A Common Purpose

POWERING COMMUNITIES AND EMPOWERING MEMBERS

Celebrating 75 Years

1938 - 2013

"The wires which tied the houses of rural people together also seemed to unite their spirits. Beginning in the early days, and growing through the years, there has been some unusual quality about the rural electrification program which has drawn people of diverse political and social views together in a common purpose."

— **CLYDE T. ELLIS**, FIRST GENERAL MANAGER OF THE NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION AND NATIVE OF NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

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PROLOGUE 1935

Edna Henbest was tired.

The 36-year-old strawberry farmer's wife was tired of hauling wood for the stove to prepare a meal. She was exhausted from bringing in buckets of well water to wash the family laundry and then later pressing stubborn cotton with a heavy iron. Her eyes were worn out from squinting in dim lamplight to thread a needle or read her Bible.

But most of all, Edna was tired of waiting — waiting for the day when electricity would be available to power the home and farm she shared with husband Gus and their children, Theda and Dean.

Through the years, electricity had been just beyond the family's grasp. They lived near the Mount Comfort community, four miles northwest of Fayetteville's city limits and outside the lines that delivered electricity and all its benefits.

Every time she and Gus drove by well-lit homes in Fayetteville, Edna was reminded of what she was missing. She knew it was a sin to be envious of what others had. Still, she couldn't help wishing for the many conveniences electricity afforded her city counterparts.

There had been talk for years that farms were going to get electricity, but nothing had happened. Some even called the idea of rural electrification far-fetched.

With each hot day and every meal she cooked, Edna grew more tired. Her patience was wearing thin. The time had come. President Roosevelt was making a commitment to bring electricity to light up the countryside, and she was ready for hers.

Edna Henbest was not alone. The longing for electricity would soon draw farm families in northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma together, bonding them for a common purpose.

Edna Henbest, Mount Comfort community

CHAPTER ONE *Dark days*

"I had seen first-hand the grim drudgery and grind which had been the common lot of eight generations of American farm women...I knew what it was to take care of the farm chores by the flickering, undependable light of the lantern in the mud and cold rains of the fall, and the snow and icy winds of winter."

— **SENATOR GEORGE W. NORRIS**, CO-SPONSOR OF THE RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ACT

The onset of the Great Depression might have gone largely unnoticed on the farms and in the rural communities of Washington County if it weren't for the newspaper headlines announcing its arrival.

Hard times were nothing new on the Ozarks Plateau. By the time a faltering economy landed a crushing blow to America, adversity was a way of life for many here. Poor harvests and low prices for agricultural commodities — the economic lifeblood of Washington County — had plagued local farmers for a decade.

Adding insult to injury was the fact that they endured it all in the dark. Like most U.S. farm families, those living in rural northwest Arkansas didn't enjoy the benefits or conveniences of electricity in the early 1930s.

BEFORE RURAL ELECTRICITY

... homes were lit at night by kerosene lamps.
... there was no running water, so no indoor bathroom.
... food was cooked on a wood-fired stove.
... water was hauled by the bucketful from a well or spring.
... milk and other perishables were preserved on ice.
... large blocks of ice had to be hauled from towns with electricity.
... clothing was washed by hand in tubs.
... clothes were pressed with a six-pound wedge of iron heated on a wood stove.
... it took more than two hours to milk 20 cows by hand.
... livestock feed had to be ground with a hand crank.
... wood was sawn by hand or chopped with an axe.

Bright lights as well as electric washing machines, stoves and irons had been common in Fayetteville for nearly five decades. But in the country, where 82 percent of the county's population lived, houses and barns had no lights, running water or electric equipment — factors that kept lives primitive and productivity limited.

Having access to electricity was something overworked farmers and their wives only dreamed about.

THE FARMERS' STORY

Agriculture had propelled the local economy since the days when white men first settled in northwest Arkansas. But unlike the state's southern counties where fortunes hinged almost solely on cotton, the farmers of Washington County had diversified enterprises.

An ideal mixture of wet weather, altitude and loamy soils made the county a good environment for growing apples, grapes and other fruits. In 1900, orchards and vineyards blanketed the region, providing a strong source of revenue for the county's farmers. Grain production, dairying and other food and fiber production endeavors were also prevalent on this westernmost portion of the Ozark Plateau.

A timber boom in the southern portion of the county was also firing the local economy. At one point, Washington County was exporting fence posts, hardwood lumber, railroad ties, spokes and posts throughout the nation.

Diversification, however, would not be enough to spare local farmers from the challenges that brutalized America's cash-crop agriculture following World War I. The prosperous days came to an end. Northwest Arkansas farmers experienced the perfect storm: commodity prices tumbled just as the land began wearing out, depleted from decades of overuse and erosion.

Apple production waned by the early 1930s due to poor soil fertility. A thriving canning and evaporating industry that employed many in the county also suffered when fruit production dropped.

A similar fate hit the commercial timber industry. Lumber prices began a rapid decline in 1927 and continued a downward slide as demand dried up during the Depression. Most small lumber companies in Washington County were forced into merger or bankruptcy. To further complicate matters, land denuded by tree harvesting quickly succumbed to erosion, leaving behind a barren wasteland rather than productive farmland.

Source: Library of Congress

When the national economic hurricane hit, struggling Washington County farmers were already poorly positioned to ride out the storm. Then came the drought of 1930-31.

Rainfall had typically been an ally for the western hill county farmers, but from April 1930 to January 1931, measurable precipitation was far below average. In August 1930, the official reporting station in Little Rock recorded 71 consecutive rainless days. For northwest Arkansas, the drought's effects were devastating. Many who had been fighting to hang on were forced to leave their farmsteads and find work elsewhere to feed hungry families.

When 1935 rolled around, the Washington County farmers who survived the decades of difficulties were rebounding. Cornfields replaced many apple orchards and poultry production was emerging as a new region specialty.

Conversations at Farm Bureau meetings and home demonstration club gatherings were turning to rural electrification.

When the national economic hurricane hit, struggling Washington County farmers were already poorly positioned to ride out the storm.

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

The Tennessee Valley Authority, the federal government's first experiment with rural electrification, was almost the Arkansas Valley Authority, according to accounts of several political insiders from the 1930s. Bill Bowen, former head of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law School, told a story that describes how two powerful Arkansans prevented the state from landing a Depression-era project that could have made rural electric power available and affordable in the state earlier.

The story goes like this:

President Franklin D. Roosevelt owed a favor to Arkansas Sen. Joe T. Robinson, then majority leader in the Senate and one of the most influential men in Washington. In 1933, Robinson pushed through Roosevelt's emergency banking bill in a single afternoon, which the U.S. Senate's website describes as "an amazing feat of legislative action."

To thank Robinson for his support, the president told him: "Joe, I want to take one of America's great rivers and develop it with dams that will create electric power, dam up the water to avoid floods and create the recreation we do not have. Would you like it on the Arkansas?"

Robinson told Roosevelt he would check with his constituents. The senator called his close friend and political ally Harvey Couch, founder of Arkansas Power & Light Company. Couch's response to the offer: "I don't want to compete with public power; I don't want that project."

After Robinson turned down the opportunity, Roosevelt offered it to Tennessee Sen. Cordell Hull, who quickly accepted. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was born.

The TVA began providing inexpensive electricity to rural residents in 1934, transforming Tennessee and parts of North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. TVA served as a demonstration to show farmers throughout the South the benefits of having an electrified farm and home.

The success of the TVA later gave rise to discussions of forming an Arkansas Valley Authority. It never became a reality, but hydroelectric dams were constructed along the state's White, Ouachita and Arkansas rivers that provide affordable electricity to the state's cooperatives.

Theodore Roosevelt

THE LONG WAIT

Agricultural groups, farmers and politicians had been talking about the need for getting electricity into the countryside since the beginning of the century. Many in government and leadership were appalled at the drudgery-ridden conditions in which rural Americans lived and worked.

President Theodore Roosevelt established a commission in 1909 to study the lack of services and conveniences in rural areas. The resulting report was the first, official expression of federal concern over the need to electrify rural areas. Pointing to the lack of power and light on farms, the report recommended that people might organize into cooperatives to obtain services.

Roosevelt called for Congress to take steps to improve rural conditions, writing in a memo, "The farmers above all should have that (hydroelectric) power, on reasonable terms, for cheap transportation, for lighting their homes, and for innumerable uses in the daily tasks on the farm."

The disparities between rural and city life, as pointed out by Roosevelt, were apparent in Washington County. Fayetteville residents had been enjoying the conveniences of electricity since 1888 when the Fayetteville Electric Light and Power Company built a plant to service the town. Almost 50 years later, the lines carrying power to city homes had not stretched to the northwest Arkansas countryside.

Though Theodore Roosevelt set a progressive agenda for rural electrification, it would be almost three decades before his cousin Franklin Delano Roosevelt succeeded at putting words into action.

"The farmers above all should have that (hydroelectric) power, on reasonable terms, for cheap transportation, for lighting their homes, and for innumerable uses in the daily tasks on the farm." – **THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

Franklin D. Roosevelt

SOUTHERN INSPIRATION

Though the idea had been bantered around for more than a decade, rural electrification went from an idea to reality thanks to some southern inspiration. The more than 900 not-for-profit electric cooperative utilities operating today in the U.S. can trace their roots back to a rural Georgia community and the farmers who lived there.

Wealthy New Yorker Franklin D. Roosevelt traveled to Warm Springs, Georgia, in 1924 to seek out the area's therapeutic waters that he hoped would benefit his polio-crippled body. On that first trip to the South he liked everything he found and chose to make Warm Springs a second home. He visited regularly for the rest of his life.

The future president would later recall that only one thing marred the otherwise-pleasant experience of his first stay in Warm Springs. Speaking at a Georgia cooperative's dedication in August 1938 President Roosevelt shared this story:

"Fourteen years ago a Democratic Yankee came to a neighboring county in your state in search of a pool of warm water wherein he might swim his way back to health … His new neighbors extended to him the hand of genuine hospitality, welcomed him to their firesides and made him feel so much at home that he built himself a house, bought himself a farm, and has been coming back ever since.

"There was only one discordant note in that first stay of mine at Warm Springs: When the first-of-the-month bill came for electric light for my little cottage, I found that the charge was 18 cents a kilowatt-hour — about four times as much as I paid in Hyde Park, New York. That started my long study of proper public-utility charges for electric current and the whole subject of getting electricity into farm homes," Roosevelt said, explaining the origins of his long-term interest in accessible, affordable electricity for all.

Roosevelt, always a keen observer of the human condition, saw how his Georgia neighbors struggled to do housework and farm work without the assistance of electricity. This inspired him to make bringing rural America out of the darkness a priority when he became the nation's president in 1933.

"Electricity is a modern necessity of life and ought to be found in every village, every home, and every farm in every part of the United States," he said. He believed that if farmers could afford to electrify their homes and farms, it would improve their incomes and raise rural standards of living.

"Electricity is a modern necessity of life and ought to be found in every village, every home, and every farm in every part of the United States." — **FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT**

Years before he became president, Roosevelt began tackling the idea of rural electrification. Though the going was slow, he never forgot that hardworking farm families nationwide needed and wanted electricity. On May 11, 1935, he signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to make federal funds available to build systems throughout the countryside. The REA was one of several national programs designed to stimulate economic growth and decrease unemployment during the Great Depression. It became one of the U.S. government's most successful projects.

Investor-owned power companies showed little interest in using the funds to expand their services to rural residents. Roosevelt's idea didn't take off until some farm organizations proposed allowing citizens to form non-profit electric cooperatives.

Ultimately, cooperatives like Ozarks Electric Cooperative Corporation, delivered the power that transformed the nation's heartland and revolutionized American farms. Member-owned utilities accomplished Roosevelt's dream of lighting up the countryside — an idea that took root in the South.

THE ANSWER IS 'NO'

Washington County ranked number one in Arkansas in agricultural income in 1935 when President Roosevelt announced creation of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) as one of the New Deal relief agencies. The primary function of the REA was to oversee a $100 million appropriation to be used to build rural electricity systems.

REA officials assumed that existing power companies, such as Arkansas Power & Light (AP&L) and Southwestern Gas & Electric Co., would request the funds to extend lines into rural America. Washington County farmers such as Shannon Pharr and L.E. Maupin were among those who hoped Southwestern, the commercial utility serving Fayetteville and Springdale, would use REA funding to extend power lines beyond the city limits.

AP&L, which was privately owned and operated by successful telephone and utility operator Harvey Couch, was the primary electric utility company for much of Arkansas in 1935. Smaller companies, like Southwestern, followed AP&L's lead.

The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture notes that 2.1 percent of Arkansas farms had electricity in 1930. Most received it from central power stations operated by AP&L. The company had been an early leader in rural electrification, bringing power to rice fields near Stuttgart as early as 1918.

In 1935, AP&L initiated a private utility rural electrification program by building lines in Grant and Hot Spring counties. Rural customers were charged more per kilowatt-hour than urban residents so AP&L could recover the cost of line construction. High rates caused farmers to use an average of only 40 kilowatts per month as compared to an average 500 consumed by city customers. Commercial utilities pointed to rural consumption in these "test" markets, reasoning that extending power lines to the countryside would not be profitable anywhere in Arkansas.

Farmers wanted electricity but stockholder-owned power companies would not give it to them because there was no profit in it.

The story was similar across the nation. Farmers wanted electricity but stockholder-owned power companies would not give it to them because there was no profit in it. They could get more customers in a city block than in 100 square miles of farmland.

Seeing no way to make the venture profitable, AP&L, Southwestern and other commercial utilities did not respond as Roosevelt and REA officials had hoped. They wanted to use the REA funding to extend lines to only the most densely populated rural areas, which would still leave the majority of farms without power.

A year after the REA was formed, most of the funding allotted for rural electrification had not been claimed. Washington County residents who had eagerly awaited their chance for power were forced to continue to wait and watch.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The rural electric movement gained new strength in 1936 with the passage of the federal Rural Electrification Act. This new legislation allowed farmers to form customer-owned electric cooperatives — utilities owned and governed by the rural residents using the electricity rather than by profit-motivated investors. These cooperatives could apply for the REA funding allocated for rural electrification.

To qualify for an REA loan, Arkansas farm and community leaders had to band together to form local electric cooperatives. Country folks were accustomed to helping each other with construction, planting and harvesting, so the idea of working together to get electricity wasn't a hard concept to sell.

Residents in some counties organized quickly to bring the power commercial electric companies had denied them. Three rural electric cooperatives were chartered by June 1937. Four more were incorporated later that year. On April 15, 1938, First Electric would become the first to energize its lines.

LOOKING BACK

"We had a big icehouse with eight-inch walls. We'd buy ice, wrap it in cotton sacks and bury it in sawdust to keep it cold. It would stay frozen for about three months."

— **WADE BLEVINS**, ELKINS, DESCRIBING "REFRIGERATION" BEFORE ELECTRICITY

HAPPY HOLIDAY

Those who had been waiting their turn to get electricity received an early Christmas gift in 1937. On December 17, a front-page story in the Northwest Arkansas Times reported "development of the rural electrification program in Washington County in the near future is the hope of the newly organized board, headed by L.E. Maupin."

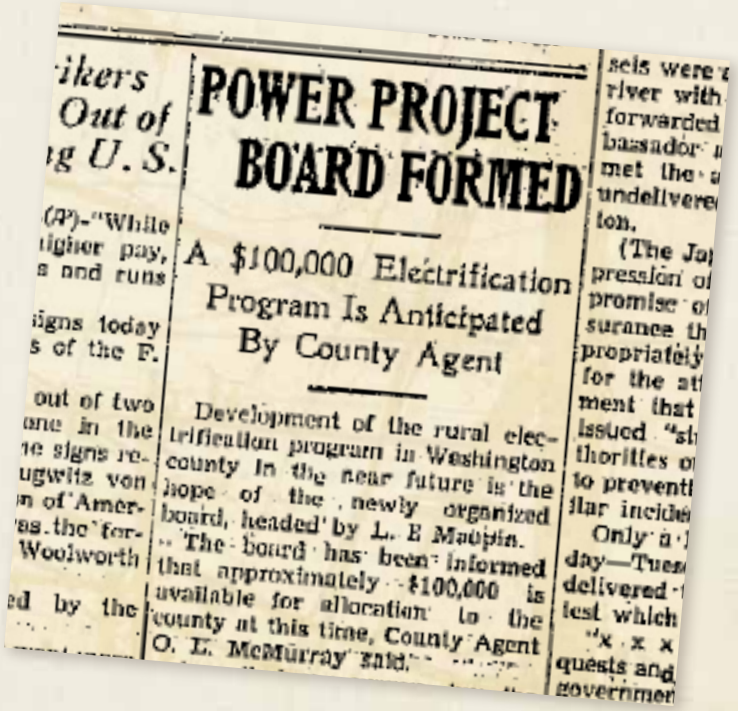
Joining Maupin, a beef cattle farmer from Prairie Grove, on what was called the "power project board" were Harry Goforth, Fayetteville; Shannon Pharr, Morrow; F.E. Perkins, Springdale; and Walter Roberts, Prairie Township.

Extension and Farm Bureau leaders teamed up to make progress on building a rural system. County Agent O.L. McMurray served as the informal initial project manager. He reported to the new board that approximately $100,000 was available to the county for building an electric system.

A survey revealed there was sufficient interest among county residents to build 225 miles of electric lines to serve about 1,500 families, McMurray told the new board.

The next step toward bringing lights to the Washington County countryside was having a survey conducted by a state electrical engineer.

The news left farm wives like Edna Henbest eager for 1938 and the state electrical engineer to arrive. They were already saving for the electric water pumps, washing machines, irons, lights and radios that would change their lives.



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POWER PROJECT BOARD FORMED

A $100,000 Electrification Program Is Anticipated By County Agent

Development of the rural electrification program in Washington county in the near future is the hope of the newly organized board, headed by L. E Maupin.

The board has been informed that approximately $100,000 is available for allocation to the county at this time, County Agent O. L. McMurray said.

