

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Rockford Gas Light & Coke Fitting and Meter Shops Building

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & number 915 Cedar Street not for publication

city or town Rockford vicinity

state Illinois county Winnebago zip code 61102

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date _____

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action _____

Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
Fitting and Meter Shops Building

Winnebago County, Illinois

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
COLONIAL REVIVAL

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: STEEL

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company Gas Fitting and Meter Shops Building is a purpose-built gas fitting and meter shops building located in Rockford, Illinois. The building, originally built and used by the Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company, was later used by its successors including Central Illinois Gas & Electric Company and Commonwealth Edison. It is located at the site of the former Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company plant where all other structures related to gas production and distribution were demolished between 1961 and 2012.

The two first gas fitting and meter shops buildings, constructed in 1915 and 1925, were subsequently connected with four additions constructed between circa 1928 and 1948. The building housed all operations associated with the distribution department, including gas meter repair, fitting, and service fleet. Expansion of the building throughout the first half of the twentieth century directly reflects the growth of the distribution and service side of the gas industry in Rockford during this period, which in turn mirrors the city's population and industrial growth. Rectangular in shape, the building is a good example of the Colonial Revival style with later sympathetic additions applied to an industrial building. Fronting Cedar Street and adjacent to a railroad line, the fitting and meter shops building retains its garages, loading areas, elevator, office, workshop, stripping room, testing room, and restroom/locker room spaces, which convey its role in the distribution side of the gas industry. The building's overall form, construction, materiality, spatial division, and fenestration patterns reflect its use as a gas meter fitting and repair shop building, and its integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association remain intact.

Narrative Description

Setting

The building is located at 915 Cedar Street in Rockford, Illinois. Cedar Street follows an east-west alignment in front of the building before turning slightly southeast to cross Kent Creek and heading toward downtown Rockford, which is bifurcated into east and west ends by the Rock River. The building is located approximately 0.5 miles west of the west end of downtown Rockford. In turn, Rockford is located in north-central Illinois approximately 90 miles northwest of Chicago.

A handful of mature trees and concrete walkways extend along Cedar Street at the south (primary) façade of the building. A concrete-paved drive to the east of the building extends toward a concrete-paved parking area to the north of the building. The building is further surrounded by grassy areas, and a metal chain link fence surrounds the property in a trapezoidal shape. There is a large grass-covered space beyond the chain link fence to the north of the building (presently identified as Avon Park, which constitutes the site of former gas works-related buildings and structures), Avon Street to the west of the building, and a railroad alignment (single-track with a siding northeast of the building) and the north fork of Kent Creek to the east of the building. The setting beyond what immediately surrounds the building is characterized by large masonry industrial complexes situated along Cedar Street and Elm Street to the

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north, west, and south of the property and an early twentieth century residential neighborhood to the northwest. The west edge of the downtown area is located beyond Kent Creek to the east.

Building Exterior

In general, the Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company Gas Fitting and Meter Shops Building rises one to two stories in height with both gable and flat roofs. The first, two-story Colonial Revival style fitting and meter shops building was built in 1915; it features a rectangular footprint and terminates in a gable roof following a similar design language to other brick buildings once located at the former plant site. A later, one-story Colonial Revival style brick building was built in 1925 to the north of the fitting and meter shops building; it housed additional workshop and tool storage house for the Distribution Department, which the fitting and meter shops were a part of. Subsequent additions to these buildings, executed between circa 1928 and 1948, expanded their footprints and eventually adjoined them. Overall, the building is clad with red brick laid in both common and running bond with exposed concrete foundations. It features both concrete and brick window sills and headers, and a concrete beltcourse between the first and second stories. Original multi-lite steel windows (casement, hopper, and double hung) remain intact throughout but both partially and fully covered with wood board or exterior insulation finish system (EIFS) panels.

The south (primary) façade faces Cedar Street and consists of three sections: the west section is a one-story addition built 1948, the central section is the two-story original meter shops building built 1915, and the east section is a two-story addition built circa 1928. The west section features three regularly spaced windows and a single door opening with a non-historic wood door. The window openings are partially enclosed with EIFS panel at the lower half and metal casement storm windows at the upper half. The central section is articulated by brick pilasters, which divide the façade into five bays. Each bay features two window openings, except for the far west bay at the first story, which features a door opening. A transom above the door opening maintains regularity in height and rhythm of openings across this section of the façade. Corbeling above the pilasters and at the eave articulates the entablature of the building. Window openings at the first story are partially enclosed by grid-pattern EIFS panels and metal storm windows, while window openings at the second story are enclosed by wood boards (from the interior, most original six-over-six steel casement windows remain intact throughout, although some glass units are cracked, broken, or missing). The east section maintains the fenestration pattern at the first story but features only a single window opening that is shorter and wider than those found at the original building. The addition at the east section does maintain the concrete beltcourse, however.

The east façade faces a concrete-paved drive and grassy areas with the railroad alignment and Kent Creek just beyond. It also consists of three sections: the south section is the two-story addition built circa 1928 with the gable end of the original two-story 1915 building visible beyond, the central section is a one-story addition built circa 1928, which adjoins the 1915 and 1925 buildings, and the north section is the one-story original meter shops building built 1925. A raised concrete loading dock extends the length of the south and central sections. The south section features regularly spaced rectangular window openings at the second story, all of which are enclosed by wood boards, with a single door opening at the north end. A metal egress stair extends southward from the door down the façade to the concrete loading dock. Except for a single door opening at the north end, the first story lacks fenestration. The central section features six regularly spaced window openings; one is enclosed with wood and five are completely enclosed with EIFS panels. The north section features three bays articulated by brick pilasters. Each bay features a

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central rectangular opening with header course brick sills and soldier course brick headers. The central opening is enclosed with EIFS and glass block, while the north and south openings are enclosed with red brick laid in the running bond. The pilasters support a brickwork pediment defined by corbeling, header courses, and angled coursing in the gable end. A brickwork circle at the center of the gable end recalls the round windows found at the larger two-story shop building.

The north façade faces a concrete-paved parking area and consists of three sections: the east section is the one-story 1925 shops building, the central section is a circa 1928 addition, and the west section is a 1948 addition. The east section is divided into five bays by brick pilasters. Evenly spaced pairs of window openings in four of the bays are enclosed with EIFS and glass block. The east-most bay features a non-historic metal garage door. From east to west, the three bays at the central section feature a non-historic metal garage door, an EIFS-enclosed window opening with a punched door opening, and a pair of EIFS and glass block-enclosed window openings. Notably, the central section is an addition, which continues the gable roof profile, brick cladding, and overall rhythm and design of the original 1925 shops building. The west section of the north façade, however, is a flat-roof addition with regularly spaced window openings that are enclosed with EIFS. The roof profile is taller than the lowest point of the gable but not taller than the ridge height of the original building.

The west façade faces grassy areas and Avon Street. A long, one-story addition spans the entire length of the west façade. It features nine evenly spaced garage door openings at the north end of the façade. The south end features four evenly spaced rectangular window openings, three of which are partially enclosed with EIFS. The original multi-light steel casement windows are visible. The gable of the one-story building to the north and the second story of the original building to the south are visible beyond the façade of the one-story addition. At the second story, similar brick pilasters, corbeling, and pediment, as previously described, is present. Four regularly spaced window openings are arranged into two bays; two are enclosed with wood boar, while the original eight-over-eight steel windows are intact and visible at the other openings. Notably, a round window with grid pattern 9-lite mullions remains intact at the center of the gable end.

Building Interior

Floor Plan

As described, the building is one to two stories in height. The first floor is primarily divided into four spaces, which are defined by the various stages of building construction spanning 1915 through 1948: to the south, a long, east-west oriented rectangular space comprises the fitting shop (built 1915), which is further subdivided by concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls; to the west, a long, north-south oriented rectangular space (built 1948) comprises additional office, locker room, and garage spaces; to the north, a long, east-west oriented rectangular space (built 1925 with circa 1928 addition) comprises additional workshop and storage space; and at the central portion of the building, a rectangular space (built circa 1928) comprises additional garage and repair shop space.

The second floor, which is located over the fitting shop, is accessed via stairs and an elevator. The stairs and elevator are located along the north façade of the fitting and meeting shop building (built 1915) along the original location of the loading dock. The second floor is the same footprint as the first floor and

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further subdivided by brick masonry walls comprising the meter repair shop, which includes office, workshop, stripping, testing, and restroom/locker room spaces. An additional stair leads to the attic level.

Finishes and Features

The building generally features exposed brick and CMU walls, exposed steel trusses, unfinished concrete floors, original painted wood paneled doors, and multi-lite steel casement and double-hung windows. Some exposed brick throughout the interior has been painted. The original brick pilasters and some windows remain intact at the south façade of the one-story building built in 1925; these features are now visible from inside the large central space built circa 1928, which is defined by an exposed steel bowstring arch truss roof. The concrete foundation at the south end of the building is a few feet higher than that of the north end; steep concrete ramps inside the large central space navigate this change in grade. The second story of the original 1915 fitting and meter shops building to the south features wood flooring, plaster ceilings and exposed brick walls. A steel compound fink roof truss and wood sheathing and gable-end brick walls are exposed at the attic level.

Alterations

Beyond additions to the original two- and one-story buildings (built in 1915 and 1925, respectively) constructed between circa 1928 and 1948, the following alterations are also observed at the building:

- A modern concrete loading dock extends along east façade
- Modern/replacement metal garage doors are installed at the north façade
- Modern gas meter equipment infrastructure installed at south façade
- Some window bays throughout are enclosed with wood board or EIFS panel (however, original multi-lite steel casement and double hung windows are visible at most openings from interior)
- Some openings at the north and east facades are bricked-in or enclosed with EIFS and glass block
- Installation of fluorescent light fixtures at spaces throughout interior
- Installation of modern heating, ventilation, and cooling equipment, including boiler within the 1925 building

Character-defining features

The following are character-defining features of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company Fitting and Meter Shops Building:

- Exterior:
 - Overall form, including rectangular footprint, gable and flat roofs
 - Rooftop ventilators
 - Red brick exterior, including decorative brickwork, corbelling, pediments, and pilasters
 - Original wood panel doors and steel overhead garage doors
 - Original steel casement and double-hung windows
- Interior:

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- Historic spatial configuration (reflecting various building stages spanning 1915 through 1948 and historic use as active fitting and meter shop through 1982)
- Change in floor grade at first story corresponding with historic location of loading dock
- Exposed steel truss structures
- Exposed brick and CMU construction
- Unfinished concrete floors at the first story and wood floors at the second story
- Original interior wood panel doors and steel windows where present
- Original industrial pendant light fixtures throughout where present
- Original wood cabinet/storage shelves at the second floor meter shop, where present
- Staircase/vertical circulation location, including elevator
- Original locker bay at the second floor meter shop

See photographs for the character-defining features listed above.

Integrity

The Fitting and Meter Shops Building has integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association.

Location – The Fitting and Meter Shops Building has not been moved since its construction and therefore retains its integrity of location.

Design – Both the 1915 and 1925 buildings retain their overall form, massing, spatial configuration, and profile and remain recognizable among later additions, which contribute to the significance of the property. The later additions, which fall within the period of significance and are contributing to the property, convey the expansion and development of the gas meter service industry throughout the twentieth century as it relates to the growth of the City of Rockford and the evolution of gas power both locally and state-wide. The original buildings retain key materials (discussed further below) and features of the Colonial Revival style, including symmetrical elevations, gabled roof profile with round windows in the gable ends, and brick pilasters that articulate bays on the north and south facades and support the brickwork pediments at the east and west facades of each building. Further, the buildings retain key features, including ample windows and roof ventilators, and spatial division, which communicates their role associated with the gas meter and fitting shops. Given the above, the property retains its integrity of design.

Materials – The building retains the majority of the original multi-lite steel casement windows, wood paneled doors, and exposed brick and steel frame construction. Further, some original light fixtures, built-ins, and other finishes remain at the second story of the original shop building along Cedar Street. Therefore, the property retains its integrity of materials.

Workmanship – As described above, the building retains a majority of original materials, fixtures, and finishes. The construction of both the original buildings and subsequent additions, reflected in the masonry, including the corbeled eaves, pilasters, and brickwork pediments, and steel truss structures, remains unaltered and visible at the interior and exterior. Therefore, the property retains its integrity of workmanship.

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Setting – While the demolition of other gas plant-related structures and infrastructure has diminished the property’s integrity of setting, the industrial nature of the surrounding area, including the former Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul railroad alignment west of Kent Creek and various commercial and industrial complexes in the vicinity along Cedar and Avon Streets remain intact. The building remains sited at the south end of the former plant along Cedar Street, which is characteristic of its building type, its use by the distribution department (separate from production), and its association with the service side of the gas industry; siting along a vehicular road and railroad allowed for ease of loading and unloading gas meters and mobilizing the service fleet. Therefore, the property retains its integrity of setting.

Feeling – Given the property’s integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, the interior and exterior of the building communicate its historic character as an early twentieth century industrial building. Despite the loss of all other features related to the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company plant, the building’s industrial character and setting, among other industrial complexes and adjacent to the railroad alignment west of Kent Creek, reinforce the property’s integrity of feeling.

