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CMS Energy

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Introduction

Energy shapes the way we live, work, and connect with one another. In the United States, where innovation and entrepreneurship are at the heart of progress, few companies have played so vital and enduring a role as CMS Energy. From its nineteenth-century beginnings providing electric light to a single Michigan town, to its current place as a major S&P 500 energy company serving millions, CMS Energy's story is one of continual transformation, resilience, and service to community and country alike.

This book traces the evolution of CMS Energy—headquartered in Jackson, Michigan—whose principal subsidiary, Consumers Energy, is a household name across the state. The journey of CMS Energy is closely intertwined with the growth and development of Michigan itself, reflecting both the technological advances and the challenges that have shaped the American energy industry over the past century and beyond. Foundations laid by entrepreneurs like William Augustine Foote and Samuel Jarvis in the late 1800s ignited a legacy of innovation and commitment that continues to power homes, businesses, and industries to this day.

More than a historical review, this volume also examines the company's modern-day operations, its ongoing transformation into a sustainability leader, and its efforts to redefine the future of energy. Major milestones—such as the advent of nuclear power, strategic mergers, and expansion into renewables—are explored alongside the human stories of leadership, employee dedication, and community engagement that have sustained CMS Energy through periods of both stability and sweeping change.

Today, the company stands at a crucial crossroads as the world pivots toward cleaner energy sources and greater environmental responsibility. CMS Energy has made bold commitments to end coal-fired power, achieve net-zero carbon and methane emissions, and invest substantially in renewable energy and grid modernization. These efforts are framed by a comprehensive approach to corporate social responsibility, with a keen focus on serving customers, supporting communities, and fostering diversity and inclusion within its workforce.

At its heart, CMS Energy's story is that of a company rooted in place but global in its ambition—one that has continually reimagined what it means to deliver safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy for all. As we look to the future, the lessons learned from its past and present illuminate the challenges and opportunities facing not just CMS Energy, but the entire American utility sector. This book, 'CMS Energy: The Story of An American Company', seeks to capture that dynamic journey and provide a window into what it means to power progress in a changing world.

CHAPTER ONE: The Birth of an Energy Pioneer

In the late 19th century, the city of Jackson, Michigan, was a bustling hub of activity, far removed from the modern metropolis it would eventually become. Founded in 1829 and named after President Andrew Jackson, the city had grown steadily, becoming an important railroad center by the 1870s. This growth brought with it a desire for modern conveniences, and among them, the allure of electric light began to flicker in the minds of forward-thinking individuals.

It was against this backdrop of nascent industrialization and civic ambition that William Augustine Foote, a flour mill operator from Adrian, and Samuel Jarvis, a foreman at an iron and engine works in Lansing, entered the scene. These two visionaries recognized the transformative potential of electricity, not just as a novelty, but as a fundamental element for urban development and quality of life. In 1884, Foote had an electric generator installed in his own flour mill, sparking his fascination with this new technology.

Their initial focus was straightforward yet revolutionary for its time: to illuminate the streets of downtown Jackson with electric arc lights. This seemingly simple ambition required not only technological know-how but also a persuasive touch, as they had to convince the city officials and residents of the benefits of this unfamiliar new light source. After all, the concept of electric streetlights was still quite novel.

On December 6, 1886, Foote and Jarvis secured their first franchise from the City of Jackson, granting them the right to install a dozen streetlights. This was the seminal moment, the true genesis of what would become CMS Energy. From this small beginning, a company that would eventually power millions of Michigan residents began to take shape.

The initial success of these pioneering streetlights laid the groundwork for further expansion. Two years later, in 1888, Foote and Jarvis formalized their venture by establishing the Jackson Electric Light Works. This marked the official birth of the company that would, through various transformations, grow into the energy giant it is today.

The early operations of Jackson Electric Light Works were a testament to the ingenuity and determination of its founders. They weren't content to simply illuminate city streets; they looked to harness the natural resources of Michigan to generate power. This led them, in 1889, to undertake a significant project: building a hydro plant at the Trowbridge Dam on the Kalamazoo River in Allegan. This early foray into hydroelectric power demonstrated an understanding of sustainable energy sources long before the

term became commonplace, laying a foundational principle for the company's future endeavors.

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