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CHAPTER TWO *Bringing the light*

"I think the most outstanding thing I did in my life was to be a leader in getting electricity for the rural people. I drove 1,600 miles without pay before we had a light shining. Now, every time I drive out over the country and see the lights shining, I feel I have been very well paid."

— **L.E. MAUPIN**, AN ORIGINAL ORGANIZER OF OZARKS ELECTRIC

Like a sleepy bear emerging from winter hibernation, America was slowly awaking from its economic slumber as 1938 dawned. The country was gradually recovering from the worst of the Depression. Even the threat of war looming in Europe could not fully dampen an enthusiasm that permeated cities, towns and farming communities alike.

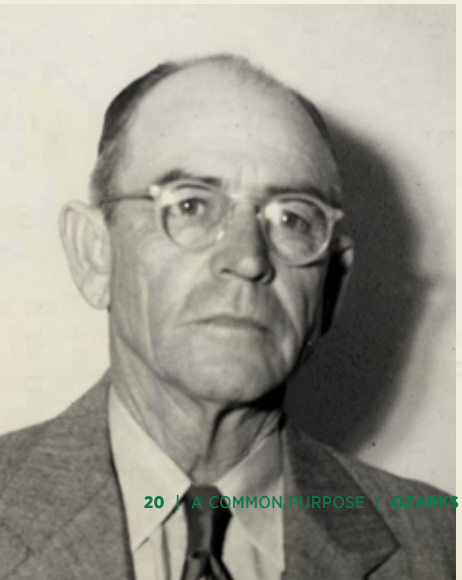
Northwest Arkansas farmers were among the optimistic. They were beginning to reap the rewards of Roosevelt's New Deal programs that renewed the farming sector. Prices for agricultural commodities had rebounded to pre-World War I levels, putting a little money in farmers' pockets for the first time in almost two decades.

The new year also brought a renewed hope for electricity among the rural residents of Washington County. Things had gotten rolling late the year before with the formation of a citizen board tasked with leading the community in getting a rural electric system.

Residents had been told that the next step was getting land surveyed for building the system. But with new cooperative systems popping up all around, the demand for a surveyor was high. Once again they were forced to patiently wait.

When spring arrived on the Ozarks Plateau in 1938 there was renewed hope that electricity was coming soon.

Photo courtesy MarkCorder.com



THE WAITING GAME

Northwest Arkansans weren't the only ones anxiously awaiting rural electrification. A January 6 article in the Northwest Arkansas Times details rural electrification administrator John Carmody's testimony before a congressional subcommittee that interest in REA loans was exceeding available funds. Once citizens were allowed, and encouraged, to form cooperatives to apply for funds, the program had caught on like wildfire.

By the end of 1937, the REA had 325 rural electrification projects in 40 states.

Carmody listed 19 states in which the "excess of applications over funds available exceeded $1,000,000." Arkansas was among them. By the end of 1937, the REA had 325 rural electrification projects in 40 states. Loans as of mid-November of that year amounted to $72 million.

TOP: On May 23, 1938, the first board of directors meeting for Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation met at 20 ½ East Center Street in Fayetteville.

BOTTOM LEFT: Shannon Pharr, a farmer from Morrow, was elected as the first president of Ozarks Electric's board of directors. He served as a director until his retirement in 1952.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Harry Goforth of Fayetteville signed on as one of the seven incorporators of the Cooperative. He was a director from 1938 to 1941.

Congress appropriated additional funding to, as Carmody described it, "meet a portion of the most urgent needs for projects in areas which have no electric service." The funding was available for lighting up the northwest Arkansas countryside.

Perhaps ironically, at about the same time Carmody was testifying in Washington, Arkansas county and home demonstration Extension Service agents were meeting in Fayetteville to discuss ways to promote higher standards of rural living throughout the state. As agents made plans for demonstrations to promote their recommendations for generating greater income and productivity on farms, residents only a few miles away were waiting for the single thing — electricity — that could almost instantly enhance both.

Adjacent to the article about the Extension agent meeting was a brief announcement about a free "motion picture showing the operation of the TVA" to be presented on January 20 at the courthouse. Rep. Clyde Ellis of Bentonville, who would later take on a leading national role in rural electrification, was to be on hand to make a short address on "A TVA in the Ozarks."

It seemed the benefits of rural electrification were being touted all around them, but a majority of Washington County's farmers didn't need any convincing. They already understood what electricity could mean for their homes and farms. Now, they just needed to get the system built to deliver it.

FORMING A COOPERATIVE

The surveyor arrived and did his job sometime in the winter of 1938. Along the way, the scope of the new electric distribution system expanded and eastern Madison County was added to the proposed service area.

Next, paperwork had to be filed with the REA to solicit funds for the project. In the spring, news came that $200,000 had been allocated for constructing 210 miles of lines in Washington and eastern Madison counties. To receive the funding, residents had to first form a consumer-owned cooperative business.

On May 16, 1938, a group of supporters met to formally establish Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation.

On May 16, 1938, a group of supporters met to formally establish Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation (Ozarks Electric). Seven signatures were placed on the articles of incorporation submitted to the Arkansas secretary of state. Signing themselves into the history books that day were Edna Henbest of Mount Comfort, Harry Goforth of Fayetteville, C.D. Griscom of Lincoln, J.D. Easley of Crosses, Shannon Pharr of Morrow, F.E. Perkins of Springdale and A.H. Berry of Hindsville in Madison County.

Ozarks Electric was the 11th electric cooperative to be incorporated in Arkansas. Eventually, the state would be home to 17 member-owned electric distribution utilities.

The incorporators, who served as the first directors of Ozarks Electric, held their inaugural meeting on May 23 at 20½ East Center Street in Fayetteville. The new directors adopted bylaws and accepted the first applications for cooperative membership. They also elected officers, selecting Pharr as president, Easley as vice president and Perkins as secretary. Henbest became the board's first treasurer.

Before the year's end, the board appointed another female member. Gladys Karnes, a community leader from Cane Hill, became a director in December 1938. She served until the first member-elected board was seated in November 1939.

GUIDED BY PRINCIPLES

When they formed Ozarks Electric in 1938, the founders used the Rochdale principles — a set of ideals for the operation of a cooperative — as guidelines for determining how the utility would be operated. Fundamental to these characteristics is that the company is owned by those who use its services. So, every customer is a member-owner of the Cooperative. Though many things have changed in 75 years, Ozarks Electric remains dedicated to these distinct, time-tested cooperative principles:

Voluntary and Open Membership – Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

Democratic Member Control – Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. Members have equal voting rights.

Member Economic Participation – Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.

Autonomy and Independence – Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

Education, Training and Information – Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives – Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, regional, national and international structures.

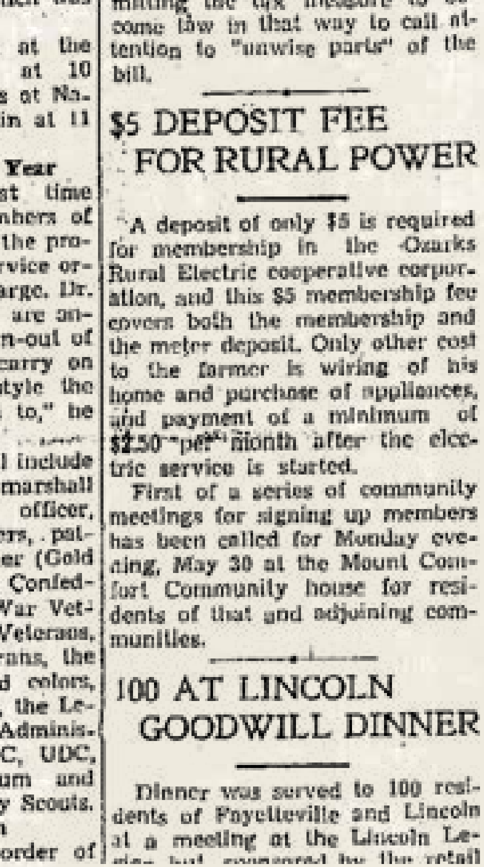
Concern for Community – While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

RALLYING SUPPORT

Now that Ozarks Electric was officially a cooperative, it needed members. Chairpersons were selected and volunteer committees formed for each rural community to conduct a membership drive.

Many stepped forward to help recruit their neighbors as new cooperative members and secure right-of-way

Richard Domenic "Memo" Morsani, shown standing before St. Joseph Catholic Church in Tontitown, was among those who helped recruit cooperative members. *Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/Richard Roso Collection (S-82-78-14)*



...come law in that way to call attention to "unwise parts" of the bill.

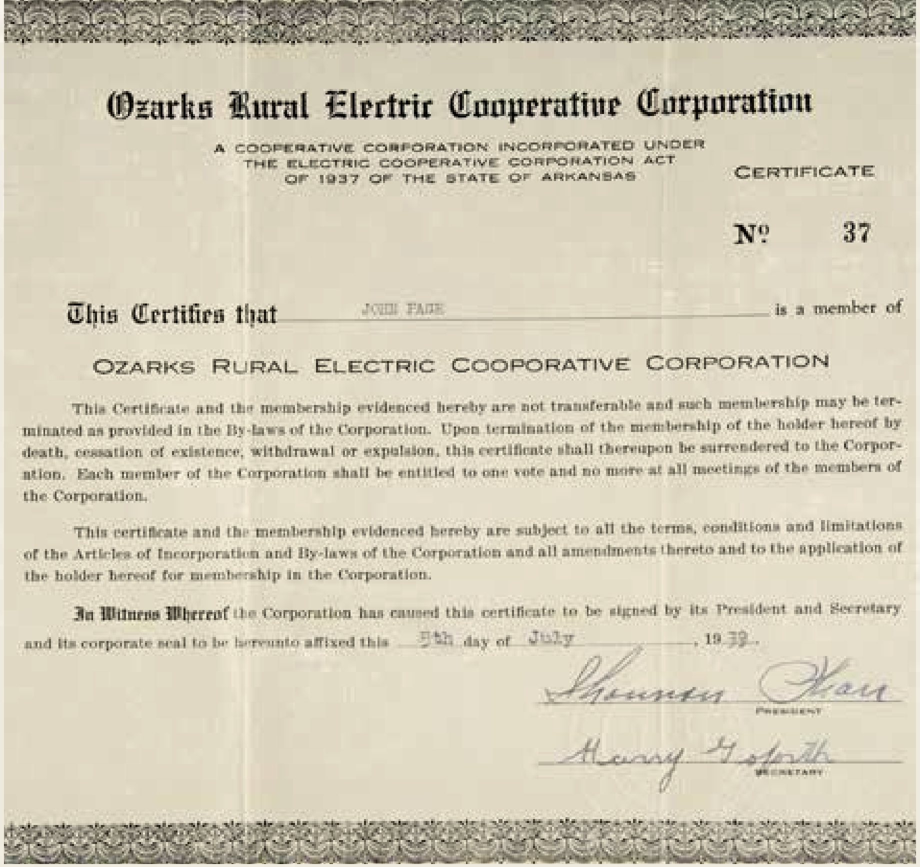
$5 DEPOSIT FEE FOR RURAL POWER

A deposit of only $5 is required for membership in the Ozarks Rural Electric cooperative corporation, and this $5 membership fee covers both the membership and the meter deposit. Only other cost to the farmer is wiring of his home and purchase of appliances, and payment of a minimum of $2.50 per month after the electric service is started.

First of a series of community meetings for signing up members has been called for Monday evening, May 30 at the Mount Comfort Community house for residents of that and adjoining communities.

100 AT LINCOLN GOODWILL DINNER

Dinner was served to 100 residents of Fayetteville and Lincoln at a meeting at the Lincoln Le-...



Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation

A COOPERATIVE CORPORATION INCORPORATED UNDER THE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CORPORATION ACT OF 1937 OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

CERTIFICATE

No 37

This Certifies that JOHN PAGE is a member of

OZARKS RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CORPORATION

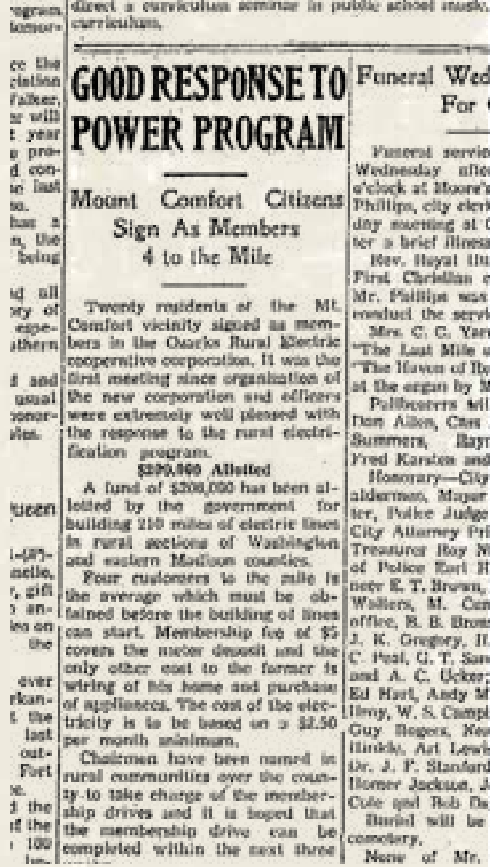
This Certificate and the membership evidenced hereby are not transferable and such membership may be terminated as provided in the By-laws of the Corporation. Upon termination of the membership of the holder hereof by death, cessation of existence, withdrawal or expulsion, this certificate shall thereupon be surrendered to the Corporation. Each member of the Corporation shall be entitled to one vote and no more at all meetings of the members of the Corporation.

This certificate and the membership evidenced hereby are subject to all the terms, conditions and limitations of the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws of the Corporation and all amendments thereto and to the application of the holder hereof for membership in the Corporation.

In Witness Whereof the Corporation has caused this certificate to be signed by its President and Secretary and its corporate seal to be hereunto affixed this 5th day of July, 1939.

Shannon Pharr
PRESIDENT

Harry Goforth
SECRETARY



GOOD RESPONSE TO POWER PROGRAM

Mount Comfort Citizens Sign As Members 4 to the Mile

Twenty residents of the Mt. Comfort vicinity signed as members in the Ozarks Rural Electric cooperative corporation. It was the first meeting since organization of the new corporation and officers were extremely well pleased with the response to the rural electrification program.

$200,000 Allotted

A fund of $200,000 has been allotted by the government for building 210 miles of electric lines in rural sections of Washington and eastern Madison counties.

Four customers to the mile is the average which must be obtained before the building of lines can start. Membership fee of $5 covers the meter deposit and the only other cost to the farmer is wiring of his home and purchase of appliances. The cost of the electricity is to be based on a $2.50 per month minimum.

Chairmen have been named in rural communities over the county to take charge of the membership drives and it is hoped that the membership drive can be completed within the next three...

LEFT: Articles in the Northwest Arkansas Times helped spread the word that a cooperative membership drive was under way in May 1938.

MIDDLE: A membership certificate indicates John Page, who joined in July 1939, was officially the 37th member of the newly formed cooperative.

RIGHT: Edna Henbest and her Mount Comfort neighbors led the way by signing up the first 20 members at a community meeting in May 30, 1938.

easements essential for construction of rural power lines. Prairie Grove's L.E. Maupin, chair of the original power board, and Morrow's Lillie Pharr, mother of board president Shannon Pharr, solicited throughout the county. Italian immigrants Memo and Rose Morsani worked as translators to help convince non-English speaking vineyard owners around Tontitown that getting electricity would benefit them. Oren Penny, one-time owner of the Cannon Creek Store, joined fellow rural residents Jim Anderson and J.D. Easley to hold community meetings. Housewives, country storeowners, farmers and others took up the cooperative cause.

Membership recruiters needed to secure at least four customers per mile of line before construction could begin. Each new member

was expected to pay a $5 membership fee that included a meter deposit and was "the only cost except wiring of the home and purchase of electric appliances." In addition, members agreed to pay a minimum $2.50 per month after the electric service started.

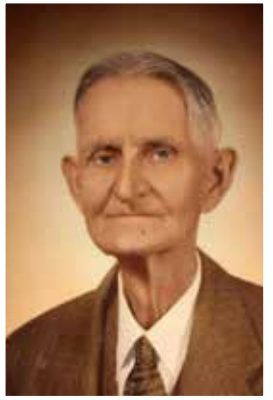
The membership recruitment team proved to be a dynamic group. They scheduled community meetings and then followed up with door-to-door campaigns to get fellow farmers, friends and neighbors signed up to "get lights" on a cooperative basis.

The first in a series of community meetings was held on May 30 in Mount Comfort. Edna Henbest led efforts at this stop and succeeded in landing the Cooperative's first 20 members.

The next day, the Northwest Arkansas Times reported that officers of the new corporation were "extremely pleased" with this initial response to bring rural electrification to the area. A week later, cooperative board members confidently committed to meet their membership goal by July 1. If the initial membership recruitment could be completed by then, the setting of poles and other operations preliminary to the beginning of service to rural consumers could start soon.

More community meetings were held and more rural residents signed on as Ozarks Electric members. By June 18, 200 farmers had already committed to become members.

LEADING THE WAY



When Washington County farmers began investigating the feasibility of getting electricity for their homes and barns, they turned to Prairie Grove farmer L.E. Maupin to chair the "power board." The choice proved to be a good one. The Washington County farmer became a dedicated advocate for rural electricity and remained so for the rest of his life.

Maupin declined a seat on Ozarks Electric's original board of directors, choosing instead to take on the role of volunteer coordinator. In this capacity, he trained community leaders to conduct neighborhood meetings and recruit cooperative members. In only six weeks, Maupin and his army of volunteers signed up enough farmers to assure organization of Ozarks Electric and qualify for the REA loan necessary to build a rural electricity delivery system.

During a 1958 interview, Maupin recalled that some of his early member recruitment efforts were centered around Tontitown where numerous vineyards were located. Grape growers living in the area were concerned that the proposed electric wires would fall down and kill their vineyards. Maupin was successful in convincing the farmers this wasn't likely to happen and converted

them to members who became enthusiastic about obtaining electric service. Tontitown became the first area to receive power when Ozarks Electric's lines were initially energized in May 1939, and Maupin was on hand to celebrate the milestone.

