

1914-1937

# THE GREAT LIGHT WAY

Ten blocks of Third Street pulsated with the ragtime music of Campbell's American band. Thousands of excited Portlanders lined both sides of Third – from Yamhill to Burnside – in front of Lion Store and Powers, H.T. Hudson Arms Co. and W.H. Dedman's cigar shop.

At 8 p.m., Saturday, June 6, 1914, a Northwestern Electric employee flipped on an electric switch. Suddenly, thousands of light bulbs blazed from double arches over every one of those 10 intersections. "Oooooohs!" and "Aaaaaahs!" filled the warm night air.

The incandescent burst of light made "The Permanent Order of Third Streeters" feel as they had during the 1890s that their stores were once again the "Center of Business" – Third Street was even brighter than Broadway!

Perhaps even prouder of The Great Light Way was W.A. Kraner & Co.'s team of IBEW electricians, Jim Irving, Ed Carlson, F. Moumine, F. Shrader, W. James, J. Hurst, Procher (Andy Peacher), and W.B. Holcourt.

They used a special derrick truck to erect the double arcades. Under the supervision of Local 48 Business Agent, W.H. Emrick, President H.L. Averill, Shop Steward C.R. Butterfield, and Foreman O. Oslone, the electricians wired each pair of intersecting arches of latticed steel anchored at each street crossing in Doric columns of concrete. They bent pipe and ran wire to ninety-six 40-watt bulbs on each of the pairs of arches, and crowned each intersection with a blinding 750-watt nitrogen lamp.

In 1931, Portland City Ordinance No. 61325 re-christened the street Third Avenue. The Great Depression and Northwestern Electric's \$6,700 annual light bill killed off The Great Light Way in 1937. Demolition began soon after. In 1947, Northwestern Electric also disappeared, merged into Pacific Power & Light. NECA/IBEW Local 48, on the other hand, would still be working together in 2013, in relative labor-management harmony.



THE ILLUMINATED ARCHES OF THE GREAT LIGHT WAY, LOOKING NORTH UP THIRD STREET, ON A RAINY NIGHT IN 1915.



BENEATH THE ELECTRIC LIGHT ARCHWAYS, BUILT AND LATER MAINTAINED BY IBEW LOCAL 48 ELECTRICIANS, WOMEN IN CLOCHE HATS CROSSED THIRD STREET UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THE TRAFFIC POLICEMAN AT THE MORRISON STREET INTERSECTION IN 1927.



NECA/IBEW LOCAL 48 DONATED THEIR SERVICES TO LIGHT THE ONCE DARK TROUTDALE ARCH, LOCATED ON THE EAST HISTORIC COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY.

