

# ELECTRIFYING CLEVELAND



## The Electrical League, 1920-41

By Gail R. Redmann

**A**T NOON ON MARCH 10, 1920, Cleveland proclaimed itself “the electrical center of the universe.” The Cleveland Electrical Show, hailed in the *Plain Dealer* as “the most pretentious electrical show ever attempted on either side of the ocean,” opened with a literal bang. Fireworks exploded atop the Hotel Statler, a strident siren blared, seventy-five costumed “imps” accompanied by a United States Marine band led a parade from Public Square, and a telegraph message about the exposition was dispatched to destinations around the world. Thomas Edison, via remote communica-

tions from Palm Beach, Florida, officially lit up the exhibition hall for a ten-day electrical extravaganza.

The electrical show, at the new Bolivar-Ninth Building, offered both entertainment and education to the more than ten thousand Clevelanders who attended on opening day. Displays and demonstrations of two million dollars’ worth of electrical devices for home and industry covered seventy-four thousand square feet of exhibit space. A special auditorium offered visitors the latest motion pictures; musical entertainment included the Naval Reserve Quartet, the “Roving Marines,” a twenty-piece orchestra, a jazz ensemble, and a chorus of four hundred electrical-industry employees.

During the period between world wars, specialized electrical devices—toasters, waffle irons, coffee percolators, and mixers—became commonplace in the kitchens of upscale homemakers. The Electrical League of Cleveland worked diligently to promote the adoption of such appliances.  
*Dayton Power and Light Company Museum*  
David R. Barker, Photographer





The Electrical League of Cleveland, which sponsored annual trade shows, was a natural outgrowth of the city's national prominence in the production of electric lighting and home appliances during the early decades of the twentieth century. *Western Reserve Historical Society*

A highlight of the show's last evening was the marriage of the lucky young couple who won the "electrical hope chest" consisting of eighteen different electrical appliances.

The 1920 Cleveland Electrical Show was the perfect harbinger of the prosperous, extravagant decade of the Roaring Twenties. The show also foreshadowed the changing direction of the Electrical League of Cleveland, whose members not only helped orchestrate the event from their headquarters in the Hotel Statler, but also appeared as the costumed imps in its opening parade. Mass production of electrical appliances was a burgeoning industry in Cleveland, and the league had been founded in 1909 to promote the interests of manufacturers, distributors, dealers, contractors, and the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company. During its first decade, the league functioned primarily as a social venue for fostering cooperation in the industry, although it did sponsor Cleveland's first electrical exposition in 1914.

By late 1920 John E. "Jack" North, director of the residential sales division of the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, had redirected the league's focus. Under North's guidance, the league's highest priority became merchandising electricity to Cleveland families. The December 1920 issue of *Cooperation* (precursor to the league's newsletter *The Leaguer*) defined "merchandising" as "not the feat of selling a loaf of bread to a starving man, but the ability to sell a hundred loaves to John J. Astorbilt, who's never been hungry in his life." North proposed to stimulate a hunger for electricity in two ways: by educating consumers to recognize the diverse uses and benefits of electrical power and by creating consumer desire for electrical appliances and equipment as symbols of a better standard of living. The success of the league in accomplishing these tasks constituted what would later be described as a "tale of romance in Cleveland," a love affair between Clevelanders and "things electrical." Through its unique blend of salesmanship and showmanship, the Electrical League mesmerized a generation of Clevelanders and propelled them on a current of electricity through both the heady years of the 1920s and the dark days of the Depression.

Beginning with North's 1920-21 Electrical Development Campaign, the Cleveland Electrical League became the model for the successful use of cooperative advertising in the electrical industry. By combining the resources and interests of all branches of the industry, from suppliers of electrical current to manufacturers and retailers, the league generated a substantial consumer market in Cleveland. League members positioned themselves on the cutting edge of "pioneer" advertising, cooperatively promoting the *idea* of electricity and the advantages of specific types of electrical equipment, rather than competitively marketing particular brands. The league's 1920-21 campaign set the tone for its future marketing programs with its emphasis on the scientific basis and practical uses of electrical power and its subtle probing for the consumer values that would make electrical equipment and appliances desirable.

Two contests run in the *Cleveland News* and *Plain Dealer* from mid-December 1920 through January 1921 targeted homemakers in an effort to stimulate their interest in electrical appliances. The *Plain Dealer's* Modern Home contest encouraged women to write essays describing their most extravagant dreams for using electricity to equip various rooms of their home, one of which was featured each week of the contest. To the delight of the Electrical League, Cleveland homemakers responded with imaginative and innovative suggestions, often complete with complex, labor-intensive plans. The "story contest" running simultaneously in the *News* solicited women's ideas on how they might use

specific electrical appliances, and their suggestions eventually appeared in advertising copy as the league expanded its merchandising activities.