Reflecting on his efforts to recruit some of Ozarks Electric's original members, Maupin said: "I think the most outstanding thing I did in my life was to be a leader in getting electricity for the rural people. I drove 1,600 miles without pay before we had a light shining. Now, every time I drive out over the country and see the lights shining, I feel I have been very well paid."

After his work as a member recruiter for Ozarks Electric was completed, Maupin was elected as a cooperative director. He held the position continuously until his death — more than 25 years later. In addition to his service to the local cooperative, Maupin was an incorporator of Arkansas Electric Cooperative, a federation of local electric cooperatives formed to generate wholesale power at the lowest possible cost for cooperative members.

MOVING FORWARD

The two-penny price of the October 19, 1938, issue of the Northwest Arkansas Times might have proved well worth it to rural consumers who had been patiently waiting throughout the year for electricity to arrive. A front-page article announced the REA was allotting more funds to build Ozarks Electric lines because 888 consumers had already become members. The community recruiters had done their jobs well.

The boundaries of the new cooperative had also expanded again. In response to farmers' requests, a portion of Benton County was added to the proposed service territory.

The REA approved a $244,000 loan to initially build 260 miles of line with an option to add another 100. This would potentially provide electricity to about 1,500 homes, businesses, schools and churches in the three-county service territory.

E.H. Looney

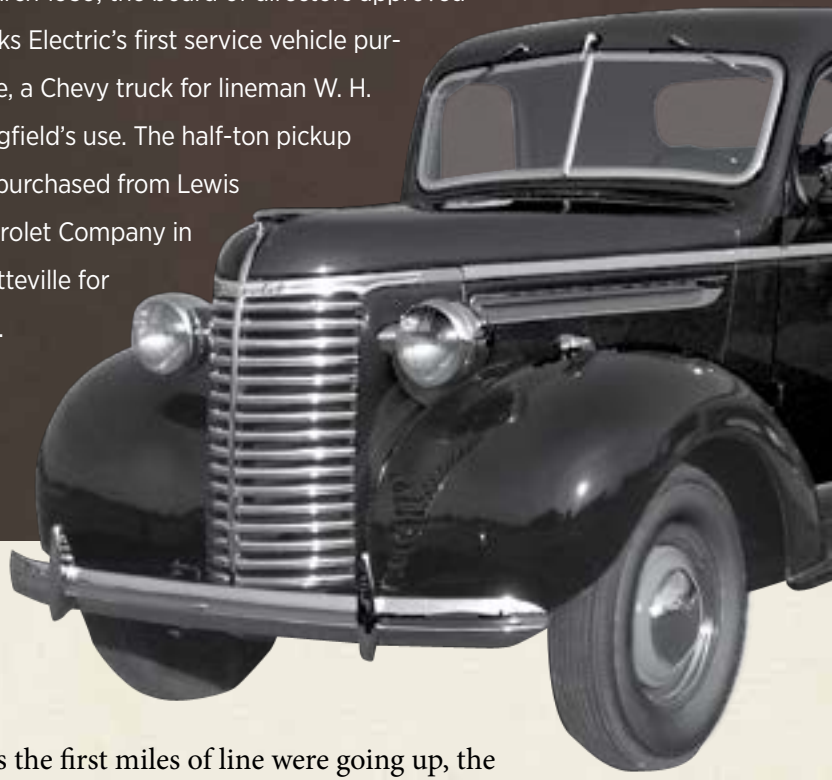
With financing locked in, the board quickly took steps to begin building. E.H. Looney was hired as the resident engineer (later called superintendent) to oversee the system's initial stages of construction, a feat of intense, manual labor. W.H. Stringfield would come on board as lineman and maintenance man the next spring.

Constructing the infrastructure necessary to deliver electricity was a feat of intense, manual labor. Building lines was a complex process, especially in the sometimes-rugged terrain of the Ozarks. Construction crews were often aided by Ozarks Electric members, who were given first preference as laborers. The workers had to use mules to carry building supplies into places where trucks couldn't go. Work progressed slowly since the crews did not have big bucket trucks with hydraulic winches and power diggers that are common today. Holes for poles were dug by hand or with crude diggers. Poles were lifted by crank winches or by men lifting and pulling on ropes. Linemen had to climb poles to attach lines.

Setting poles and attaching power lines in the rugged Ozarks hills was a feat of intense, manual labor.

WHEELS

In March 1939, the board of directors approved Ozarks Electric's first service vehicle purchase, a Chevy truck for lineman W. H. Stringfield's use. The half-ton pickup was purchased from Lewis Chevrolet Company in Fayetteville for $575.



As the first miles of line were going up, the board voted to set tentative rates at approximately 7 cents for the first 35 kilowatt hours used monthly and around 5 cents for the next 45. The next 920 kilowatt hours would cost 3 cents each. Any consumption exceeding 2,000 kilowatt hours per month would be billed at about 2 cents each. Schools and churches would pay a flat rate of $1.50 per month for electric service.

LOOKING BACK

Wayne Neal was 16 years old in 1936 when E. H. Looney arrived in Washington County to conduct preliminary surveying for a then-future rural electricity system. He got a job with the survey team, working after school and in the summer.

He worked for the construction company that built Ozarks Electric's original electricity distribution system in 1939 and later helped expand the system after World War II. He was a "powder monkey," the crewman responsible for rigging dynamite explosions to blow holes in the rocky Ozarks terrain to set poles.

Later, Neal became a lineman for Ozarks Electric and spent his days climbing poles to do his job. He still has his pole-climbing hooks— mementos of his contribution to rural electricity.

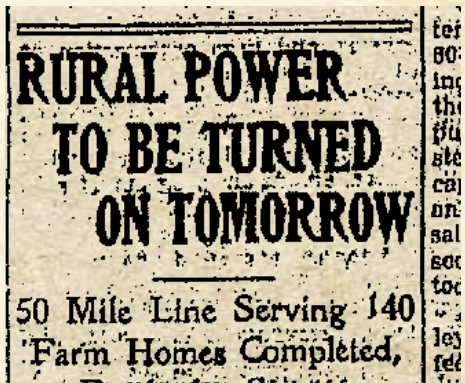
LIGHTING UP THE COUNTRYSIDE

At 6:15 on Thursday evening, July 6, 1939, KUOA Radio presented a special program on the history of "the Ozarks REA project" featuring guests E.H. Looney, project superintendent, and Fred Jordan, an REA official. The broadcast prefaced a long-awaited day in rural Washington County — the day the lights came on.

A crowd of about 300 supporters left behind farm and home chores to gather on Friday, July 7, in Tontitown to dedicate the new system. Guest speakers, electric appliance demonstrations and contests attracted farm families anxious to welcome electricity.

The first section of the rural electrification project was energized on May 10. The home of S.T. Cantrell of Tontitown was the first to receive power. Cantrell and his wife Juanita provided land on their farm situated between Springdale and Tontitown to build Ozarks Electric's first substation, a structure essential to electricity distribution. A nominal $2 was paid to the Cantrells for the land.

A 50-mile section of northwestern Washington County, including Tontitown, Harmon, Elm Springs, Stony Point, Wheeler, Mount Comfort and Meadow Valley, were incrementally energized that first day. Of the 140 cooperative members on the



RURAL POWER
TO BE TURNED
ON TOMORROW

50 Mile Line Serving 140
Farm Homes Completed,

About 100 farm families in northwestern Washington County began enjoying lights in their homes and barns when a 50-mile section of power lines was energized on May 10, 1939.

section, about 100 had their homes wired and equipment installed to receive electric service when it initially became available.

Eighty-five miles of line were built and energized in the county's northwestern quadrant before crews moved to the east side of the county and began work there on May 15. By early July, 753 members living along 224 miles of line in parts of Washington, Madison and Benton counties had received power.

The wait was finally over. Electricity had arrived.

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

Not everyone was happy about the quick success of Ozarks Electric and other consumer-formed electric cooperatives. Investor-owned utilities, which had previously been uninterested in extending their lines to sparsely populated rural areas, began reversing their stance. In 1938, they wanted a piece of the action.

But they wanted only a piece — the lucrative piece. Just as they had done when President Roosevelt and the REA first offered funds for building rural electric systems, the city-based utilities wanted to build lines to only densely populated rural areas, ignoring the needs of the majority of the rural population. They went to the Arkansas Department of Public Utilities seeking permits to build lines to select rural communities, overlapping the system building under way by consumer-owned cooperatives.

Arkansas rural electric cooperatives and the Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation fought back.

H.S. Mobley, a new member of Ozarks Electric and representative of the Farmers' Union, was among those defending the cooperatives at a Department of Public Utilities meeting held in September 1938.

The Prairie Grove farmer told the utilities authorities that "farm people of a given area, regardless of whether they live in a thickly settled or a sparsely settled neighborhood, should have opportunity to avail themselves of the services and comforts of electricity, so long as the project for the whole area is a feasible one..."

He continued, adding: "We see no reason why any power company should be given a permit to construct lines designed to take only the cream of the rural business and leave the rest. We feel further that if the power companies do not have sufficient funds to develop fully these areas where farmers want electricity, then the Department of Public Utilities should ask that they refrain from any development whatsoever in the areas, leaving them open to be developed by farmers themselves, through the cooperation of the Rural Electrification Administration."

With those words, Mobley threw down the proverbial gauntlet, setting off a power struggle between the state's rural electric cooperatives and commercial utilities. The battle would span decades.

CHAPTER THREE *Powering progress*

"... one dares not place any limits on the possibilities of electricity in the future."

— **GEORGE BUCHER**, PRESIDENT OF WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC AND MANUFACTURING CO., 1939

The landscape was quickly changing along the rugged hills and down in the valleys of the Ozarks. Tall wood poles jutted up from the scenery, standing like sentinels of a new era. Lines elegantly draped from one pole to the next, looking much like holiday garland strung on a fireplace mantle. The electricity coursing through those lines was lighting up country homes, farms and businesses in northwest Arkansas.

The electricity was changing people. It began powering cooperative members' hopes and dreams for a better life. Electricity was the great equalizer between town and country. With the flip of a switch, rural Arkansans were sprinting toward a tomorrow filled with possibilities.

Electricity improved productivity in the fast-growing poultry industry.

LOOKING BACK

"The REA line came in just after we finished our new home (in 1939) ... I can remember how nice that first electricity was."

— **GEORGE HERMAN**, JAPTON, QUOTED IN RURAL ARKANSAS, 1972

'SAD' NO MORE

By summer 1939, membership applications and the required $5 fee were stacking up in the office in Fayetteville. Construction crews were erecting poles and lines as quickly as possible, which was sometimes slow going in rugged terrain. Meanwhile, Ozarks Electric's board of directors and management kept an eye on the future, applying for more REA funding and mapping out the fast-expanding system.

Once they had electricity, Ozarks Electric families found plenty of new ways to consume it. They flocked to Fayetteville retailers to purchase new appliances. Local stores experienced explosive demand for appliances to help with chores like washing, ironing, cooking, sewing and preserving foods.

The first item many rural housewives purchased was an electric iron, a replacement for the despised, heavy "sad iron" they had been forced to use to press clothes. An electric Sunbeam iron with dial-a-heat features cost $12 at Cy Carney Appliance Company.

Washington County native Loy Caughman, who was 12 years old when his family first had electricity in their home, remembers an iron being the electric appliance his mother liked most. The family, who lived in Greenland, also enjoyed having lamps for reading and a radio for entertainment. His favorite appliance, however, was an electric toaster.

Large appliance purchases quickly followed small ones as soon as families could afford it. A new Maytag clothes washer could be had from Guisinger Music House with "easy payment terms" of only $1 a week, the Fayetteville retailer promised in advertisements displayed in the Northwest Arkansas Times.

LOOKING BACK

"The radio and a Frigidaire we bought were the favorite electric appliances at our house."

— SONJA STOKENBURY BLEVINS,

WHO GREW UP IN ELKINS

New Ozarks Electric members rushed to buy electric appliances for their homes.

Phillips Motor Co. proudly announced it had become the region's exclusive Westinghouse dealership, inviting shoppers to check out its new line of electric refrigerators. At LinkWay Stores Co., shoppers were getting a look at the 1939 Frigidaire, "the world's first cold-wall refrigerator," ads claimed. Meanwhile, Montgomery Ward was offering its new 6.4 cubic-foot refrigerator for $121 with a $5 delivery fee. Campbell & Bell was advertising Kelvinator refrigerators for "as low as $99.50."

Though women were typically the first in the household to embrace the conveniences electricity offered, the men soon discovered that electric equipment could ease their workload and increase farm productivity. Farmers bought electric coolers for their milk and power motors to pump water, grind feed, milk cows and saw wood.

Photo: Louis Edward Nollau F Series Photographic Print Collection, University of Kentucky

RADIO DAYS

Farm families anxious to add news as well as entertainment to their days often made a radio one of their first electrical appliance purchases.

New Ozarks Electric members might have been drawn to Campbell & Bell Dry Goods Company in Fayetteville to shop for a radio. They could buy a Crosley console for $39.50. A Philco floor model could be had for $34.95.

Farmers quickly learned to rely on their radios for market and weather reports. While eating lunch, they listened to "The National Farm and Home Hour" for agricultural advice and tips from agencies and government officials.

A farm wife might listen to a soap opera like "The Guiding Light" while using her new electric iron to press the family laundry.

Children rushed to finish chores in time to catch the latest adventures of "The Lone Ranger" and "Little Orphan Annie."

In the evening, families gathered around the radio to enjoy programs like "Burns and Allen" and "The Edgar Bergen – Charlie McCarthy Show." On Saturday nights, they listened to music from the Grand Ole Opry or the National Barn Dance.

When the U.S. entered World War II, the radio became a vital link to what was happening on battlefields around the globe. Families tuned in to President Roosevelt's "fireside chats" for updates on the war as well as plans for peace.


Wednesday, Oct. 9, 1940 NORTHWEST ARKANSAS TI

REA Equipment Show

THE 'CIRCUS' COMES TO TOWN

From the day the first lights were switched on in Tontitown, Ozarks Electric was on a hot streak. An average of 20 families were being connected to cooperative lines each month. By October 1940, cooperative electricity was being delivered to more than 1,000 farms with another 550 due to be getting service in a few weeks. It was an ideal time for the arrival of the REA Farm Electric Show, which came to the area on October 10 and 11 that year.

The consumer education show was officially billed as the "Cavalcade of Electricity" but nicknamed the "REA circus" because the traveling exhibit included two huge tents, several smaller tents, 20 trailers and truckloads of electric farm equipment and household appliances. Sponsored by Ozarks Electric and Carroll Electric, the show was held at the Davis farm just off Highway 71, a mile north of Lowell.

The men came to see demonstrations for putting electricity to productive work on the farm. Electric-powered feed grinders, shellers, elevators, cutters, pumps and motors packed the show's midway. Ozarks Electric members showed particular interest in the irrigation systems that could improve vegetable and fruit crops. Dairy farmers were interested in electrical devices that could help them earn bigger cream checks and reduce labor. Demonstrations showing the value of running

water in poultry, dairy and swine production attracted a crowd.

Under the show's "big top" tent, women sat to watch demonstrations of "new, labor-lightening home appliances." Crowds gathered to see washing machines, electric irons and other home laundry appliances "that take the rub out of wash day," presenters assured. Meats large enough for hungry harvest hands were prepared in electric ranges and roasters by REA home electrification specialists.

WESTWARD EXPANSION

Just as electric lights were beginning to light up the countryside of northwest Arkansas, an Oklahoma woman was eyeing Ozarks Electric and wondering, "What if?"

Roberta Hitchcock lived in Eldon, Oklahoma, a crossroads community straddling the Adair and Cherokee county lines. Like other rural women, she despised the heavy "sad iron" she had to heat on a wood stove to press shirts for her husband, William, and sons Raymond and Russell. She longed for the conveniences of electricity that could not only reduce her workload at home, but also enhance Hitchcock's Place, the general store she and her husband operated near the intersection of Oklahoma highways 51 and 62 in the heart of the Cherokee Nation. Now, electricity — and all its possibilities — was just 20 miles east across the state line in Arkansas.

MEMBERS MEET

Vera Crain, a poultry producer from Harmon, was elected to the Ozarks Electric's board of directors at the first annual meeting in 1939.

Since 1939, Ozarks Electric member-owners have met annually to review their cooperative business and elect representatives to the board of directors. The meeting puts into practice the cooperative principle of self-governance by members.

Ozark Electric's first annual meeting was held at 10 a.m. on Nov. 4, 1939, at the National Guard Armory in Fayetteville. Members elected J.D. Easley, Crosses; A.H. Berry, Hindsville; Harry Goforth, Fayetteville; Vera Crain, Harmon; Shannon Pharr, Morrow; C.D. Griscom, Lincoln; and L.E. Maupin, Prairie Grove.

Like its membership, attendance at the annual meeting trended upward in the first few years. By the third meeting on Nov. 3, 1941, there were 211 voting members present, according to cooperative records.

She'd heard that farmers, rural business owners and others in and around Washington County had organized into a cooperative to get their electricity. The new system's electric lines were already extended as far as the state border. Would it be possible to let some Sooner State farmers pay the $5 membership fee and extend those lines westward, she wondered.

Ozarks Electric history notes that Hitchcock was the first Oklahoman to inquire about becoming an Ozarks Electric member. It was not an unreasonable idea, E.H. Looney, cooperative manager, would later explain.

"We were from the beginning boxed in on the north and east by Carroll Electric Cooperative and on the south by the Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative, which left our only area of expansion to be westward across the state line into Oklahoma," he said.

Hitchcock's request was quickly followed by others from those anxious to get a rural electric system in eastern Oklahoma. They were told at least three subscribers per mile would be needed to qualify for the necessary REA loan to extend the electric lines across the Arkansas border.

