Another tidbit of Starke County history ---

A photo of the Knox Nickel Plate Depot has been selected as the cover photo of a new publication by the Starke County Tourism Committee. The publication, to be available in June, is called The Starke County Traveler, and will be a 28-page full-color "magazine".

The same photograph is also on the cover of a book, *Railroad Depots of Northern Indiana*, written by David Longest (\$15.59 Amazon.com). (Photo, courtesy of the Starke County Historical Society.)

Old photographs can reveal much about life in the past. The **attached photo** tells us much more than about old cars, trains, and a depot. The street lamp on the left side of the photo has its own story.

In about 1894, Knox had a generating plant (privately owned) that produced electricity for the 20 or so street lamps at the different intersections of the downtown streets, as well as for any businesses that wanted to hook up to the system. The first power plant was located at the northwest corner of Lake & Clark Streets. (Portland was called Clark at least through 1933). It was powered by a coal fired steam engine. It was called Knox Electric Works. It operated from approximately 5 o'clock in the evening to 11 o'clock at night. This was before electricity was widely used in homes. Then around 1904-05 Thomas Grist built a plant just south of the Nickel Plate tracks on Shield Street. It was also a coal fired steam plant. In McCormick's history it mentions that Swartzell's home (now M.C. Smith's Funeral Home) was the first residence to be lighted by electricity in Knox. Apparently, that was in 1895.

In the **second attached photo** is a close-up view of the **street lamp**. Notice the two loose wires on each side of the lamp. These were the electric wires that furnished electricity to the lamp. The lamp is hanging from a cable suspended from an arm that has two pulleys. The cable can be seen traversing the two pulleys and then going down the pole where it was attached to a stop.

These were **carbon arc** lamps. They had to be manually started each day. At about 5 o'clock each evening, the town marshal (or whoever was assigned to the task) would lower each lamp and strike the two carbon rods together to start the light. Then he would pull the lamp up to its proper place. The brilliant glow from the lamp would light up the intersection. To see more about Carbon Arc Lamps, go to - http://www.electricmuseum.com/exhibits/arclamps/brush.shtml

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http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/

http://www.starkehistory.com