Another unique promotional angle of the 1921 campaign assailed consumers' suspicions about electricity and its uses, while targeting the next generation of prospects. On February 16 fifteen taxicabs, each bearing a sign that read Electrical Scholarship Contest, carried registration cards and promotional materials to Cleveland public and parochial schools for "the biggest single contest of its kind ever put on in the country." Beginning the next day, an electrical lesson appeared in the *Plain Dealer* twice a week. At the end of thirteen weeks, each registered contestant received a final examination consisting of questions that had appeared in the twenty-six newspaper lessons. The lucky elementary or high-school student with the highest score won a grand prize of a four-year scholarship to Case

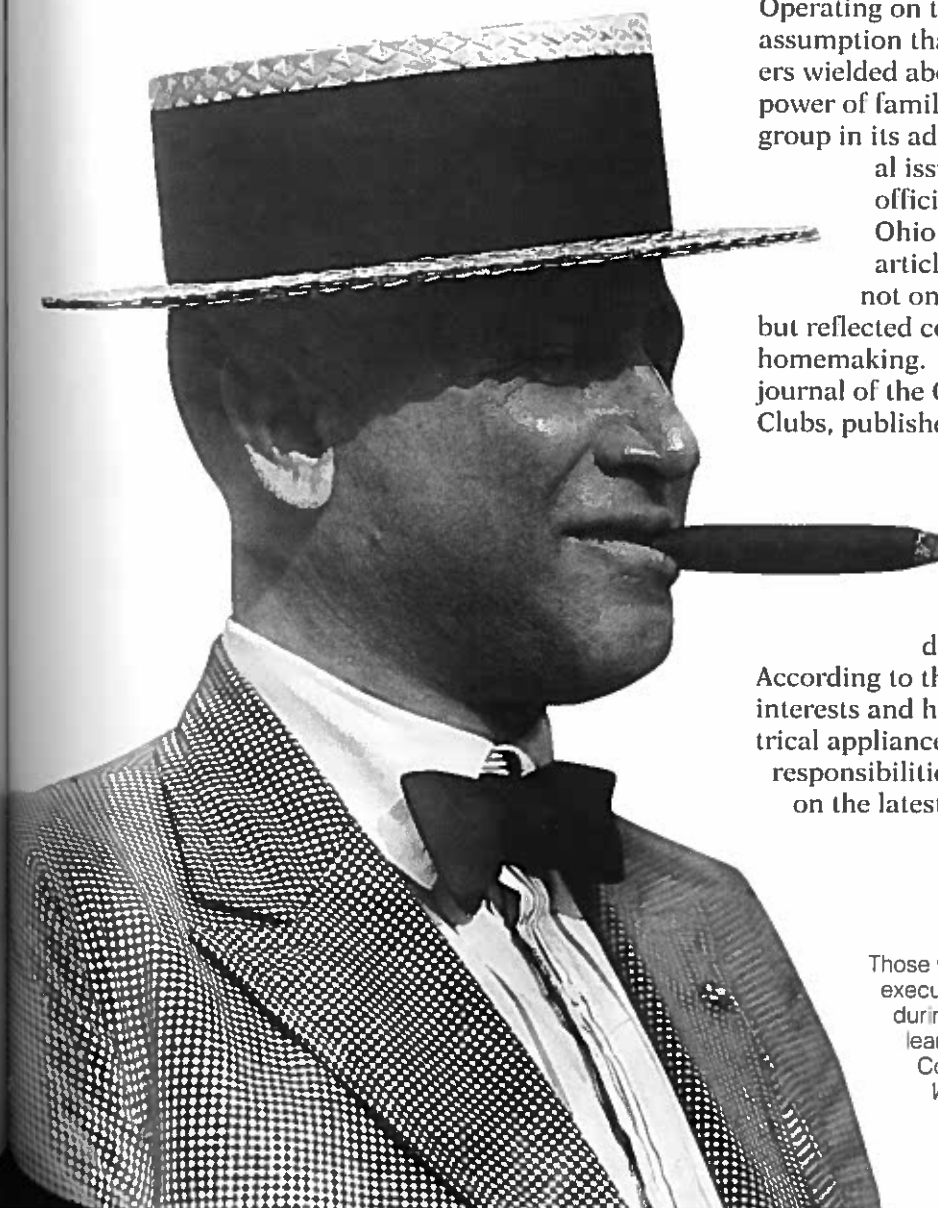
School of Applied Science. In fact, the Electrical League was the big winner, stimulating an interest in electricity in more than four thousand Cleveland young people and promoting itself as a major resource for electrical education.

