

Here is what the Jamestown Journal said February 21, 1894 concerning Mr. Carlson when most of our public improvements were in the controversial stage:

"The man who worked in and out of season, to whom a large share of the credit is due, is Samuel A. Carlson. His sledge hammer arguments fell in all places at the right time and no one seemed to be able to stand against them. He was armed with an array of facts and figures and so well grounded in his position that it was impossible to shake him."

In reference to Mr. Carlson's connection with the early development of the electric plant, the following editorial appeared in the Morning News of April 16, 1895:

"The people remember that it was through the efforts of Mr. Carlson as Chairman of the Lighting Committee, that the work of extending the municipal lighting plant, was brought about against powerful opposition."

As a further explanation in reference to the above comments it should be stated that the municipal utility movement had its beginning immediately after the Village of Jamestown had been incorporated as a city.

The first steps were taken at a meeting of the Ethical Society, which held public meetings Sunday afternoons, at which a motion was introduced by Mr. Carlson and carried, to petition the City Council to authorize the construction of a plant to light the business streets of the city. This resolution, however, was pigeon-holed by the council at that time.

Mr. M. George Martyn, a manufacturer and a frequent contributor to the press on local topics, gave vigorous support to this proposal. The Board of Aldermen, however, finally built the street lighting plant at a cost of \$30,000. After this project had been successfully tried out Mr. Carlson, as stated above, was prevailed upon to become a candidate for alderman on a platform calling for the expansion of the lighting plant at a cost of \$32,000, for the purpose of selling electricity to the citizens, which was not authorized under the street lighting system, and also erecting a new municipal water plant and other improvements such as paving and sewers. Jamestown was the first city in the U. S. A. to supply electric service to the people.

The conservative citizens were up in arms against Mr. Carlson. They said he was a "youthful inexperienced dreamer." They called him a radical with visionary notions about the functions of government. They wrote letters to the newspapers denouncing his theories and asserted that he would lead the city government into financial bankruptcy by launching an intricate and complicated mechanism of electrical production as part of the city municipal administration.

According to the city statistical reports of 1955 during the past 42 years the total electric current sold to consumers by the local electric power plant brought in about \$38,000,000.00. Local consumers have paid about one-half the rate paid by consumers in cities supplied by privately owned plants and this can be considered a saving to local consumers of \$38,000,000.00 during these 42 years—nearly a million dollars a year average. In addition, the city power plant has been expanded and paid for out of revenues and without taxing the citizens of Jamestown, its value at the present time representing many millions of dollars. Also, the Board of Public Utilities has voluntarily contributed tax moneys to the city in excess of the amount which a private electric power company would have contributed although the courts of this state have held that any municipal plant supplying utility service at low rates thereby makes the equivalent of tax contributions, and in some years the Board has paid dividends to consumers ranging from 10 to 20 per cent. Allowance for depreciation is made each year.

Many people who talk about "creeping socialism" overlook the fact that any public utility system must be a monopoly whether publicly or privately owned. In Jamestown the average home-owner gets electric service for all household purposes for less than 15 cents a day even after the 18 per cent increase fixed by the Public Service Commission a few years ago. We have free enterprise in all privately conducted business undertakings but there can be no free enterprise in the field of public utilities.

At Mr. Carlson's first election as mayor he had three prominent opponents, ex-mayor O. F. Price, Prof. H. E. V. Porter, then president of the Board of Aldermen and ex-alderman John C. Swanson, a contractor. In order to give the voters of three minority groups official representation in the city administration, he appointed ex-mayor Price to the office of City Treasurer, Prof. Porter to the office of Chairman of Civil Service Commission and ex-alderman Swanson to the office of inspector of paving and sewer construction. The politicians told him that he would never get anywhere by that kind of a policy, but he continued to give minority representation on all appointive boards.

Mr. Carlson has always favored control by the majority and fair representation to minorities in all legislative bodies. All voters pay their share of taxes either directly or indirectly and minority groups are often more progressive in opinions than the majority.

The leaders of the recent two presidential conventions praised independent voters. Why should they not be officially represented in our government branches?

Mr. Carlson continued to be elected mayor for eleven two-year terms and one four-year term, the four-year term being in compliance with a constitutional provision which was required when the amended constitution went into effect providing that all mayors should be elected in the odd-numbered years, and which was intended to eliminate state and national politics from city elections which had previously been held in the even-numbered years. This makes his mayoralty service 26 years. Later he was appointed by Mayor Leon F. Roberts as a member

of surplus funds to expand the electric plant in order to give more people lower electric rates. However at the next election Mayor Roberts was defeated and Mr. Carlson was re-elected.