Association – The property retains key character-defining features at both the interior and exterior which communicate the building’s use and association with gas metering and distribution for the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company. As described, it retains key features of a purpose-built gas meter and fitting shops building, including two-stories, roof top ventilators, ample windows, elevator, loading dock, and workshop, storage, vehicular maintenance, office, and locker room spaces. Further, it retains integrity of location, setting, and feeling and, therefore, it retains integrity of association.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1915-1974

Significant Dates

1925, circa 1928, 1948

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company, Holm-
Page Company, Security Building Company

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company Fitting and Meter Shops Building is a historically significant building type in the city of Rockford, as well as the surrounding region of Winnebago County, which it serviced. The building, once part of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company, housed the Distribution Department, which included the fitting and meter shops for the company, and was associated with the distribution side of the local gas industry. The building is individually eligible at the local level under Criterion A for its association with gas distribution and metering, the latter of which spurred industrial growth both locally and nationwide, as well as Criterion C as an example of an early 20th century purpose-built gas fitting and meter shops building. The period of significance is from 1915, the year it was constructed, to 1974, the fifty-year cutoff or significance for the National Register.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company Fitting and Meter Shops Building – Criterion A

The Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company Fitting and Meter Shops Building is locally significant and individually eligible under Criterion A for industry, its association with gas distribution and metering in Rockford. The building was originally part of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company, which pioneered the production and distribution of gas to power streetlights, businesses, and residences in Rockford. The company, formed in 1856, was the first of several predecessors to the Central Illinois Electric & Gas Company (later merged with Commonwealth Edison) to incorporate. Its first meter shop was created in 1911 and located on the second floor of the plant stable building. At the time, the shop was responsible for 10,200 meters throughout Rockford, a drastic increase from 850 meters just two decades prior in 1890. In 1915, the company built the Fitting and Meter Shops Building, the city's first purpose-built fitting and meter shop at the gas works located just west of downtown Rockford. The building reflected the expansion in gas distribution services that occurred during the early to mid-twentieth century. The changes and growth in the industry necessitated the establishment of a modern gas metering and distribution system to meet the city's growing population and associated demand. The shop, which had subsequent additions built between 1925 and 1948, would later service a total of 38,000 meters in Rockford and surrounding communities by 1949. The Fitting and Meter Shops Building ceased operation in 1982, almost twenty years after the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company was demolished.

Gas Industry, Fitting and Meter Shops History and Standardization of Practice

The Significant Role of the Gas Meter in Gas Distribution

Up until the mid-to-late nineteenth century, most households relied on wood for their energy source, and early industries were powered by water mills. Wood was soon supplanted by coal, an inexpensive yet effective product which became the main source of energy in the country by the late 1900s and played a major role in the Industrial Revolution. It remained in high demand for nearly one hundred years.¹ Natural gas first emerged in the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century. While pipes were laid in towns across the country

¹ "Energy sources have changed throughout the history of the United States." *Today in Energy*. U.S. Energy Information Administration. July 13, 2013. <https://www.eia.gov/> Accessed January 5, 2024.

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to carry gas for streetlamp lighting, only the occasional shops or factories drew service. At that time gas was underutilized because there was no accurate means to measure the amount of gas a consumer used. Billing methods were costly and unpopular. Rates were based upon conjecture, and gas companies charged ...an annual flat rate [that] was based on an estimate for a given number of burners in a reasonable number of hours.”² The size of the burners also factored into the rate estimation. This billing method proved to be an obstacle in the use of gas light services to household consumers who, on average, could not afford the flat-rate service fees. Manufactured gas companies were also dissatisfied with this practice for determining rates, which often did not reflect actual consumption.³

Billing and usage issues were resolved when meters that measured gas usage were invented. A gas meter is a mechanical instrument, which measures the quantity or number of cubic feet of gas consumed in a given particular time at a particular place. This enabled gas companies to expand their services to household consumers and the industry grew exponentially. British engineer Samuel Clegg is credited as the inventor of the “wet meter,” aptly named for its use of water, in 1815, after which time it went into general use. Shortly after, John Malan invented the first “dry meter” in 1820 to address evaporation and freezing issues prompted by the use of water in wet meters in hot and cold climates. It wasn’t until variations of the dry meter patented by William Richards in 1844, however, that meters would later come into universal use by the early twentieth century.⁴

Nearly two decades after Richards patented his meter design, the gas meter business, much like other industries across the country at the time, felt the severe impacts of wartime conditions during the American Civil War.⁵ The American Meter Company, which formed in 1863, was born out of these conditions when three meter manufacturing companies in Philadelphia and New York merged under a fifty-year New York charter. The company’s formation is often cited as the beginning of the standardization of gas metering in the United States given its later role in engineering and testing advancements in meter design and technology.⁶ Despite impacts to the gas meter production industry during wartime, a tabulation of nationwide gas service sales reveals that gas distribution more than doubled between 1861, which recorded 4,000,000,000 cubic feet, and 1871, which recorded 10,700,000,000 cubic feet.⁷

Gas meters were typically employed in two ways and at two locations: the production end and the consumption, or distribution, end. Large station meters installed at a gas works measured gas production before it was conveyed to Gasometers (gasholders) for storage prior to distribution. In turn, smaller meters installed at commercial properties, industrial buildings, or private homes measured gas consumption.⁸ The gas industry was revolutionized by the implementation of the gas meter in the distribution of gas which rendered “the determination of the quantity of gas consumed [as] not a matter of observation or memory or estimation but [as] based on absolutely fixed means of mechanically determining the actual consumption of gas.”⁹ Decades after the introduction of the gas meter, the *United States Investor*, a financial journal published by Frank P. Bennett & Co. of Boston, Massachusetts, would run an article May 1923 on the history of the gas manufacturing

² Alfred Lief, *Metering for America: 125 Years of the Gas Industry and American Meter Company*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. (1961): 3.

³ Alfred F. Krug, “The Gas Meter,” *Baltimore Gas and Electric News*, December (1913): 75.

⁴ Krug, “The Gas Meter,” 75.

⁵ Lief, *Metering for America*, 20-21.

⁶ Lief, *Metering for America*, 21.

⁷ Frank P. Bennet & Co., “History of the Gas Industry,” *United States Investor* Vol. 34 (May 1923): 31; Lief, *Metering for America*, 20-21.

⁸ Leif, *Metering for America*, 4.

⁹ Krug, “The Gas Meter,” 76.

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industry worldwide. Regarding gas meters, the publication stated that “it is to this simple instrument that a great deal of the success of the gas industry is due.”¹⁰

By the 1880s, electricity posed serious competition against the gas industry for lighting services in the United States and abroad.¹¹ Despite this, gas consumption steadily increased during this period due to increased consumer demand for cooking and heating. Nationwide gas sales in 1881 totaled 23,500,000,000 cubic feet, an increase of 12,800,000,000 cubic feet from sales reported in 1871.¹² This climb in gas consumption and demand for service directly correlated with a need for more consumer meters, larger Distribution departments, and more efficient production and service. As later stated in the *United States Investor* in May 1923, “the advances in the mechanical art [of gas production and consumption] have been the result of the demand on the part of the public for this commodity.”¹³

Despite the increase in use during the 1890s, growth in gas services remained challenged by the high costs related to gas consumption for individual consumers. New developments in gas meter design during this period brought the prepayment meter to consumers across the United States as early as 1894. Encouraged by their success in Europe, American manufacturers, including American Meter Company, quickly began widespread production and implementation of this coin operated device. In his 1961 book, *Metering for America: 125 Years of the Gas Industry and American Meter Company*, Alfred Leif wrote,

“The coin (usually a quarter) opened the valve and, as gas passed, a price wheel with teeth or holes (having a specific value) began revolving. A credit dial indicated the number of feet paid for and not yet used, and on a full turn of the wheel the registration and gas supply stopped. Additional coins could be deposited beforehand to keep the home fire burning. For a lower or higher price, a wheel with fewer or more teeth was easily substituted.”¹⁴

After their introduction in the United States, prepayment meters played an important role in the more widespread use of gas. Leif wrote,

“The consensus of gas companies was that the prepayment meter had done more than any other agency to increase consumption since the beginning of the industry. It opened up business they could not get without it. It appealed to a side of human nature that willingly bought in large quantity if small expenditures could be made at a time instead of lump sum. Once-barren territories were now among the best revenue-producing. In the years before World War I, the tide of popularity was such that one-third of the meters being set were of the prepay type.”¹⁵

Nationwide gas service sales in 1891, prior to the implementation of the prepayment meter, totaled 45,000,000,000 cubic feet. After the meter’s introduction, nationwide sales increased to 101,626,000,000 cubic feet by 1901, 159,101,000,000 cubic feet by 1911, and 326,951,000,000 cubic feet by 1921.¹⁶

¹⁰ Frank P. Bennet & Co., “History of the Gas Industry,” 30.

¹¹ G.F. Ray, D.T. Jones, and J.E. Davis, “The Innovation Process in the Gas Industry,” *National Institute Economic Review* No. 73 (August 1975): 47.

¹² Frank P. Bennet & Co., “History of the Gas Industry,” 31.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Lief, *Metering for America*, 52.

¹⁵ Lief, *Metering for America*, 71-73.

¹⁶ Frank P. Bennet & Co., “History of the Gas Industry,” 31.

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Since gas lines and meters were the link between the company and the consumer, gas distribution and meter maintenance became essential components of the gas industry. These duties were carried out in fitting and meter shops buildings. The fitting shop building oversaw the installation of pipes used to distribute gas from the company's main lines to the consumer. This involved cutting and threading pipes, which occurred in the shops or on site.¹⁷ The shop implemented orders from the commercial and office divisions which catered to the needs of consumers, so it had more involvement with other company departments than any other department.¹⁸ Trade magazines emphasized the importance of fitting shops as their efficiency and organization could impact customer satisfaction as well as the company's bottom line:

The company's revenue depends upon the amount of gas consumed by the appliance, and in order that the maximum amount of gas will be consumed the appliance must be satisfactory to the customer. It cannot be satisfactory unless properly installed, and it will not be properly installed unless the organization of the fitting shop is high class....A large sum of the company's money is invested in the appliances, meters, pipes and materials handled and used by the fitting shop. That they are handled carefully and used economically means dollars and cents to the company.¹⁹

Gas meters were the industry's most important commodity for the accuracy of meter registrations directly impacted a company's net income.²⁰ Meter shops oversaw the testing, proving, stripping, repainting, and cleaning of the meters. It was recommended that gas meter shops be located in the same building as the fitting shops, and advised that they be situated on the second floor for workers to have plenty of light and ventilation given then nature of their meticulous maintenance work and use of harsh chemicals.

Both the fitting and gas meter shops fell under the distribution side of the gas industry. Distribution departments at gas companies across the county were modernizing to provide more efficient service. The motor vehicle greatly improved the loading and unloading of meters at the shops, as well as the efficient mobilization of the meter service and pipe fitting fleets. Given the close relationship between the servicing and circulation of gas meters, fitting and meter shop facilities were expanded, particularly toward the middle of the twentieth century, not only to accommodate the increasing amount of meters in service, but also to provide necessary space for the storage and maintenance of associated service vehicles.

Natural Gas Consumption to 1974

Natural gas consumption in the United States steadily increased over time as it was inexpensive, clean, and accessible. By the 1920s, it had become acceptable for household appliances. After World War II, seemingly abundant supplies of gas were located during the country's search for oil. Additionally, improvements were made in the design and quality of the pipe that made it easier to deliver gas over long distances. Between 1946 and 1952, marketed gas production doubled from four to eight trillion cubic feet. During the 1950s and 1960s, it continued to increase steadily at an average

¹⁷ Wehrle, 325.

¹⁸ Ibid, 310.

¹⁹ Wehrle, 316.

²⁰ Wehrle, 338.

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increase of 6.5% per year. Production was at its highest in 1973, topping out at 22 trillion cubic feet, followed by the first significant decrease of 6% in 1974.²¹

Rockford and the Gas Industry: An Overview

Rockford was no exception to these nationwide trends in increased gas consumption. In 1890, operating from its original plant location in downtown Rockford, the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company had just 850 meters in place throughout the city, primarily at industrial plants and commercial enterprises. By the time the company established its first meter shop in 1911, it serviced 10,200 meters, half of which at that time were prepayment meters; this total would later climb to 16,000 meters by 1922 and 38,000 meters by 1949. At the height of its use, over 8,000 prepayment meters were installed in the city.²²

This increase in gas delivery and consumption, as indicated by the rise in meter implementation across Rockford, directly correlates with the city's population growth during this period, which totaled 23,584 in 1890, prior to the implementation of the prepayment meter, and grew to 83,000 by 1925. The city's population growth slowed over the next 15 years, due in part to national involvement in World War II, as it climbed to just 92,927 by 1950. In the postwar period, however, population, and, in conjunction, gas consumption, continued its historical exponential growth, reaching 126,706 by 1960 and 147,370 by 1970.

Early Power Industry of Rockford, Winnebago County, IL

Rockford, the seat of Winnebago County, is located roughly halfway between Chicago to the East and Galena to the West in north-central Illinois. Its location along the Rock River was instrumental in transforming the community into a manufacturing center. The industrial growth of city, incorporated in 1839, could also be attributed to state legislation passed in 1848 that called for navigational improvements along the river at Rockford and the incorporation of the Rockford Hydraulic and Manufacturing Company. The dam and associated locks were completed by Fall 1845 and began supplying power to sawmills, grist mills, and foundries which developed along the river in the following years.²³ The Rockford Water Power Company, formed in July 1851, organized in response to the total failure and destruction of the dam earlier in June of that year. By Spring of 1853, a new dam erected across the Rock River began supplying power to the growing number of mills, foundries, and industrial plants of the village.

Concurrently, the rise of the manufactured gas industry finally caught up with growing cities in the Midwest region. The Chicago Gas, Light & Coke Company, the first in the state to incorporate in 1849, was quickly followed by the introduction of manufactured gas services to Rockford in September the following year when the city's population totaled just 23,047. By 1854, newly formed gas companies provided service to the cities of Quincy, Rock Island, and Springfield, and to Galena, Ottawa, and Peoria by 1855. Gas companies incorporated and expanded rapidly in Illinois and around the country during this period, such that by 1873 there were nearly one thousand gasworks in the United States.²⁴

²¹ "The Natural Gas Shortage: A Preliminary Report," Federal Energy Administration, Office of Policy and Analysis, August 1975. <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0204/1511759.pdf>, accessed January 16, 2024.