Adair County Attorney E. G. Carroll, a popular community leader from Baron, took the lead in member recruitment. He visited many prospective members to explain the advantages of electric service and sign them up for cooperative membership. Electricity was an unfamiliar force to many people, so Carroll had to convince some that the high lines would not dry up cows

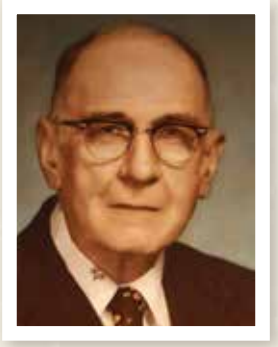

(NEA radiophoto)

Ozarks RE Gets New Allotment

$168,000 to Build 183 Miles of Line

milk or burn up crops. In some cases, Carroll obtained memberships by placing the deposit himself, with the member agreeing to repay "if it turned out to be a good thing."

By July 1940, successful recruiting in both Adair and Cherokee counties had netted 207 new members. Ozarks Electric received approval and a REA loan to extend its lines over the state border. Rural electricity was on its way to northeastern Oklahoma.



E.G. Carroll

OPERATING IN OKLAHOMA

Adair and Cherokee counties officially joined Ozarks Electric in early 1941. E.G. Carroll was appointed to represent his fellow Oklahomans on the board of directors, a position he would be re-elected to many times. He would twice serve as board president.

Construction on Ozarks Electric's first Oklahoma lines began in the fall of 1940. The initial phase was a 28-mile stretch to serve 65 families in the Baron and Westville territories.

An Ozarks Electric branch office was opened in Stilwell to serve these new members. The space was rented for $25 per month. William J. Smith of Stilwell was hired as the first office employee in Oklahoma at a salary of $65 per month. W.H. Stringfield, the original lineman in Arkansas, relocated to Stilwell to oversee line repairs and maintenance.

WAR CLOUDS

As 1941 drew to a close, nearly one million farms nationwide were receiving power from more than 800 cooperatives financed by REA. Almost 35 percent of all U.S. farms were electrified. By all measures, the rural electrification movement was a huge success.

The same was true at Ozarks Electric. There were 1,515 members in November 1941. Hundreds of potential rural consumers had applied for service and were waiting for lines to be built to their communities.

In the Ozarks Electric territory as well as other parts of the country, there was an intense momentum to push on, to complete the rural electrification job. Certainly, the primary objective was to get electricity to those who were in desperate need of it.

LOOKING BACK

Martha Brock of Cane Hill recalls the scandal her grandmother, Myrtle Shannon of Clyde, caused when she was one of the first residents of the community to have electricity. Myrtle had the unheard of "extravagance" of having two receptacles installed. Her neighbors agreed that not only would Myrtle never use two receptacles, but "if she does, she won't be able to afford it!"

But there was another reason, too. A war was already raging in Europe and Americans knew it was only a matter of time before their troops would be drawn into it. A country at war would likely mean a curtailing of plans and aspirations, including getting rural electricity lines and systems built.

On December 7, Americans' fears were realized. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, a place in Hawaii that most living in the Ozarks Electric territory had never heard of before that day.

War had come … to the United States … to Oklahoma and Arkansas … to the homes and farms of Ozarks Electric members.

CHANGING GEARS

America's entry into World War II brought a halt to advancing electric lines into rural areas. Electric system construction projects nationwide were shut down due to shortages of manpower and materials such as the copper needed for wire. Resources — both materials and people — were diverted to fuel America's war machine.

Ozarks Electric, which was in the midst of extending more lines into Oklahoma, was allowed to complete the project after the outbreak of the war. This expansion brought the cooperative system to 690 miles of line serving 2,145 members. It would be the last major construction undertaken for almost five years.

Attention shifted to accelerating wartime food production while electric system-building was on hold. The diversified farms of the Ozarks Electric territory were among those targeted to help meet America's defense goals. Farmers who had been lucky enough to get electricity before the war were urged to increase production. Their help was needed to provide food for friends and allies defending freedom overseas. At the Cooperative's 1942 annual meeting, the program focused on how members could "produce more and better food with less labor" with the aid of electric "hired hands."

Perry Rushing

Ozarks Electric's management and administration experienced significant change as employees left their desks to serve the country. Among them was Manager E.H. Looney who reported for duty with the U.S. Army in February 1942. Perry Rushing, who had served as engineer for the first phases of the system, was brought in as acting manager.

Ozarks Electric, like all utilities in the nation, was making adjustments to do its part for the war effort. Shannon

Pharr, president of the board, reminded members that self-billing and member meter reading — accepted electricity usage monitoring used by the Cooperative since its inception — were "doubly important now with conservation of rubber and gasoline vital to the war effort," a 1942 newspaper article notes. "Several hundred thousand miles of driving are saved every month through these practices."

Cooperative members also became prominent leaders in local support efforts. In the summer of 1942, board member L.E. Maupin and cooperative incorporator Harry Goforth joined County Agent Clifford Smith in organizing a countywide scrap metal drive. Metal — from chicken wire to farm equipment — was being recycled to build tanks, planes and weapons. The three coordinated a sweeping campaign involving 100 communities. Community leaders, many of them already Ozarks Electric members, oversaw scrap depots and community-wide canvassing to urge every citizen to donate metal.

The members of Ozarks Electric supported the war effort through both sacrifice and productivity. On May 8, 1945, they were rewarded with an Allied victory in Europe. The conflict ended in the Pacific in August. World War II was over, the troops were coming home and the Cooperative was gearing up to resume its mission of bringing electricity to rural homes in Arkansas and Oklahoma.


REA

Electricity Speeds Victory

Board of Directors

Employees

In The Armed Forces

Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative Corp.

17 NORTH BLOCK STREET PHONE 554 FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

NOTABLES

1940 — Cooperative membership exceeds 1,000.

1941 — U.S. enters World War II.

1943 — Ozarks Electric joins the newly formed National Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives.

1945 — World War II ends and 12 million American soldiers return home.

CHAPTER FOUR *Opportunities and obstacles*

"The part which cooperatives and power districts have played in the progress of rural electrification in America during the past decade warrants a feeling of real pride. Your record of accomplishment has confounded your critics and exceeded the most optimistic predictions made in your behalf in the early days before you had proven yourselves. – **PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN**

When World War II finally ended in the summer of 1945, a new era began in the United States.

Rationing was over, making materials available for construction. Industry stopped producing war equipment and began manufacturing goods for luxury as well as necessity. The American economy was stronger than ever.

Young servicemen came home ready to find peacetime jobs, marry and start families. They used veterans' benefits to attend college and buy houses. They had seen the world and now wanted something better at home. Getting electricity became a top priority for those returning to farms, and Ozarks Electric was poised to respond.

Explosive growth in places like Fayetteville and Springdale presented Ozarks Electric with both opportunities and obstacles in the 1950s.

BOOM TIME

Ozarks Electric was ready to pick up where it had left off as soon as the war ended in Europe. The few employees who had remained in the office during the war years refused to let the member-owned business become dormant. Instead, they planned for the day when materials and manpower would again be available to bring service to the more than 3,000 consumers who had applied for cooperative membership.

By the time Johnny came marching home, Ozarks Electric was ready to launch full-scale construction on another 240 miles of lines in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Planned expansion would more than double the number receiving service, bringing electricity to some 5,000 farm homes and rural establishments.

ABOVE: Pearl Barnett and Edna Henbest, first and second from left, are among the employees standing outside the Ozarks Electric office on Block Street in Fayetteville in 1946.

RIGHT: Attending a 1948 board meeting are, from left, front, Shannon Pharr, Lincoln; Vera Crain, Harmon; and L.E. Maupin, Prairie Grove. Standing, from left, are Ralph Buck, Delaney; Maupin Cummings, cooperative attorney; O. B. Counts, Wesley; E.H. Looney, manager; and Roe Stokenbury, Elkins. Not pictured is E.G. Carroll of Baron, Oklahoma.

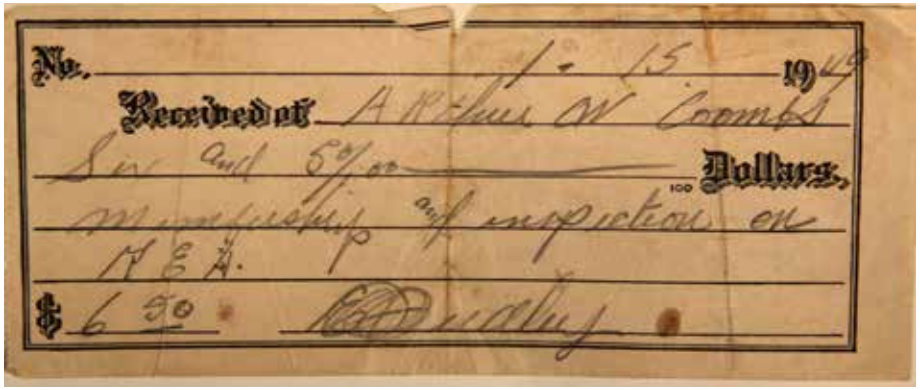
In September 1945 E.H. Looney returned from military service and was reinstated as manager. Perry Rushing, the acting manager, returned to his position as engineer to oversee the ambitious construction project mapped out during the war.

Ozarks Electric began building lines as quickly as funding and materials were available to meet pent-up demand. By early 1950, electricity was being distributed over 1,745 miles of line to 6,867 connected members.

Four years later membership topped 10,000 consumers. The Cooperative's territory by then encompassed parts of nine counties, including Washington, Madison, Benton, Franklin and Crawford in Arkansas and Adair, Cherokee, Sequoyah and Delaware in Oklahoma.

Electric cooperatives across the nation were experiencing a growth spurt. Four years after the war, the number of rural electric systems in operation doubled, the number of consumers connected more than tripled and the miles of energized line grew more than five-fold. About 90 percent of U.S. farms had electricity by 1953.

A 1949 receipt for fees, $5 for Ozarks Electric membership and $1.50 for inspection, paid by Arthur Coombs.



THE
OZARKS
RURAL ELECTRIC
IS YOUR COOPERATIVE

Serving Over
10,000 Members
In Eastern Oklahoma
and Northwest Arkansas

With Offices in
STILWELL
WESTVILLE
and FAYETTEVILLE

FAR LEFT: Ozarks Electric moved into a new office building a block west of the square in downtown Fayetteville in November 1949.

TOP: The new headquarters included a large garage area to house and maintain the Ozark Electric's fleet of service trucks.

LEFT: Cashiers Charley Heffelfinger, left, and Crete Burge stand ready to greet members in the headquarters lobby.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

In its first decade of existence, Ozarks Electric's administrative offices were housed in leased space in Fayetteville. The headquarters were located at 20 1/2 East Center Street from May 1938 to March 1939. Offices then moved to 17 North Block Street, a facility rented for $50 per month.

During the postwar boom period this space became inadequate as the staff grew to handle the influx of new members. In 1949 the co-op built its own offices and warehouse at the corner of Center and Church streets in downtown Fayetteville.

Paul Young Jr., a Fayetteville architect, developed the plans for a structure described as a "modernistic design in brick and stone." Tune Building and Excavating Company of Fayetteville was awarded the construction project with a bid of $86,240.65.

The new building was ready for occupancy in November. Its features included a demonstration kitchen, boardroom and private offices for the manager, bookkeeper and home economist.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Even as membership rose and construction kept a steady pace, Ozarks Electric experienced growing pains in the 1950s. The turbulent decade had just gotten under way when the first problem arose.

E. H. Looney, who was the original system surveyor and first manager of Ozarks Electric (absent three and a half years for military service), was asked to resign in late September 1950. He was dismissed following an REA investigation of some 800 faulty poles, which the manager had personally sold to Ozarks Electric. Investigators reported that the poles were "condemned, unusable and failed to meet specifications" and refused to approve the use of REA funds or cooperative funds to replace them. The board asked Looney to reimburse the Cooperative $15,000 for the faulty poles and expenses related to replacing them.

A month later Chester Williams moved into the manager's office and stayed until May 1953. Just after Williams told the board he was leaving, a call was placed to Perry Rushing, who was Ozark Electric's acting manager during the war. The Fayetteville native was hired two hours later and served as manager until January 1965.

A MAJOR ACQUISITION

Rushing managed a major expansion in early 1954. Ozarks Electric increased its Oklahoma service area through the purchase of power lines serving Watts, Westville and surrounding

LEFT: For many years, the Stilwell office was located in the home of Clint Thomas, left, and his wife Evelyn. Thomas began overseeing all Oklahoma operations in 1954.

RIGHT: The new Stilwell branch office of Ozarks Electric formally opened on April 19, 1956.

territory. Westville, with a population of 800, and Watts, a town of 450, were in the center of a fast-growing dairy, poultry, fruit, vegetable and livestock production area. It was the first major acquisition of new territory made by an Arkansas electric cooperative since World War II had slowed growth and expansion a decade earlier.

Ozarks Electric acquired the lines from Public Services Company of Oklahoma. The Fort Gibson Dam, constructed in the early 1950s, left the towns of Westville and Watts isolated from the private utility system, meaning it would be necessary to relocate lines and also compromise service. Instead, Public Services offered to sell the system to the Cooperative. The deal included service to 722 accounts, a substation, 3 1/2 miles of heavy transmission lines and a 15-square-mile rural service area.

Ozarks Electric increased its Oklahoma service area through the purchase of power lines serving Watts, Westville and surrounding territory.

The acquisition was an ideal opportunity for Ozarks Electric. It had been serving the adjoining area for 12 years and already had a branch office in Westville.

Clint Thomas, who had supervised the Stilwell office for many years, was tapped to oversee all of the Oklahoma operations. By 1956, the Oklahoma headquarters needed more office space and employees moved to 200 West Center Street in Stilwell. Another new office was opened in Westville two years later.

FAR LEFT: The new Westville branch office of Ozarks Electric was the scene of an open house celebration on October 16, 1958.

LEFT: Lawyer Swake, mayor of Watts, Oklahoma, in 1954, gives a haircut to Link Sixkiller, also of Watts, as the two discuss the switch to Ozarks Electric service. Sixkiller was the first to sign up for electricity in the Watts community.

ABOVE: Staff members at the Westville office in the late 1950s are, from left, Neil Maggard, Don Cagle, Nell Murray, Belle Colvin and Billy Jack Smith.

LOOKING BACK

A few months shy of his 110th birthday, Lewis Taylor of England Hollow in Adair County became Ozarks Electric's oldest member. Taylor, a Cherokee Indian who spent most of his life working as a cowboy, was the son of parents who had walked the bitter "Trail of Tears" to relocate to Oklahoma from Georgia 12 years before his birth. Ozarks Electric employees Bob Medley, Clint Thomas and Curtis Crouch visited with the Taylor family while linemen Herbert Proctor and Joe Wright connected the home's electric service on November 11, 1959. Taylor lived to age 113.

ABOVE: A member watches as an Ozarks Electric linemen changes out a transformer near Westville. The distribution system around Watts and Westville was upgraded in 1956.

LEFT: Don Cagle, left, and Billy Jack Smith were among the first employees working in Ozarks Electric's Westville office.

REA Administrator Claude R. Wickard addresses the 1952 annual meeting of Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative attended by approximately 5,000 people. Seated behind Wickard are, from left, directors L.E. Maupin, O.B. Counts and Roe Stokenbury; Harry L Oswald of Arkansas State Electric Cooperatives; and directors Ralph Buck, Vera Crain and Shannon Pharr.

signed as a week of intensive study in Government.

Ozarks Co-Op to Meet June 8

The Annual Membership meeting of the Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation will be held Friday, June 8, at the Washington County Fair Grounds in Fayetteville, Arkansas, it was announced this week by Perry L. Rushing, manager.

Registration will begin at 9

MIXING BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE

For as long as there has been an Ozarks Electric, there have been annual meetings — a time for members to collectively review their cooperative business and conduct board elections.

The annual meeting is an opportunity for Ozarks Electric members to exercise their rights as member-owners. But in the postwar era, it was also a don't-miss social affair for local farm families. Thousands turned out to enjoy a full day of visiting with neighbors and fun that accompanied the more serious matter of conducting cooperative business.

Annual meeting attendance began swelling in 1948 when more than 2,000 attended the November session. In 1950, when the meeting date switched to June and the event moved to the Washington County fairgrounds, participation climbed 50 percent to 3,000. Attendance peaked in 1952 with an estimated 5,000 participants.

Attendees arrived early for the all-day event that included morning activities such as displays of the latest electric appliances and farm

TOP LEFT: A midday meal drew a crowd at the 1961 annual meeting.

BOTTOM LEFT: Members register before an annual meeting so they can vote in the board election.

BELOW: More than 2,000 attended the 1948 annual meeting.

equipment, demonstrations, entertainment by 4-H Club members and a talent contest. Following a lunch served by Washington County Home Demonstration Club members, the group got down to business, hearing reports from officers and management, conducting board elections and hearing guest speakers.

The politically powerful as well as national rural electricity leaders were often guest speakers. Even a downpour couldn't keep the crowds away in 1951 when an estimated 3,000 braved the inclement weather to hear John R. Steelman, assistant to President Truman. Among annual meeting guests were Arkansas governors Sid McMath and Orval E. Faubus and Clyde Ellis, executive manager of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

People came for the door prizes, too. Lucky attendees took home prizes such as an electric range donated by Cy Carney Appliance or a Frigidaire refrigerator from Tucks Service Co. Irons, toasters, percolators, deep fryers, table lamps, fans, heaters and popcorn poppers were among the many electric appliances given away each year.

TERRITORY WAR

Shifting population and expansion of municipal boundaries by cities and towns posed another problem for Ozarks Electric in the 1950s.

Baby boomers were leaving farms and moving to cities. In November 1954, Ozarks Electric had some 1,400 idle services — lines built to farm homes no longer occupied.

At the same time, populations in Fayetteville and Springdale were growing, spurring new residential developments called subdivisions that were often built on farmland that was annexed into these towns.

A 1954 Supreme Court decision determined that a commercial utility's service area could shift along with a city's boundaries. Commercial utilities that had earlier refused to serve rural residents could now gobble up cooperative territory when the population reached a profitable level. These "acquisitions" left cooperatives with fewer members to pay off the REA loans used to build rural electric systems.

