



Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

85 YEARS OF SERVICE

FERGUS ELECTRIC CELEBRATES MILESTONE WITH A LOOK BACK AT ITS HISTORY

Story by **JANINE RIFE DIDIER** | *Fergus Electric*

In honor of Fergus Electric Cooperative celebrating 85 years of service, we thought it would be fun to reminisce a little. At our headquarters office in Lewistown, we have records and meeting minutes from the very beginning, 1938. The next few decades were busy as the co-op's line-men pioneered their way through each part of the system, bringing electricity to rural central Montana. To date, we are maintaining and replacing many of the same power-

lines that were originally constructed in our early years. As the late French writer, Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr wrote, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." The following pieces were taken verbatim from board meeting and annual meeting minutes from the years 1938 through 1958.

We hope you enjoy reading this bit of your co-op's history.

• **August 1938** – U.S.A. Loan not to exceed \$88,000 to construct the lines for the transmission and distribution of electric energy, including lines to private property to serve individual customers in rural areas.

• **September 1938** – Borrowed an additional \$130,000.

• **November 1938** – Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees. Construct two miles of power line up Trout Creek and construct two miles of power line north of Hilger on Winifred Road for four customers. Line extensions continue to be built in multiple areas. It was decided to buy a typewriter, filing cabinet, and adding machine.

• **February 1939** – After considerable discussion and consideration of bids submitted, it was decided to purchase a 1939 half-ton Ford V8 truck.

• **March 1939** – The Chairman outlined general terms of the proposal that the Corporation initiate and carry out a plan to assist customers who desire such assistance to wire their premises and to install

therein plumbing appliances and fixtures for such wiring and plumbing installation. The Corporation would obtain a government loan in an amount not to exceed \$8,000. "Plumbing appliances and fixtures" shall be understood to include septic tanks and water system and the word "wiring" shall be understood to include service extensions from distribution lines of the Corporation to the respective premises of the customers.

• **July 1939** – Articles of Conversion for the purpose of converting into a cooperative, non-profit membership corporation. The new name assumed by the Corporation is Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc.

• **August 1939** – Borrowed an additional \$130,000 at 2.73 percent for 25 years.

• **November 1939** – Motion carried to approve the change order for the Danvers Extension and build 36 miles of line to serve 50 customers.

• **December 1, 1939** – (first time the word 'members' appeared in the minutes.) The word customer was used prior.

• **April 5, 1940** – Allotment for 34 miles of line which would include the Garneill, Moore and Kendall extensions.

• **April 20, 1940** – It was moved, seconded and carried that the Board would not approve any extensions unless there was an average monthly guaranteed payment of \$8.00 per mile and a five-year contract signed by each applicant.

• **March 7, 1941** – Permission was given to trade in the Cooperative's Ford pickup for a new V-8 pickup of the same size and make.

• **July 1942** – Motion carried to try to get a release to purchase a new pickup.

• **March 6, 1943** – Annual Meeting minutes. Outages were discussed. The Warm Spring area experienced outages during the season when rains were heavy, and the lightning was exceptionally bad. Mr. Boettger (of Grass Range) complimented the superintendent on his splendid service throughout the year, and especially the

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FEC WORKING TO KEEP PACE WITH A CHANGING INDUSTRY

By **PAUL DESCHEEMAER**
Fergus Electric President



ONE of the most interesting aspects of being an electric co-op board member is watching and learning about how technology is changing how we produce and use electricity.

As we see the phasing out of carbon-based electric generation, innovation has stepped up its game. Over the last decade, wind, solar and hydrogen technologies have developed and/or improved very rapidly.

Nuclear energy, one of the most reliable energy sources, has supplied approximately 20 percent of the nation's power since the 1990s.

Other forms of generation less talked about, but nevertheless noteworthy, are geothermal and biomass. These two have kept people warm for generations and, with technological advancements, may become leaders in electrifying our world. How we use electricity is also changing rapidly. We are becoming more dependent on electricity as battery technologies

advance and everything from a weed eater to a car runs on a rechargeable battery. It's a bit scary to think about all the items we use every day that require electricity.

Fergus Electric Cooperative's role in this whole scheme is to provide the energy produced from the many forms of generation to its members in a safe, reliable and affordable manner. We continually maintain and make improvements to our distribution system to meet our members' needs. Our members, in turn, use this energy to heat, light and "recharge" their world. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to determine how important it is to maintain a constant supply of electric generation to meet the demand of an ever-growing use, i.e., heat, lights and battery chargers.

