The interpretive sign located at the exhibit site
The development of transmission lines was an essential part of expanding this industry. In the early 1910s, power was flowing from the dams on the Upper Iowa River into a three-county area via transmission lines, reaching the towns of Decorah, Waukon, Lansing, Cresco, and Postville. Area villages too small to support a steam plant were also supplied.

Shifting to coal

By the early 1920s, the power companies began to use coal to generate electricity. As the demand for electricity continued to grow, the use of coal as a fuel became more common. Coal was abundant and cheaper than alternatives like wood or oil, making it an attractive choice for power plants.

The Tainter gate

The Tainter gate is a type of radial arm gate used in dams to control the flow of water. It is characterized by its radial arms, which extend outward from the center of the gate. When the gate is closed, the arms are parallel to the water surface, allowing water to flow through the gate. When the gate is opened, the arms rotate to form a wedge shape, increasing the resistance to water flow.

As the need for electricity continued to expand, a commission of the state-power companies began to operate in northeastern Iowa and along the western communities. By 1912, Upper Iowa Power Company owned the area's two dams (Tainter gates at the Upper and Lower Dams) and sold electricity to Decorah and Lansing. Upper Iowa Power Company received the Oneota Dam and the Tainter gate in 1915.

In 1918, the Iowa State Legislature considered and approved a bill for the creation of the Iowa Public Service Commission. In 1921, the Iowa Public Service Commission was established, providing oversight and regulation for the electric utility industry in Iowa.

In the early 1970s, the DNR purchased the dam properties, and continued to manage the dam sites for recreation. Over the years, significant damage has occurred at the sites due to flooding events and disrepair. In 2008, flooding caused structural damage to the dam sites, and the DNR had to remove the dam gates from the sites. In 2009, Interstate Power Company closed both Upper and Lower Dams for economic reasons.

The Lower Dam Tainter gate was constructed four miles downstream from the site of the Upper Dam after the first Upper Dam failed in March of 1941 due to faulty construction. The Lower Dam powerhouse is a wider structure in 1941 as in this photo. Photo courtesy of Winneshiek County Historical Society.

Lake Oneota, the lake formed by the Lower Dam, was a popular place for boating, fishing, and leisure activities. It was also used for recreation, and the dam was instrumental in providing a steady flow of water for the dam sites.

The Tainter gate in 1927 is a radial arm gate used to control water flow. It is characterized by its radial arms, which extend outward from the center of the gate. When the gate is closed, the arms are parallel to the water surface, allowing water to flow through the gate. When the gate is opened, the arms rotate to form a wedge shape, increasing the resistance to water flow.

As the need for electricity continued to expand, a commission of the state-power companies began to operate in northeastern Iowa and along the western communities. By 1912, Upper Iowa Power Company owned the area's two dams (Tainter gates at the Upper and Lower Dams) and sold electricity to Decorah and Lansing. Upper Iowa Power Company received the Oneota Dam and the Tainter gate in 1915.

In 1918, the Iowa State Legislature considered and approved a bill for the creation of the Iowa Public Service Commission. In 1921, the Iowa Public Service Commission was established, providing oversight and regulation for the electric utility industry in Iowa.

In the early 1970s, the DNR purchased the dam properties, and continued to manage the dam sites for recreation. Over the years, significant damage has occurred at the sites due to flooding events and disrepair. In 2008, flooding caused structural damage to the dam sites, and the DNR had to remove the dam gates from the sites. In 2009, Interstate Power Company closed both Upper and Lower Dams for economic reasons.

The Lower Dam Tainter gate was constructed four miles downstream from the site of the Upper Dam after the first Upper Dam failed in March of 1941 due to faulty construction. The Lower Dam powerhouse is a wider structure in 1941 as in this photo. Photo courtesy of Winneshiek County Historical Society.

Lake Oneota, the lake formed by the Lower Dam, was a popular place for boating, fishing, and leisure activities. It was also used for recreation, and the dam was instrumental in providing a steady flow of water for the dam sites.