A 1955 Arkansas law provided a solution: When cooperative territory was annexed to a city served by a commercial power company, there would be an equal swap of consumers to make up for the cooperative's loss. But the "swap" mandate did not pass the reality test and Ozarks Electric became embroiled in a precedent-setting territory war with Delaware-based Southwestern Gas & Electric.

"In the last legislature we worked out a compromise in good faith. Now one utility company refuses to negotiate a settlement as the law provides," Perry Rushing, general manager, wrote to members. When Ozarks

In 1955 Ozarks Electric had to fight to keep member-owners whose homes were annexed into growing Fayetteville. The Cooperative built lines here in about 1939 to serve what was then a rural area in need of electricity.

Electric's service area was annexed by Fayetteville and Springdale in 1955, Southwestern refused to swap customers. Instead, the company tried to force the Cooperative to sell its electricity distribution assets within city limits.

Cooperative leaders knew such a move would reduce the value of their member-owned business and place added financial burden on remaining members to pay off the outstanding REA loans. Ozarks Electric fought to stop the pirating. Legislation was proposed to "freeze" service areas, allowing cooperatives to keep their territories regardless of revised city limits.

The cooperatives prevailed. In 1957, the state's General Assembly voted to permit cooperative electric systems to keep what was theirs. The legislation remains in effect today. No such law exists in Oklahoma, meaning cooperative assets there are unprotected from predatory commercial utilities.

LOOKING BACK

"We moved to Arizona when I was 7 or 8, then came back to Arkansas when I was 17. I was amazed that you could just flip a switch and have light, since I was used to coal oil lamps or gasoline lanterns. And I was amazed at the Coke machine that the senior class had for fundraising at school. It was filled with sodas, and they would stay cold all the time."— **WADE BLEVINS,** ELKINS

ROADBLOCK TO PROGRESS

In the beginning, getting electricity to the rural communities and far-flung corners of Ozarks Electric territory required compromise for the sake of expediency. Just setting poles and stringing lines was a major undertaking for the fledgling cooperative. Financial resources nor time were available to also construct a source of wholesale power. Out of necessity wholesale electricity from investor-owned suppliers was used to power members' homes and farms.

As power demands grew in the postwar era, it became apparent that continuing to provide reliable, affordable electricity would require Ozarks Electric to not only distribute, but also generate its own power.

The Arkansas Electric Cooperative (AEC) was organized in 1947 to investigate options for generating wholesale electricity for three northwest Arkansas-based electric cooperatives, including Ozarks Electric. Their plan: Use the plentiful water from the Arkansas River and available natural gas to make steam-generated electricity, providing member cooperatives with a lower cost, dependable source of power. With the support of Governor Sid McMath, the organization applied for a REA loan to build a steam generation and transmission system to serve some 40,000 rural consumers.

By November 1950, a $10.5 million loan had been approved, seemingly clearing the biggest hurdle for the project. Approval from the Public Service Commission was expected before the end of the year.

FAR LEFT: Gov. Orval E. Faubus addressed members of Ozarks Electric at their annual meeting in 1955 to stump for a proposed cooperative steam generating plant at Ozark "to furnish more power, not only to meet the needs for more electricity on our farms but to bring more industry into northwest Arkansas."

TOP LEFT: Thirteen years after funding was granted, the Thomas B. Fitzhugh Steam Generation Plant in Ozark opened in 1963.

BOTTOM LEFT: Cooperative guests visiting the G.E. manufacturing plant in 1961 get a close-up look at a turbine for the Fitzhugh plant.

ABOVE: Ozarks Electric representatives attending groundbreaking ceremonies for the Fitzhugh steam plant in June 1961. From left are directors Roe Stokenbury, O.B. Counts and L. E. Maupin; Chief Engineer Jack Whitting; Manager Perry L. Rushing; and Assistant to the Manager Roger Carter.

But investor-owned utilities, which had been profiting from sales of wholesale power to the cooperatives, weren't happy about losing their cash-cow customers. Just as in the days when cooperatives were looking to get their start in Arkansas, private companies declared war on consumer-owned utilities.

WAGING WAR

For the next six years AEC and a group of investor-owned utilities engaged in a legal and legislative tug-of-war that eventually reached the Arkansas Supreme Court. The two sides each had their share of victories and defeats while doggedly defending their arguments.

The two groups eventually agreed to partner on the project, but by early 1958 negotiations had ceased. The commercial utilities seemed to lose interest in the project.

AEC quickly renewed its steam plant plans. By this time, cooperative memberships and electricity demands had increased, so original blueprints were scrapped in favor of a bigger and better plant. In the June 1959 member newsletter, the headline proclaimed "Co-op Hopes for Steam Plant Seem Coming True." It appeared the decade-old project would finally come to fruition.

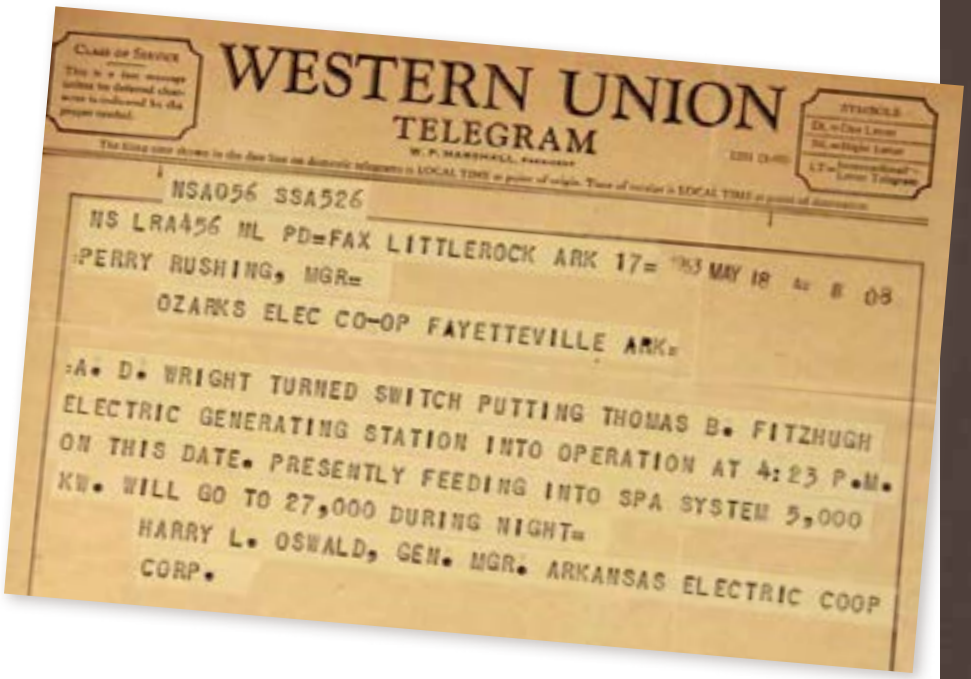
The commercial utilities, however, regrouped for one final battle. In a "sneak attack," the private companies attempted to block funding for the project. AEC officials had to testify before a Senate subcommittee in Washington, D.C., to rescue the already allocated REA loan.

"After over a decade of determined efforts to overcome tremendous opposition and many obstacles, leaders in the fight for your right to own your own wholesale power source have

finally been successful," Ozarks Electric Board President Roe Stokenbury reported to members in 1961.

On June 30, 1961, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the construction of the Thomas B. Fitzhugh Steam Generating Plant at Ozark, the first cooperatively owned power-generating facility in Arkansas. The station was named in memory of the man credited with pioneering the cooperatives' successful battle to achieve their own power supply.

At 4:23 p.m. on Saturday, May 18, 1963, the Fitzhugh plant initiated operation nearly 13 years after the REA first approved a loan for its construction. The start was six weeks ahead of schedule and the project came in nearly $3 million under budget. The original three cooperatives receiving power from the plant had grown to eight serving some 70,000 consumers-members in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Texas.



WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

NSA056 SSA526
NS LRA456 ML PD=FAX LITTLEROCK ARK 17= 1963 MAY 18 AM 8 08
:PERRY RUSHING, MGR=
OZARKS ELEC CO-OP FAYETTEVILLE ARK=
:A. D. WRIGHT TURNED SWITCH PUTTING THOMAS B. FITZHUGH
ELECTRIC GENERATING STATION INTO OPERATION AT 4:23 P.M.
ON THIS DATE. PRESENTLY FEEDING INTO SPA SYSTEM 5,000
KW. WILL GO TO 27,000 DURING NIGHT=
HARRY L. OSWALD, GEN. MGR. ARKANSAS ELECTRIC COOP
CORP.

A May 18, 1963, telegram, announced that the Fitzhugh plant was generating electricity.

NOTABLES

1947 — Ozarks Electric's territory expands to include parts of Franklin and Crawford counties in Arkansas.

1948 — Southwestern Bell Telephone Company begins using cooperative-owned poles to extend phone service to residents in the Ozarks Electric territory.

1949 — Ozarks Electric office opens in Westville.

1950 — 82.5 percent of Arkansas farms are electrified, but the state still lags behind the national average of 86.3 percent.

1951 — Chester F. Williams succeeds E. H. Looney as manager of Ozarks Electric.

1954 — Cooperative membership reaches 10,000.

1958 — Ozarks Electric begins offering outdoor, dusk-to-dawn security lights.

1959 — A drive-thru service window and night depository box are new additions at the Fayetteville office.


KIN
Div.
Rexall
DRUGS
Western Auto
Associate
Store
KELVIN

CHAPTER FIVE *Changing and growing*

"The job of rural electrification will never be completed as long as our members in this area continue to increase their needs for electric power — thereby increasing their prosperity and improving their standards of living." — **ROE STOKENBURY**, OZARKS ELECTRIC BOARD PRESIDENT, 1961

History remembers the 1960s as an era of change. Flag makers added two more stars to the nation's standard as the buttoned-up conservatism of the 1950s faded into the decidedly different decade. The 70 million children from the postwar baby boom became teenagers and adults who sent John F. Kennedy to the White House. They listened as civil rights leader Martin Luther King altered the public consciousness. An economically healthy America was embracing new ideas in education, values, lifestyles, laws and entertainment.

Northwest Arkansas was changing, too. The region "boomed" right along with the rest of America following World War II.

Towns served by Ozarks Electric, such as Westville, flourished right along with the rest of the region in the 1960s.

The availability of rural electricity combined with new roads (built as part of a massive improvement project launched during Governor Sid McMath's administration) had transformed the region into a land of opportunity. Newcomers were flooding in. The greatest impact was in Washington County, which would count more than 77,000 in its population by the decade's end.

ADJUSTING TO CHANGE

A growing population meant new member-owners for Ozarks Electric.

This new membership was less rural — in their address as well as attitude. Many lived in modern subdivisions built on former farms skirting the city boundaries of Fayetteville and Springdale. They moved into the area for jobs in the region's fast-growing

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Ozarks Electric Cooperative celebrated its 25th anniversary in June 1963. In his monthly newsletter column, General Manager Perry Rushing reminded members about how far the system had come.

"On its 25th birthday, your electric distribution system was able to stand proudly on its record of service to the thousands and thousands of consumers who from time to time have been members.

From the earliest days of the system, the days when its future was black and its operations small but significant in their contribution to a struggling America, until this day in 1963, many problems have beset your electric distribution system. Because of the diligence, hard work and perseverance of countless persons along the way, your electric utility is today a multi-million dollar business, vital to the future of the areas which it serves, doing its share and more to assure these areas reliable, low-cost, electric power."

poultry industry or at the University of Arkansas. Most had never known a life without electricity. Few remembered "when the lights came on" or how farm families with a common purpose made it happen.

In 1962, members voted to change the business name to Ozarks Electric Cooperative Corporation.

Ozarks Electric had to quickly adjust to serving a larger, more diverse population with varying needs and expectations. The first outward sign of this adjustment was a name change voted on by members at the 1962 annual meeting. Reflective of the varied populations and locations it served, the word "rural" was dropped and the official name became Ozarks Electric Cooperative Corporation.

ON THE GROW

As membership increased so did the need to expand the Ozarks Electric system. Construction continued to be an ongoing project to bring power to new housing developments and businesses springing up to serve the burgeoning population.

Average household consumption of electricity was steadily rising in both new and longtime member households. In 1962, the average member was consuming nine times more power than in 1939, the year Ozarks Electric initiated service. Usage was projected to double again by 1969, making it necessary to upgrade aging infrastructure (some now more than 20 years old)

and improve existing lines to distribute more electricity to the increasingly power-hungry consumers.

Construction wasn't the only way Ozarks Electric was adjusting to meet the new needs of members. In 1964 the member newsletter reported that "a platoon" of IBM data processing machines was installed to achieve greater efficiency in handling billing and other paperwork involved in managing accounts for members.

Growth in the northeastern section of Ozarks Electric's service territory prompted the opening of a branch office in Springdale. The office opened in June 1963 at 218 East Emma Street.

LEFT: Membership increases and growing power demands kept construction crews busy expanding Ozarks Electric's electricity distribution capabilities.

RIGHT: In September 1961, a new data processing system helped employees like Carla Martin keep pace with the demands of an increasing membership.

LOOKING BACK

"Your electric service is more than 99 percent perfect — and getting better all the time. The reason: your electric distribution system is devoting a great deal of time, effort and money to keep the electric lines in A-1 condition." — 1962 annual report

By 1965, Ozarks Electric had again outgrown its corporate headquarters. The board of directors voted to purchase 15 acres on Highway 16 West in Fayetteville to relocate the main office. T. Ewing Shelton was tapped as the architect and Shirley Construction Co. was awarded the construction project. Work on a new, 30,000-square-foot facility began in the fall.

THE COLOR OF GROWTH

Ozarks Electric's growth in the 1960s could be measured in orange — Swamp Holly Orange, to be exact — the color of transformers installed on electric poles throughout the service area from the early 1960s until they were phased out in the early 1990s.

"Whenever and wherever you see one of the Swamp Holly Orange transformers of Ozarks Electric Cooperative going up, you'll be seeing area development in the making," said Millard Goff, who became the cooperative's general manager in 1965. "The power lines your cooperative builds, the meters it connects and the transformers it installs are part of the development of this area."

Each of the state's 17 electric cooperatives was assigned a different color for transformers. Ozarks Electric's bright, distinctive orange was easy to spot and helped service personnel readily identify the cooperative's transformers in areas where utility service territories bordered one another.

Ozarks Electric's distinctive orange transformers were a frequent sight, a sign of the system's growth.

A sign announces the location of Ozarks Electric's new headquarters on Highway 16 just outside of Fayetteville.

Employees moved into the new building on April 24, 1967. An official open house was held in conjunction with the annual meeting in August. The office, which remains the headquarters in 2013, was touted as an all-electric facility that used electric heat pumps for heating and cooling.

LIVING BETTER ... ELECTRICALLY

Setting poles and running wire had necessarily been Ozarks Electric's primary emphasis in the 1940s and 1950s. Crews had worked at breakneck speed installing 3,000 miles of line to bring electricity to places where it had never been available before. Though construction continued, the Cooperative's main focus shifted to consumption in the 1960s.

Members were being encouraged to "live better electrically."

"You are urged to do what your neighbor is doing — that is, make more use of the convenience and modern characteristics of electric appliances in your home," General Manager Perry Rushing wrote in the August 1963 newsletter.

Willie Wiredhand, an advertising mascot introduced in the mid 1950s, became a frequent sight as Ozarks Electric promoted power consumption. New programs and personnel were added to encourage members to take greater advantage of the electricity now available throughout the service area.

Marketing helped make the all-electric home a popular trend. Ozarks Electric's Gold Medallion program designated homes of cooperative members "who are making full use of electricity for modern living." Gold medallions affixed by a home's front door became a status symbol as members quickly caught up to — and now often exceeded — the standard of living long enjoyed by city dwellers.

To merit a gold medallion, a new or remodeled home had to be outfitted with an electric range, electric water heater and electric heating system. It also had to have at least three electric appliances such as a dishwasher, clothes washer, clothes dryer, freezer, refrigerator or air conditioner. Requirements also included having "the most modern in exterior and interior lighting" — wall switches, overhead light fixtures, porch ceiling lights and outdoor floodlights.

Loy and Kimmy Watson and daughter Teresa of Wesley were the first cooperative members in Madison County to receive a gold medallion. Rewiring and new appliance installations transformed their 1,300-square-foot house into a "modern all-electric home." The Watsons completed renovations to their all-electric home in 1960.

Electricity consumption was also being promoted to improve farming. The cooperative employed farm electrification advisors "to help members use their electricity to their best advantage," Manager Perry Rushing wrote in the 1961 annual report. The advisors helped farmers install electric irrigation, brooders, poultry house heating systems, well pumps and other productivity-related equipment.

TOP: Exhibits, such as this traveling bus that promoted electric heating, helped to increase electricity consumption.

LEFT: All-electric homes received the cooperative's prestigious gold medallion.

RIGHT: Farm electrification advisors helped members use electricity to improve productivity and profits.

MEET THE MASCOT

The University of Arkansas has Tusk and Oklahoma State has Pistol Pete. At Ozarks Electric, Willie Wiredhand was the long-time mascot for rural electricity.

Introduced by the National Rural Electric Association in the early 1950s, the cartoon character appeared frequently in Ozarks Electric advertisements in the 1950s and 1960s.

The character was fashioned from a socket, a plug and insulated wire. The name, Willie Wiredhand, is a play on the fact that electricity flowing through wires brought farm families a new hired hand.

Willie became one of the best-known symbols in rural America. At Ozarks Electric, his likeness was emblazoned on cooperative office buildings, uniforms, signs and more. In local newspaper advertisements, Willie was often depicted performing a variety of home and farm chores aided by electricity.

Willie Wiredhand, the mascot of rural electricity, appears on a 1960s-era sign in front of the Ozarks Electric corporate office in Fayetteville.

COOPERATION PAYS

The phrase "capital credits" first entered members' vocabularies in 1962 when they learned it meant financial gain for them. Cooperative leaders announced that $70,000 in capital credits would be distributed among those who had been members between 1945 and 1948. Some received only a few cents while others collected around $100, the amount being determined by how much electricity they had purchased during the designated years.