Jack North mobilized one more attack on the consumers' pre-electric world view before the close of 1921. Cleveland's first Modern Electric Home opened May 15. Within a month the league's message of electrical modernity had attracted thirty-five thousand visitors. Both the 1921 and 1922 Modern Electrical Home campaigns addressed two of the main obstacles to selling electrical appliances: lack of proper wiring and consumer concern about cost of operation. The league offered free advice to visitors and analyzed house plans for adequate wiring while using statistics from the first electrical home to demonstrate that electrical appliances cost only "pennies" to use.

In 1923 North, as the newly elected president of the Electrical League, concentrated on the merchandising of appliances specifically to homemakers. Operating on the prevailing advertising-industry assumption that America's middle-class homemakers wielded about 80 percent of the purchasing power of families, the league expressly targeted this group in its advertising. Beginning with its inaugural issue in August 1923, the *Buckeye*, the official publication of the Federation of Ohio Women's Clubs, contained monthly articles written by the league's staff that not only promoted the use of electricity,

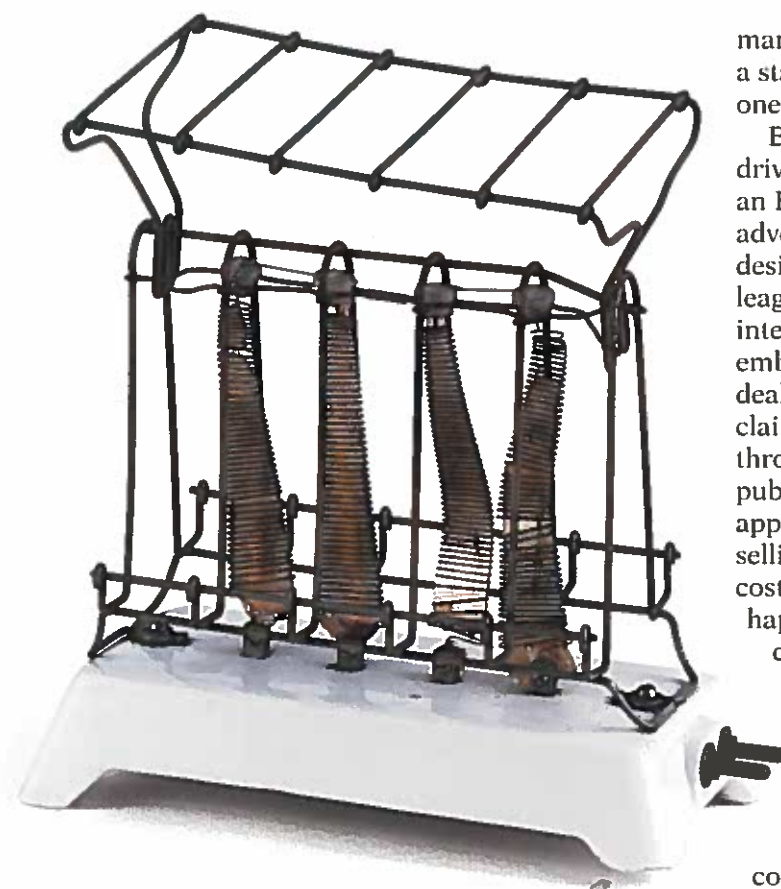
but reflected contemporary cultural attitudes toward homemaking. The *Cleveland Club Woman*, the journal of the Cleveland Federation of Women's Clubs, published its first issue in late 1927 for its self-proclaimed audience of "twenty thousand women...from the most substantial homes in Greater Cleveland." Both publications frequently contained league ads specifically designed for their particular audience.

According to these ads, the club woman had "broad interests and helpful social contacts," valued electrical appliances because she was "alert to her responsibilities," and, above all, kept informed on the latest in household technology.



Those who met John E. North, the cigar-chomping executive who headed the Electrical League during the 1920s and 1930s, were surprised to learn that he had spent his youth on a Clark County farm. *Western Reserve Historical Society*





David R. Barker, Photographer

A 1927 national survey revealed that, of all small kitchen appliances, the toaster was the most popular with consumers. Early models required close attention.  
Dayton Power and Light Company Museum

In its first *Buckeye* article, "The Better Home of Today," the Electrical League's home economist Grace Hadley bemoaned the busy middle-class clubwoman's difficulties in locating household help, and warned that in "building new homes care should be taken to provide for modern labor savers, for 'good girls' are scarcer day by day and one can never tell when 'precious treasure' will depart." Scholars of the history of household technology note that the "servant problem" faced by middle-class homemakers in the 1920s was a major factor in their growing desire to own electrical appliances. Expanding opportunities for factory labor in the early 1920s attracted many young, single women who were dissatisfied with the restricting lifestyle of domestic service. At the same time, stricter immigration laws were virtually eliminating the source of European servants, leaving middle-class housewives to take on an increasing number of household chores. Since the modern woman of the 1920s saw herself as the

managerial equal of her husband, she had to acquire a staff of electrical "servants" to replace the human ones that were escaping to the factories.

