

January 23, 2024

6:00-7:45 PM

Meeting of COMO Preservation

[www.comopreservation.org](http://www.comopreservation.org)

Columbia Public Library, Friends Room

I. Call to order by Dianna O'Brien

The sign-in sheet was passed around and the following were present: Anne Orazio, Carl Orazio, John Stolwyk, Joe Kouba, Mahagler Voris, Mercy Austin, Tom Hourigan, Denny Buckler, Brianna Bland, Vivian Scallon, Camryn Woolford, Christine Gardener, Lena L., Lyria Bartlett, Turma Asokan, Scherrie Goetsch, Nina Sappington, Mary Kaye Doyle, Anna Meyer, Jay C., Anne Jacobson, Joe Blut, Chris Creasy, Cortnay Daniels, Chloe Nielson, Bruce Alspaugh, Melissa Barnhardt, Janice DeRosier, Patrick Earney, Patricia Fowler, Sarah Justice, Cindy McCord, Melinda Moellering, Dianna O'Brien, Rachel Penn, Julie Plax, Sarah Seat, Elena Vega, Dan Viets and Deanna Wasman.

Event Reminders:

-Our next meeting will be Feb. 27 at 6:00. Stephen Bybee - Photos of Columbia at night.

-Future dates: Wednesday, Mar. 20 and Tuesdays, April 23, May 28, June 25 and July 23.

-Volunteers are needed for all teams. Tasks range from taking photos, writing content for a blog to monitoring Columbia's colleges to help salvage historic items.

Advocacy Team: next meeting: 9-10 AM on Feb. 8 at EatWell.

Restoration Team: next meeting 5:15-6:30 PM on Jan. 30 at Elena's house-2815 N. Oakland Gravel Road.

Education Team: next meeting 3-5 PM on Feb. 13 in The Grind on Forum.

Announcements:

-Become a member for only \$20 per year.

*\*\*In order to ensure the safety of all library visitors, Daniel Boone Regional Library requires that children under the age of twelve (12) be accompanied by a parent, guardian or responsible adult age sixteen (16) or older while on library property. The library is not responsible for caring for children who are left unattended in the library or who come to the library without an adult or other responsible person.*

II. Speaker: Chris Cady – Orr Street History – Columbia Gas Plant.

Orr Street was the location of the Columbia Manufactured Gas Plant from 1875-1932 & beyond. Chris Cady works for the Department of Natural Resources preserving and telling stories about the manufacture and clean up of manufactured gas facilities. What would a town look like without streetlights?

1800's England used coal facilities to make gas for streetlights. As time went on it rapidly

became practical for homes to have gas lamps.  
In 1844 Laclede Gas was started in St. Louis.  
Springfield, Missouri was an early town to have streetlights.

1875 Columbia Gas & Coal Company started.  
Gas plants included coal storage and huge underground tanks to hold the gas. The problem was that the tanks leaked over time. The underground gas holders became obsolete by the mid 1900's, but they weren't dismantled. Tar water, waste & residue settled to the bottom of the gas holders. It smelled like an asphalt truck & ammonia. The hydrocarbon residue is heavier than water and sinks through the water table causing dangerous levels of contamination in the groundwater.

In 1883 – Photo of the earliest map of Columbia railroad shows tracks at Orr and Ash Streets.  
1890-1920 – Turbulent Times. A cleaner product could be used, oil.

In 1910 the Wabash Station was built in the Tudor Style and had a wood plank deck which was on the National Register. The deck was torn down in 1978 to make room for the new fire station.

1913 fire sweeping out of embankment along railroad, the fire burned for 3 days. At that time Columbia only had one horse drawn fire engine.

1914 Sanborn Map shows Wabash Station with 6 tracks and a siding to bring coal to the to the gas plant. All gas plants were located along the railroads to be able to deliver large amounts of coal to use in the gasification process.

1918 coal miner strike, coal famine. "Gasless days".

1920's the gas plant dumped their residue into a culvert that went into Flat Branch Creek. Flat Branch was terrible, flowing with tar and sewer.

1930-1932 the natural gas pipeline came to Columbia. The property was owned by Union Electric Company, now Amren UE.

1930 Aerial view of gas plant shows the railroad bridge over Orr Street.

By 1932 the Columbia Gas Plant closed.

1970's Columbia College used part of the former gas works building as an Art Annex.

1978 the Gas Plant Building was torn down.

1994 – Clean-up & Redevelopment

Soil excavation revealed coal ash & tar-stained cinders around Orr Street. They excavated the original gas holders to find everything saturated with tar. The lower-level soil is not hazardous and was taken to a sanitary landfill. The hazardous material, 32,000 tons, was taken to a special landfill in Indiana.

May 2014 a tent was put up over the contaminated area. The tent had giant fans that helped with the terrible smell from the cleanup site.

June 2023 groundbreaking for the new Orr Street Park. Construction of the new completely safe park is planned for 2024.