

Granite Falls Electric Company

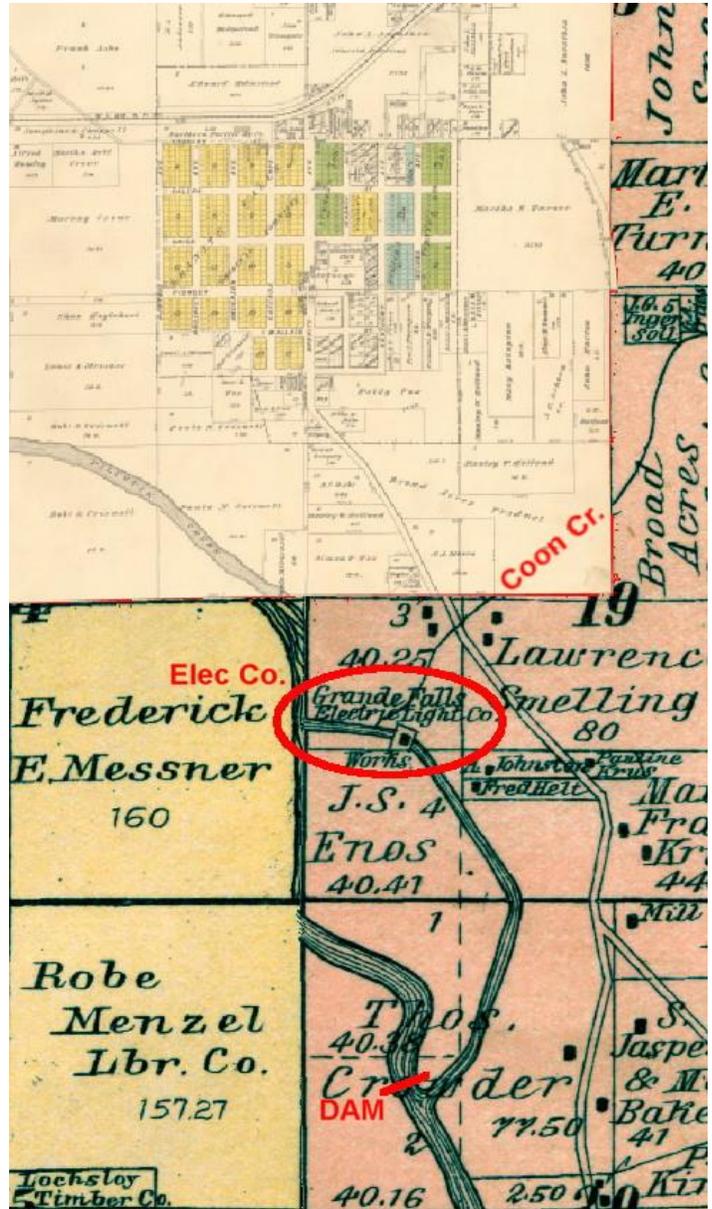
Steven Parr homesteaded 160 acres, spanning both sides of the south fork of the Stillaguamish River. Near the center of his homestead was a waterfall known as Granite Falls.

On Dec 7, 1904, Granite Falls Ordinance #24 granted to Steven Parr (and his heirs and assigns) the right to erect poles and string wires throughout the city for the distribution and sale of electricity. It stipulated that unless work was started by Aug 1905, and the system in operation by Jan 1906 (slightly over one year), the agreement would be void.

Thus the groundwork was laid for the Granite Falls Electric Company, which would provide power to the community until it was sold to the Puget Sound Power & Light Co. Steven Parr sold the franchise rights to O.L. Lewis, who operated the Snohomish system. Lewis, in turn, proceeded to build the Granite Falls system and hired John Cleaver as the manager.

A dam was built on Coon Creek, with a concrete powerhouse about 50 yards downstream. A large round hole in the dam fit the large pipe leading to the confined space where the turbine was to be placed. Coon Creek couldn't provide adequate water by itself, so a dam was built on the Pilchuck about a mile upstream, and water was diverted through a pipeline/ditch that added to the water from Coon Creek. You can see the diversion path on the 1910 map at right.

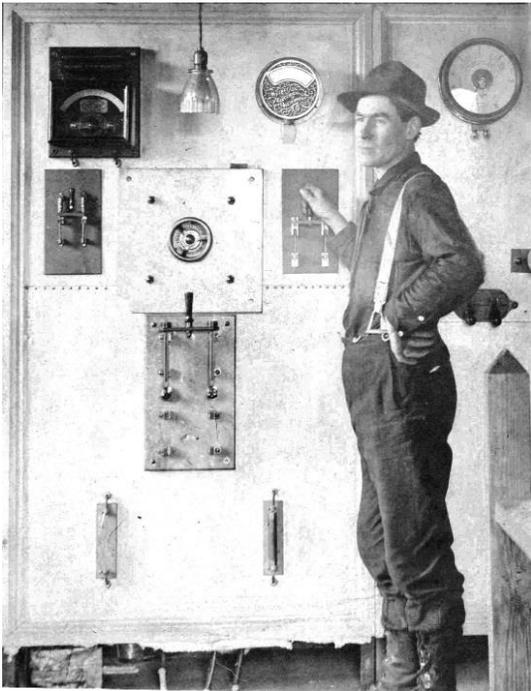
Unfortunately, some freight delays in the East suddenly made it virtually certain that the turbine would not arrive in time, causing the company to miss its startup deadline. There was some interesting antagonism between the Electric Company and certain members of the City Council, and when the discussion arose at a Council meeting, one of the Council members snidely asked if Cleaver wanted to apply for an extension. Shortly before the meeting, however, Cleaver had installed a small hit-and-miss engine, connected it to a generator, and connected the output to City Hall.



The lone bulb burned brightly when the engine fired, faded noticeably as the engine slowed, then immediately brightened when the engine fired again. The City Attorney (friendly to the Electric Company) replied there was no need for an extension, for "a plant is in operation".



Not much is left on Coon Creek except the dam (the lower three feet of the spillway was removed in 1983 to allow fish passage) and the shell of the power house.



The picture of the controls show a pretty simple system ("Granite Falls - ON/OFF"). John Bockmier is at the controls.

The early company blotter (given out as advertising) shows the close relationship between the electric power companies and the companies striving to provide new appliances to the American public.