Beginning with its first major appliance-sales drive in 1923, whose slogan was Save Mother with an Electric Washing Machine, Electrical League advertisements presumed the modern woman's desire for relief from drudgery. Early that year the league also took advantage of growing consumer interest in trademarks by designing an advertising emblem for its own use and for display by member dealers. Members exhibiting the emblem proclaimed their belief "in Electrical Development through truth, honesty, quality and service to the public." The nattily attired electrical salesman who appeared with the emblem in 1924 washer ads was selling more than just an appliance that "in reality costs you nothing." He was also offering health, happiness, and independence. League advertising continued to display the emblem through 1925, encouraging Cleveland homemakers to make their purchases based on its subtle, personal reassurance.

Despite the public's fascination with electricity and its inextricable link to the coveted "modern" lifestyle, Electrical League copywriters shared the problem of all advertisers of the 1920s: overcoming consumer fears about the decade's rapid social change and technological advancement. Imaginative advertising drew parallels between ancient techniques and modern technology to diffuse consumer concerns about experimenting with electrical appliances. An early 1924 ad for the electric range compared its operation to the ovens used "by ancient peoples as far back as the days of the Pharaohs." In the summer of that year, the *Buckeye* reassured its readers that the modern electric ironer descended from an ancient Roman device called the "cochelia," whose technology miraculously survived the fall of Rome and persisted through the Middle Ages as a household aid for noble ladies preparing their husband's tunics for the Crusades.

The modern woman of the 1920s placed enormous trust in the businessman and his cadre of advertisers and saw them as allies in her quest to raise her family's standard of living. However, her emotional investment in her home and family made her vulnerable to the new psychological advertising that appealed to the guilts and fears of the modern age. The 1924 National Better Home Lighting Contest was tailor-made for psychological advertising and promotion. North, the project's Ohio-Kentucky-West Virginia regional director, orchestrated the distribution of Home Lighting Primers to school children, which encouraged them to survey their homes, critique existing lighting, and write

essays developing plans for more adequate home illumination. The program was a lighting salesman's dream, but a mother's nightmare, as she struggled with the guilt of having possibly exposed her children to poor lighting, and the fear of embarrassment should that information be made public in a winning essay. Opportunistically, the league introduced a *Buckeye* article on the program with a description of the atrocities of a medieval Byzantine ruler who barbarously blinded fifteen thousand prisoners of

Early washers may have reduced the housewife's drudgery, but still required many hand operations, including running the clothes through the wringer.  
Dayton Power and Light Company Museum



David R. Barker, Photographer

war. Noting that "we of today in America have blinded or half-blinded eighty-six million of our people" through poor home lighting, the league warned Ohio mothers not to be surprised if their children discovered dangerous, defective lighting in their own homes.

The league continued to expand its marketing strategy not only through advertisements and popular articles, but also through displays and demonstrations designed to build consumer confidence in using electrical appliances. A 1925 *Plain Dealer* survey confirmed that more than 97 percent of Cleveland homes were wired for electricity, providing a large market for additional electrical lighting and appliances. On May 18, 1925, the league unveiled the exhibit of Everything Electrical for the Home, located at its headquarters on the fourteenth floor of the Hotel Statler. The free exhibit included demonstrations and displays of merchandise from member manufacturers and distributors, accompanied by catalog sheets describing each appliance and including the names of dealers from whom homemakers might purchase the items.

Interest in the exhibit of Everything Electrical for the Home quickly gained momentum. Increasing numbers of women's clubs, church groups, and PTAs took advantage of the league's offer to provide lectures on electrical living. The highly successful program also generated new advertising ideas as women shared "testimonials" on how electrical appliances had improved their lives. Throughout 1926, articles in the *Buckeye* emphasized the importance of the "Art of Homemaking," a nobler pursuit than the "housekeeping" drudgery of the past, made possible mainly through the use of electrical appliances. To reinforce the message, the league provided each visitor to the exhibit with a copy of its publication *Electrical Homemaking*, touted as "the world's first textbook on electricity."





The booklet, which detailed the many uses of electricity throughout the home, created a huge demand from local schools. By May 1926 the league had distributed thirty-six thousand copies of the book to public and private high schools and colleges in the area.