One of the most important official actions ever taken by the Board of Public Utilities was the purchase of the Niagara electric distribution system in 1931. For a number of years there was litigation, confusion and a kind of rivalry that was costly and with no gain or benefit to either the city or the private company. Power lines were often tapped by alleged mistake. Both of the electric authorities accused each other of taking power unlawfully from the other's lines. But it was not until Mr. Carlson had returned to office to continue his policies of complete municipal control after his first defeat in 1927 that the private Company seemed inclined to negotiate regarding the sale of their distribution system in the community. The company held out for a million dollar price for the transfer of its system in the Jamestown district. The company finally consented to sell the entire system within the Jamestown territory for the sum of \$750,000 as proposed by Karl Peterson. The expansion of the plant from 1908 to 1933 was engineered by the Klauer Engineering Co. and Melvin O. Swanson. Robert H. Jackson, attorney for the company, advised the acceptance of the board's offer, (he was not then Supreme Court Justice.) Attorney J. Russell Rogerson was then counsel for the Board of Public Utilities.

It should be stated that it was Frank O. Anderson, an industrialist, who played a leading part in first making the municipal electric plant a formidable competitor of the private electric system. In 1933 under Leon Roberts Mayorality administration, Clayton O. Johnson was appointed Superintendent of Public Utilities, succeeding Melvin Swanson, and at the close of 1956 Merle W. Smedberg was appointed to succeed Mr. Johnson who had retired. The first Superintendent of the plant was the late Charles Sundquist, it was Ernest Cawcroft who drew the charter that gave the board the necessary expansion powers.

The Jamestown Welfare Department under the direction of Carroll M. Hall has come to be recognized as the most efficiently conducted in the State of New York.

It should be stated in this connection that when the electric plant was in complete control of the Board of Aldermen elected by partisan methods in the early days of the electric plant operations there were only about 200 consumers and less than \$50,000 annual revenues, while during the period of non-partisan administration the plant's list of consumers has reached 18,000 with an annual revenue of nearly two and one-half million dollars up to the time of this writing. Artesian well water is supplied by the city at a rate of less than two cents for each 50-gallon barrel and at this writing the city is practically free from any tax-payable bonded debt.

#### Mr. Carlson's Religious Views

Mr. Carlson's religious viewpoints are based on the following passages from Holy Writ. Micah the prophet said, "What does God require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy and walk humbly with thy God?" The Great Master preached a doctrine of love, not hatred. He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." He said love your enemies, not hate them. He never blessed the war makers yet we continue to conscript our sons for foreign battle fields.

#### NEWSPAPER COMMENTS

Post-Journal Editorial, May 1, 1943: "Down through this long span of years, Sam Carlson has made a contribution to the life of Jamestown which entitles him to the deep respect of all our people, regardless of differences in community politics and policies. No one can question the fact that at all times he has sought with intense sincerity and down-right honesty of purpose to serve his native town to the utmost of his ability, and that he has succeeded in accomplishing a great deal of lasting value is true beyond the shadow of doubt. In certain phases of city government he has pioneered movements which have eventually become recognized as of vital significance in local history. Especially is everlasting credit due him for his part in the establishment and the development of the city electric light and water systems, which will always remain a monument to his civic leadership."

The Buffalo News said: "Samuel A. Carlson becomes a symbol of good government, the most re-elected mayor in America."

Charles A. Beard wrote to Mayor Carlson: "Your Autobiography is a living document for the history of popular government."

On January 1, 1938 when Mayor Carlson retired from the mayorality, the City Council conferred upon him the unique title of Mayor Emeritus in recognition of his long service to the city of Jamestown.

Referring to the purchase of the local Niagara Power System by the City, the New York Times in commenting August 16, 1931, said, "The name of Samuel A. Carlson becomes closely identified from the beginning with the developments of municipal electricity in Jamestown, and he is the man who gives the personal human interest to most of the governmental history of that city for a longer period than is covered by the average memory of the present generation."

Mr. Edward J. Meeman noted Editor of the Memphis Press-Scimitar published at Memphis, Tenn. sent Mr. Carlson the following letter October 22, 1956:

Dear Mr. Carlson;

I am very happy to have "Sam Carlson's Own Story."

It is a great story—one of America's best stories, one of the world's best stories.

It is inspiring.

All good to you.

Those who wish further information regarding Mr. Carlson's public record can secure this at the James Prendergast Free Library where his numerous scrapbooks have been filed.