

Dean Hills Mitchell Biography



Dean Hills Mitchell, - Class of 1912 - b. December 1, 1894 d. November 13, 1984 From the EHS Yearbook, The Maroon: “Mitch” First Debating Team Captain, Negative; Class Historian; Interclass Track and Baseball.

Dean Hills Mitchell Graduated from the University of Chicago and received a law degree from Northwestern University. He was the chairman of the Board of the Northern Indiana Public Service Co. (NIPSCO). He retired from that position in 1978 at age 83 after 54 years of service (he started in 1924), 43 of them as the utility’s CEO. He oversaw the growth of the company that had a revenue of \$12 million and a net plant investment of \$68.9 million in 1934 to \$806.7 million and a net plant investment of nearly \$2 billion when he retired.

“The company was called Calumet Electric Company when he started and it was going around buying other utility properties,” he said. “But it had \$10 million of unpaid debts. I think my most significant achievement was to get the company from having no credit rating to having a double-A rating.”

Under Mr. Mitchell’s direction, NIPSCO was a major factor in the economic expansion of heavily industrial northwestern Indiana. The utility service area has more than 40 percent of the state’s population and produces nearly 50 percent of its industrial output. When Mr. Mitchell retired, the company was the state’s biggest taxpayer.

Edmund Schroer, who became chairman and chief executive of NIPSCO when Mr. Mitchell retired, said: “Mr. Mitchell was a legend in his own time. His professional and personal accomplishments were of the highest distinction. His contributions will long be remembered as an inspiration to all of us.”

In the 1930s, NIPSCO consolidated its business in the 30 counties of Northern Indiana by trading properties it owned in Lafayette, Crawfordsville, Frankfort and Lebanon with Interstate Public Service Co. for properties that company owned in Goshen, Warsaw and Monticello.

At the same time, NIPSCO’s Michigan City Generating Station went online. The future was bright, but the Great Depression hit and electric use declined. Guiding the utility through that economically difficult period was Dean Mitchell. He not only kept the utility solvent, he set the stage for NIPSCO’s involvement today in communities and non-profit organizations. When World War II began, NIPSCO joined with other utilities across the country and set up delivery systems in which 70 percent of the nation’s natural gas output went to industries to speed the manufacture of weapons. NIPSCO and its employees purchased more than \$2.3 million worth of war bonds.

The new Dean H. Mitchell Generating Station in Gary in 1956. In 1962, it opened the Bailly Generating Station in Porter County, allowing the company to virtually eliminate the need to purchase off-peak power for its customers from other sources.