Although the league targeted middle-class homemakers as its greatest marketing prospects, it continually tried to broaden interest in electrical appliances. In early 1926 the league conducted a survey of the number of appliances in two thousand Cleveland homes by distributing questionnaires to employees of newspaper offices, department stores, factories, banks, and the central electrical power station, as well as to attorneys, physicians, and electrical industry executives. Concerned that this survey might have been skewed toward upper-income groups, the league organized an additional

survey of homes that rented between \$25 and \$130 per month. That summer, through an arrangement with William Connors, secretary of the Negro Welfare Association, the league opened a temporary exhibit at Central Avenue and East 25th Street that was similar to the permanent one at the Hotel Statler. In addition to its vigorous ad campaigns in Cleveland's English and foreign-language presses, the league also began to experiment with radio marketing when "Electric Night" was broadcast over WTAM on October 21, 1926. By 1928 the league was broadcasting an electrical message on WTAM every morning.

Throughout the 1920s the league frequently used the growing technique of psychological marketing. "There's something wrong with your kitchen," women were warned, "unless it is envied by your friends." Electric percolators not only made good coffee, but "happier homes," and electric washers were necessary "For the Better Upbringing of Baby." After the 1926 appliance survey revealed that only about 5 percent of Cleveland homes had refrigera-

The league's marketing strategists saw children as future consumers. This group of Catholic school children assembled at headquarters to hear a lecture on electricity.  
*Western Reserve Historical Society*



In 1930 the Electrical League moved its headquarters from the Hotel Statler to the Cleveland Builders Exchange Building on Prospect Avenue. Here it maintained extensive — and well-lit — displays of a wide assortment of electrical products.  
*Western Reserve Historical Society*

The league's exhibit of Everything Electrical for the Home was fabulously popular, attracting more than ninety thousand visitors during a single year.  
*Western Reserve Historical Society*





## UPSTAIRS IS A LONG WAY!

• Only the women who have to climb the stairs countless times day after day realize what a living rood the stairway becomes... • Upstairs... downstairs... the beds to be made... the doorbell to answer... again and again, often with the hands full. • An electric vacuum cleaner for each floor will save many trips upstairs and down... and make cleaning twice as easy.

EVERY TWO-STORY HOME SHOULD HAVE TWO-CLEANER CONVENIENCE

You are invited to examine the 1930 models of electric vacuum cleaners at the Exhibits of Everything Electrical for the Home, 14th Floor, Hotel Statler. They have improved features, increased efficiency. Select your second vacuum cleaner here. Purchase where you please. Open every week day from 9 to 5.

CLEANERS ON DISPLAY

SANITATION SYSTEMS GRAYBAR HOOVER WESTINGHOUSE SUPER ROYAL GENERAL ELECTRIC BEE VAC A.P.E. PRIMER DUPLEX UNIVERSAL

### THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE

14TH FLOOR • HOTEL STATLER • PROSPECT 3466

One thrust of the league's advertising was an attempt to convince women that increased use of electricity and electrical products would improve housekeeping efficiency. *Ohio Historical Society*

tors, these appliances were increasingly promoted to consumers as essential for good health. With an electric refrigerator, the concerned housewife and mother "bought right, served right," had "no work, no worry," and provided "life insurance for [her] children" against the "microscopic enemies" that threatened unrefrigerated food.

The Electrical League continued its ambitious refrigerator promotion in conjunction with the National Food Preservation Movement in August and September of 1929. It orchestrated a "Germ Smash" to spread the "50-Degree Doctrine," which reiterated the dangers of food spoilage at temperatures above 50 degrees, the "safety zone temperature" of an electric refrigerator. Besides its traditional methods of advertising through newspapers, women's club magazines, and radio, the league also sponsored innovative related advertising through local dairies, which hung promotional tags on milk bottles, and restaurants, which displayed food preservation messages on menus and easel cards,

RESIDENTIAL... office at this price. Call at 1825 Rock road... off Hampshire, one block east of Coventry. Owner on the premises.



### Soothing Breezes for Sultry Nights

BRING a gentle, cooling breeze into the sleeping room on hot summer nights—with an Electric Fan. Place the Fan at the window to draw cool air into the house and relieve the sultry atmosphere.

On hot afternoons the Electric Fan soothes restless tots with its whispering comfort at nap time.

THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE

14th Floor—HOTEL STATLER—PROSPECT 3466

BRING THE BREEZES INDOORS

Another approach in league advertising played on maternal concerns. *Western Reserve Historical Society*

reassuring customers that electric refrigeration was in use at their establishments.

The 1929 refrigerator promotion was part of the league's novel program of community electrical exhibits that expanded the organization's hands-on instructional activities beyond the permanent exhibit at the Hotel Statler. The exhibits, which were staffed by women especially trained by the league, each consisted of displays and demonstrations of ironers and refrigerators, a model kitchen and laundry, food preservation lectures, and an "ironing school." Reflecting the prevailing interest of middle-class homemakers in learning the skills of their "profession," the league drew an overwhelmingly



## Odors

CAUTION! If you have symptoms of eye trouble, have your eyes examined and cared for. Light is not a cure for eye trouble due to organic defects of the eyes or disease. But good eyes deserve good light impinged eyes demand it.