"Perhaps the most significant and meaningful one event in 1962 was the capital credit payments made during the year … an indication that this utility is unique among utility firms operating in this area," said Perry Rushing, general manager.

Capital credits is a distinctively "cooperative" way of saying return of net profit. Ozarks Electric was formed to bring to consumers the most reliable electric service possible at the lowest possible cost. In adherence to its cooperative principles, any profit made over and above the expenses of running Ozarks Electric is returned to the members in proportion to their use of its services. These profits, or margins, are called capital credits.

By its 75th year, Ozarks Electric had returned a total of $36.4 million to members.

Often, a portion of capital credits are reinvested in the Cooperative to help keep the operation on a sound financial basis. Any retained portion of capital credit funds is allocated to members' individual equity accounts and paid at a later date.

Besides a financial windfall to members, the first distribution in 1962 signified strong financial footing. Ozarks Electric was well on its way to repaying $7.5 million in REA loans used to build an electric system that was, by then, serving some 12,000 members.

LEFT: Members received their first capital credit payments in the mail in 1962.

RIGHT: Ozarks Electric's board of directors gathered for a monthly meeting in 1963 are, from left, Vol Rutherford, Lincoln; L.E. Maupin, Prairie Grove; O.B. Counts, secretary/treasurer, Wesley; Perry Rushing, general manager; Roe Stokenbury, president, Elkins; E.G. Carroll, vice president, Baron; George Stratton, Cookson; T.C. Anderson, Durham; and Thurman Parsons, Springdale.

Capital credit payments have continued almost annually since 1962. In 2012, members shared $1.8 million in capital credits. By its 75th year, Ozarks Electric had returned a total of $36.4 million to members.

LOOKING BACK

"Rural electrification has brought the convenience of city living to the joy of country living. It is one of the greatest satisfactions of my life to have had a part in helping so many of our members obtain the magical force which has changed our lives so much." — **CURTIS CROUCH**, ELKINS, WHO IN 1939 RECRUITED MEMBERS ALONG HIGHWAY 45 EAST OF FAYETTEVILLE

REVVING UP RECREATION

Ozarks Electric played an important role in the development of northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma as an outdoor recreation destination. Visitors and their tourism dollars were drawn to the region's lakes, mountains and valleys. In the 1960s, cooperative electricity helped rev up the appeal of some of these recreation spots.

In January 1963, cooperative employees completed the challenging installation of nearly four miles of power line to serve U.S. Forest Service facilities atop 2,600-foot White Rock Mountain in the Ozark National Forest. The project pre-

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

In many communities throughout Ozarks Electric country, Friday night in the fall means one thing: It's high school football time. But it wasn't until rural electricity came along that gridiron battles held at "country schools" could be played under the lights.

Ozarks Electric began installing athletic field lights at area schools in the early 1960s. A cooperative annual report noted, "A complete and modern lighting system was installed at the

A cooperative crew installs lights at the Westville High School football field in 1964.

Watts, Okla., high school athletic field in time for home games in fall 1961."

Retired lineman Wayne Neal worked on the five-man crew that installed the first football field lights at Westville High School in 1964. "The poles were about 100 feet in the air. We took our longest pole and added another on until the correct height was reached for lighting the field," he recalled. "Those were really tall poles."

Ozarks Electric continues to provide light for after-dark sporting events at five high schools throughout the region.

Inspecting a light about to be installed at Fayetteville High School are, at left, Joe Cantrell and school superintendent Harry Vandergriff. Ozarks Electric employees adjusting the lights are, kneeling, Bob Curtsinger and Clifford Dutton. Also pictured, right front, are Vincent Lesh and football coach Shelby Breedlove. Standing behind the light pole are Randall Hankins, Joe Dunn, Mearl Cooksey, Floyd Cantrell, Dave Jones and Hughes Bilbrey.

sented engineering problems not usually encountered when installing power lines. It required 60 poles, placed in holes made by dynamite blasting, to string line through rugged, wooded, rocky, mountainous terrain.

"Electricity on White Rock Mountain constitutes a real symbol of the wonders of modern-day rural electrification," said Perry Rushing, general manager. "If Ozarks

Power lines had to span rough terrains and steep inclines to reach the top of White Rock Mountain in the Ozark National Forest.

Electric can get electricity up that mountain, then we can get service anywhere."

> "If Ozarks Electric can get electricity up that mountain, then we can get service anywhere." — Perry Rushing

The project electrified vacation cabins, a fire observation tower and other buildings situated on the windswept mountaintop that afforded a scenic view of thousands of acres of untouched forestland.

Electricity also played an important role in two major improvement programs at Devil's Den State Park, a 2,500-acre recreation area in the Boston Mountains between Fort Smith and Fayetteville. Ozarks Electric completed an outdoor lighting installation at the park in 1961. A decade later, the project was much bigger.

The park's infrastructure, originally built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933, underwent a facelift in late 1969 and 1970. The renovation included installing underground power supply lines to energize the park.

"Ozarks Electric put in some hard work and quite a bit of dynamite" to lay cable service underground … In this case, underground meant solid rock," a Rural Arkansas article noted.

The improvement project introduced a variety of electrical conveniences, including heat pump-equipped visitors' cottages, water heaters in the shower houses, power outlets throughout the campgrounds and an all-electric laundry. Powerful electrical pumps installed underground could lift water up the mountain and also flush sewage. Filtration systems for the park's swimming pool, night lights in all areas and a large picnic pavilion were also among the park amenities that were electrified.

Electrified lakeside cabins and lodges attracted more tourists, too. On the system's west side, the Lake Tenkiller area improved its tourist appeal with electrified lodging. Likewise, the Beaver Lake area on the system's east side blossomed when electrical conveniences were introduced.

STORM CLOUDS

Oh, a storm is threatening
My very life today
If I don't get some shelter
Oh yeah, I'm gonna fade away
"Gimme Shelter," The Rolling Stones, 1969

As the 1960s drew to a close, the country was again at war and the collective good mood that had greeted the decade was souring. 1967's "summer of love" might have been far removed from Ozarks Electric country, but even those living in northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma could not avoid the

storm clouds brought on by the Vietnam War's mounting casualties and the slayings of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy.

Despite the grim national headlines, cooperative officials projected that members' power usage would increase 100 percent in the coming decade. These increased power requirements would require an even greater investment in facilities. Much of Ozarks Electric's aging infrastructure had to be replaced or upgraded, too. More substations and transmission facilities would be required. Additional electric generation capacity was needed as well.

> "System expansion costs will be staggering." – Thurman Parsons

This necessary growth would be complicated by continued rising costs for materials and labor. Thurman Parsons, cooperative president in 1969, glumly predicted, "The cost of operating and maintaining the existing system will be tremendous. System expansion costs will be staggering."

Ozarks Electric finished the decade with 17,686 members — member-owners who, along with their power supplier, would face significant challenges in the years to come.

NOTABLES

1960 — Electric cooperatives nationwide celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Rural Electrification Administration.

1965 — Millard Goff becomes Ozarks Electric's general manager on April 1.

1966 — Construction of Beaver Dam is completed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, creating a reservoir for power generation, flood control and water supply.

1967 — Ozarks Electric's service territory lies within one of the fastest-growing areas of the U.S.

1968 — The annual report notes "there are now more than 600 uses for electricity in the home, on the farm, and in business and industry."

1969 — Members' power use increases 229 percent in 10 years.

1969 — Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the moon.

CHAPTER SIX *Staying the course*

"More efficient use of electricity is going to become extremely important in the next few years if the continually increasing power needs of the area are to be met, and if the price of that energy is to remain within the realm of reason." — **MILLARD GOFF,** OZARKS ELECTRIC GENERAL MANAGER, 1961

Like most electric cooperatives around the nation, Ozarks Electric spent the 1960s encouraging members to "live better electrically." Members obliged by quickly developing a near-insatiable appetite for electric appliances and equipment that eased workloads, provided convenience and offered entertainment.

Efforts to boost consumption had worked — perhaps too well. Skyrocketing consumption contributed to circumstances that created a perfect storm, a tempest that would rage for nearly two decades and challenge Ozarks Electric's ability to stay the course.

Ozarks Electric employees install an underground power supply line in Westville in 1975.

THE PERFECT STORM

Throughout the 1960s, Ozarks Electric had been steadily serving more members and delivering increasing kilowatt hours per household. Times were good. Electricity was available and affordable, and members were demanding more and more of it. Household electricity consumption tripled during the decade.

But the years of prosperity ended soon after the 1970s debuted. The boom went bust as gas prices, interest rates, inflation and unemployment hit record levels. Ozarks Electric began struggling under the weight of tough economic times and high energy costs. Wholesale power costs, which increased 346 percent from 1960 to 1970, were climbing even higher. Escalating operating expenses plagued the entire utility industry.

In 1971, the board's secretary-treasurer, George C. Stratton, warned members that cooperative leaders were preparing for "an even larger rise in the cost of doing business in the future."

Cost concerns worsened in 1973 when crude oil-producing nations cut off supplies to the U.S. during the Arab oil embargo. Tight supplies and high demand drove fuel and energy prices to levels previously thought impossible. The embargo plunged the nation headlong into an energy crisis felt well into the next decade.

Inflation, complicated by the energy crisis, was in full swing by 1974. The price tag for electricity — like the cost of nearly everything else in the country —rose to unprecedented highs. In that year's annual report, members were reminded:

"Your electric cooperative — just like you —must pay higher prices for virtually everything it buys. Materials needed to build, maintain and operate the system that delivers your electricity have increased tremendously. Poles, power line, transformers, insulators, cross arms and all the other needed hardware items have climbed in cost. In some cases, they have doubled and tripled in price."

Inflation was gnawing away at cooperative revenue. Though there were increases in the revenues from sales of electricity, it wasn't enough to offset the rising cost of everything else. The low-cost energy that Americans had enjoyed in the postwar era was gone. The ability to deliver affordable electricity, the fundamental reason for Ozarks Electric's very existence, was seriously threatened.

> "The days of 'cheap' energy are past. They're as much a part of the past as are kerosene lamps, high button shoes and silent movies." – **GENERAL MANAGER MILLARD GOFF**, 1976

"The days of 'cheap' energy are past. They're as much a part of the past as are kerosene lamps, high-button shoes and silent movies," said General Manager Millard Goff in 1976.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The theme of Ozarks Electric's 1974 annual report was "Meeting Our Energy Challenges." For the first time, energy conservation became a primary message to members.

PLUGGING IN

About the time Americans celebrated the nation's 200th birthday, a growing number of Ozarks Electric members were plugging in to a national trend. Electricity-powered home entertainment became the popular alternative to gas-guzzling family vacations or trips to the drive-in movies.

Video gaming emerged as a popular pastime when Atari produced the first low-priced integrated circuit TV games and introduced Pong in the mid 1970s. In December 1975, ads in the Northwest Arkansas Times advertised a Pong game system as a hot Christmas item available for $69.95 at the Fayetteville Dillard's department store.

The videocassette recorder (VCR) allowed Americans to record television shows and watch them according to their own schedule and view feature films in the privacy of their own homes. By the close of the 1980s, 70 percent of American homes had a VCR.

Personal computers, which would prove to be the future of home entertainment, sparked the greatest change in American lifestyles of the 1980s. Introduced by Apple in 1977, desktop computers were beginning to show up in homes, offices and schools.

Pong, played on Atari game systems, introduced video games as home entertainment.

A groundbreaking ceremony in 1974 launches construction on Ozarks Electric office in Stilwell.

NOTABLES

1970 — The federal census counts Fayetteville's population at 30,729, an increase of 52 percent from 1960. Washington County's total population is 77,370.

1971 —Ozarks Electric's first computer is in use in the Fayetteville office.

1972 — President Richard Nixon issues an executive order to eliminate the REA low-interest loan program electric cooperatives rely on to build and expand distribution systems.

1974 — Ozarks Electric members elect directors using mail-in ballots for the first time.

1975 — The Cooperative opens a new, 7,620 foot office and warehouse facility on Highway 51 outside Stilwell. Members like the new drive-up window for making bill payments.

1977 — Ozarks Electric welcomes its 25,000th member.

1979 — An ice storm hits the Ozarks Electric service territory on December 31, leaving 10,000 without power. Ice-laden lines "the size of a Campbell Soup can" cause outages lasting up to two weeks in some areas.

1982 — Total capital credits paid to members exceed $1 million.

1988 — Ozarks Electric celebrates its 50th year.

"We find ourselves in the confusing situation of having to urge members to reduce their use of electricity, which is the only product the electric cooperative is in business to distribute!" General Manager Goff wrote in the annual report.

Energy efficiency and conservation began permeating every level of the "cooperative conversation."

"You'll be hearing 'don't waste electricity' for a long time to come," promised W.C. Brooks, cooperative president in 1974.

Ozarks Electric began an aggressive information campaign aimed at developing "energy awareness" among members. News articles featured conservation tips, such as how to "weatherize" a home to achieve greater energy efficiency. Cooperative energy advisors conducted community meetings to present energy efficiency information.

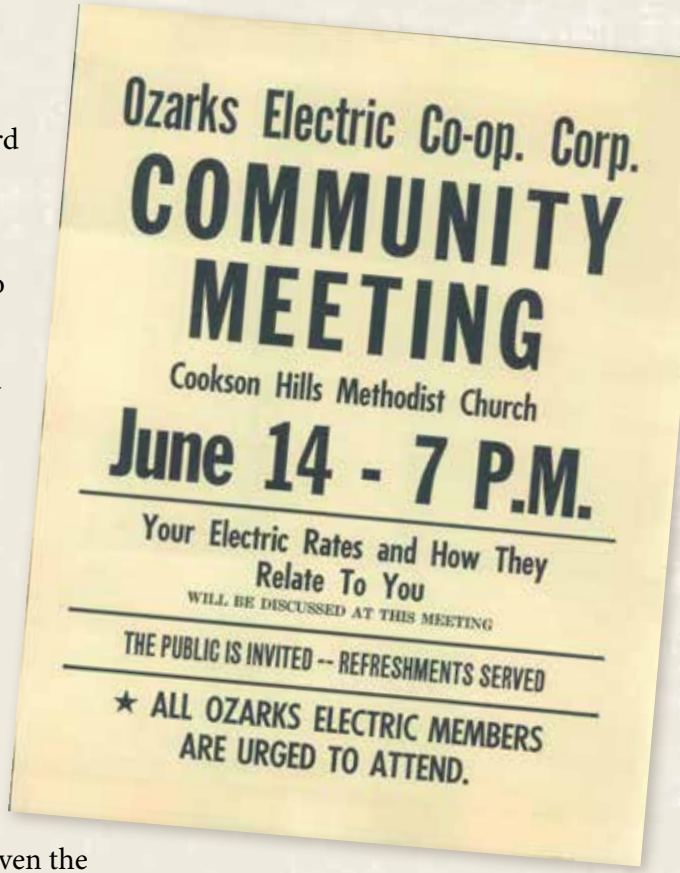
LOOKING BACK

"Use electricity wisely. Make the most efficient uses of it that you can. It's too valuable to waste." – **1975 ANNUAL REPORT**

By 1978, the message had grown more urgent with cooperative leaders imploring, "Each of us must do everything possible to avoid wasting any form of energy. And the best place to start energy conservation is at home."

Members weren't the only ones expected to become more efficient. Austerity became the watchword for Ozarks Electric's business operations as well.

The 1975 annual report notes that board members and management were "doing everything possible to keep system expenses as low as possible and still maintain our electric cooperative's dependability as a power supplier." Expenses involved in all areas not related directly to improved electric service were drastically reduced. Even the number of pages in the annual report had been scaled back due to the escalating cost of paper, printing and postage.



In 1976, Ozarks Electric ended its longtime practice of hosting a full day of activities and entertainment in conjunction with the annual meeting. A special notation on annual meeting

Cooperative leaders and energy advisors conducted numerous community meetings to explain the causes of higher power costs and share energy efficiency ideas.

A CENTURY OF LIGHT

On October 21, 1879, Thomas Edison discovered the key to a practical incandescent electric light bulb. He'd perfected a long-lasting filament. It was, in retrospect, a relatively simple thing. His filament was nothing more than a short strand of cotton thread coated with a thick carbon paste.

A common piece of thread in the hands of an uncommon man brought on the Electrical Age. In 1979, Ozarks Electric joined with the rest of the nation's electric utilities in a year-long Centennial of Light celebration to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Edison's event that opened the door to the "live better electrically" era for electric cooperative members.

"Who's to say that some other common item, in the hands of another uncommon inventor, might not prove the key to our future energy needs?" mused Larry Baggett, president of the Ozarks Electric board in 1979.

announcements said, "This will be a business session only. In the interest of economy, no attendance prizes will be awarded and no entertainment or food will be provided."

When the economy finally turned around in the latter half of the 1980s, energy concerns eased. But, much as the Great Depression had left its indelible marks on early members, Ozarks Electric consumers remembered the years of the energy crunch. They had formed new habits; conservation became the new norm. Energy efficiency remains a major theme for the electric cooperative some 40 years after consumers first learned the true meaning of "energy crisis."

BACK TO WORK

The early 1980s brought even tougher economic times to the nation, to Arkansas, to Ozarks Electric and its members. The decade began with double-digit inflation that ushered in the official start of a recession. Healthcare costs and unemployment rose. Meanwhile, newly elected U.S. President Ronald Reagan declared a war on drugs and Kermit wasn't the only one thinking it wasn't easy to be "green."

But Ozarks Electric's leaders refused to be beaten by the nation's circumstances. Cooperative founders had faced tough times too, but they had persevered. Taking a page from their own history, directors and management pursued new ways to power communities and empower members.

Cooperative construction crews work to erect a 70-foot pole in a ravine while building a section of new transmission line near Farmington in 1984.

The 1980 annual report theme said it all: "The 80's … A Decade of Determination." Cooperative leaders publicly declared "a growing determination not to let the energy problems of the past decade" cloud the future for member-owners. They pledged to "quit talking about those difficulties and start doing something about them."

