

CITY OF SAVANNAH, GEORGIA
CITY STREET LAMPS

STREET LAMPS OF SAVANNAH

The information listed below concerning the street lamps of Savannah, Georgia, dating from the early 1800s up until around the turn of the century. Information before 1850 regarding street lamps is limited. It is known a contractor(s) supplied oil and lamps and oil kettles were purchased in the beginnings of the 19th-century. The exact date for the City's transition to gas as the primary fuel is unclear, but it can be presumed that Savannah switched between ca. 1812 and 1853. In 1807, London, England was the first city to have a gas-lit street; thanks to William Murdoch, a Scottish engineer and inventor, who is accredited with perfecting this more efficient fuel when he performed a public presentation outside London's Soho Foundry where he worked in 1802. The Annual Mayoral Reports of Savannah show the evolution from gas lamps to electric. In 1882, the City entered into a contract with Brush Electric Light & Power Co. after the poor performance of the exiting gas street lamps and also possibly due to the poor performance of the contractor Savannah Gas Lighting Co. The new contact was to provide electric light to the city.

Newspaper articles from other cities could provide context here. Newspaper articles from Savannah, with search terms "street lamps" and "street lighting" for example, should be listed below.

RESEARCH

June 1807: Savannah City Treasurer Cash Books (5600CT-410 vol.1 p. could not read)

City of Savannah paid John Hunter for oil and contractor for lighting lamps.

City Expenditures for 14 lamps and a kettle.

January 11, 1808: City Council Minutes

City of Savannah paid John Hunter & Co. for oil for lighting the city.

May 18, 1812: City Council Minutes p. 451

Hunter & Glen paid for oil, and F.M. Stone for lighting lamps

1824-1831: Savannah City Treasurer Cash Books (5600CT-540 vol. 1, p. 170)

City Expenditures for City Lamps.

1853-1888: City Council Meeting Papers Box

(0115-002-18 Box # CON 2: #136, #137, #144, #145, #152)

File contains contacts relating to the City of Savannah and Brush Electrical Power Co. for electrifying the City for and the installation of arc lights.

1855: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City

1858: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for gaslights and lighting the City

1860: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City
- Number of lamps increased as gaslights were extended to the western part of the city

1861: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City
- New lampposts added

1862: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City
- 17 new lampposts added.

1863: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$16,528.00

1865-1890: City Council Meeting Papers Box

Letters referring to city lamps

1866: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City
- 100 new lamps added.

1867-1890: Clerk of Council Meeting Papers

(0115-001 Box# WAT 4 A396 Water Committee Papers)

This entire box contains petitions of residences for street lamp installation on various streets. Some are approved and some in installation are too expensive and the gas company states they will not install the lines unless the City will pay for them.

1870: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City
- Contact with Savannah Gas Light Co. costs

1871: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City
- Terms of new contract with Savannah Gas Light Co. and
- Mentions lamp fuel as "coal-gas".

1873: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$15,939.65

1876: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$9,054.81
- Reduction in cost since 1872

1877: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City
- Estimated expenditure of \$15,000.00 for gas street lamps

1878: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$15,161.03

1879: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$15,528.78
- New contract terms with Savannah Gas Lighting Co. for “567 lamps lighted in the city”

1880: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$16,407.25
- 21 new street lamps

1881: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$16,970.05

1882: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for lighting the City: \$7,043.79
- Expenditures low, due to poor performance of gas lamps and refused to pay Savannah Gas Lighting Co.
- Entered into new contract with Brush Electric Light & Power Co. for lighting the city with new lights

1883: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lights/Lamps: \$18,204.41
- Notes Brush Electric destroyed by fire Oct. 31, 1883

1884: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps lighting streets: \$17,173.00

1885: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$18,008.00

1886: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$24,929.00

1887: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps lighting streets: \$25,000.00

1888: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps lighting streets: \$25,000.00

1889: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$25,510.00
- New contract with Brush to furnish 200 arc lights instead of the present 100

1890: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$27,305.57
- Recommended additional 10 lamps

1891: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$26,125.03

1892: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$27,500.00

1893: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$26,593.78
- Recommendation to put in an "electric plant"

1894: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$27,919.60
- Recommendations for the pumping station to have electric light

1895: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditure for City Lamps: \$26,856.34
- City Lamps now under direction of a Commissioner of Public Works

1896: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditure for City Lamps: \$27,203.08
- Beginning of the year 305 arc lights-5 added totaling 310, 1 changed to a "swinging light"

1897: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditure for City Lamps: \$28,136.05
- Added 6 arc lights and 1 incandescent light

1898: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$28,379.25
- 188 arc lights added, yr. total 504

1899: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$39,181.98
- 503 arc lights in the city

1900: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$36,318.98

1901: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$36,590.86
- 512 arc lamps

1902: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$36,882.00
- 513 arc lamps

1903: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$36,760.41
- 515 arc lamps to be replaced with enclosed arc lamps

1905: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$37,232.61
- 520 arc lamps to be replaced with enclosed arc lamps

1906: Engineering Map (5600EN-090)

This map shows the location of all lamps in 1906.

1907: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lamps: \$38,448.77
- 8 arc lights added, yr. total 538
- (3) 50 candle power lamps in use
- Bids advertising for street lighting

1911: Annual Mayoral Report

- 356 arc lights, 350 magnetite lights, (4) 50-candle power lamps in operation

1917: Annual Mayoral Report

- 802 lights, 4-amp magnetite arc lamps in use, 20 having been installed
- New terms: Post & Pendant Lighting and Ornamental Street Post Lighting

1923: Annual Mayoral Report

- Expenditures for City Lights \$57,144.59
- 10 arc lights added, yr. total 955
- 7 incandescent street lights

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

- New York Public Library Digital Collections – Dennis
Collections: <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/robert-n-dennis-collection-of-stereoscopic-views#/?tab=navigation&scroll=10>
This collection provides stereoscopic images from the late 19th-century to early 20th-century.
(See Appendix A).
- Library of Congress: Detroit Publishing Company
Collection: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/det/>
This collection provides images from the late 19th-century to early 20th-century.
(See Appendix B).
- New York Landmarks Preservation Commission: Historic Street
Lampposts: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/lampposts.pdf>
This designation article mentions Savannah when discussing ornamental arc lampposts, more specifically the Bishop’s Crook lamppost.

Other Sources:

Annual Reports of the Mayor of Savannah, 1855-1923.

While there are numerous annual reports provided with each mayor, these reports will be useful for a Savannah timeline from the possible first installation of city lamps to the maintenance of said lamps.

Barlament, James. “Savannah Electric and Power Company.” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. September 17, 2014. Web. Accessed April 18, 2015.

This article provides information on an electric company of Savannah and their progress with fuel choice and amount of light posts. It also provides [be more specific how it is helpful]

Brodrick Brian. “Atlanta Gas Light Company.” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. August 29, 2014. Web. Accessed April 18, 2015.

This article will provide information on Savannah’s place within Georgia regarding the advancement in lighting.

“Historic Street Lampposts Boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.” Landmarks Preservation Commission. June 17, 1997.

This source names a particular lamppost in Savannah that came from New York. I will use this Designation list to aid in the identification of existing lampposts in historic downtown Savannah.