FEATURES OF THE SIGHT-SAVING STUDY LAMP

- A—100-watt light bulb.
- B—Glass reflector and diffuser.
- C—White shade with white lining.
- D—Tall standard.
- E—Approval by the Illuminating Engineering Society.

FEATURES OF THE SIGHT-SAVING THREE-LIGHT LAMP

- A—Two-filament 100-200-300-watt bulb.
- B—Glass reflector and diffuser.
- C—White shade with white lining.
- D—Approval by the Illuminating Engineering Society.

THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE  
18TH FLOOR • MIDLAND BUILDING • CHERRY 2333  
SIGHT IS PRICELESS • • • LIGHT IS CHEAP

What conscientious parents would allow their children to suffer, league copywriters asked, because of inadequate home lighting? *Ohio Historical Society*

positive response to the simple ad, "There's a Chair Waiting for You at the Electric Ironing School," which invited women to bring "a whole basketful" of home laundry for an educational day of ironing.

The stock market crash only solidified the league's resolve to push electrical merchandising even further in the new decade. With a salesman's ubiquitous optimism, a December 1929 ad boldly proclaimed, "Christmas 1929: Make it the Very Best!" North pumped up members in January 1930, encouraging them to "be deaf to all this idle talk about the stock market crash depressing business,"

## WILL "Inferiority Complex" KILL YOUR SON'S AMBITION?

"We have found that that most serious handicap, inferiority complex, has often been the direct result of a young person's inability to see adequately." That's what a Cleveland educator recently said in addressing a public meeting.

Educators the country over now know that bad eyes may make a child appear stupid, timid, ineffectual—may make him lose faith in himself and feel inferior. An inferiority complex kills ambition, bars the way to success!

The cause of poor vision—and headaches, nervousness and a host of serious ills—frequently is eyestrain. Reading, studying, or doing other close seeing tasks in improper light is likely to cause you and your children to suffer eyestrain.

Provide Sight-Saving Light in your home! When your children do their homework, or any difficult eye task, see that they use a Sight-Saving Study Lamp or a Sight-Saving Three-Light Lamp. These lamps are scientifically designed to provide ample light, properly diffused.

THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE  
18TH FLOOR • MIDLAND BUILDING • CHERRY 2333  
SIGHT IS PRICELESS • • • LIGHT IS CHEAP

and announcing that "the league is preparing to launch the most sweeping market-development program it ever inaugurated." On November 13, 1930, the league opened a new exhibit headquarters adjacent to the widely publicized Home in the Sky, a complete home constructed on the eighteenth floor of the new Builders Exchange Building and surrounded by exhibits of building materials and home furnishings.

Faced with a slumping economy, the league adopted several innovative promotional techniques to sustain public interest in purchasing electrical appliances during the early 1930s. A 1929 survey of appliance ownership in greater Cleveland helped provide the focus for the league's advertising cam-





GIVE SOMETHING ELECTRICAL

CHRISTMAS 1-9-2-9  
MAKE IT THE VERY BEST!

What a wonderful Christmas . . . make it the best you've ever known . . . so many reasons for good cheer and generosity . . . so many marvellous, modern ways in which to express our exuberant Christmas spirit . . . so many delightful, useful, lasting gifts . . . so many Gifts Electrical, suitable to every purse, suitable to every person . . . you can't make a mistake if you choose to give Something Electrical.

DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EASILY!

Visit the Exhibit of Everything Electrical for the Home, 14th Floor, Hotel Statler . . . bring this list with you . . . see the complete display of Electrical Gift Things . . . make your selections here, quietly, comfortably . . . note on this list the initials of those for whom you make Gift Selections . . . then purchase where you please.

- |                        |                         |                          |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| ..... Air Purifier     | ..... Health Lamp       | ..... Range Refrigerator |
| ..... Boudoir Lamps    | ..... Heater            | ..... Sewing Lamp        |
| ..... Bridge Lamp      | ..... Hot Plate         | ..... Sewing Machine     |
| ..... Candlesticks     | ..... Immersion Heater  | ..... Study Lamp         |
| ..... Chaffing Dish    | ..... Iron              | ..... Table Lamp         |
| ..... Clothes Washer   | ..... Ironing Machine   | ..... Table Stove        |
| ..... Cooker           | ..... Juice Extractor   | ..... Tea Samovar        |
| ..... Corn Popper      | ..... Kitchen Aid       | ..... Toaster            |
| ..... Curling Iron     | ..... Lamp Shades       | ..... Torchieres         |
| ..... Desk Lamp        | ..... Library Lamp      | ..... Toys               |
| ..... Dishwasher       | ..... Lighting Fixtures | ..... Tree Lights        |
| ..... Floor Lamp       | ..... Massage Vibrator  | ..... Vacuum Cleaner     |
| ..... Grill            | ..... Percolator        | ..... Waffle Iron        |
| ..... Hair Dryer       | ..... Plane Lamp        | ..... Warming Pad        |
| ..... Health Exerciser | ..... Radio             |                          |