²² "Gas Company Extended Service Five Miles," *Morning Star*, December 31, 1911; "Gas Service: To Gas Consumers," *Morning Star*, February 12, 1922.

²³ Charles A. Church, *History of Rockford and Winnebago County, Illinois, From the First Settlement in 1834 to the Civil War*, Rockford: New England Society (1900): 222-225.

²⁴ Illinois Committee on Public Utility Information, *History and Development of the Gas Industry*, 1925, 12-13; Lief, *Metering for America*, 23.

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Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company

In 1856, the Illinois General Assembly passed an act to incorporate Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company, which listed Selden M. Church, Edward F.W. Ellis, and John Platt as incorporators, on February 1, 1855.²⁵ Rockford Gas Light & Coke was the first of several predecessors to the Central Illinois Electric & Gas Company to incorporate.²⁶ In April 1856, the company began construction on a plant at the intersection of Wyman and Mulberry Streets, the site of the present-day Rockford Public Library, along the west banks of the Rock River.²⁷ The company built new main pipes throughout the city and by Christmas 1856, new gas lights illuminated a large Christmas celebration. Main pipe construction continued into the new year to supply commercial, residential, and street gas lighting services. On February 3, 1857, the stores of Rockford were first lit with gas.²⁸

After the company was sold at auction to satisfy creditors in March 1858, the new owners obtained a charter from the State Legislature in February 1861 and Thomas Butterworth (born in Manchester, England in 1827 and an employee of the works since 1856) was appointed manager.²⁹ By 1890, Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company experienced considerable growth. The Philadelphia-based American Gas Company, which controlled gas works in cities across the country, purchased the Rockford plant on March 1, 1890, for \$300,000. Henry S. Whipple, employed by the American Gas Company as manager of the works at Elgin, IL, was promoted to management of the Rockford plant after the company purchased it.³⁰ At the time, the Rockford plant manufactured 35,000,000 cubic feet of gas per annum, owned 45 miles of mains, supplied 550 streetlamps with gas power, and employed an average of 25 men.³¹

Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company continued to expand under Whipple's direction, but city officials eventually raised concerns about the cost of gas services. A mayor-appointed committee comprised of gas company representatives and elected officials was formed in 1898 to explore improvements to or relocation of the gas works, which would improve efficiencies in gas manufacturing and decrease the cost of gas services. In late June 1899, the company purchased two and half acres of land located west of downtown and Kent Creek along the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul (CM&StP) Railroad from R.H. Tinker for \$5,000 for the construction of a new gas plant. The *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette* reported that this location, at the center of the railroad and manufacturing district, would "enable the company to get coal much cheaper" resulting in cheaper gas services.³²

On March 3, 1900, the *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette* reported that Whipple met with George G. Ramsell, a general manager of the American Gas Company, to plan the construction of a new gas works.³³ The following day the *Rockford Morning Star* reported that plans for the new, \$100,000 gas works were already complete, and construction would begin later that spring. The newspaper went on to state that the American Gas Company

²⁵ *Rockford Republican*, February 20, 1856.

²⁶ The company also notably incorporated 23 years prior to the development of the electric light bulb by Thomas Edison in 1879.

²⁷ *Rockford Morning Star*. "Rockford Gas, Light Firm Fathered Utility." March 30, 1962.

²⁸ Hazel M. Hyde, "Christmas Ceremonies Celebrate the Gas Lights." *Nuggets of History* 3, No. 1 (Nov.-Dec. 1965): 2.

²⁹ Butterworth continued to manage the company until his death in 1885, when ownership transferred to his heirs. P.J. Naschold, "Rockford Illinois - 'The Forest City,'" *The UGI Circle* 6, No. 7 (January 1926): 1; Church, *History of Rockford*, 365-66.

³⁰ Whipple graduated from Yale in 1875. Notably, Whipple was later elected President of the Illinois Gas Association in 1919 and later served as a director of the organization. He also served as Director of the Illinois Committee on Public Utility Information, County Chairman of three counties for the Public Service Speakers' Bureau, President of the Rockford University Club, and both Director and Board President of the Rockford Public Library. *Rockford Daily Gazette*. March 10, 1890; "Henry S. Whipple, New President of Illinois Gas Association," *The Gas Record* 15, No. 6 (1919): 236; Naschold, "Rockford, Illinois," 3.

³¹ Eugene Brown and F. Ford Rowe, *Industrial and Picturesque Rockford, Rockford: Forest City Publishing Company* (1891): 61.

³² "Site for Gas Plant, Property for the new Works has Changed," *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette*, June 23, 1899.

³³ "Plan New Gas Plant," *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette*, March 3, 1900.

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gave the new Rockford plant “special attention” to create an exemplary, model plant and showcase its capabilities to other gas companies.³⁴ Later that month, Rockford Gas, Light & Coke issued advertisements for bids on three brick buildings at the new plant and construction began shortly after.³⁵ S.P. Curtis, then-engineer of construction with the American Gas Company and later General Manager, is credited for the design and construction of the Rockford plant.³⁶ Notably, the population of Rockford, which totaled 31,051 in 1900, would soon climb alongside the expansion of gas services provided by this state-of-the-art plant.³⁷

Construction continued throughout the year 1900 and by December it was reported that Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company expended \$175,000 on its new plant and miles of new, large mains.³⁸ The “model plant” was capable of manufacturing 500,000 cubic feet of gas per day.³⁹ Meanwhile, the demolition of buildings and removal of equipment at the former plant site began in September of that year and continued, as able, when operations were relocated to buildings at the new plant site. In April 1901, a storehouse under construction at the new plant site replaced the old stable and warehouse at the former gas works location.⁴⁰ The City of Rockford acquired the old plant site at Wyman and Mulberry Streets in 1902 for the specific purpose of building the Rockford Public Library.⁴¹

Rockford experienced substantial population growth during the company’s first decade of operation at the new plant site. Between 1900 and 1910, the city’s population increased by over 46 percent, or the second greatest percentage of growth experienced by any city in the state. The city’s industries grew at nearly the same rate during this period, which is reflected by an expansion in gas services.⁴² Notably, additions to the plant completed in 1906 nearly tripled its daily capacity from just five years earlier to 1,400,000 cubic feet.⁴³

As Rockford grew, and demand for gas services along with it, the plant was expanded further into the 1910’s. The headline of an article published by the *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette* on December 9, 1912, reads “Gas Company Buys Land to Build Mammoth Plant. Planning for City’s Growth.” It was reported that the company purchased a large acreage adjoining its plant for planned improvements amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars that would bring daily capacity to somewhere between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 feet of gas. The plant grew to cover nearly all the land between Cedar Street to the south and Short Elm Street to the north except for a small triangular piece of land occupied by Martin C. Brennan, a yard foreman of the CM&StP Railroad.⁴⁴

Whipple, manager of the plant, was quoted in a *Rockford Republic* article covering the acquisition saying “Rockford is growing rapidly and the company is keeping up with the growth and aiding it by their extension plans.”⁴⁵ Plans for the \$500,000 expansion prepared by company architects were later completed by the Spring of 1913, and construction began under the supervision of constructing engineer S.G. Smith in late summer of

³⁴ “To Build Model Plant,” *Rockford Morning Star*, March 4, 1900.

³⁵ “Bids Wanted,” *Rockford Morning Star*, March 28, 1900.

³⁶ Johns Hopkins, “The American Gas Company,” *The UGI Circle* 6, No. 5 (November 1925): 27.

³⁷ Population.us. “Population of Rockford, IL.” <https://population.us/il/rockford/> (accessed May 3, 2023).

³⁸ “Rockford On the Up Grade,” *Rockford Morning Star*, December 16, 1900.

³⁹ “Rockford Gas, Light,” *Rockford Morning Star*, 1962.

⁴⁰ “Gas Plant to Have New Warehouse,” *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette*, April 20, 1901. The 1913 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* of Rockford document the configuration of the gas plant at the beginning of the twentieth century and reveal that location of the storehouse built in 1901 where Preston and Avon Streets intersect.

⁴¹ Construction of the Rockford Public Library extended from 1902 until 1903 when the library opened. The library building was in operation from 1903 until 2017 at which time concerns about contamination arose. “Rockford Public Library.” IL HABS No. WO-2017-2.

⁴² Rockford Chamber of Commerce, “Rockford.”

⁴³ Naschold, “Rockford, Illinois,” 1.

⁴⁴ “Gas Company Buys Land to Build Mammoth Plant. Planning for City’s Growth,” *Rockford Register-Gazette*, December 9, 1912.

⁴⁵ “Gas Co. Plans Half Million Enlargement,” *Rockford Republic*, December 9, 1912.

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that year.⁴⁶ Smith, quoted in an article published by the *Rockford Morning Star* on November 16, 1913, said “the best evidence of the growth of a city is the expansion of its heating and lighting facilities.”⁴⁷

Smaller gas manufacturing companies of this era often lacked division between departments; however, the rapid growth of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company necessitated the separation of departments and the establishment of dedicated space for each. Typical departments included Manufacturing, Office, and Distribution, the latter of which included the fitting shop, meter repair shop, street service fleet, distribution system, and associated storeroom, warehouse, and maintenance spaces.⁴⁸ A new retort house and administrative building were among the structures built during the 1913 expansion for the Manufacturing and Office departments, respectively.

Fitting and Meter Shops Building

The company’s first gas meter shop was started by Charles G. Monks in 1911. Monks joined the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company as a pipefitter’s helper in October 1902 at age 17. In 1911, he took a course by the American Meter Company, the Philadelphia-based manufacturer of gas meters, in Chicago and returned to the Rockford plant to establish the city’s first gas meter shop at the second floor of the storehouse building located on the west side of the plant where Preston and Avon Streets intersect.⁴⁹ At the time of its inception, the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company meter shop was responsible for approximately 10,200 meters across the city.⁵⁰

In July 1915, the company broke ground on a new, purpose-built fitting and gas meter shops building to be solely occupied by the Distribution department which, still operating out of a makeshift space at the second floor of the storehouse building, was in dire need for additional space. The two-story building was erected along Cedar Street in the same design language as the other brick structures at the plant: Colonial Revival style as applied to a commercial-industrial property. It was reported that the gas company’s construction department built the building, which cost approximately \$9,000. The building was later advertised in the *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette* as “one of the best equipment meter shops in the state.”⁵¹ Monks relocated his Distribution department to the new facility in late 1915 when the building was complete.

Just a decade later, continued growth warranted further expansion of the Fitting and Meter Shops Building that allowed for additional Manufacturing and Distribution department facilities. On July 31, 1925, the *Rockford Republic* reported that Security Building Company (Rockford, IL) was awarded a \$7,000 contract for the erection of a new workshop and tool house to provide “better facilities for handling a big volume of business” by the Distribution department which was overseen by Frank Shugart, distribution foreman, and Monks, meter shop repair foreman, at that time.⁵² The workshop and tool house, a one-story brick structure, was designed in

⁴⁶ “Gas Co. Builders Starting Work,” *Rockford Republic*, March 17, 1913; “Cave-In Caught 2 Workers at the Gas Plant,” *Rockford Republic*, August 8, 1913.

⁴⁷ “Is Rockford Growing? The Gas Company is Spending Half Million Because it Believes it is,” *Rockford Morning Star*, November 16, 1913.

⁴⁸ George Wehrle, *American Gas Works Practice: Standard Practice Methods in Gas Fitting, Distribution and Works Management*, New York: Progressive Age Publishing Co. (1919): 350.

⁴⁹ “Charles Monks Retires Wednesday. Meter Shop Foreman Bids Farewell to Half Century Gas Utility Career,” *Rockford Register-Republic*, August 27, 1955. The American Meter Company formed in 1863 when three companies merged; it still operates today as part of the German-based Elster Group. Across the country, gas and meter companies alike provided educational courses and workshops about the gas industry. Notably, Chicago-based Peoples Gas Light & Coke Company operated The Chicago Fitters’ School out of a building dedicated entirely to gas industry-related coursework with classes covering subjects like equipment maintenance, fitting practice, and meter reading.

⁵⁰ “Gas Meter Kept Accurate by Repair Crew of 18 Men,” *Morning Star*, January 30, 1949.

⁵¹ *Rockford Daily Register-Gazette*. “You Are Invited.” June 20, 1923.

⁵² “Will Build \$50,000 Gas Plant Unit,” *Rockford Republic*, July 31, 1925.

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the same Colonial Revival style as the earlier fitting and meter shops building. It was sited in close proximity to and north of the existing structure. The paper also reported that company engineer S.E. Nims announced a total of nearly \$100,000 expended to date that year on improvements at the Rockford plant. A new, \$50,000 water gas unit was among the manufacturing improvements executed in 1925, which were expected to increase gas production by 33 percent.

By 1925, the Rockford plant had the ability to produce over 3,300,000 cubic feet of gas daily and the number of gas meters in use totaled 18,280, a sharp increase over the 850 in use in 1890. In that same time, Rockford's population grew exponentially from 23,584 in 1890 and to 83,000 in 1925. Also, by 1925, the plant and its 174 miles of main lines throughout Rockford represented a value of more than \$3,500,000.

