

## The Coghlin Companies:



### JOHN P. COGHLIN

October 5, 1869 – April 28, 1940

John P. Coghlin was the son of James Joseph Coghlin who was born in Milford, Massachusetts. He was educated in the public schools of Milford, and at the high school at Southboro, where he graduated in 1888. He then took a special course at Worcester Academy to prepare for college and in 1889 entered the Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He was graduated in 1893 taking the degree of S. B. He was given the degree of E. E. (Electrical Engineer) by his Alma Mater in 1905.

Immediately after graduation he formed the Columbia Electric Company for the manufacture of dynamos and motors and to install electric power plants.

Its shop was at 180 Union Street. Later the company opened an office in the Burnside building. In 1897 he sold his interests in the Columbia Electric Company and soon afterward organized the Central Electric Company with headquarters at 311 Main Street, dealing in electric appliances and apparatus of all kinds, and installing electric plants. Later he bought the Page Electric Company, which was established on Pearl Street in 1885. He consolidated the two companies and incorporated the combined business under the laws of Massachusetts in the same year. He also removed from 28 Pearl Street, where the Page Electric Company was located, to 24 and 26

Pearl Street to secure larger quarters. The Page Electric Company is the best known and largest electrical concern in Worcester. Mr. Coghlin is the chief owner of the business. He is president, treasurer and secretary of the corporation. His brother, Peter A. Coghlin, is a director and superintendent of the business. Another brother, E. F. Coghlin, is the third director of the corporation. The character of the work done by Mr. Coghlin's company, and the extent and variety of it can be told best by describing a few of his larger contracts. Among the electric light and power plants installed is that at the purification plant of the Worcester sewerage plant at Outfall avenue; the dynamo and lighting plant at the shoe factory of Isaac Prouty, Spencer, Massachusetts; the electric plant at the Westboro Insane Asylum at Westboro; a magnificent equipment for the model' factory buildings of the Royal Worcester Corset Company at Worcester; the equipment at the Standard Plunger Elevator Company in Worcester, where each machine, according to the latest methods, is furnished with its individual motor, giving thus the maximum speed to all machines as required, effecting an economy in power and increasing the product substantially; the electric lighting outfit of the Oread Institute; that of the Simplex Piano factory recently built on Blackstone street. Worcester.

The Page Electric Company had the contract for the electrical wiring, fixtures and equipment of the "C. C. Houghton block on Front street; of the federal or post office building, Main street, Worcester; Union Congregational Church, Worcester; St. John's Church, Worcester; St. Joseph's Church. Leicester; St. Vincent's Hospital, Worcester; the Worcester City Hospital new buildings; the Wellington Hotel, North Adams; the East Side high' school, the West Side high school and the Broad Street high school in Providence; the new high' school building in Gardner, Massachusetts; the Nelson Theatre in Springfield, Massachusetts; the Worcester Insane Asylum, Summer street; the Grafton Colony for the Insane at North Grafton, recently built: Poli's Theatre, formerly the Crompton block. Front and Mechanic streets, Worcester; the new Thule building, built by the Swedish people, Main street. Worcester: the New Alurnni building at the College of the Holy Cross; the Casto Theatre at Fall River; the residence of Matthew J. Whittall, the mill owner, at South Worcester: the residence of Mrs. F. P. Knowles, Elm street: the new residence of Austin P. Cristy publisher of the *Worcester Telegram*, on Salisbury street; the residence of Mrs. Frank P. Goulding, Harvard street: the residence of C. A. Hill. Queen Street; the residence of Hon. Josenh H. Walker. Ripley Street.

Perhaps the largest contract of the kind ever handled in Worcester was the electrical equipment of the Worcester and Southbridge Street Railroad. Mr. Coghlin was both electrical and mechanical engineer for this work. His company installed all the electrical apparatus and wiring, including over head and job work. At the time it was built in 1891-2 this road was as finely equipped electrically as any in the country. It was the first high speed road in this section of the country and only two others have been completed since. These two are the very successful Boston & Worcester road and the Narragansett Pier road from Providence. It was the first high voltage system put into use. The voltage used is developed at 11,000 volts and reduced down to the ordinary voltage by the use of rotary transformers. The power plant was built with the view

of furnishing power for two hundred miles of electric roads. Mr. Coghlin's thesis at the time of the completion of his graduate work at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute was based on the experience gained in the construction of this fine piece of electric road. He considered the commercial engineering point of view in work of this kind.

One of the largest and perhaps the most unique jobs of the company was at Niagra Falls where Mr. Coghlin was given carte blanche by Mr. Perky in building and equipping the plant of the Shredded Wheat concern there. The power, as is well known, is supplied there in the form of electrical energy, at a voltage of 2200 and is transformed to different potentials according to the requirements of the case. The electrical machinery and work there cost about \$200,000. Mr. Coghlin was the electrical engineer and his company had the contract for the work. Some 12,000 kilo-watts or about 18,000 horse-power are utilized in the manufacture of shredded wheat and triscuit. Each machine has its own direct connected motor for which the electricity is transformed to 440 volts. A rotary transformer supplies a direct current at 220 volts for the elevators, and other transformers provides the usual no volts for the the 3,000 incandescent lamps in use. The triscuit and other products of the company are baked in electric ovens - which are so arranged that when in operation the baked product is being rolled out by the cooking machine completely baked and ready for the market without any handling during the cooking. A test of the accuracy and excellence of the electrical work may be had by a sight of one row of 150 drop lights where every tip is seen to be in alignment. The office building was wired with the wires inside iron conduits.

The company has a right to be proud of the contract at the Saco & Pettee mills at Biddeford, Maine. This concern employs 2,000 hands and it was provided that the plant should have electrical power put in without interfering with the operation of the mills. Two four hundred kilo-watt steam turbine generators were installed in place of three power plants from which power was wastefully transmitted by means of ropes and belts from shaft to shaft. The lighting system was also changed from direct to alternating system. In this job the separate departments each had their own motors. The motors were not applied to each machine, but to each room or building as the case might be. Some fifty motors were installed in these mills.

A similar alteration in the power was made at the mills of M. J. Whittall at South Worcester. One big electric generating plant was put in to supply electricity to the motors in the various mills and rooms of the many buildings of the Worcester carpet mills, the Edgworth mills and the Whittall mills, all now under the control and ownership of Mr. Whittall. The new equipment displaced several steam power plants at the various mills. The new plant also supplies electricity for 3,000 incandescent lamps. During the past three years the Page Electric Company has had a wholesale department, having men on the road selling their goods to the mills, factories, contractors, electric lighting and street railways plants.

Mr. Coghlin is a member of the Commonwealth Club, Worcester Continentals, the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. He is the

president of the Worcester Alumni of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute and president of the Worcester Automobile Club. He is third vice-president of the National Electrical Contractors' Association.

He married, July 28, 1896, Josephine A. Callahan, of Worcester. Their children are: John, born in Worcester, May 4, 1897; Caroline, January 2, 1901; Edwin, October 19, 1902. Mr. Coghlin resides at 25 Richards street, Worcester.