At the intersection of Nicollet and Hennepin Avenues, the Brush Electric Company installed the first electric street lights in Minnesota.

Soaring 257 feet, the mast’s eight arc lamps illuminated the vicinity around Bridge Square. Brush Electric contracted for smaller lamp posts throughout the city—with the gas company stubbornly resisting the competition. Because consumers lit their homes with gas or kerosene and considered electricity dangerous, power companies worked hard to persuade homeowners to adopt this new, electric technology.

We had electricity in our house in Council Bluffs, Iowa, but not up at the lake in Minnesota. Before I went to a dance at the Balmorel near Ottertail, I would try to put on a little mascara but it was hard to do my makeup while holding a kerosene lamp up to the mirror. I much preferred electric light.

Mary Ellen Smeder, Battle Lake, MN, 1979

There will be neither blaze nor flame, no smoking or disturbing, it will be whiter and steadier than any known lamp. It will give no obtrusive fume nor smoke, will prove one of the healthiest lights possible, and will not blacken ceilings or furnaces.

Thomas Alva Edison

Advertisement, Minneapolis Journal, July 26, 1914