In 1926, the United Gas Improvement (UGI) Company, based out of Pennsylvania, purchased the plant. UGI paid homage to the Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company in its January 1926 issue of the *UGI Circle*, the employees monthly magazine, in which it stated that since 1856 the Rockford company "stepped on [the] accelerat[or] and paced [the] city's 1100% growth."⁵³ The Rockford plant was sold again the following year to the Central Illinois Gas & Electric Company, a Chicago-based company that operated numerous gas and light companies in the region at that time.⁵⁴ The company purchased both Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company and the Rockford Edison Company, consolidating gas and electric services in the city.⁵⁵

Through all the changes in ownership, Whipple remained manager of the plant; however, the front-page headline of the February 20, 1928, issue of the *Rockford Daily Republic* read "Whipple Quits Gas Co. Post." The long-time manager's resignation was effective on May 1 of that year, and it was reported that Central Gas & Electric Company would be appointing a new plant manager.⁵⁶

Following Whipple's departure, an extensive enlargement program took place at the Rockford plant, under which the Fitting and Meter Shops Building received two additions. A two-story flat roof loading and storage space addition was built at the east façade of the two-story original building, adjacent to the Meter Shop workshop and Boiling and Stripping Room. Also, a one-story garage addition, for service fleet storage and maintenance activities, was built connecting the two-story original building and the one-story workshop and tool house built in 1925. The garage is noted to have had a capacity of 25 cars at the time.⁵⁷ Other improvements at the plant included additional equipment such as ovens, a by-product apparatus, a boiler plant, a coal, and coke handling apparatus, and a new 2,000,000 cubic foot capacity storage holder. All in all, the improvements, which totaled \$1,500,000, increased the plant's capacity to approximately 5,500,000 cubic feet daily.⁵⁸

In 1945, the Central Illinois Electric & Gas Company announced that it would be changing over service lines to natural gas within a year. The change no longer necessitated the transportation of 125,000 tons of coal from

⁵³ Naschold, "Rockford, Illinois," 1.

⁵⁴ "Huge Deal Announced Here Today, 53 Million Dollar Firm Takes over Local Plant," *Rockford Daily Republic*, October 26, 1927. Origins of the Central Illinois Gas & Electric Company date to incorporation in 1925 in Delaware as the Wisconsin Utility Company. The name was changed in March 1926 as a consolidation of Illinois Public Utility Co., Hoosier Utility Co., Lower Peninsular (Mich.) Power Co., Houghton County (Mich.) Electric Light Co., Michigan Water Power Co., and the Consolidated Water Co. of Suburban New York.

⁵⁵ *Rockford Morning Star*. "Utilities March Forward with City's Half-Century Growth." March 20, 1938. The first electric service in Rockford began with the Forest City Electric Light and Power Company on April 16, 1883. The Rockford Electric Power Company opened in competition on December 27, 1887. Rockford Electric Power Company later joined with the Rockford Electric Light and Power Company, which held the original franchise, to form the Rockford General Electric Company on March 3, 1896. In 1899 Rockford General Electric Company and Forest City Electric Light and Power Company merged to form the Rockford Edison Company.

⁵⁶ "Whipple Quits Gas Co. Post., Central Co. to Appoint New Chief," *Rockford Daily Republic*, February 20, 1928.

⁵⁷ Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Rockford, Winnebago County, Illinois*, 1913 Vol. 1; Republished 1928.

⁵⁸ "First Rockford Gas Plant Put in Operation Over 74 Years Ago," *Rockford Daily Republic*, October 1, 1929.

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Kentucky and Pennsylvania to Rockford or the manufacturing of coke in Rockford. It was reported approximately half of the plant was to be abandoned as part of the change in service.⁵⁹ The conversion did not impact the productivity of the work being done at the Fitting and Meter Shops Building, for on April 16, 1948, the *Rockford Morning Star* reported that the Central Illinois Electric & Gas Company would be expanding the building by constructing a one-story, 31' x 42' addition to provide additional office and locker room space.⁶⁰ The addition, built at the west elevation of the original, two-story shop building along Cedar Street, was of brick and steel construction and featured a flat roof. The Holm-Page Company was contracted to build the \$7,000 structure.⁶¹ Later that year, in November 1948, the Holm-Page Company was contracted again to build another, 30' x 50' brick and concrete block addition to the fitting and meter shop to provide additional garage space for the storage and maintenance of its vehicular service fleet.⁶²

During this period, the fitting and meter shop, still headed by its founder and foreman Charles Monks, employed 18 men full time. As of the beginning of 1949, the shops were responsible for the efficient operation of approximately 38,000 meters installed in homes, commercial buildings, and industrial plants located in Rockford and nearby Freeport and Lincoln. In the previous year, it was reported that the fitting and repair shops ran approximately 10,000 meters through the testing, stripping, and reassembling processes. An article in the *Morning Star* (Rockford) newspaper published on January 30, 1949, with the headline "Gas Meter Kept Accurate by Repair Crew of 18 Men," included the following excerpts about the testing and repair processes:

When the meters first are brought into the shop...they are stacked for 24 hours to allow them to reach room temperature, which is desirable for pre-conditioning tests. Then [a serviceman] tests them three times by running measured amounts of air through them, just as the gas would flow, to check the accuracy of the recording dial mechanism."

After testing, the meters are taken to the stripping room. There they are dipped in a warm alkali solution to remove the paint from the airtight outer surface before dismantling begins. The solder that seals the removable top and ends is melted and these pieces are removed, exposing the working mechanism. The two leather bellows, the recording dials, the valves and other moving parts are removed before the shell is again dipped in a hot alkali solution to clean the inside.

If only a few years have passed since the meter was completely overhauled and the bellows seem to be in good condition, only the dial and valve system is removed. The second alkali bath is skipped and oil is sloshed around inside the meter box to lubricate the leather.

There are actually two sections to each meter, each complete with bellows and valve. The bellows expand and contract alternately, controlling and measuring the flow of gas as they do so. In reassembling the meters, workmen hone the sliding valve surfaces to ensure close fitting, insert new leather bellows if needed, and solder the meter boxes airtight again.

An intermediate step involves testing the bellows operation by operating them backwards. Before the top is sealed on, the meter is sent to the testing room, where it is checked for accuracy. After the top is soldered, the meters are dipped in water to test for leaks, painted and again sent to the testing room."

⁵⁹ *Rockford Morning Star*. "Utility Will Reconvert Gas Lines in Area." August 25, 1945.

⁶⁰ *Rockford Morning Star*. "Utility Line to Enlarge Line, Meter Building." April 16, 1948.

⁶¹ "Utility to Modernize Line Department Facilities," *Register-Republic*, April 15, 1948.

⁶² "Gas Company Receives Permit for Addition," *Morning Star*, November 23, 1948.

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If they pass the final test, the meters are dated and stacked, ready in turn to be taken out on the truck for replacement purposes.

In January 1954, the Central Illinois Electric & Gas Company announced a huge “expansion program” with projects totaling an estimated \$8,550,000. As part of this program, the company planned for a new, \$700,000 office and service building to be built at northwest corner of the gas plant site along Avon and Short Elm Streets.⁶³ When the company moved into its new office and service facility in February 1955, the Fitting and Meter Shop Building continued to house the gas meter department along with the electric substation department and motor vehicle repair shop.⁶⁴ Later, in February 1959, Central National Bank purchased and razed the Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company’s former downtown office and showroom at 201 Mulberry Street. Newspapers at the time referred to the structure as a “landmark,” which met the wrecking ball so that the site could be developed for “drive-in banking facilities” while the adjacent former Aldens store building was converted into “modern banking facilities.”⁶⁵

In early 1962, it was reported that “the last vestiges of Rockford’s manufactured gas facilities [were] being taken out of service.”⁶⁶ The two large cylindrical gas storage tanks, one built in 1906 and the other in 1928, were razed first in 1961.⁶⁷ By May 1962, the 34-year-old, 175-foot tall smokestack “originally used to furnish draft for the boilers of the gas manufacturing plant” was razed; it hadn’t been in use since 1946 when the company converted to natural gas.⁶⁸ In December of that year, it was reported that razing of nine brick buildings on the gas plant property was underway as part of a process to completely retire facilities once used in gas manufacturing operations. The demolition project, carried out by Ballard Wrecking Company, was scheduled to be complete by February 1963.⁶⁹ It allowed Central Illinois Electric & Gas Company to consolidate the last of its gas operating departments in its more modern service building built in 1955. The only brick building dating to the original Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company era spared from the wrecking ball during this period was the Fitting and Meter Shops Building, which continued to be used by the gas meter and electric substation departments of the company and for its motor vehicle shops.

The Fitting and Meter Shops Building – Criterion C

The Fitting and Meter Shops Building is locally significant and individually eligible under Criterion C architecture, for its distinctive building type. Key design features, including rooftop ventilators, ample windows, transportation facilities (including vehicular storage, loading docks, and elevators) and spatial organization (two-stories with separate office, workshop, locker room, and storage space) remain intact and communicate the building's function as a purpose-built early twentieth century fitting and meter shop for the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company's Distribution Department. Additions to the building throughout the first half of the twentieth century directly reflect the growth of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company (and its successors), which in turn mirrored population growth and the industrial development of both the City of Rockford and surrounding communities in Winnebago County at large.

Gas Fitting and Meter Shops Building Typology

⁶³ “Utility Schedule \$750,000 Structure, Slate Outlay of \$8,550,000,” *Rockford Register-Republic*, January 1, 1954.

⁶⁴ “Utility Moves into New \$700,000 Service Quarters,” *Rockford Morning Star*, February 26, 1955.

⁶⁵ “Raze Downtown Landmark Soon,” *Rockford Morning Star*, February 27, 1959.

⁶⁶ “Rockford Gas, Light,” *Rockford Morning Star*, 1962; “Rockfordland History – Its Legend and Lore,” *Rockford Register-Republic*, January 30, 1960.

⁶⁷ “Utility Fells Landmarks, Expands Storage Capacity,” *Rockford Morning Star*, December 17, 1961.

⁶⁸ “It’s 175-Foot Bullseye, Smokestack Hits Target,” *Rockford Register-Republic*, May 31, 1962.

⁶⁹ “Raze 9 Old Gas Plants,” *Rockford Morning Star*, December 5, 1962.

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Providing standardized training to workers was part of an initiative by late nineteenth and early twentieth century organizations and associations aimed at serving the interests of companies in the manufactured gas industry and guiding the standardization of industry practices. Much like the companies they served, such associations underwent merging and monopolizing over the course of the manufactured gas industry history. Utility expert and oilman Henry L. Doherty gave a paper at a Congress of the American Gas Association in 1906 which emphasized the need for standardization and proper training in the industry. He pointed out numerous criticisms and objections to affairs in the manufactured gas industry, including “the unsatisfactory conditions on many points in the manufacturing and distribution departments” as well as “the inefficiency of gas literature and specific reference data on scores of practical gas questions” and “the lack of sufficient education facilities for the younger gas men.”⁷⁰

Perhaps the most effective means of education, other than in-person training, was provided through trade journals. The most widely-circulated and longest running trade publication, the *American Gas Journal*, began as the *American Gas Light Journal*, which first circulated out of New York in 1879. While it was renamed several times over the years, it remained in publication through 1970.⁷¹ In addition to such independent trade journals, associations and companies also circulated their own publications, often produced by and for their membership and employees, such as *The Gas Age*, of the American Gas Association, and *The U.G.I Circle*, of the United Gas Improvement Company.

Beginning from 1914 through 1917, the American Gas Association’s publication, *The Gas Age*, ran a serial publication of articles called the “Handbook Series.” Industry professional and members of the American Gas Association authored instructive articles for the series on subjects ranging from the art of salesmanship to the chemistry performed by superintendents.⁷² By the early 1920s, articles comprising each subject in the “Handbook Series” from *The Gas Age* were reproduced, expanded upon, and recirculated by Progressive Age Publishing Company as handbooks for the manufactured gas industry.

Trade journals and handbooks also provided specifications for buildings and floorplans. As fitting and gas meter shops were an important component of gas plants, they were prominently featured in these publications. One such handbook, *American Gas Works Practice: Standard Practice Methods in Gas Fitting, Distribution and Works Management* by George Wehrle, Assistant Superintendent of the Gas Department at Denver Gas & Electric Light Company (compiled and republished in 1919) was advertised as follows: “This work is intended as a general reference book on gas-works practice in the United States, with special emphasis on gas-fitting practice. Approximately one-half of the book is devoted to the latter topic, and the methods used in street and house distribution, standards adopted, etc. are fully described.”⁷³

At the introduction, Wehrle wrote that such a reference for the standards in American gas practice “had been decidedly lacking and in great need by the gas industry.”⁷⁴ The Fitting Shop, including its location, design, equipment, organization, and processes, is described in Chapter 9 while the same aspects of the Meter Shop are described in Chapter 13. In Chapter 17, titled “Storeroom and Fitting Rules,” practice, methods, and rules for gas fitting and meter shops are described. The following aspects of a gas company fitting and meter repair shop

⁷⁰ F.H. Shelton, “The American Gas Institute,” *American Gas Light Journal*, September 24, 1906.

⁷¹ Center for Research Libraries, “Library Catalog: The American Gas Light Journal,” <https://catalog.crl.edu/Record/657d323d-f88f-5039-b941-9b3528846b45>, accessed July 19, 2023; Center for Research Libraries, “Library Catalog: The American Gas Journal,” <https://catalog.crl.edu/Record/6de426ba-3d4a-5cf1-940f-90fa752a2e14>, accessed July 19, 2023.

⁷² *Chemical Control of Gas Manufacture: Practical Instruction in Gas Works, Chemistry for Superintendents, Foremen, and Chemists* was first printed in 1916 and *Instructions to Gas Appliance Salesmen* was first printed in 1914.

⁷³ American Society of Civil Engineers, “New Books,” *Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers* Vol 46 (March 1920): 369.

⁷⁴ George Wehrle, *American Gas Works Practice: Standard Practice Methods in Gas Fitting, Distribution and Works Management*, New York: Progressive Age Publishing Company (1919): VIII.

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are described in the handbook and can be seen at the former Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company Fitting and Meter Shops building.

