



AEC
APPALACHIAN
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Connecting you to your Co-op

A Special Quarterly Newsletter for AEC Members for the Year 2015 • Spring Edition

IN CELEBRATION
of 75 years of
Service
To our members

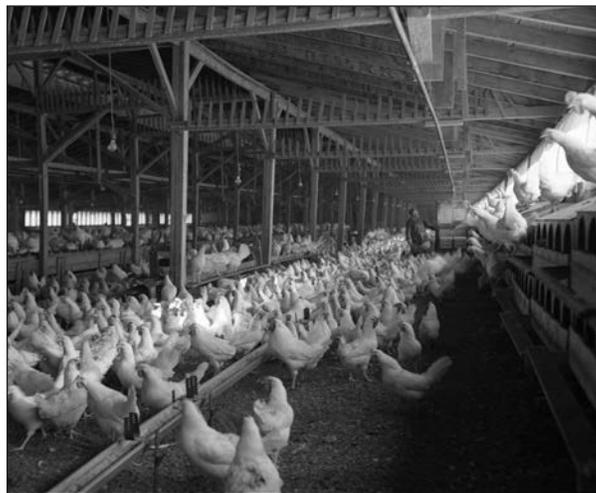
Grainger • Hamblen • Jefferson • Sevier



If you drive along any of the beautiful country roads around here, you'll pass fields of corn, soybeans, tobacco, and many other crops. You'll see beef cattle grazing and fruit trees blossoming in a hillside orchard. The AEC poles and wires that run alongside many of these backroads are closely associated with the rural landscape; they're part of the scenery around here. Up the hills and down into the hollers of this part of East Tennessee, they bring electricity to farmhouses, barns, and tractor sheds—no matter how far they lie “off the beaten path.” Before the Co-op was formed, electric service was only



available in densely-populated areas, where the number of those paying for it would have guaranteed a good return on the investment required to build the necessary infrastructure.



Along with advances affecting other types of agriculture, the advent of electricity transformed poultry farming. Automatic feeders and waterers meant that long hours of carrying feed and water to the chickens were a thing of the past. Electric lamps and heaters improved the survival rate of the flock during cold weather and incubators helped hatch the chicks and keep them warm. Electric fans increased ventilation in chicken houses during hot summers, and electric lights enabled farmers to easily illuminate the interior of fertilized eggs (a process called “candling”) to check the progress of developing chicks. This 1963 photo shows the Nichols Poultry Farm in Jefferson City.

Photo credit: Tennessee Valley Authority

With the arrival of electricity, **LIFE ON THE FARM** got a whole lot easier

No wonder farmers in the early part of the 20th century “went to bed with the chickens.” After all, when it got dark out in the barnyard, it was also pretty dark inside their homes. Before the advent of electricity, that was true of many types of farmers—not just those who raised poultry. For example, dairy farmers would begin their work day around 4 a.m. That’s because it took so long to do the milking (for a medium-sized herd of around 30 cows, it took a man working by himself maybe three or four hours) and because the rest of the daylight hours were needed for working in the fields. The milking usually took place by the dim light of a kerosene lantern. People used to say that the light from such a lantern was so faint that “you had to light a match just to see if it was burning.”

In warm weather, cooling the milk without refrigeration was quite a challenge. Several different methods were used, depending upon the size of the dairy operation. Sometimes the milk cans were hauled to a concrete tank; cold well water was pumped to fill the tank so that the milk would “keep” until the milk truck arrived. On hot days, a farmer might have to drain and fill the tank more than once.

After electric power from AEC reached dairy farms in our area, refrigeration changed how milk was stored and shipped. Electric milking machines and cream separators meant that the “old-fashioned ways” were left behind. Electric lights in dairy barns made early morning milking safer and more comfortable and electric water heating eliminated the need for

lighting fires to boil water for cleaning and sterilizing.

Perhaps no use of electricity was more appreciated on the farm than a motor to drive the well pump to provide water for cattle and horses. Before then, windmills helped with the task—when the wind was blowing, that is. Otherwise, water had to be pumped by hand.

Electricity didn't just make work easier for farmers. It helped them produce fresher, higher-quality products that they were then able to sell for a higher price—which, in turn, improved the overall financial viability of their operations. In a very real way, the electricity that AEC brought to farms in our area empowered the hardy folks that worked the land. And their productivity, in turn, contributed

significantly to our local economy. Seventy-five years later, the Co-op's ties to the agricultural community remain strong. Safe, reliable, and affordable electric service continues to make things better for the men and women that produce the outstanding food products (from Grainger County tomatoes to Shelton Farms cornmeal) that our area is known for.

