

Down Memory Lane

By Vin Bellew

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THE LAMP LIGHTER ...

Do you remember the Lamp Lighter who lighted the gas on your street pole or was it before your time?

Children would sit on the curb waiting for the Lamp Lighter to come along and light street poles. It was a treat for the children to watch this performance every night.

Gas had just made its appearance and it was a far cry from the oil lamps in the homes. The oil lamp always burned in the front window of every home. Every home had a ten gallon can of oil on their back stoop. It was called Kerosene and every kid was sent to the country grocery store to bring home a can in his wagon.

Every room in the house had a kerosene lamp in it. You could turn it on bright or dull. The lamp had a chimney and wick which could be turned up or down.

The lamp is part of the romantic history of our early people.

Then came the gas light.

It all started on the poles along the street in the busy parts of the town. Every night at dusk the Lamp Lighter would come along with his wagon, get out and take a long pole with a lighted end to ignite the gas in the lamp on top of the pole.

There was nothing more romantic than to see the lighted gas lamp throw its beams into the darkness, particularly in the winter with the snow on the ground.

Slowly but surely the gas came into the stores and homes in the community.

We remember there were gas lights in our home, one in the kitchen, in the dining room and in the parlor. The other rooms had the kerosene lamps, with an emergency candle here and there.

The one in the dining room was a prize. It had three lamps with a Tiffany Chandelier. That was something! Of course all of these lamps had to be lighted with a match.

In those days a box of matches was the best seller in a grocery store, while today it is hard to find a box of matches.

It was a great day when my father brought the gas lights into his country grocery store. It lighted up his store like a Christmas tree and people would come in just to see the lights and have the wonder of gas light explained to them.

Your hand would tremble when you struck a match to light up the gas.

Then Mother brought the gas range into the kitchen and we said goodbye to the old coal stove. Mind you! The kitchen stove never left our kitchen but stood as a monument to happy earlier days.

Gas had its day, just like the oil lamp, then electricity came along and Thomas Edison with his electric light bulb.

Everbody didn't have electricity at once so gas lingered for some time, but once electricity became available at good rates, everyone lighted up their house like a Christmas Tree. First they put electric lights in the middle of the ceiling, then on the walls, then in floor and table lamps. Now electric lights peak out from all places in the house and just at the push of a button.

What next?

We hear they now have an electric bulb that will last for 20 years.

We admit that we live easier now that we have electricity but we can't find an ounce of romance in it.

That old Gas Lamp Lighter who came along at dusk to light a beam in the darkness is a romantic picture that lives in our mind.

How about you?

There must be many of you out there who remember.