The Tainter gate in 1927 is a radial arm gate used to control water flow. It is characterized by its radial arms, which extend outward from the center of the gate. When the gate is closed, the arms are parallel to the water surface, allowing water to flow through the gate. When the gate is opened, the arms rotate to form a wedge shape, increasing the resistance to water flow.

As the need for electricity continued to expand, a commission of the state-power companies began to operate in northeastern Iowa and along the western communities. By 1912, Upper Iowa Power Company owned the area's two dams (Tainter gates at the Upper and Lower Dams) and sold electricity to Decorah and Lansing. Upper Iowa Power Company received the Oneota Dam and the Tainter gate in 1915.

In 1918, the Iowa State Legislature considered and approved a bill for the creation of the Iowa Public Service Commission. In 1921, the Iowa Public Service Commission was established, providing oversight and regulation for the electric utility industry in Iowa.

In the early 1970s, the DNR purchased the dam properties, and continued to manage the dam sites for recreation. Over the years, significant damage has occurred at the sites due to flooding events and disrepair. In 2008, flooding caused structural damage to the dam sites, and the DNR had to remove the dam gates from the sites. In 2009, Interstate Power Company closed both Upper and Lower Dams for economic reasons.

The Lower Dam Tainter gate was constructed four miles downstream from the site of the Upper Dam after the first Upper Dam failed in March of 1941 due to faulty construction. The Lower Dam powerhouse is a wider structure in 1941 as in this photo. Photo courtesy of Winneshiek County Historical Society.

Lake Oneota, the lake formed by the Lower Dam, was a popular place for boating, fishing, and leisure activities. It was also used for recreation, and the dam was instrumental in providing a steady flow of water for the dam sites.

The Tainter gate in 1927 is a radial arm gate used to control water flow. It is characterized by its radial arms, which extend outward from the center of the gate. When the gate is closed, the arms are parallel to the water surface, allowing water to flow through the gate. When the gate is opened, the arms rotate to form a wedge shape, increasing the resistance to water flow.

As the need for electricity continued to expand, a commission of the state-power companies began to operate in northeastern Iowa and along the western communities. By 1912, Upper Iowa Power Company owned the area's two dams (Tainter gates at the Upper and Lower Dams) and sold electricity to Decorah and Lansing. Upper Iowa Power Company received the Oneota Dam and the Tainter gate in 1915.

In 1918, the Iowa State Legislature considered and approved a bill for the creation of the Iowa Public Service Commission. In 1921, the Iowa Public Service Commission was established, providing oversight and regulation for the electric utility industry in Iowa.

In the early 1970s, the DNR purchased the dam properties, and continued to manage the dam sites for recreation. Over the years, significant damage has occurred at the sites due to flooding events and disrepair. In 2008, flooding caused structural damage to the dam sites, and the DNR had to remove the dam gates from the sites. In 2009, Interstate Power Company closed both Upper and Lower Dams for economic reasons.

The Lower Dam Tainter gate was constructed four miles downstream from the site of the Upper Dam after the first Upper Dam failed in March of 1941 due to faulty construction. The Lower Dam powerhouse is a wider structure in 1941 as in this photo. Photo courtesy of Winneshiek County Historical Society.

Lake Oneota, the lake formed by the Lower Dam, was a popular place for boating, fishing, and leisure activities. It was also used for recreation, and the dam was instrumental in providing a steady flow of water for the dam sites.

The Tainter gate in 1927 is a radial arm gate used to control water flow. It is characterized by its radial arms, which extend outward from the center of the gate. When the gate is closed, the arms are parallel to the water surface, allowing water to flow through the gate. When the gate is opened, the arms rotate to form a wedge shape, increasing the resistance to water flow.

As the need for electricity continued to expand, a commission of the state-power companies began to operate in northeastern Iowa and along the western communities. By 1912, Upper Iowa Power Company owned the area's two dams (Tainter gates at the Upper and Lower Dams) and sold electricity to Decorah and Lansing. Upper Iowa Power Company received the Oneota Dam and the Tainter gate in 1915.