Location and Building

The handbook begins by describing the “logical” place for a fitting shop as at “a location as near the center of population of the area covered by distribution system as possible” in order to reduce distribution fleet travel and maximize efficiency.⁷⁵ Further, it recommends that the location of a fitting shop consider the valuation of the property, facilities for the delivery of materials, facilities for handling transportation equipment, and proximity to associated departments, such as the meter shop. Specifically, it states “The location of the meter repair shop in close proximity to the fitting shop is desirable and within the same building preferable...these two departments of a gas company are so closely related that efficient and economical operation cannot be carried on if the two shops are widely separated.”⁷⁶

The handbook goes on to state that location of the shops at a site along a railroad switching track and at an accessible location along a road to facilitate the delivery and unloading of meters, appliances, pipe, and other materials and equipment. Last, the handbook states that, due to the harmful and offensive odors produced during the meter repair and testing process, a fitting and meter shops building should be located separately from other departments and in a location, which minimizes burden to the public, such as within an industrial district.

All of the above characteristics are seen at the Fitting and Meter Shops Building. The fitting and meter shops are co-located in a single structure with garage facilities at the edge of the former gas works plant, within an industrial district, along Cedar Street, and adjacent to the former Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad alignment to the east.

Fitting Shop Spatial Division

Per the handbook, the fitting shop “should be located on the first floor in the most accessible part of the building” and should be divided into at least two spaces: the shop office and the fitting shop proper (Figure 12).⁷⁷ An additional space with employee lounge and lockers is also typically included and often separate from the shop. The Distribution Department storeroom is advised to be “isolated from all other parts of the building and accessible to only those responsible for the handling of stocks and materials.”⁷⁸

The fitting shop proper was historically located at the first floor of the original portion of the Distribution Department building (built 1915) where today the space has been subdivided into three rooms; however, this change is distinguished from the original configuration of open space by the use of concrete block, which contrasts with the original exposed brick masonry interior. The portion of the building built in 1925 initially provided separate storeroom space and additional workshop space for the department and later served as additional garage space for the storage and maintenance of the growing distribution fleet at the midcentury. A one-story addition built at the north end of the original building (1948) provided additional separate office and employee locker/lounge space. Prior to the construction of this addition, employees of both the fitting and meter shops used a washroom and bay of lockers at the second story of the original building. The company’s exponential growth in service (as described in the preceding and following sections and associated with

⁷⁵ Wehrle, American Gas Works Practice, 351-52.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 463-64.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 356.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 357.

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population and industry growth in and around Rockford) correlated with the expansion of the Distribution Department, which was responsible for the service-side of the industry.

Meter Shop Spatial Division

The handbook states that the meter repair shop, which should be located at the second floor of the building, is typically divided into three spaces: Proving and Testing Room, Stripping and Boiling Room, and the Workshop (Figure 13). The Proving and Testing Room required physical separation to maintain an even temperature for the gathering of accurate test results; in some cases, this space was also used as an office by the foreman and therefore contained some interior windows to allow for views of the shop. The Stripping and Boiling Room also required physical separation to minimize the escape of hazardous and offensive odors throughout the building; as such, this space was confined with solid interior partitions and windows only opening to the building exterior. Further, drainage from building and stripping vats were advised to lead to a separate collecting vessel located in an accessible place from which it could be removed and transported to the appropriate dumping site. Last, the Workshop proper required open space for the arrangement of work benches and storage racks. The space also required ample windows to provide natural lighting and ventilation.⁷⁹

This division of space remains at the second floor where the meter repair shop was located. The former Proving and Testing room is located at the northwest corner of the second floor and features glass windows at the internal partitions (Photo 00022). The former Stripping and Boiling Room is located at the northeast end of the second floor; the space is enclosed with solid interior partitions and fenestration only toward the exterior of the building (Photo 00025). The former Workshop space is located near the elevator and is arranged along a long space with large south-facing windows. The double height space features exposed steel trusses above (Photos 00023 and 00024). As described, the meter repair shop also retains the original washroom and locker space utilized by both fitting and meter shop employees.

Building Features

Ventilation

The handbook recommends that the meter repair shop should be located on the top floor of a building with sufficient windows and rooftop ventilators to provide adequate daylighting and airflow.⁸⁰

Several turbine ventilators are situated along the roof ridge of the Fitting and Meter Shops Building and pairs of tall, double hung windows are evenly spaced throughout the second floor (Photos 02 and 03).

⁷⁹ Wehrle, *American Gas Works Practice*, 465-68.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 356.

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Transportation Equipment Facilities

The handbook recommends that facilities for handling transportation equipment and for the delivery/shipment of materials be employed at the fitting and meter shop building. It states that a “loading platform extending across the entire width of the building and at a height level with the floor of trucks and wagons” be built along the fitting shop at the first floor.⁸¹

Later additions to the Fitting and Meter Shops Building included the enclosure of the original loading platform (although it is still visible today inside the building) to provide additional garage space for the storage and maintenance of service vehicles (Photo 00011). The 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map indicates that a wooden platform extended along the entire length of the east end of the building at that time; at a later point, this was replaced with the concrete loading platform that exists today and extends approximately two-thirds of the length of the east façade (Photos 00007 and 00008).⁸² Given the utility company’s growth through the first half of the twentieth century, as reflected by the growth of the City of Rockford, the fitting and meter repair shops and associated distribution and vehicular service fleet grew as well. To accommodate this growth, additions to the subject property for the purposes of storing and maintaining transportation equipment were vital to the building’s operation as a fitting and meter repair shop (Photo 00010).

Elevators

The handbook specifically recommends that an elevator be sited adjacent to the loading platform to facilitate the receipt and delivery of materials and meters as well as transport meters between the repair shop and the fitting shop. It states, “an elevator, by which meters may be transported in truck loads, is a very desirable part of the equipment of any shop.”⁸³

The elevator in the Fitting and Meter Shops Building is located along the north end of the 1915 building’s original concrete loading platform, which is the same height at the floor of the former fitting shop; it is adjacent to the stairs, which connect the fitting and meter repair shops.

Other Features

In addition to the features outlined above, several other interior finishes and features associated with the building’s function as a fitting and meter shop remain intact, including built-in wood cabinets and shelves at the Proving and Testing Room (Photo 00022); original wall-mounted and pendant light fixtures throughout garage, workshop and office spaces (Photos 00010 and 00015); original paneled wood doors throughout (Photo 00025); and original sinks, lockers, cabinets, shower partitions, and other related features at the wash room and lounge spaces (Photos 00013, 00018, and 00019).

Rockford Gas Industry, 1966 -Present

In 1966, the Central Illinois Electric & Gas Company became an operating division of Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd). At that time the Central Illinois Electric & Gas Division supplied services to a region

⁸¹ Ibid, 357.

⁸² Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Rockford, Winnebago County, Illinois*, 1913 Vol. 1; Republished 1951.

⁸³ Wehrle, *American Gas Works Practice*, 464-65.

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totaling 3,200 square miles and a population of approximately 325,000.⁸⁴ By 1970, the population of Rockford peaked at 147,370, a number around which the city has maintained since.⁸⁵

In early 1981, ComEd began construction on a new complex combining the Rock River Division headquarters, stores, and reporting center in new facilities located at 123 Energy Avenue in Sabrooke Industrial Park. The city previously issued a \$6,000,000 building permit on November 19, 1980. Gray Construction Company, the general contractor, completed the building in spring 1982. It was reported that “Edison will close its service building at 300 S. Avon Street, as well as its office in the present Rockford headquarters at North Main and Jefferson Streets, combining local facilities.”⁸⁶

After relocating nearly 500 employees to the new complex in Sabrooke, ComEd put the former Rockford plant site and the two remaining buildings, including the Fitting and Meter Shops building, up for sale. In December 1982, after failing to sell the site, ComEd held an auction with no minimum bid; however, the company rejected a bid received during auction, but later sold the property to a Mr. Glenn C. Mackey in 1983.⁸⁷ In the late 1990s ComEd conducted investigations at the site into coal tar contamination. Monitoring wells and soil samples taken in mid-December 1998 were sent to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. It was reported at that time that “a boarded-up brick building on the southern end of the property once was home to a long line of power companies, including Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company and Central Illinois Electric and Gas Company.”⁸⁸

Mr. Mackey continued to own and use the site and its facilities for industrial storage and as a truck terminal; however, remediation of the site resumed in the mid-2000’s and some demolition of smaller structures throughout the yard is visible in historic aerial photographs by circa 2010. By 2012, the site was cleared of all buildings except for the Fitting and Meter Shops Building, although paved parking areas, walkways, and curbs are still visible in historic aerial photographs.⁸⁹

Conclusion

The Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company Fitting and Meter Shops Building in Rockford, Illinois, is a good candidate for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is important for its role in the distribution side of Rockford’s gas industry, having achieved significance independently from the production side of the business. It is also important as an identifiable building type, having been purposely built to meet the specifications for fitting and meter shops. The building’s alterations occurred during the period of construction and are considered contributing to its significance.

⁸⁴ “Our Power Story – Coke to Atoms,” *Rockford Morning Star and Register-Republic*, February 15-16, 1968.

⁸⁵ Population.us. “Population of Rockford, IL.” <https://population.us/il/rockford/> (accessed May 3, 2023).

⁸⁶ Dean Todd and Eileen Peterson, “Edison Begins Work on New Quarters,” *Sunday Register Star*, January 4, 1981.

⁸⁷ Kurt Peters, “Edison to Auction Off Former Headquarters,” *Rockford Register Star*, November 16, 1982; “Edison Fails to Sell Old Site,” *Rockford Register Star*, December 13, 1982; ICC Docket No. 05-0597 Commonwealth Edison Company’s Response to Staff’s (TEE) Data Request 1.01-1.12, September 16, 2005.

⁸⁸ Alex, Gary, “Rockford Site Checked for Coal-Tar Tainting,” *Rockford Register Star*, December 2, 1998; “Utilities Waiting for Pollution Results,” *Rockford Register Star*, January 4, 1999.

⁸⁹ Nationwide Environmental Title Research. Historic Aerial Photographs, 1945-2019. Historic Aerials Viewer. <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>. (Accessed April 27, 2023).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>42.270475 °</u>	<u>-89.105569 °</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is the building located at 915 Cedar Street in Rockford, Winnebago County, Illinois (Property Identification Number 11-22-401-001 per Winnebago County Assessor). The nominated property is inclusive of the building footprint including the concrete loading dock along the east façade of the building. The nominated property does not include the adjacent asphalt-paved or grassy areas within the surrounding lot to the West, North, and East of the building.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary corresponds to the significance of the building as an early 20th century purpose-built gas fitting and meter shop building type.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kara Johnston & Kelsey Kuehn date _____
organization JLK Architects telephone 312-357-1221
street & number 230 W. Huron Street Suite #510 email kjohnston@jlkarch.com
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60654

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Sketch Floor Plans**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Rockford Gas Light & Coke Fitting and Meter Shops Building
City or Vicinity: Rockford
County: Winnebago **State:** Illinois
Photographer: Kelsey Kuehn
Date Photographed: July and August 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00001)
South façade, camera facing north.

Photo 2 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00002)
West façade (left) and south façade (right), camera facing northeast.

Photo 3 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00003)
West façade (left) and second story beyond (right), camera facing east.

Photo 4 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00004)
West end of north façade (left) and west façade (right), camera facing southeast.

Photo 5 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00005)
North façade, camera facing south.

Photo 6 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00006)
East façade (left) and east end of north façade (right), camera facing south west.

Photo 7 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00007)
East façade, camera facing west.

Photo 8 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00008)
South façade (left) and east façade (right), camera facing northwest.

Photo 9 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00009)
Tool house, camera facing southeast.

Photo 10 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00010)
Vehicle fleet storage space, camera facing south.

Photo 11 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00011)
Vehicle fleet maintenance and storage space, camera facing southeast.

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Photo 12 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00012)
Fitting Shop workshop, camera facing south.

Photo 13 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00013)
Fitting Shop restroom and showers, camera facing southwest.

Photo 14 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00014)
Fitting Shop office, camera facing southeast.

Photo 15 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00015)
Fitting Shop workshop, camera facing northeast.

Photo 16 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00016)
Fitting Shop loading and storage, camera facing northeast.

Photo 17 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00017)
Meter Shop hallway, camera facing southwest.

Photo 18 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00018)
Meter Shop lockers in the hallway, camera facing south.

Photo 19 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00019)
Meter Shop restroom and showers, camera facing south.

Photo 20 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00020)
Meter Shop office and Proving and Testing Room, camera facing west.

Photo 21 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00021)
Meter Shop office looking toward hallway (left) and workshop (right), camera facing southeast.

Photo 22 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00022)
Meter Shop Proving and Testing Room, camera facing southeast.

Photo 23 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00023)
Meter Shop workshop, camera facing southwest.

Photo 24 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00024)
Meter Shop workshop, camera facing southeast.

Photo 25 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00025)
Meter Shop Stripping and Boiling Room, camera facing southeast.

Photo 26 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00026)
Meter Shop loading and storage space, camera facing south.