Cooperative leaders publicly declared "a growing determination not to let the energy problems of the past decade" cloud the future for member-owners.

Those words set the tone for the years to come. Ozarks Electric was moving forward.

Northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma continued to grow in the 1970s and 1980s despite the nation's economic challenges. Likewise, the number of new cooperative members increased steadily. Membership multiplied by more than 1,000 annually in the 1970s. Numbers remained strong throughout the 1980s with about 850 new consumer-owners joining Ozarks Electric each year.

These increases were on target with what cooperative management had expected. Long-range planning carried out in the 1960s had positioned Ozarks Electric to meet the service area's electrical requirements.

ELECTRICITY POWERS POULTRY'S PROGRESS

Northwest Arkansas' poultry industry was still in its infancy when rural neighbors were becoming the first members of Ozarks Electric in the 1930s. Even then, progressive producers like Ernest and Vera Crain could see great potential in having reliable, affordable electricity to improve the efficiency of their poultry breeding farm near the Harmon community. Nobody, however, predicted

LEFT: Vera Crain, who was elected to the Ozarks Electric board of directors in 1939, shows off trophies awarded to the White Wyandotte chicks she and husband Ernest raised. The Crains were among the first in the area to use electricity to improve the quality and efficiency of their poultry hatchery.

BOTTOM LEFT: Interest in all-electric poultry houses began to increase when Ozarks Electric member and director Vol Rutherford of Cane Hill, along with three other producers, participated in a 1967-68 study using electric quartz tube infrared heaters in their broiler houses. Rutherford reported that the house, which had a capacity of 21,000 birds, had a total electricity cost of only 1.4 cents per bird. This was far below the cost of other fuel used on his farm.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The availability of reliable, reasonably priced electricity has played a role in poultry farming and processing throughout the years. Washington County continues to rank as the state's leader in agricultural receipts due in no small part to being the epicenter of Arkansas' $4 billion poultry industry and home to Tyson, Cargill and George's.

NEAR RIGHT: In 2011, Ozarks Electric partnered with NextGen Illumination to offer a new light-emitting diode (LED) light bulb designed specifically for use in broiler houses. University of Arkansas studies showed the new technology dramatically increased flock production while decreasing energy consumption for lighting by a whopping 83 percent.

FAR RIGHT: Cooperative electricity powers area poultry plants, such as Cargill, where poultry products are processed and packaged.

just how much of an influence electricity would have on the region's emergence as a national poultry production and processing center.

Commercial chicken production began replacing other enterprises on small northwest Arkansas farms in the early 1920s. Poor soil as well as uncontrollable pest and disease problems had made it nearly impossible to grow fruit and other crops that were once the farmers' mainstay.

Poultry producers were independent growers supplying only local and regional markets when rural electricity first became available in the late 1930s. The poultry houses populating the region's landscape were not well insulated or equipped.

Poultry became a growing business as electricity started flowing to farms and rural businesses. Hatcheries were springing up and the use of electric brooders helped fill larger poultry houses with more birds. World War II accelerated the demand for chicken, prompting large meat packing companies to locate processing plants in northwest Arkansas to be closer to poultry farms. By 1950, there were 19 companies in Springdale alone that were hatching chicks, supplying feed, processing chickens and shipping them in refrigerated trucks delivering to markets around the country.

Frozen chicken changed the industry in the 1960s. The further processing drove poultry consumption as well as the use of electricity to provide that commodity. By this time, Ozarks Electric was supplying power at hatcheries and feed mills for the poultry companies. On poultry farms, cooperative electricity was powering lights, running feed augers and pumping water to grow birds more efficiently. The region's poultry industry and Ozarks Electric were growing together.

The poultry industry has evolved from a very labor-intensive business in the early days to great automation in every phase of production, from lighting and ventilation in the houses on the farm to processing the bird for America's dinner table. As poultry companies have discovered new ways to grow and care for the birds, Ozarks Electric has been there to provide the power to help maximize productivity and minimize the resources required. The Cooperative has collaborated with the University of Arkansas and the poultry companies on innovations to use energy efficiently and make poultry more profitable.

By Penny Storms, Ozarks Electric's manager of communications and media relations

The system's electrical carrying capacity was expanded at a rapid pace. Nearly 1,400 miles of new power lines, some of which were buried underground, were installed over the course of the two decades. Hundreds of miles of line were upgraded and facilities improved to maintain the system's 99 percent reliability status.

ENERGIZING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The availability of reliable, economical electricity is an essential building block for rural development. From its earliest days, Ozarks Electric went above and beyond simply supplying electricity to help power the communities it serves. Its emphasis on economic development led to the location or expansion of several industries.

"The name of the game is full area development, and the power distribution facilities and the director-management-employee team of your electric cooperative will always be where the action is," manager Millard Goff said in 1972, reaffirming Ozarks Electric's longtime commitment to economic development even as the national economy was struggling.

The 1960s had been a period of significant economic development throughout the Ozarks Electric service territory. "Industry began to take a closer look at the less thickly populated areas as possible sites for new or expanded facilities. Agriculture was marked by rapid advances. Entire communities took on a fresh look," Goff said.

The momentum continued into the next decade as cooperative power fueled new and expanded industrial facilities throughout the region. Agribusinesses like Tyson Foods and Cargill, which had evolved in the area during the 1950s and 1960s, expanded in the 1970s and 1980s. The region's numerous hatcheries, feed mills and processing plants were using cooperative electricity to power cost-efficient operations.

When Ozarks Electric installed its 30,000th meter in 1983, some of the largest

Flint Creek Power Plant is jointly owned by Arkansas electric cooperatives and investor-owned utilities. Though they battled over territory in the 1950s, the two groups joined forces to provide power for all in the 1970s.

Photo courtesy Fayetteville Flyer

agriculture-related businesses in the state were — and continue to be — among its members. These include the Tyson Foods headquarters and feed mill as well as processing plants for Cargill and George's Inc., all in Springdale. The Cooperative also powers poultry farms for Simmons Foods growers.

A dependable supply of electricity helped to entice manufacturers such as Baldor Motors and Drives to locate facilities in northeast Oklahoma. The motor maker opened a 50,000-square-foot plant in the Westville Industrial Park in 1974.

Cooperative electricity continues to help local communities grow by providing dependable power to industrial consumers. It has energized the economic development efforts of towns like Springdale, which was responsible for 44 percent of Arkansas' job growth between 2010 and 2012. Innovators in nanotechnology, high-tech tactical equipment, robotics and aerospace instrumentation are among the manufacturers using electricity from Ozarks Electric.

Cooperative electricity powers wood products manufacturer Conner Distribution Company in Stilwell and plastics recycler AERT in Watts. It aids in quality healthcare at Willow Creek Women's Hospital in Johnson and treats the region's wastewater at plants managed by Operations Management International. The 6,500-seat Arvest Ballpark in Springdale, home of the Northwest Arkansas Naturals Double-A baseball team, is also a commercial member of the Cooperative.

Cooperative power lines deliver electricity to retail businesses large and small. More than 100 retail stores inside Fayetteville's Northwest Arkansas Mall get their electricity from Ozarks Electric. So does the Sam's Club in Fayetteville as well as several Harp's Food Stores. The Cooperative also electrifies family-owned businesses like Wilhite Sawmill at St. Paul, Pig Trail By-Pass Country Cafe in Crosses, Hogeye Mall near Strickler, Mt. View Meat Company in Rocky Mountain, Dairy Princess in Cookson and Flintridge Grocery in Park Hill.

Encouraging growth has proven to be good business for Ozarks Electric. Development creates jobs that attract and retain residents who collectively strengthen the local economy.

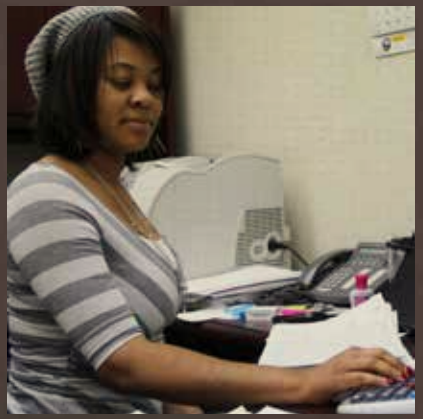
A GOLDEN CELEBRATION

May 1988 marked Ozarks Electric's 50th anniversary. There was plenty to celebrate. The energy crisis of the 1970s and the recession of the early 1980s were history. Through innovation and dedication, the Cooperative had weathered a perfect storm and emerged stronger.

By the end of 1989, Ozarks Electric was the third largest electric distribution cooperative in Arkansas.

ON THE JOB

When Ozarks Electric energized its first miles of line in 1939, the cooperative had only three employees — a manager, a bookkeeper and a lineman. And though membership has grown from the first 100 to 58,000, the supporting workforce remains relatively small. In 2013, a dedicated team of 198 employees serves members. Just as in the beginning, they are working to reliably deliver electricity at the lowest possible cost.




RURAL ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE COR

CHAPTER SEVEN *The cooperative way*

"We are working today, as those who led the way for us in the last 75 years, to do more than keep the lights on. We, like our organizers, are here to turn on new lights. Our purpose is powering communities to empower our members to improve the quality of their lives, every day." — **MITCHELL JOHNSON,** OZARKS ELECTRIC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, 2013

When six men and one woman signed their names to incorporate Ozarks Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation in 1938, they created a different kind of company guided by principles rather than profits. It was a business that put consumers before stockholders, one that gave priority to service and dependability.

Armed with its cooperative principles intact, Ozarks Electric barreled full-speed into its sixth and seventh decades of existence. Leaders combined modern technology and time-tested practices to accomplish the ongoing mission of being a source of safe, affordable, reliable electricity. At the same time, a variety of programs and projects demonstrated the "cooperative difference" that defines the business.

SPEEDING UP

Arkansas native William Jefferson Clinton became the 42nd U.S. president just as technology and a revived economy began whipping the nation into a growth spurt in the 1990s.

Ozarks Electric's long-term economic development efforts began to pay greater dividends in northwest Arkansas. Higher traffic volume, new construction and escalating real estate prices indicated a healthy local economy. Cooperative construction crews worked at a fast pace to stay ahead of the growth curve as the region started bursting at the seams with new people and businesses needing electricity.

LIGHTING THE WAY

Road construction was one of the most evident signs of regional growth in the 1990s. The January 1999 opening of Interstate 540, which connects Fayetteville to Interstate 40 and other points south, replaced the winding and often treacherous Highway 71.

Building I-540 was a feat of engineering that traversed rugged terrain and contains some of the deepest cuts, the highest hills and the tallest bridges in Arkansas. The roadway features the state's only highway tunnel. The twin tunnels extend 1,600 feet and run 220 feet below the mountain's top. They are illuminated by 15,000 lights and have 29 emergency phones, 10 video cameras and 10 fans — all operated with electricity from Ozarks Electric.

The utility was supplying service for about 35,000 meters for residential, commercial and industrial members in January 1990. That number nearly doubled over the next 22 years.

Electricity consumption was escalating even faster than membership. Bigger televisions, ever-faster computers and a host of new electronics and appliances found in most homes were driving up per-consumer consumption. Extensive and near constant system improvements were required to assure the reliability members expected from their cooperative electric service.

"The tremendous growth taking place in the service territory of Ozarks is straining almost every department to maximum capacity ..."

— **CEO CHARLES COSBY**, 1994

"The tremendous growth taking place in the service territory of Ozarks is straining almost every department to maximum capacity, especially the engineering, construction and service departments," CEO Charles Cosby reported to members at the 1994 annual meeting.

LOOKING BACK

On March 4, 2000, Trent Andersen signed up for residential electric service at 16366 Harmon Road in Fayetteville and became Ozarks Electric's 50,000th member-owner.

MOVING FORWARD IN A NEW MILLENNIUM

Mitchell Johnson

When Mitchell Johnson settled into the chief executive's office at Ozarks Electric in September 1999, he was overseeing some of the company's most dynamic development. Almost every cooperative department was operating at full speed and marking milestones nearly daily. The backdrop against which these achievements played out would change dramatically in the years to come.

The events of September 11, 2001, when terrorists hijacked planes and crashed them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field, introduced a period of unprecedented turbulence in the nation. Security concerns and war began distracting Americans from the pursuit of progress. Then, midway through the century's first decade, a failed banking system, high unemployment and a recession dealt a further blow to the economy and consumer confidence.

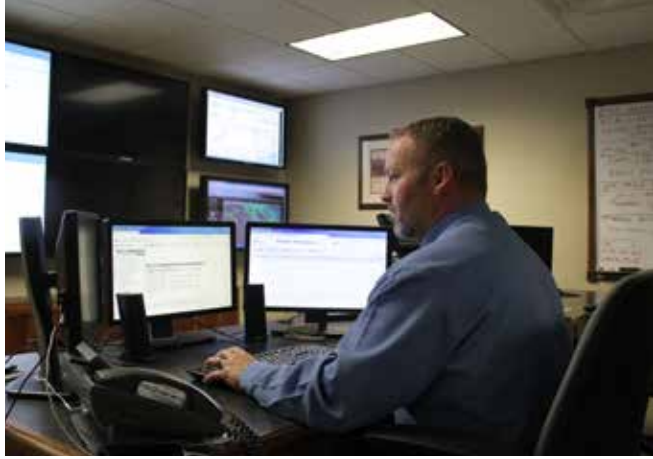
Amid these serious times, Ozarks Electric doggedly pursued its mission to safeguard the best interests of its member-owners.

In the 1990s, cooperative crews installed larger transformers, expanded substations and made other improvements to keep pace with mounting electricity demands.

That mission became more challenging beginning in 2005 and 2006. Soaring natural gas prices and coal shortages led to higher electric bills for cooperative members.

In the face of rising energy costs, members' interest in energy efficiency was rekindled. Ozarks Electric responded with programs and assistance to help members improve the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses. The Cooperative began offering free energy audits and sponsored an annual seminar featuring nationally recognized energy efficiency expert Doug Rye.

Ozarks Electric also began a model home program to promote innovations in building techniques and materials for energy-efficient homes. Seven model homes were built by 2013. In 2011, a model home displayed during the Northwest Arkansas



Parade of Homes attracted more than 1,200 people in a single week. Visitors learned about the house's geothermal heating and cooling system, hybrid heat pump water heater, tri-level insulation and energy efficient lighting.

LOOKING BACK

In August 2009, Aaron and Jerissa Rogers of Wesley learned they were the winners of the 2009 Energy Efficiency Makeover Contest sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas. They were selected from among more than 1,100 applicants statewide to receive a home renovation valued at $50,000.

TOP LEFT: By 2012, Ozarks Electric had built seven energy-efficient model homes.

TOP CENTER: Visitors learn about the energy efficiency features of Ozarks Electric's 2012 model home.

TOP RIGHT: Screens in Ozarks Electric's dispatch center help Larry Kelly simultaneously monitor an outage map, track locations of service trucks and keep an eye on weather developments.

REMAINING RELIABLE

Ozarks Electric's leaders and management stayed in the forefront of technology to assure the utility met its core mission of supplying reliable electricity amidst skyrocketing demand and, in the 2000s, increasing energy costs. The utility became a leader for progress in Arkansas with forward-thinking investments in equipment and services that increased system efficiency and controlled costs.

An automated outage reporting system that expedited power restorations debuted in 1995. In 1998, linemen began carrying laptop computers in their trucks to improve the quality and efficiency of every service call. By 1999, all residential meters were read remotely via drive-by computers.

In 2000 a global positioning system (GPS) was acquired to map Ozarks Electric's electricity delivery system. It was the first in a series of steps leading to full deployment of the state's first automated meter reading (AMR) system in 2003.

The utility was one of the first electric cooperatives in the nation to install AMR, which allows meter reading electronically through

telecommunications systems. With AMR, cooperative employees can read meters and handle service connections from an office-based computer. The system also gathers electrical energy usage information that allows members to track their daily consumption.

In 2005, Ozarks Electric began the next phase of technology development by installing computer-controlled monitoring (SCADA) of its substations, which allows cooperative engineers to control the distribution of electricity via computer. A state-of-the-art dispatch center, opened in 2002, integrates both AMR data and SCADA to effectively and efficiently manage the system's more than 6,000-mile electricity distribution system.

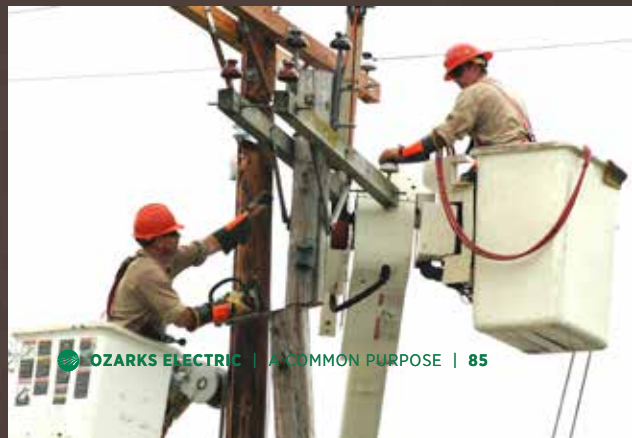
ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

In freezing temperatures and blazing heat ...in downpours and ice storms ... at the crack of dawn or the stroke of midnight ... No matter the weather or the hour, Ozarks Electric members know they can count on the utility's linemen to come to the rescue when the lights go out.

Through the years, Ozarks Electric linemen have served as cooperative representatives out on the land and along the lines. Though their daily work involves maintaining and improving electric service, it is the linemen's feats of courage and endurance during the worst weather conditions that earn members' trust and gratitude.

Linemen also play an important role in how Ozarks Electric honors the sixth cooperative principle: cooperation among cooperatives. When disaster strikes in another part of the country, teams of Ozarks Electric linemen often deploy to help other cooperatives rebuild lines and restore power to their members. Likewise, linemen from other co-ops have traveled to the Cooperative's service area when help was needed.

