

Report of a visit to Mrs. Alma Harris
of Hunter Avenue, Silverton on December
28, 1976.

Question: Are you a relative of J.M. (Johnnie) Harris?

Answer: I am the widow of John Morgan Harris.

Question: He died in 1953 at the age of 89. You seem still
so young?

Answer: He was 37 years older than I am.

A man who lives with Mrs. Harris and who had gone to get the
mail when we arrived comes in.

Mrs. Harris introduced him as Mr. Ted Kleim who operated the
power plant for the last 14 to 16 years after Mr. Harris had
developed a heart condition.

Question: who constructed the power plant?

Answer: People from the railroad company constructed the plant
during a slump in the economy.

Question: Who were the owners of the company?

Answer: The Sandon Waterworks and Light Company was a limited
company. Mr. Fred Texas Kelly, the secretary, and Mr.
John Morgan Harris, the president, were the major
shareholders. The total capital was \$ 50,000 and John
owner 499 of the 1,000 shares.

Question: Electricity was generated by water power. Where did
the plant get its water from?

Answer: A flume and high pressure pipe conducted water from
Sandon Creek and from White Creek, both tributaries
of Carpenter Creek, which is the one that ran through
Sandon down to New Denver, to a reservoir that supplied
the plant with the necessary water. A third creek,
Tributary Creek, supplied the domestic water for Sandon.

Question: Who manufactured the generator?

Answer: The generator was purchased from Canadian General Electric.
The generator was driven by a Pelton Wheel which was
after the breakdown in 1954 sold to people in Renata.

Question: There were also plans to build a larger plant that
would supply electricity for the mines. Where was
that plant located?

Answer: Another limited company, the Slocan Power Company Limited,
was formed with a capital of \$ 50,000. This Company

would construct a larger plant, generating 12,000 horsepower, at Three Forks where more water was available since it is further downstream on Carpenter Creek and another tributary creek came in at that point. However a great fire, according to Ted the fire of May 1900 which destroyed the business section of Sandon, took out all the timber between Sandon and Three Forks and high up the hillsides. After that fire the snow melted too quickly and the supply of water at Three Forks was much too irregular - much in the spring and very little during the rest of the year - to supply a plant of that size. The Slocan Power Company never produced any electricity.

Question: Were the mines ever supplied with electricity?

Answer: The mines never received electricity from the Sandon Waterworks and Light Company.

Question: It took some time before the street lights were supplied with power; the houses and businesses had light first. What was the reason for this delay?

Answer: For the houses and businesses incandescent lights were used, which did not take so much electricity. For the streetlamps arc lights were used, which took very much electricity and required direct current. We had a separate generator for that.

Question: How were people assessed for the use of electricity?

Answer: The number of lights per house and the power of each light was recorded and people paid for the number of lights and their candlepower. Later electricity was charged through the use of meters. Before meters were installed people could not use more electricity or the fuse would blow. However there have been several instances where people wired around the fuse box and thus used more electricity than allowed.

Question: I read an article in Cominco magazine - the magazine is in the Selkirk College Library, but the two relevant copies had in the meantime been put on the table between us - that the power plant ran itself. How did that work.

Answer: Ted here knows best how to answer that. That is why I have him here with this interview.

Answer from Ted: The governor on this generator was extremely precise. Immediately when demand for electricity increased or decreased because someone used more or less electricity the governor would regulate the flow of water and the speed. There never was any noticeable drop in voltage. I think it was a marvellous machine always

going, twenty-four hours a day for sixty years. All that was needed was oiling the bearings.

Question: Was the powerplant working until the flood of June 23, 1955, the night when Carpenter Creek broke loose and wiped out Sandon?

Answer: No. The power went out in 1954 because of a landslide. Fortunately John has never known that, since he died in 1953, for the plant was his pride and joy. After that landslide we sold the Pelton Wheel to fruit growers in Renata.

In the course of the conversation the originals of several photos which were later published in Cominco magazine had come on the table. On two of these John Harris is pictured with his brainchild: the first electric plant in the Kootenays, though it went into operation after the Nelson plant. A yearly report of Reco Mining and Milling Company Limited Liability of which John Morgan Harris was president and major shareholder and the articles of incorporation of the Slocan Power Company Limited were gracefully lent to me to make photostat copies. There were also two pages of the Calgary Herald of Friday, May 4, 1962 and Saturday, May 5, 1962, which contained each an article based on an interview with Mrs. Harris. Mrs. Harris is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Barney Lommatzsch of Vulcan, Alberta. She came to Sandon, according to the paper in 1934, but 1924 is the year Mrs. Harris claimed to us, because Mr. Harris had advertised for help in his store and hotel. She married Mr. Harris two years later. Lommatzsch, according to Mrs. Harris, is a farming community about 40 miles from Dresden in East Germany. Mr. Kleim (the "m" is not a typing error, this is the correct spelling) also is of East German parentage.

Interviewer:
Mrs. Wilma van Beynum
Slocan Park B.C.

The Pelton Wheel which was sold to Renata was later donated through the intermediary of John Mansbridge, Librarian of Selkirk College, to the Electronics Department of Selkirk College. The people in Renata did not need the wheel when the village was flooded by the construction of the Hugh Keenleyside dam.

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