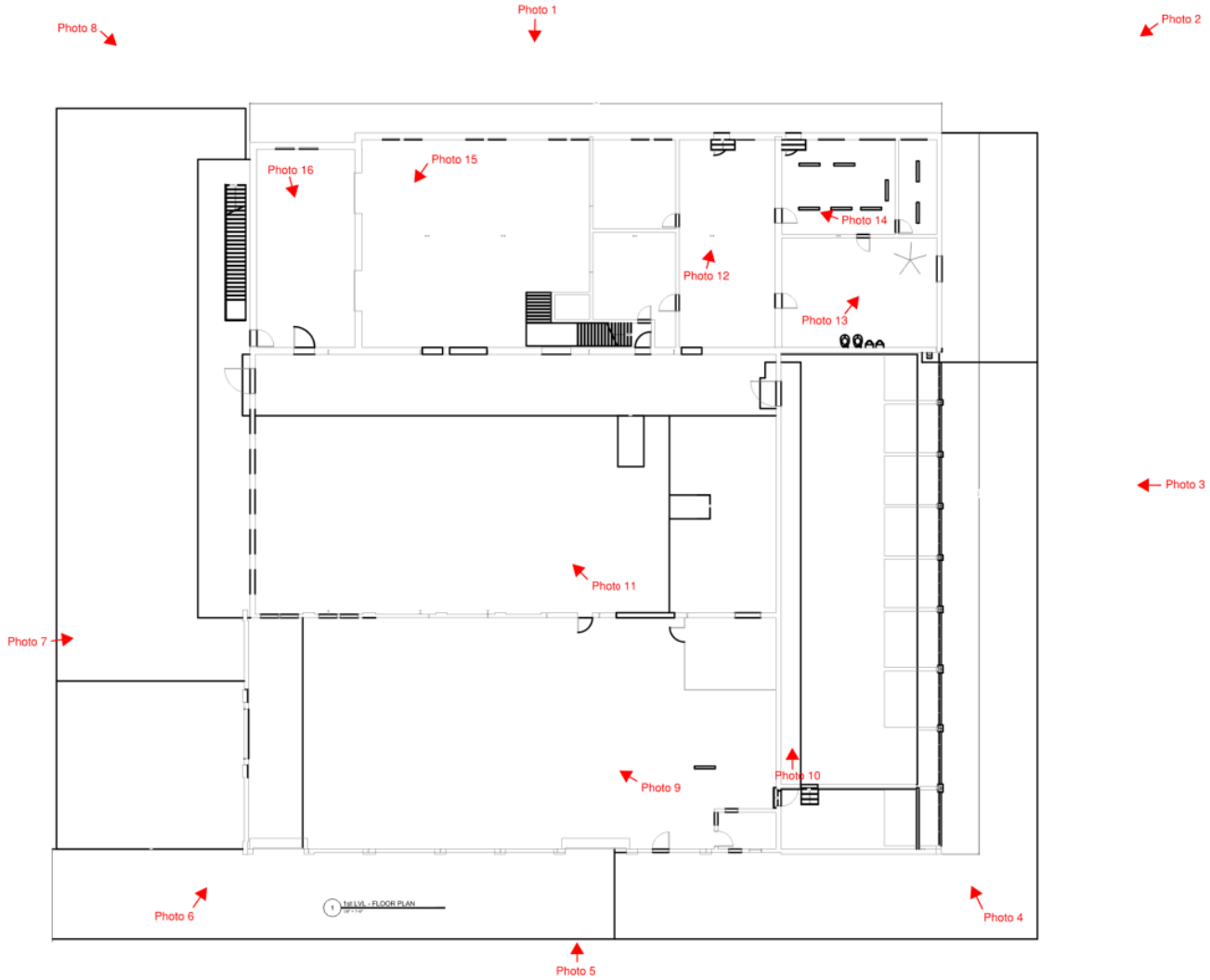
Photo 27 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00027)
Meter Shop loading and storage space, camera facing south.

Photo 28 of 28 (IL_WinnebagoCounty_RockfordGasLight&CokeCoFittingandMeterShops_00028)
Attic storage space and trusses, camera facing east.

Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
Fitting and Meter Shops Building
Name of Property

Winnebago County, Illinois
County and State

First Floor Sketch Plan with Photo Keys (NTS)



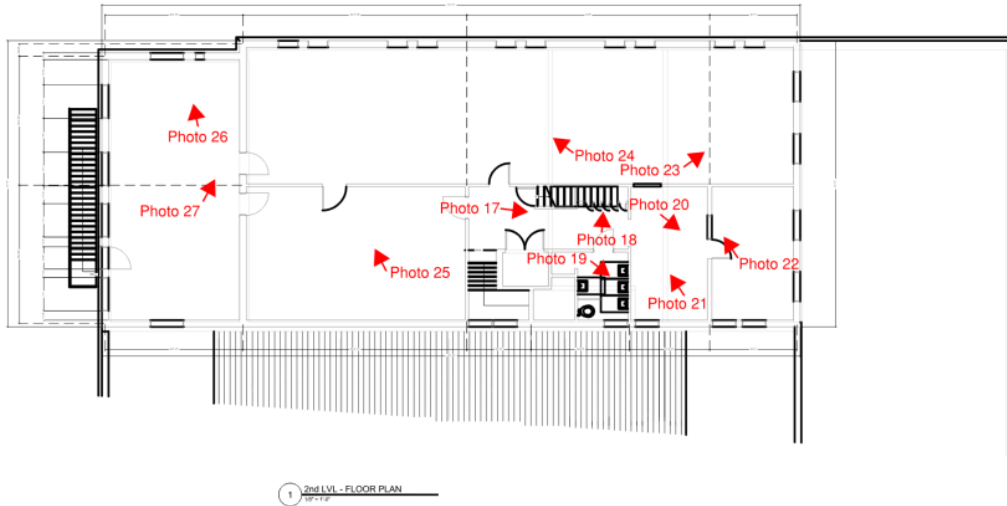
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
Fitting and Meter Shops Building

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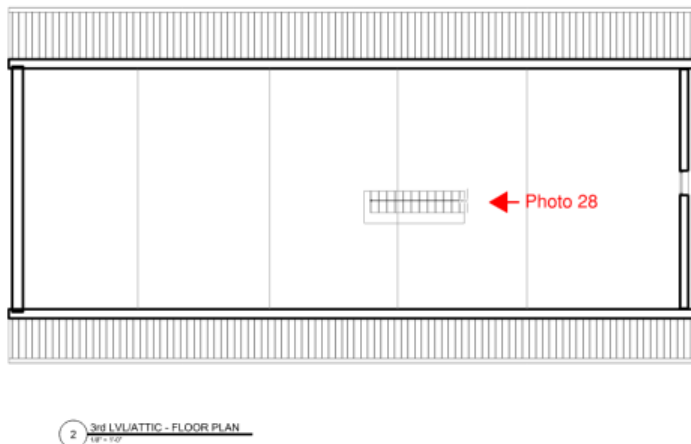
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Second Floor Sketch Plan with Photo Keys (NTS)



Third Floor Sketch Plan with Photo Keys (NTS)



Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
Fitting and Meter Shops Building

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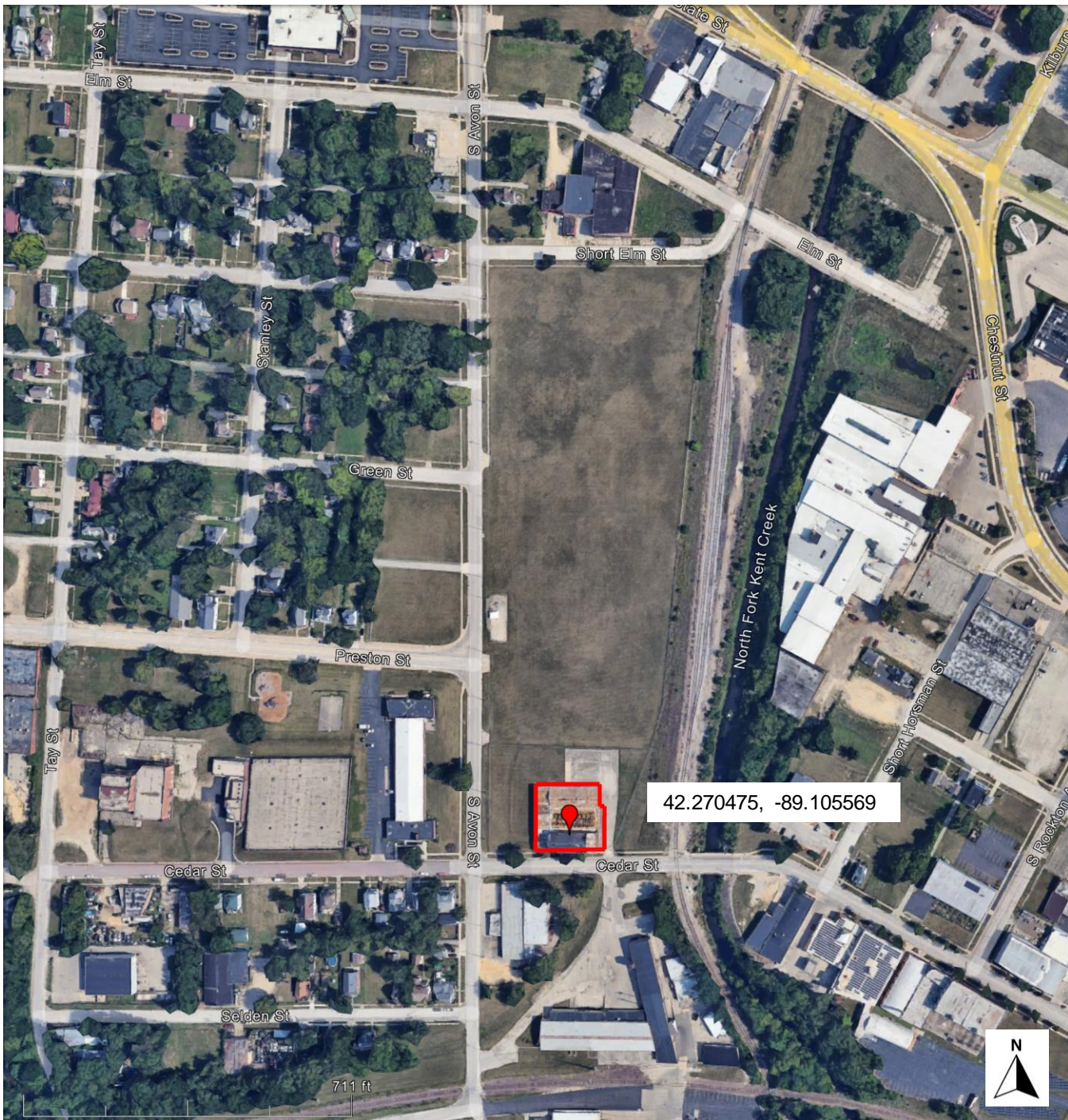
Name of Property

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List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

Figure 1. GIS Location Map



Fitting and Meter Shops Building
915 Cedar Street
Rockford, Winnebago County

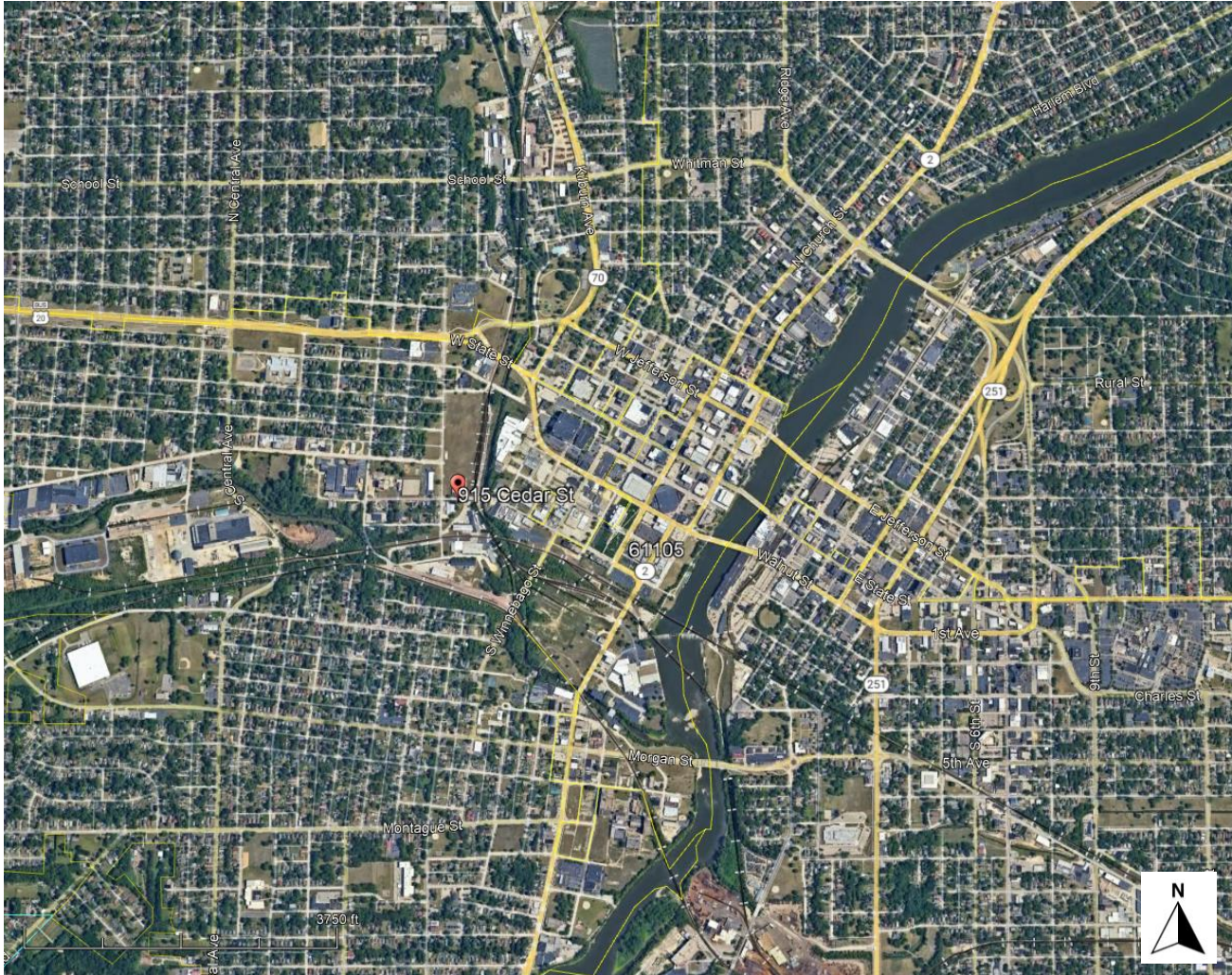
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 2. Local Location Map