"I would like at this time to say "Thank You" for the people involved in getting our power back on. I looked out, and at 9:00 p.m. there was a crew of men working on that pole that had broken off. Somewhere around 11:00 p.m. they left and I could not see where they had gone ... Around 3:45 a.m. in the cold of the night our power came on. It takes special people to work in the dark of the night, in the cold, away from their family and away from a nice warm bed ... My hat goes off to all those involved in their efforts to keep my family warm ..." — **LETTER FROM JIM BURKETT**, FARMINGTON, FOLLOWING A DECEMBER 2000 ICE STORM THAT LEFT 8,000 WITHOUT POWER



ONE FOR THE AGES

Never is a cooperative's commitment to those it serves more clearly demonstrated than when disaster strikes. Ice storms, floods and tornadoes have all hit Ozarks Electric's territory over the decades. The worst in the Cooperative's history occurred in January 2009, crippling northeast Oklahoma and northwest Arkansas and producing widespread power outages. This is the story of what happened.

Creeeak. Snap! Sizzzzle. Pop! Booom!

Ears could hear the destruction that eyes could not see as a massive ice storm began pummeling the Ozarks Electric territory late on January 26, 2009.

The National Weather Service had predicted trouble. Forecasters estimated up to four inches of precipitation would fall into sub-freezing temperatures — a recipe for icy disaster.

Employees of Ozarks Electric stood ready 24 hours before the storm hit. Most had been through it before, in December 2000, when ice storms left northwest Arkansas in the dark and cold for days and weeks. This time, they hoped for the best but were prepared for the worst.

When ice began coating power lines and trees, it didn't take long for weighed-down limbs to break and fall on the lines. The eerie sounds of wood cracking, lines and poles crashing to the ground, and transformer fuses blowing filled the night air.

The first distress calls started coming in around midnight. Soon, Ozarks Electric's electronic service area maps were awash with red dots indicating where power outages were occurring.

Frozen precipitation continued falling for 10 hours, eventually coating the region with inch-thick ice.

As the full scope of the damage became clearer on January 28 and 29, cooperative employees were astonished. They had experienced

destructive storms before, but they had never seen such devastation. This was one for the ages.

More than 1,200 poles were snapped and 53,600 of the Ozarks Electric's 64,421 meters had no power. The electricity distribution system was demolished. What had taken 70 years to construct would have to be rebuilt in days.

Ozarks Electric's linemen and recovery teams bravely turned to their disaster recovery plans to deal with the mammoth storm's aftermath. Long, tiring — and sometimes frightening —hours of work lay ahead.

"When you're working out there at night and everything around you is pitch dark, when you hear a crack, you know something is coming down but you don't know which way to run. It's pretty scary," said cooperative lineman Jon Odom about the hazards of repairing lines after the storm.

Hilly and rugged terrain made it difficult to reach members living in isolated areas. "Getting there was half the battle," recalled Don Pinkley, lineman and job training safety coordinator at Ozarks Electric. In some cases, workers set poles, which weigh about 1,300 pounds, by hand because vehicles couldn't reach the downed lines.

Though the catastrophic storm knocked out electric service, it could not dampen cooperative spirit. Members — many who didn't have power themselves — arrived at cooperative offices and pitched in to aid in the recovery. Volunteers prepared and served 1,000 meals and packed more than 300 lunches daily to keep repair crews fed. They brought snacks and homemade treats for those putting in 18-hour days.

The cooperative principle promoting "cooperation among cooperatives" came to life as bucket trucks and crews from around the country began arriving only hours after the storm. More than 450 mutual aid and cooperative employees from Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana and Pennsylvania helped Ozarks Electric employees restore power quickly and safely.

Thanks to the extra help, the system was rebuilt at remarkable speed. Power was restored to all but the most remote locations within two weeks.

Touchstone Energy®

CONNECTING WITH MEMBERS

In 2000, one out of every two American homes had a personal computer and about 40 percent of those were using the Internet to get information. Recognizing the benefit of taking Ozarks Electric "online," the cooperative's website, www.ozarksecc.com, debuted in 2001. The site quickly became a vehicle for communicating news, energy-saving tips and product information.

Internet-supported conveniences such as online bill payment coincided with the website launch. Later additions included a portal members use to track electricity usage, manage accounts, pay bills and request services.

The fast rise in social media popularity provided new opportunities to communicate with members. Ozarks Electric established a presence on both Facebook and Twitter in 2009. In 2012, an application for smartphones was first offered for those wanting to conduct cooperative business, track outages or check local weather via mobile devices.

LOOKING BACK

In 2002, Ozarks Electric became a Touchstone Energy Partner, joining hundreds of other co-ops nationwide to promote standards and core values based on accountability, innovation, integrity and commitment to community.

The Touchstone Energy balloon flies over Arvest Ballpark in Springdale before the Northwest Arkansas Naturals take the field on July 4, 2011.

THE COLOR OF RESPONSIBILITY

Long before it hit a crescendo among the masses in the 2000s, "going green" was the cooperative way for Ozarks Electric. The utility has been using green power — electricity generated from renewable resources, such as the sun, wind and water — since the 1930s.

The first electricity delivered to members' homes was generated by hydropower purchased from commercial generation stations. Ozarks Electric began building its own hydropower generation stations on the Arkansas River in the late 1980s. In 2013, three hydropower stations were in operation.

The commitment to renewable energy continued in 2007 with the purchase of wholesale electricity produced by wind turbines at the Bluegrass Ridge Farm in Missouri. In 2012, the opening of the 66,000-acre Flat Ridge 2 Wind Farm in Kansas provided a second wind power source.

Ozarks Electric's service territory is home to a landfill gas-to-electricity conversion facility in Tontitown. Since 2011, methane gas that naturally occurs from decaying trash has been converted into green power and distributed throughout the state to electric cooperatives.

Ozarks Electric introduced the GreenPOWER program in 2007. Members can invest in renewable power generation by having a small, voluntary contribution added to their monthly electric bill. Funds are used to build future green power generation facilities and promote energy efficiency.

Environmental stewardship also prompted Ozarks Electric to take the lead in promoting electric vehicles in 2012. Cooperative personnel drove a Chevrolet Volt, a rechargeable car propelled solely by electricity, to educate members about its environmental benefits.

To increase energy awareness among students, Ozarks Electric is a co-sponsor of the Fayetteville Public Schools Energy Challenge that occurs each March. Students and teachers compete to see which school can save the most electricity in a month. Winners collect cash prizes that are used to install energy-saving equipment.

TOP: Wind turbines in Missouri generate some of the "green" electricity used at Ozarks Electric.

MIDDLE: Ozarks Electric's service territory is home to a landfill gas-to-electricity conversion facility in Tontitown.

BOTTOM: Employee Mitchell Styles prepares to recharge the Chevy Volt acquired by Ozarks Electric in 2012.

CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

"To properly serve our members, Ozarks Electric Cooperative Corporation must do more than just provide electricity. We are also dedicated to making members' lives better," CEO Mitchell Johnson told members in 2004. Throughout their cooperative's 75-year existence, members and employees have contributed both money and time to improve the area's quality of life.

The members of Ozarks Electric contribute some $50,000 annually to support community organizations. Donations have helped build a children's wing at the Stilwell Public Library and sponsor local festivals such as Westville's Loyalty Day and Tontitown's Grape Festival. Cooperative members have also given nearly $250,000 to support local volunteer fire departments that help assure community safety.

LEFT: Yolanda Copeland, bilingual customer service representative, center, volunteers at Springdale schools as an interpreter for Spanish-speaking parents at parent/teacher conferences.

MIDDLE: Ozarks Electric employees' cooperative spirit is on display while helping out at the Mount Comfort pancake supper in 1965.

RIGHT: Sandra Johnson, who works in Ozarks Electric's Fayetteville office, lends a hand to benefit a family shelter during the United Way's Day of Caring.

Cooperative donations support education through grants to enhance classroom instruction and have funded nearly $250,000 in college scholarships. School athletic programs, music programs and organizations such as 4-H and FFA also receive support. Cooperative funds provide premiums to reward students who learn valuable skills by raising and exhibiting livestock in area county fairs.

Employees individually accomplish countless tasks for their communities — evidence that they also embrace the principles that distinguish their member-owned company from others. In 2012 alone, employees worked 23,175 volunteer hours. They are youth sports coaches, PTA officers and school booster organizers. Several serve on community and church committees. Employees also support the United Way and form teams to participate in fundraising run/walks to benefit good causes.

As a group, Ozarks Electric employees reach out to help the underserved. In 2012, a companywide Angel Tree project provided holiday gifts of clothing, toys, food and basic supplies for three families in the cooperative service area. Employees also collected more than 100 pounds of food to be distributed through Cooperative Emergency Outreach.

LEARNING — THE CO-OP WAY

Ozarks Electric is committed to education and training as a way to enhance members' electrical knowledge and interest in the cooperative form of business. In the early days, rural men and women looked to their cooperative for instruction about using electrified appliances and equipment. Later, cooperative education efforts focused on sharing energy-efficiency ideas as well as teaching safety, cooperative principles and leadership to the next generation of cooperators.

LEFT: Ozarks Electric sponsors students from area high schools as delegates to the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. The weeklong event in Washington, D.C., educates youth about the federal government and the electric cooperative industry.

MIDDLE: An Ozarks Electric lineman working in Oklahoma explains the dangers of downed power lines and other electrical hazards during a safety program at Maryetta School.

RIGHT: Ozarks Electric began sponsoring an electric vehicle education program in 2007. The program teaches students skills in mathematics, auto mechanics, physics and engineering while building an electric vehicle. Here, Harrison Farwell drives an electric vehicle built by students at Fayetteville High School during the EV Rally.

Celebrating 75 Years
1938 - 2013

A PRINCIPLED PRESENCE

In May 2013, Ozarks Electric celebrates 75 years as a member-owned utility. Few companies of any kind can make such a claim. CEO Mitchell Johnson attributes this longevity to a corporate culture that aims to be much more than the "electric company."

"This company came to exist out of necessity as farm families pulled together for the common purpose of getting electricity for their homes and farms. It will be here for years to come because we remain committed to putting the best interest of members first," he said.

Ozarks Electric will continue its legacy of empowering people and powering communities, pledged Billy Joe Bartholomew, chairman of the board of directors in 2013. He said:

"This cooperative's rich heritage inspires us as we plan for the next 25 years — always with the goal of assuring adequate, reliable power for future generations of cooperative members."

NOTABLES

1991 — Millard Goff retires as general manager after 25 years' service at Ozarks Electric. Longtime cooperative employee Charles Cosby is tapped as his successor.

1991 — A new branch office opens to serve member-owners in Westville.

1999 — Mitchell Johnson replaces the retiring Charles Cosby as Ozarks Electric's CEO.

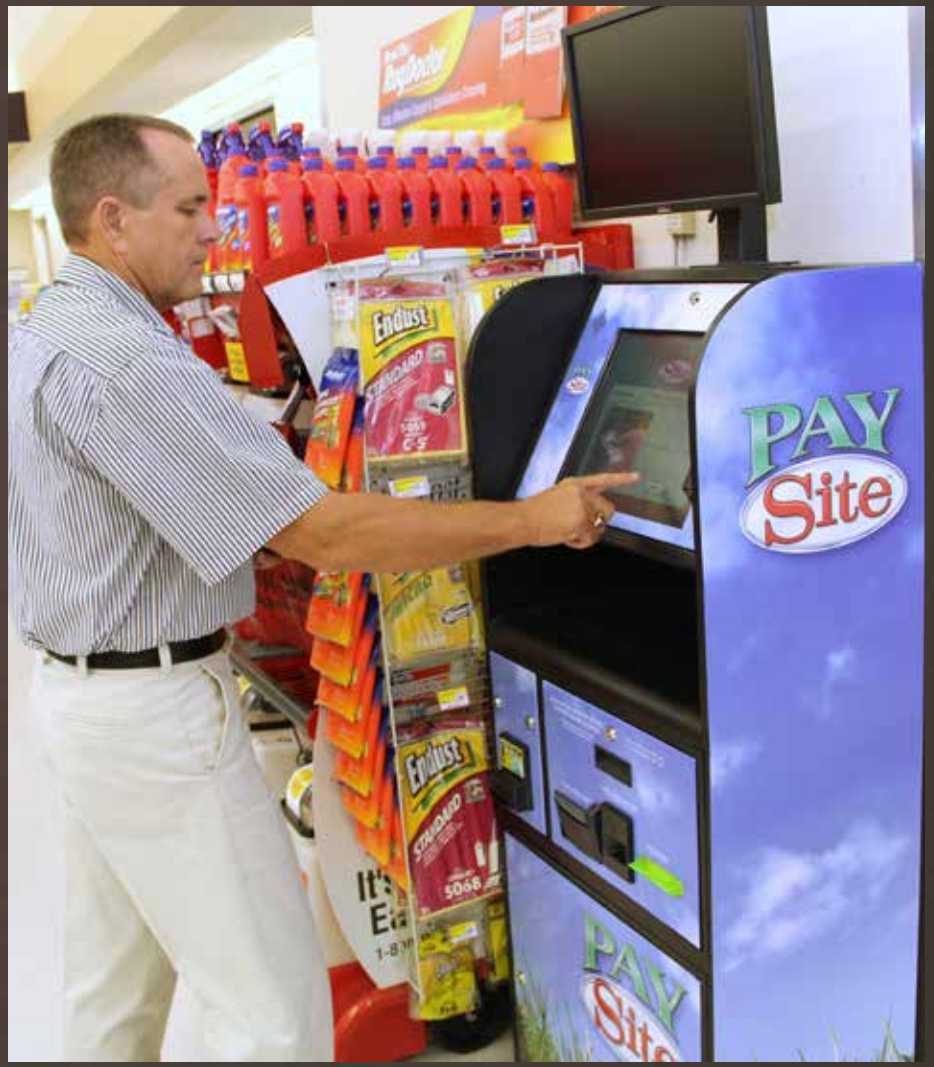
2001 — Construction is completed on an expansion of the corporate headquarters that doubles the size of the office space and includes additions to the service center and warehouse.

2002 — A Customer Response Center, staffed by specially trained customer service representatives, opens at the corporate headquarters to provide members with prompt, knowledgeable assistance when calling the co-op to transact business or make an inquiry.

2010 — A ribbon-cutting ceremony is held to celebrate the opening of a new office Springdale.

2011 — A remodeling and expansion project at the Stilwell office is completed.

2012 — PaySite® kiosks open in both Arkansas and Oklahoma for convenient, 24-hour electric bill payment.



TOP: Employees and members gather for a ceremonial ribbon cutting to open a new office in Springdale in 2010.

BOTTOM: Ozarks Electric member and employee Paul Dougan tries out one of the new PaySite® kiosks located throughout the service area.

EPILOGUE 2013

Edna Henbest, one of the original incorporators of Ozarks Electric Cooperative Corporation, lived in Washington County for the rest of her days. And there were many of them. She was only two months shy of her 99th birthday when she passed from this life on November 10, 1997.

By then she enjoyed almost 60 years of the electricity she and her neighbors fought so hard to get in 1938 and 1939. In fact, by 1997 electricity had been around so long that most took it for granted. They didn't remember that lights didn't always come on with the flip of a switch or that laundry day involved pressing clothes with a heavy iron heated on a wood stove.

But Edna remembered the days in the dark. It's perhaps why she seemed to celebrate all the ones after electrification. The time electricity helped her save on the farm was dedicated to church activities, volunteering for community organizations and assisting senior citizens.

She even became an Ozarks Electric employee. For 13 years she secured right-of-way easements, took applications for service and helped draw maps to expand the system.

It seems fitting that her final resting place alongside her husband should be in the Mount Comfort Cemetery in the shadow of electric lines that still run along the road there. Nearby is the site of the community house where she and her neighbors gathered to be the first to sign up as members of the cooperative that first brought electricity into their lives and community.

Ozarks Electric Cooperative Corporation

2013 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gathered before a board of directors meeting in 2013 are, from left, John R. Eldridge III, cooperative attorney; and directors Larry Baggett, Fayetteville; Joe Lynn Carson, Stilwell; Billy Joe Bartholomew, chairman, Prairie Grove; Jerry Bolinger, Hindsville; R.L. "Dusty" Richards, Springdale; Pam Smith, vice chairman, Westville; and David Verucchi, secretary, Springdale.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shannon Pharr 1938–1952
J.D. Easley 1938–1945
A.H. Berry 1938–1941
Harry Goforth 1938–1941
C.D. Griscom 1938–1939
Edna Henbest 1938–1939
Gladys Karnes 1938–1939
F.E. Perkins. 1938
L.E. Maupin 1939–1965
Vera Crain 1939–1952
Roe Stokenbury 1940–1973
E.G. Carroll 1941–1980
Otis Counts 1941–1963
Ralph Buck. 1945–1959
George Stratton 1949–1980
Vol Rutherford 1952–1984
Thurman "Shorty" Parsons 1952–1983
T.C. Anderson 1959–1991
Curtis Berry 1963–1973
W.C. Brooks 1965–1982
Larry Baggett 1973–present
Jerry Bolinger 1973–present
Alyne Berry 1973
Joe Lynn Carson 1980–present
Sonny Billings 1980–2004
Billy Joe Bartholomew 1982–present
R.L. "Dusty" Richards 1983–present
Ronnie Allen 1984–2006
Pam Smith 2006–present
David Verucchi 2006–present

GENERAL MANAGERS & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

E.H. Looney . . . . . January 1939–February 1942
Perry L. Rushing . . . February 1942–September 1945
E.H. Looney . . . . . September 1945–September 1950
Chester F. Williams . . November 1950–June 1953
Perry L. Rushing . . . June 1953–January 1965
Millard Goff . . . . . April 1965–January 1991
Charles Cosby . . . . January 1991–August 1999
Mitchell Johnson . . . September 1999–present

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Sources for additional information referenced in this book:

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The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture
"The Next Greatest Thing: 50 Years of Rural Electrification in America," Richard A. Pence, editor
"Tyson, From Farm to Market" by Marvin Schwartz
University of Arkansas Museum Collections
U.S. National Archives and Records Administration
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