

# One of first ranges installed at MC

**Editor's Note:** This article was furnished by CP&L and was published in the Raleigh Times.

The year was 1914. Louis V. Sutton waited anxiously for a phone call in his office at Carolina Power & Light Company. Finally it came.

"I just baked a fine batch of biscuits," the voice on the line said.

History has not recorded Sutton's smile. But we know that one of the first electric ranges ever built had been a success in the Meredith College Home Economics Department.

Sutton was sales manager of CP&L's commercial office in 1914. He had installed the electric range at Meredith himself. Sutton believed electric cooking was the clean, economical and safe way of preparing food in the future. He was right.

"Dust and dirt, together with the bother and burden of handling and storing coal, wood and ashes, are entirely eliminated," Sutton wrote. "Cooking by electricity is the ideal method."

One of the tools Sutton began using to promote electric cooking was a cookbook he wrote in 1914. He installed an electric range in his own kitchen. While his wife tested recipes, he took notes.

Sutton's "Electric Cookbook" was viewed with amusement among his office associates. But slowly requests for the book increased and electric range sales began to climb.

Only one torn and

yellowing copy of Sutton's cookbook is still to be found. But the booklet, over 65 years old, is filled with unique recipes and advice for the homemaker with a new electric stove.

"Put your roast into the oven of your electric range at 2 o'clock. Turn off the current after an hour and go out for the afternoon. The first quick, intense heat will sear the meat. The retained heat will complete the process and keep the meat warm, ready to serve at dinner time," Sutton wrote.

The cookbook also gave testimony to the convenience of electric cooking.

"Does it surprise you to know that there are thousands of electric ranges in daily use giving entire satisfaction? Billings, Montana, a city of 10,000 population, has more than eight hundred electric ranges in use," Sutton wrote.

"An electric range delivers heat in its perfect form - no fuel, no flame, no dampers, no constantly watchful eye needed. You simply turn a switch, the electric range does the rest," Sutton boasted.

The "Electric Cookbook" also advertised models of electric ranges produced around 1914 by General Electric Company, Hughes Electric Heating Company, and the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company.

Customers could buy electric stoves on the installment plan and pay for them as they paid their monthly electric bills. Five dollars down and five dollars a month was one typical arrangement. Installment and

service on the appliance was also usually done by CP&L.

Louis V. Sutton later became president of CP&L and during the Depression years he used the idea of electric living to fight the increasing debts of CP&L by promoting residential electric sales. With a bold new approach, he directed CP&L salesmen to make calls on every home served by the company and had them explain the advantages of electricity.

Sutton also announced a new rate schedule giving residential customers a reduction in rates. The biggest savings went to the customers who increased their use of electricity the most.

The tactic worked, and the resulting increase in sales allowed CP&L to build larger and more modern plants that drove down the cost of each unit of electric energy.


That pattern held until the late 1960s when the economics of electric production changed, with each new generating plant costing more, and thus increasing rates. The change took CP&L out of the selling business and had led to the company's emphasis on conservation and load management.

Those who chuckled at Sutton's initial efforts with his "Electric Cookbook" could not have imagined the impact that electric cooking would have on the way of life in the Carolinas. Today, as CP&L celebrates its 75th anniversary, there are more than 553,000 electric ranges in the company's service area.



1913 General Electric range. One similar to this was installed in the Meredith Home Economics Department in 1914.

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