**Fitting and Meter Shops Building
915 Cedar Street
Rockford, Winnebago County**

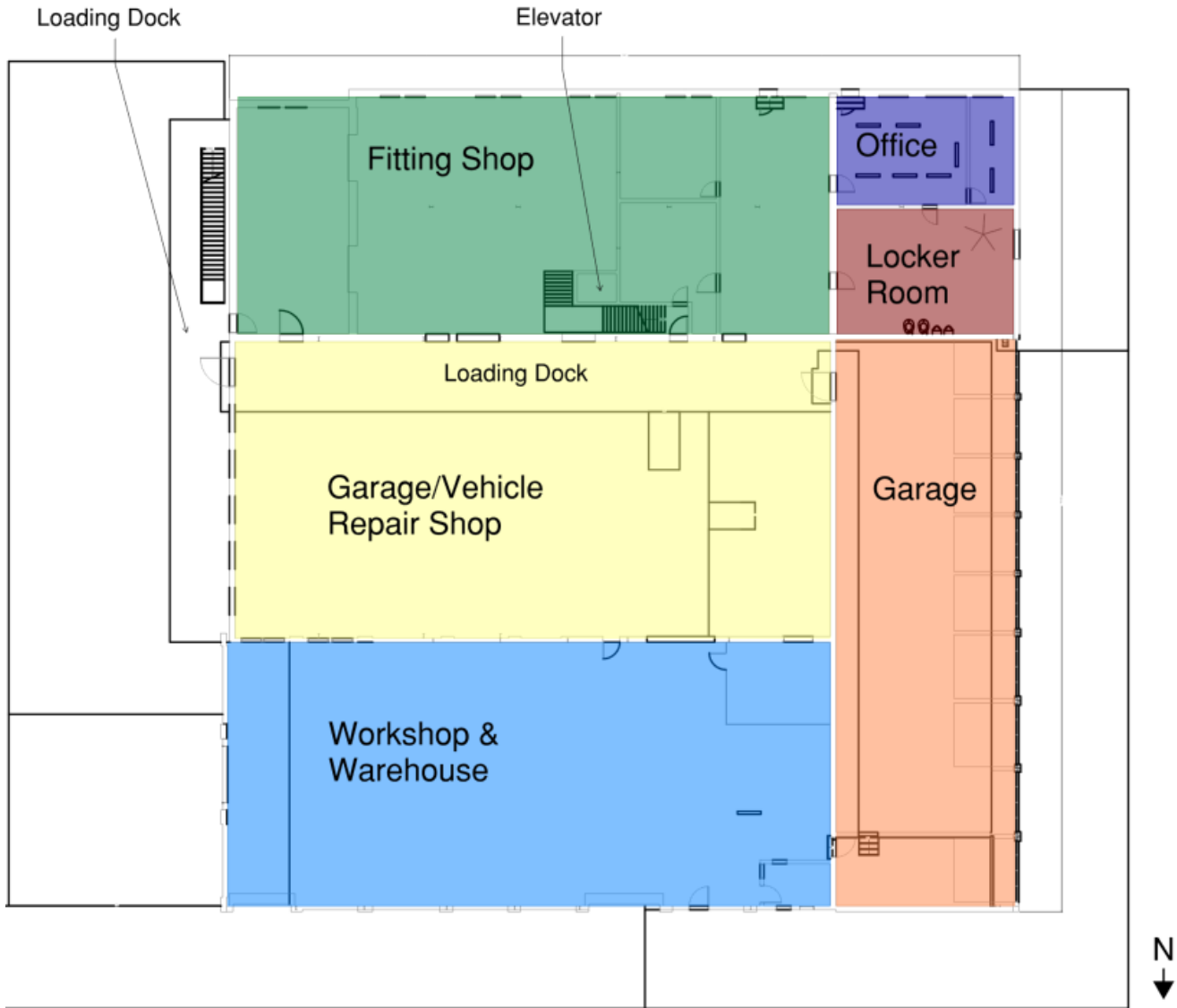
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 3. Existing Annotated First Floor Plan



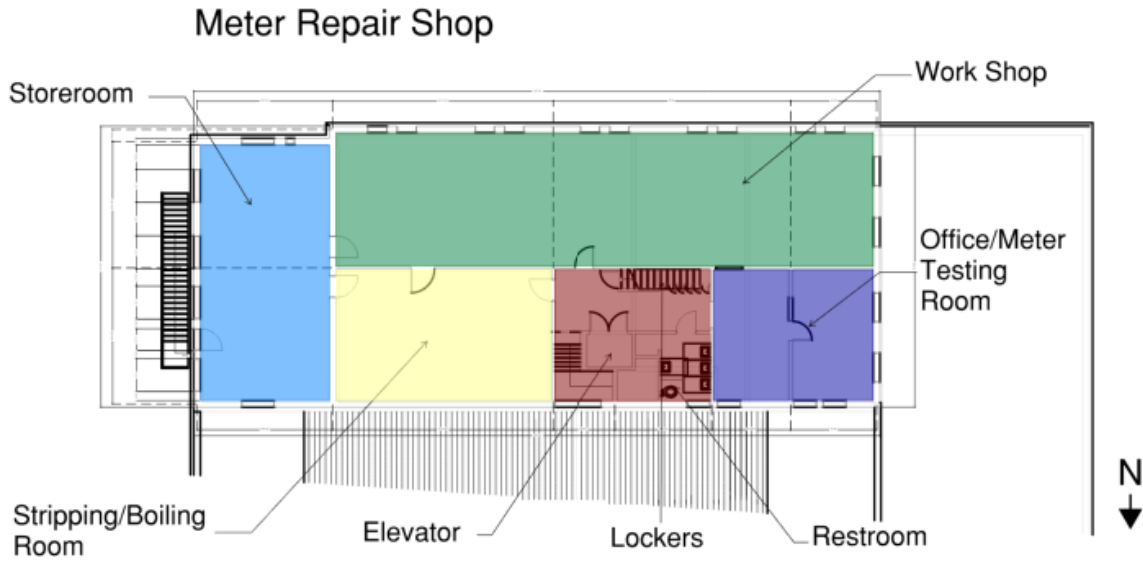
1 FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 4. Existing Annotated Second Floor Plan



2 SECOND FLOOR PLAN

5 15 35

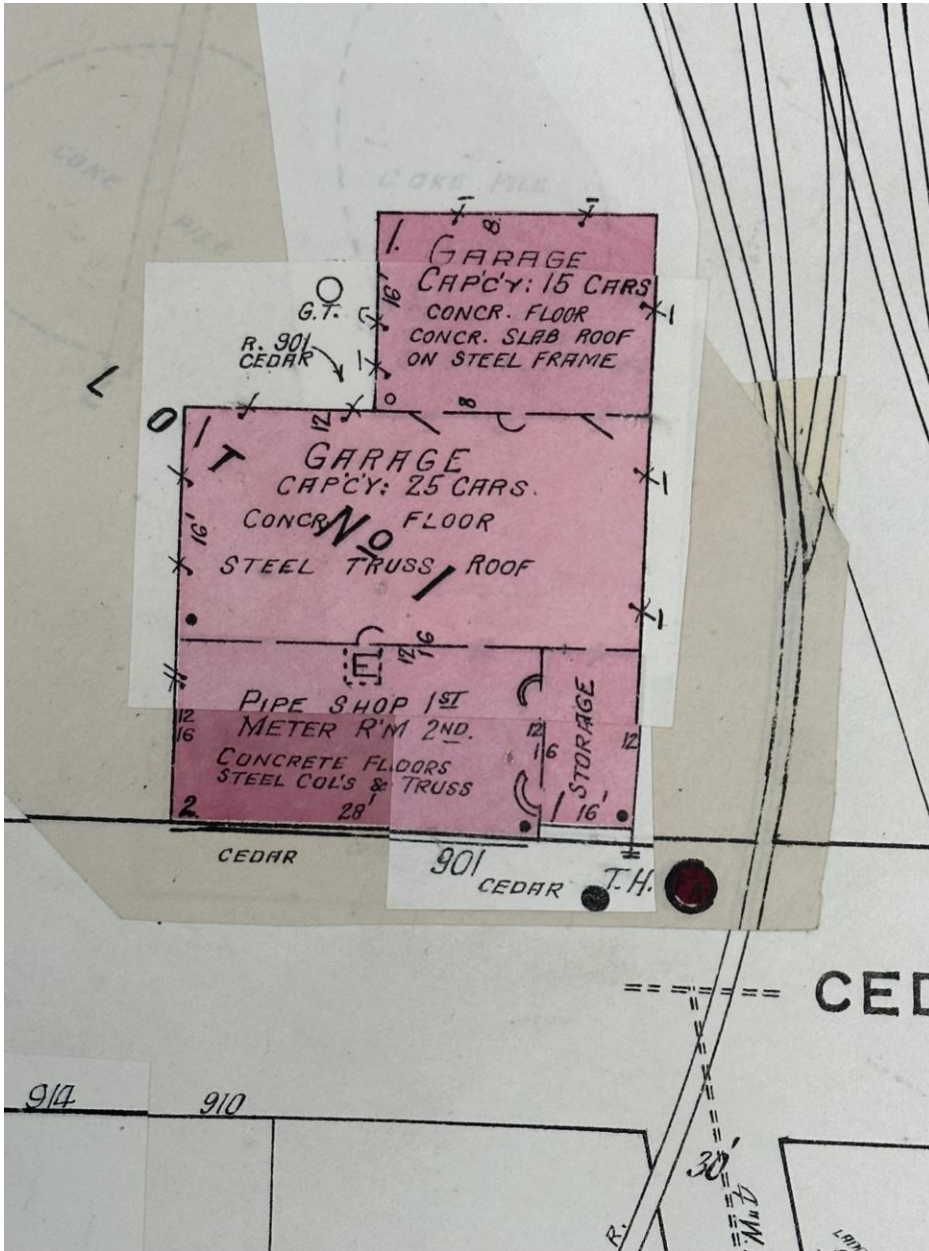
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 5. Clipping of *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Rockford, Winnebago County, Illinois*. Published 1913, Edited through 1928. Retrieved from Rockford Public Library Local History Collection.



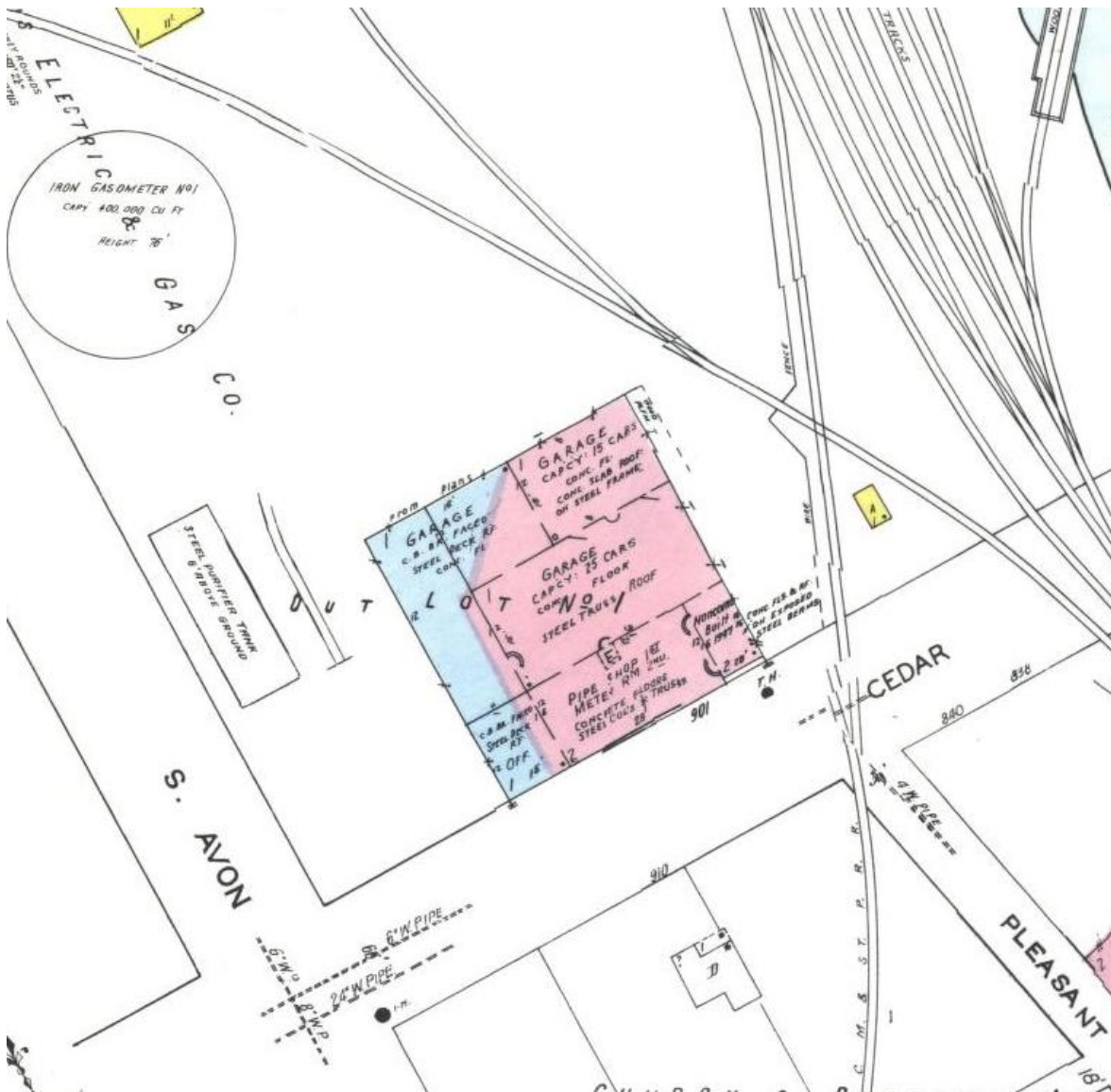
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 6. Clipping of *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Rockford, Winnebago County, Illinois*. Published 1913, Edited through 1951. Retrieved from Library of Congress.