EXHIBIT OF EVERYTHING ELECTRICAL FOR THE HOME  
14TH FLOOR - HOTEL STATLER - PROSPECT 3466

THE ELECTRICAL

To league officials, every holiday or wedding was another opportunity to "give something electrical."  
Ohio Historical Society



FOR THE BRIDE'S TABLE!

We speak of the table the bride will set in her new home . . . What a joy Electric Table Appliances will prove! . . . The Percolator, the Toaster, the Waffle Iron, the Egg-Cooker . . . What smart Wedding Gifts they are!

THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE  
BUILDERS EXCHANGE BUILDING, 19th FLOOR - PROSPECT AVENUE  
CHERRY 2535 - ACROSS FROM THE UNION TERMINAL



As electrical appliance sales sagged in the hard times of the 1930s, the league came up with a "seal of approval" for its members. Consumers were supposed to be assured of high quality whenever seeing it in conjunction with a product.  
Western Reserve Historical Society

The league kept close tabs on the popularity of air conditioning in downtown Cleveland and promoted it wherever possible.  
Western Reserve Historical Society

Professor Henry B. Dates of the Case School of Applied Science; Dr. Howard H. Shiras, eye specialist for the Cleveland public schools; public relations and advertising man William Ganson Rose; and Jack North, developer of the Better Light-Better Sight Committee of the Electrical League. The council's purpose was to promote research into the protection of human eyesight and to generate public awareness and concern.

The Better Light-Better Sight campaign included "Effective Expression" classes to teach public-speaking skills to officers of local women's clubs. In return for the training, the club women agreed to speak on the topic of eyesight conservation to at least one women's club meeting. As always, it exemplified the dual role of the Electrical League as both educator and salesman. Improving electrical lighting to preserve human eyesight constituted a lofty, humanitarian goal that league members, no

\* See TIMELINE, December 1985

AIR CONDITIONING  
WILL INCREASE BUSINESS IN THE

BARBER SHOP  
AND  
BEAUTY SALON



YOU CAN ATTRACT MORE BUSINESS AND INCREASE PROFIT BY INSTALLING

AIR CONDITIONING

Your customers will enjoy the improved conditions and will show their appreciation by their increased patronage. Air Conditioning is especially important where personal service is rendered, such as doctors' and dentists' offices, barber shops and beauty salons. It will pay you to investigate the advantages of Air Conditioning. Call CHERRY 2535 for information.

THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE

REPAIR OPEN MONDAYS 9 TO 5 - ADMISSION FREE - NOTHING FOR SALE  
BUILDERS EXCHANGE BUILDING - 19TH FLOOR - PROSPECT NEAR ONTARIO



The Helen Miller, Inc. Beauty Salon at 13205 Shaker Square, provides Air Conditioning for the comfort of patients.

doubt, sincerely embraced, but they also reaped the economic rewards of increased consumer use of electricity. North realized that the best way to make lighting sales was to use the latest techniques of advertising psychology and promote "feelings," not "things." To sell better home lighting, North encouraged leaguers to "sell elimination of eye strain, sell health and social advantages. Sell accuracy, speed of vision, and pleasant surroundings. Sell protection of the most precious human possession." By following that technique, he assured league salesmen, "orders for more and better lighting equipment are sure to follow."

League better-lighting advertisements followed North's sales techniques and played on some of the deepest fears and the most common maladies of Depression-era consumers. Ad copy with the ominous headlines, "You are going blind!" and "Don't ruin your eyes" left no doubt what was at



# SALADA TEA

**Salada Tea**  
 The most delicious and healthful tea ever made. It is a blend of the finest teas from the mountains of China and India. It is a true tonic and a most refreshing beverage. It is sold in 10-cent and 25-cent packages. Write for a free sample to Salada Tea Co., 1234 Broadway, New York, N.Y.

## "YOU ARE GOING BLIND!"



Can you imagine your feelings if your doctor should tell you, "You are going blind?" Certainly, you would do anything to prevent this calamity. But what will you do NOW to protect your eyes from defective vision, the handicap of one-third of the people you meet? One of the main causes of eyestrain and defective vision is inadequate lighting. To save your eyes, get sight-saving light from your lamps.

