



## Retired linemen restore Helena's historic streetlights.

▲ Retired Linemen Pat Glueckert, left, and Stan Severin, right, have restored several streetlights that were originally installed in Helena, Montana, in the 1920s or '30s.

Around 1922, General Electric released a streetlight called the Novalux. The ornamental, lantern-style, post-top light was designed to look European, with etched glass panels on the side and top and a slender, pointed pinnacle.

The G.E. Novalux streetlights were popular, installed across the country, including in Helena, Montana.

"In my opinion, they were the first electric streetlight in Helena," said Pat Glueckert, who worked as a lineman in Helena for 36 years before retiring from NorthWestern Energy in 2016.

It's unclear exactly when the Novalux lights were first installed in Helena, but they helped illuminate the Carroll College campus and the Helena Cathedral area for about 100 years.

"We don't know what year they came to Helena, but it's got to be in the 1920s or '30s," said Stan Severin, who retired from NorthWestern Energy in 2017 after 22 years of service.

The lights were recently replaced as part of NorthWestern Energy's LED streetlight project, where all NorthWestern-owned streetlights are being replaced with energy-efficient LED lights. NorthWestern Energy worked with the Lewis and Clark County Historical Society to select new LED lights that somewhat replicated the old lights.

Stan's son works for NorthWestern Energy as a lineman in Helena and told his dad the lights were being replaced. Spencer Severin and other linemen know Stan appreciates old memorabilia and thought he

might want to restore the old streetlights.

"They were very concerned that they would get scrapped and thrown away, and they'd be gone forever," Stan said.

Stan ended up taking 33 of the old lights and asked Pat whether he wanted to work on the project as well.

"There were 33 of these lights that we took apart to get enough parts to build the lights we built," Stan said.

Pat restored one streetlight and Stan restored four.

"We used to service these lights," Pat said. "These things are just too cool."

As they took the lights apart, Stan and Pat realized many of the parts were brass and copper, while other parts were silver in color. Everything, except the glass, had been painted black by the power company.

"All the nuts and bolts were brass," Pat said. "We cleaned every nut and every bolt."

They also found the eight panels of glass on the top of each light had been covered with a metal lid, likely after the first hailstorm broke some of the glass.

They discovered tags on the lights, which had been painted over, identifying them as G.E. Novalux lights. Stan ordered an old G.E. catalogue online that described the lights in detail.

"These sold for \$28 each," Pat said.

Pat and Stan both spent the past winter working on their lights.

# Shining a Light on the Past

By Erin Madison

“Every night, we’d call each other,” Pat said. “We fueled each other’s interest in it.”

The lights they restored are all original, with the exception of the eight panels of glass on the sides. The panels of glass on the top had been saved by the metal covers added to the lights.

“That glass is 100 years old, so it’s actually starting to turn purple,” Stan said.

Pat finished his light and mounted it on a short pole to display in his

basement. Stan restored lights for his son, daughter and himself. He has a fourth light that he’ll auction off at The Angel Fund auction in Helena on Dec. 4. The Angel Fund helps children in the Helena School District by purchasing clothes, shoes, coats, school supplies and awarding scholarships to graduating seniors.

NorthWestern Energy donated another 30 or 40 of the lights to the Helena Historical Society so they can be preserved.

“They’re just such a beautiful light,” Pat said. ☀️



▲ Pat and Stan recovered 33 lights, which gave them enough parts to rebuild five streetlights. Many of the parts were brass and copper, other parts were silver in color. Everything, except the glass, had been painted black by the power company.