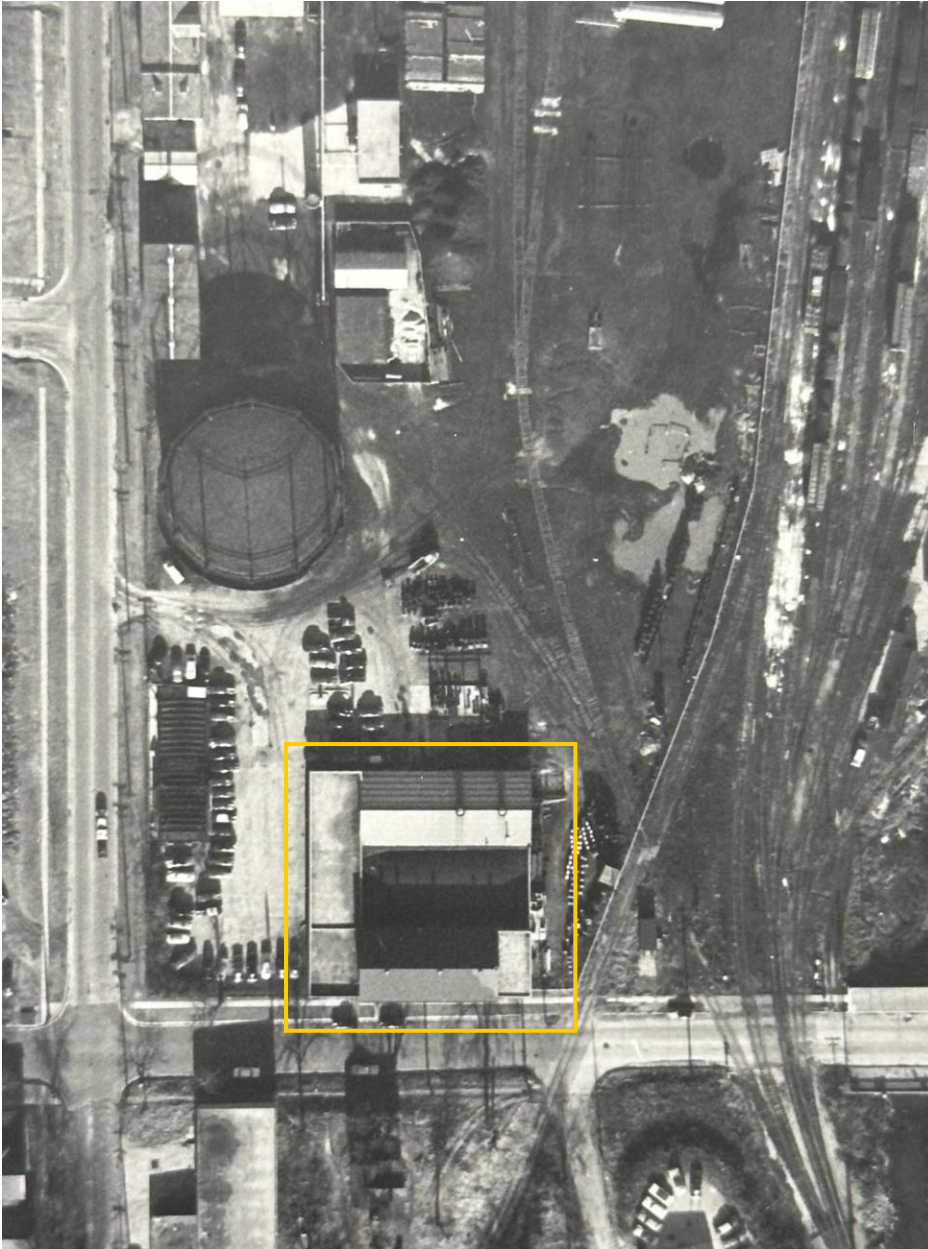
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 7. Clipping of Historic Aerial Photograph of Rockford, circa 1955. Retrieved from Rockford Public Library Local History Collection. Fitting and Meter Shops Building outlined in yellow.



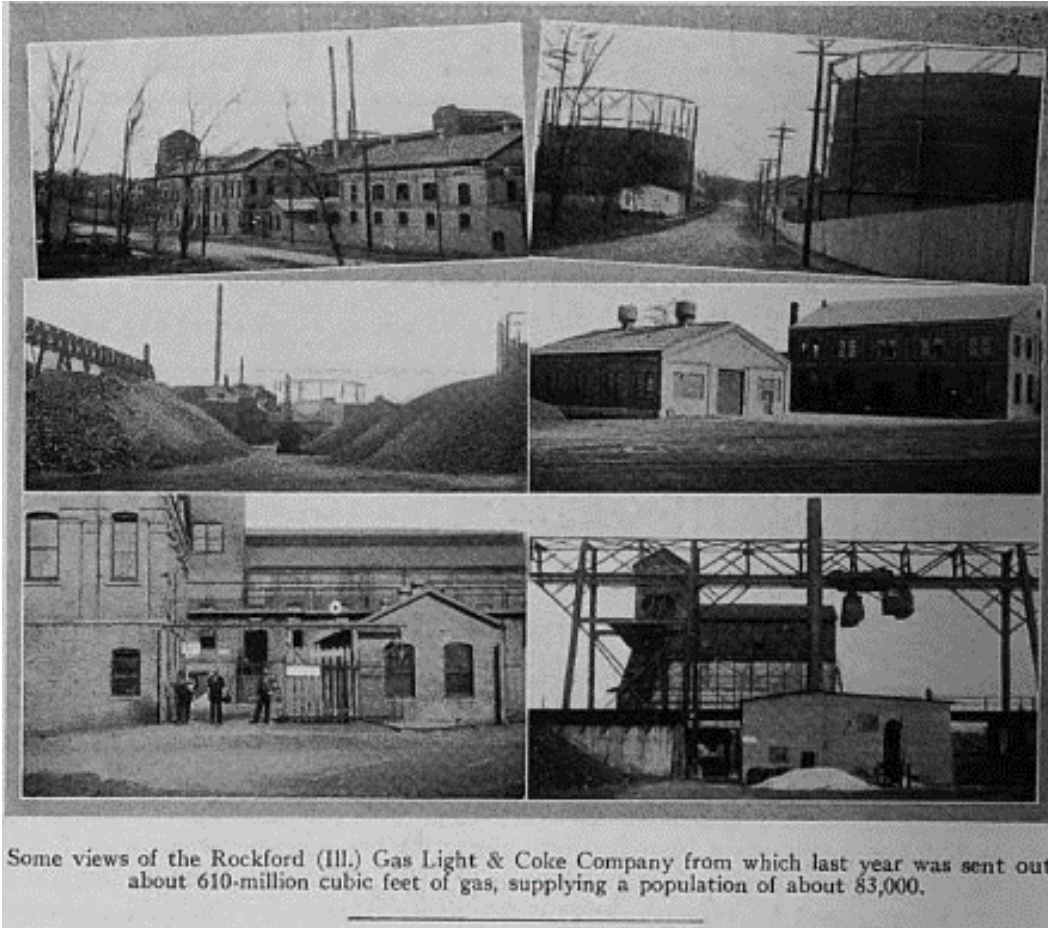
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 8. Clipped of page 2 from United Gas Improvement Company's publication *The UGI Circle* with images of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company plant. Fitting and Meter Shops Buildings at center right. January 1926.



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Figure 9. Clipped from page 6 from United Gas Improvement Company's publication *The UGI Circle* with images of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company staff. Distribution foremen F.S. Shugart and Charles Monks pictured with fitting and meter shops employees pictured in front of shops building. January 1926.



Some of the employees of the Rockford Gas Light & Coke Co. At the top are the employees and their families at the company's annual picnic last summer. Next below is Sales Manager P. J. Naschold and his assistants, next, as your eye runs down the page, the commercial office force and then the meter readers and distribution forces with F. S. Shugart, distribution foreman and Charles Monks, meter shop foreman, seated at left and right, respectively

-[6]->

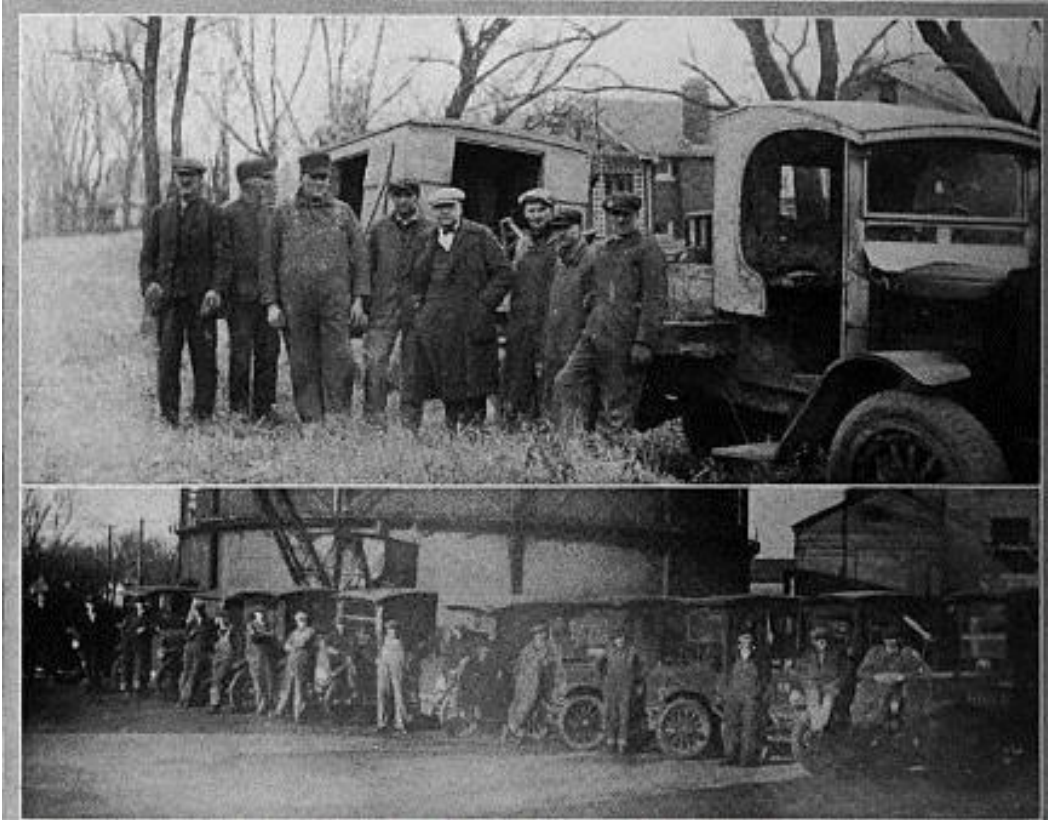
Rockford Gas Light & Coke Company
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Figure 10. Clipped from page 8 from United Gas Improvement Company's publication *The UGI Circle* with images of the Rockford Gas, Light & Coke Company staff. Distribution Department employees and motor service fleet. January 1926.



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Figure 11. Meter testing room at the second floor of the Fitting and Meter Repair Shops Building, circa 1926.



Meter tester and testing room of Rockford Gas
Light & Coke Co.

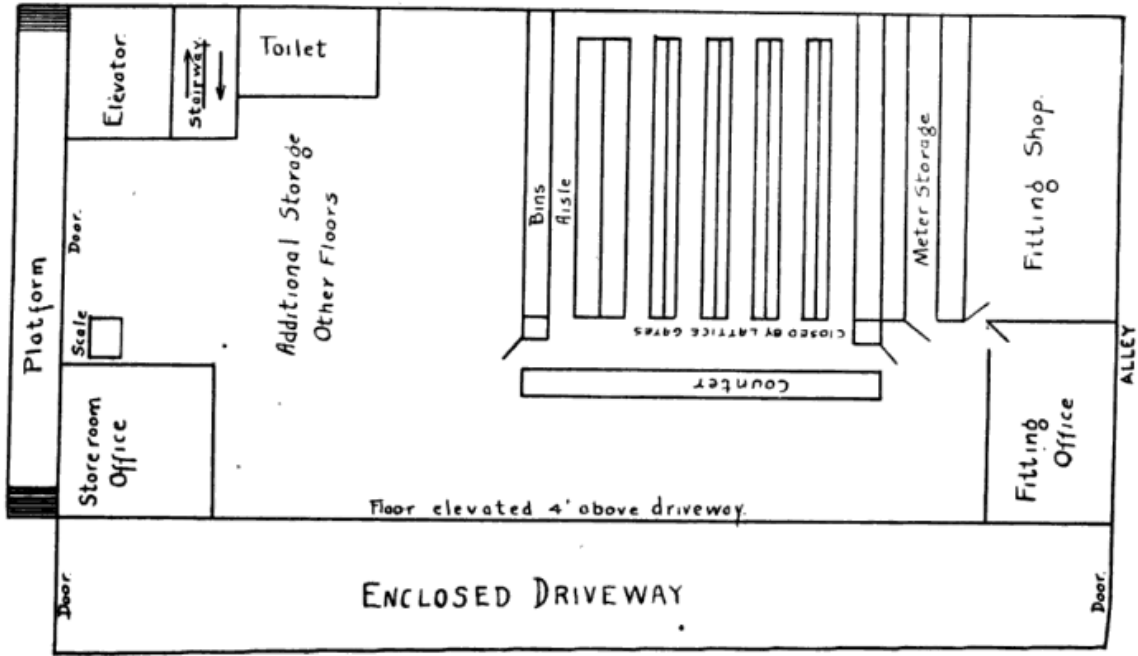
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Figure 12. "Plan of a Well Arranged [Fitting] Shop on First Floor," from *American Gas Works Practice: Standard Practice Methods in Gas Fitting, Distribution and Works Management* by George Wehrle, published 1919.



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