**GOOD LIGHT**  
 When your lights are in quantity to make seeing easy—  
 When your light is free from any direct or reflected glare—  
 When you have general lighting which abates deep shadows and sharp contrasts—  
 Then you have good light.

**USE SIGHT-SAVING LIGHT BULBS IN YOUR LAMPS**  
 Ninety-nine per cent of all homes are poorly lighted. But there is no need of continuing to suffer from poor lighting in your own home. Replace the old undersized light bulbs in your floor and table lamps with new bulbs of right-saving size. If necessary, get new translucent, light-colored shades. Follow these rules:



Attend the Science of Seeing Show • Admission Free • Nothing for Sale

**THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE**  
 BUILDERS EXCHANGE BUILDING • 18TH FLOOR • CHERRY 2222  
 PROSPECT NEAR ONTARIO • ONE BLOCK SOUTH OF PUBLIC SQUARE



### Don't Miss a Laugh—

WHEN THE WORLD'S GREATEST ENTERTAINERS ARE ON THE AIR

The fun comes fast, when the famous funnymen of the air are putting on their uproarious, wise-cracking radio shows. You needn't miss a laugh with a **NEW 1936-MODEL RADIO**. The 1936 Radios have greater range—sharper selectivity—better tone. They give you, too, the thrills of shortwave reception from foreign lands. More than \$20,000,000 a year is being spent for radio talent—entertainment, information, dance music, concerts, operas, symphonies, dramas. Buy a 1936-Model Radio now, so you can get your full share of radio pleasure.

- RADIOS APPROVED BY THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE**
- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| American-Bosch   | RCA Victor     |
| Atwater Kent     | Silverstone    |
| Crosley          | Spartan        |
| General Electric | Stewart-Warner |
| Grunow           | Westinghouse   |
| Philco           | Zenith         |
- THESE RADIOS ARE OFFERED FOR SALE BY MEMBERS OF THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE

**THE ELECTRICAL LEAGUE**  
 BUILDERS EXCHANGE BUILDING • 18TH FLOOR • PROSPECT NEAR ONTARIO

Above: Electrical appliances supposedly provided more time for leisure activities, and league officials suggested filling that time with electrical entertainment. *Ohio Historical Society*

Left: The league picked up on General Electric's Science of Seeing campaign in the mid-1930s. It coincided with the introduction to the home market of two new "sight-saving" lamps: the study lamp and the three-light lamp that included both a glass reflector and diffuser and a wide shade with white lining. *Ohio Historical Society*

League ads and activities became supplemental to those of its members, who were encouraged to initiate their own exhibits and demonstrations and to participate in cooperative advertising. League staff continued to train home lighting advisors and appliance demonstrators, but most of them sought immediate employment with league retailers. Women's clubs still met at the organization's headquarters, and the public-speaking courses remained popular, but interest in the broad promotional campaigns of the 1920s and early 1930s was waning.

As the international news grew bleaker, the league's programming reflected the subtle social changes. In 1939 the league renamed the Kitchen



Tea Assemblies, which had been popular with women in 1937 and 1938, the Better Living-Happier Homes program, perhaps from a sense of the impending transition in women's roles. The declaration of war in 1941 sealed the fate of the old league, as wartime preparations commanded the electrical industry's attention. In its "Victory program," the league made a swift transition from a promoter of electrical consumption to a strong voice for conservation, teaching homemakers how to prolong the life of their electrical equipment in support of the country's war effort.

For a generation, the Electrical League truly "electrified" Cleveland. Driven by the creative energy of President North, the league captured the interest and imagination of Cleveland families with its enlightening and entertaining electrical promotions. Through surveys, contests, appliance "schools," electrical expositions, and the latest in advertising techniques, the league was able to maintain a merchandising finger on the pulse of consumer desire, successfully monitoring the effectiveness of its sales strategies through two diverse

North developed creative programs to chart the league's course through the Depression. Among these were courses to train women as appliance salespeople and referring them to league members in need of demonstrators. *Western Reserve Historical Society*

decades. Ironically, the league's greatest sales strategy was promoting itself from the early 1920s as a trusted friend who provided information and advice, but who had "nothing for sale." Consequently, the league created a unique niche for itself as the neutral mediator, not only between the salesman and the consumer, but between the consumer and the uncertainties of the modern electrical age. In addition, during the depths of the Depression, the league provided a voice of eternal optimism for both its members and consumers, refusing to accept the bleakest economic news. The league's public vision of the world in the 1930s was as bright as any of Hollywood's better attempts at escapism. In fact, like entering the sanctuary of their favorite movie theater, the "World's Best Home-makers" could "step through the portals of the Electrical League into a new world of better living," — and admission was free. **UL**