

Southern Power Company ^[1]

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by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

See also: [Duke Power Company](#) ^[2]

Benjamin N. and James B. Duke (sons of [Washington Duke](#) ^[3], the tobacco magnate and prominent philanthropist), along with partners Walker Gill Wylie and William States Lee, incorporated the Southern Power Company in New Jersey on 22 June 1905. The move came after several years of cautious preliminary investigations and was influenced by the brilliant technical expertise of Lee, who became chief engineer of the [Catawba Power Company](#) ^[4] in 1902 and who later was elected as the first southerner to be president of the [American Institute of Electrical Engineers](#) ^[5]. The Dukes had invested in Catawba Power since 1902, and as part of the deal forming Southern Power they acquired Catawba.

Concentrating on industrial users and the wholesale selling of power, the Dukes had not originally intended to supply individuals in residential areas. Soon, however, there were pressures to retail power to residential customers and small businesses and to operate a streetcar system in [Charlotte](#) ^[6] and other communities such as Greenville and Spartanburg in South Carolina and [Greensboro](#) ^[7], [Durham](#) ^[8], and [Winston-Salem](#) ^[9] in North Carolina. In some cities Southern Power also owned and operated natural gas supplies and waterworks. As a result, the Southern Public Utilities Company was organized in 1913 as the retailing and streetcar arm of Southern Power.

From its inception, the Southern Power Company was a highly successful, pioneering hydroelectric venture that played a key role in the industrialization of the [Piedmont](#) ^[10] Carolinas. On 18 Nov. 1924 its name was changed to [Duke Power Company](#) ^[2], which on 18 June 1997 merged with PanEnergy Corporation to create [Duke Energy Corporation](#) ^[11].

References:

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