The lives of local farm families are easier and better because they can depend on AEC power. And our Cooperative is stronger and better because these rural folks are the backbone of our membership. People who make their living working the soil are some of the most honest, hard-working, and upright individuals we know. We're proud to provide power to these local farms, and we're even prouder to count farmers among our members.



MEMBER MEMORIES

"If all you've ever known is life without electricity, you'll never forget the day when you finally got it." After almost 86 years of living here in East Tennessee, long-time AEC member **A.J. Hoffner** still remembers the thrill of "when the lights came on." A.J. and his family moved to a five-room house on Bays Mountain Road in Piedmont in 1932 when he was a small child. Along with wife Elizabeth, he now lives on Russell Gap Road and (with help from sons Walter and James) is still actively engaged in farming—raising beef cattle and mowing hay on approximately 260 acres.

Nights during A.J.'s growing-up years were largely dark. An oil lamp sat on the table where the family ate supper and where he and younger brother Bobby studied. Early morning farm chores like milking were illuminated by a lantern he and Bobby carried to the barn—very carefully, to minimize the risk of fire. He recalls seeing his first electric lights when he began his education at the two-room Cherry Hill School, and then at the local Methodist church. "When electricity came to McCampbell's Chapel, boy, we thought we were uptown!"

A.J.'s dad died when he was 12 and he was a teenager back in the mid-1940's when a gentleman drove up to the Hoffner home in a nice pick-up truck. The fellow offered an interesting proposition, according to A.J.: "He said they were trying to bring electricity out our way. He said that if you boys will sign the papers to indicate that you want electricity, then your neighbors can get it, too. But he told us they'd have to have 100% of folks around here on board in order to be able to do it. We wanted it, alright! But before agreeing to anything, I asked what it was going to cost. He told me a dollar a month. I signed the papers and they put the power lines up. We saved up the money to have the house wired, with one bare light bulb at the end of a cord hanging down from the ceiling in each room, a few wall outlets, and a porch light. We sure were glad to have it."

In the early 1950's, they got electricity at the dairy barn. The lights in the hallway were helpful, but A.J. says it was the milk cooler that really made a huge difference: "Before refrigeration, you had to cool the milk by placing the can in a bucket of water you'd drawn from the cistern. You took a big wooden spoon and stirred until you thought your arm would fall off, trying to cool that milk. After we got electricity, I'm telling you, everything changed. Oh, what a help that was!"

When asked about his AEC membership, A.J. doesn't hesitate: "They've been good to us. I had problems with my security light just recently and they put a new one in for me." He says he's thankful to have the service the Co-op provides. He sums it up this way: "When you need 'em, you call 'em, and they come out and see about you."

What's new at the Co-op

and how you can be a part of it

Now available

HOLA! AEC has some new ways for our members to communicate with us (and vice-versa) during outages. You can report a service disruption via our automated telephone system or by using the outage map on our website. We can provide you with a courtesy call when your power is restored. We have a Spanish language option available through our Interactive Voice Response system and you can download our new mobile app for free. It's all part of serving you better!

Throughout spring

In celebration of our 75th anniversary, AEC is making our service area more beautiful. We're donating and planting 75 native redbud trees throughout the counties and municipalities served by Co-op power. These flowering trees will provide both environmental and aesthetic benefits to the communities we're proud to serve.



811 This is the time of year we love to work out in the yard. But before you pick up a shovel, it's important to pick up the phone. Call 811 before you dig to have underground utilities marked for free. Stay safe and prevent power outages for you and your neighbors by calling first. Know what's below!



May

If you're a contractor or if you're building a new home in our service area, join us on May 7th at Lisa's Country Kitchen in Jefferson City for a 7:30 am breakfast and workshop to learn more about incentives that are available for meeting energy efficiency construction standards.



June

We'll kick off the summer grilling season with special pricing on Meco electric grills all month long. Stop by the Co-op each week to sample some tasty tidbits cooked on the grill. Electric grills and smokers from AEC are a safe, convenient, and hassle-free way to enjoy cooking out all year long.



Call us at 865.475.2032, ext. 1880 for more information about any of these programs or events.