

THE WORLD'S FIRST ELECTRICALLY LIGHTED CITY - WABASH, INDIANA -

The Ford Meter Box Company has long been known for innovation. This leadership trait may have been inspired by the same quality in the company's home town of Wabash, Indiana, which is the world's first electrically lighted city.

The story of lighting Wabash actually starts with Charles Brush of Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Brush had been experimenting with his new invention, the arc light. He had successfully lit a park in Cleveland, but nothing as ambitious as lighting an entire city. On February 2, 1880, the Common Council of Wabash agreed to assist Mr. Brush in proving his light's usefulness. The council appropriated \$100 to the Brush Electric Light Company for the test and the experiment was underway!

The Brush Light Company installed four 3,000-candle power lamps, suspending them from the flagstaff on the Wabash County Courthouse dome. For this initial test, a dynamo, driven by a six-horse steam engine, provided the electricity. At 8 p.m. on March 31, 1880, more than 10,000 people witnessed the event as arc lights from the

courthouse spread light throughout the area. A report states that the light was visible as far as a mile from the courthouse square.

A couple of headlines of the day expressed the excitement and success of Brush's light. From the *Grand Rapids Times* (Grand Rapids, Michigan), "The city of Wabash, Indiana, is to be lighted by electricity hereafter. The initial test of the system was made Wednesday night and proved entirely successful." From the *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), "The lighting of an entire city by means of electricity seems to have been accomplished. Over ten thousand witnessed the test. The crowd spread over the suburbs making tests by looking at watches and reading newspapers. In short, the Brush system of electric lighting for cities is a success, and Wabash enjoys the distinction of being the first city in the whole world to be lighted by electricity."

If you happen to be passing through north central Indiana, be sure to stop by the courthouse in Wabash. You can learn more about this special event and see one of the original lights that is on display.



Wabash Mayor Bob Vanlandingham (left) and 3rd district City Councilman Marc Shelley pose in the Wabash County Courthouse with one of the original arc lights that was installed by the Brush Light Company in 1880.