Through strategic planning, Fergus Electric is working to upgrade our system. We completed our new AMI metering system last year, and have several projects in place for this coming year. Contractors

will complete the rebuild of the 24 miles of 50 kilovolt transmission line from Hilger to Winifred in the next 12 months. Later this fall, building contractors will complete the construction of our new truck garage/office located just east of Roundup along Highway 12 on property the co-op purchased years ago for this purpose. The co-op is currently in the initial stages of a rate study to determine fair, revenue-neutral rates across all rate classes on our system.

As we all feel the effects of inflation, Fergus Electric continues to strive for stable rates for our members. Fortunately, our wholesale electricity rates have stayed stable and, in some cases, have been reduced by bill credits through our energy supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative. On the flip side, everything else has gone up substantially from clamps to poles and wire to trucks. Our employees work hard to be efficient and realize savings whenever possible. Please extend thanks to a lineman whenever possible. They keep our lights on. RM

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diligence applied in emergencies to repair damage and keep the service intact. It was finally decided that the Warm Spring Section just "doesn't live right."

• **March 1945** – Annual Meeting minutes. The winners of the door prizes were given \$3.75 in War Saving Stamps.

• **June 1945** – Motion carried to give the manager authority to purchase a new 1-1/2-ton truck or a good second hand one. Approved construction of nine miles of line at Utica.

• **December 1945** – It was approved that the following extensions be approved: Harlowton, Coffee Creek, Winnett, Cat Creek, Flatwillow, Becket, Forest Grove, Beaver Creek, Hanover, Grass Range, Kolin, East Winifred, Buffalo, and Gilt Edge, or approximately 308.65 miles of extensions.

85 YEARS OF SERVICE

• **February 1946** – Move, seconded and approved to send a telegram to each of our senators and representatives urging them to back the Poage Bill and that they use their every effort to work against taxing the cooperatives.

• **February 1950** – The manager explained that the net income for 1949 amounted to \$2,079.67 and he asked the Board if they wished to take action on the allocation of Capital Credits to the members for the net income shown for the year 1949. It was unanimously carried that the net income for the year 1949 be carried over without distribution of capital credits to the members and that said net income would be distributed at a later date.

• **June 1950** – The first order of business was the signing of Procurement Order

#34 for the purchase of one International pickup truck to replace the maintenance truck being used in the Roundup area of the system.

• **July 1950** – The Board was advised that Line Builders, Inc. had completed the Ryegate Barber project and that the final payment was now due.

• **August 1950** – The proposed N project is based on 110 miles of line to serve 96 signed members and 9 prospective members, with a loan in the amount of \$185,000 to cover the cost of construction. Gerald Wise will be in direct charge of the construction of the proposed N project.

• **July 1951** – The Board accepted the bid offered by Cooley Chevrolet Company

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for three new trucks at \$1,919.00 per new unit and an offer on old units of \$2,395, leaving a purchase price for three 3/4-ton pickups at \$3,362.00. The manager explained that it was necessary to obtain a new digging machine if construction was to be carried on in an economical manner. After discussion, it was duly moved, seconded and carried authorizing attendance of a demonstration and "if" in their judgment, a digger of this type meets with their approval, they were authorized and empowered to purchase this type of digger.

• **August 1951** – Manager reported that the south and east Roy lines had been completed, along with Hilger, east Denton and Conard taps. Also, the Hilger-Roy conversion has been completed. The Gilt Edge line is under construction. The Chris Nelson tap is staked, leaving the Alaska Bench, Jenicek, Bruflat and Hedgesville tap yet to be built in the N section.

• **September 1951** –

Miles of line	1,645.76
Members	2,218
kWh Purchased.....	770,918
kWh Sold	662,325
Line Loss.....	14%
No. of Substations.....	10
No. of owned trucks.....	20
Total Assets, current and accrued:	\$135,310.22
Total Assets and other debits:	\$2,240,883.77

• **November 1951** – The trustees authorized the borrowing from time to time from the U.S.A. amounts not to exceed in the aggregate \$5 million to finance the construction and operation of electric transmission, distribution, service and generation facilities. The manager reported the Hedgesville extension was complete and ready to be energized and the Buckentin and Hamilton taps were under construction.

• **December 1951** – At the request of the manager, it was duly moved, seconded and carried that he be authorized to purchase a new desk for the billing clerk.

• **October 1952** – Annual Meeting. Before the meeting started, the members were entertained by the Junior High School Band under the direction of Mr. Estes.

• **December 1953** – The manager reported that the Rothiemay line was completed and energized and that 10 miles of line had been staked on the extension known as Custer-Musselshell.

• **October 1954** – Annual Meeting: 205 members registered and 161 guests. Miss Jean Frazer, Home Demonstration Agent for Fergus County, gave a report on the

convention American Institute of Cooperation, which was held at Cornell University in New York. Miss Brooks stated that she and Mr. Brooks were the chaperons for four Montana youths, two FFA and two FHA. The trip was made possible by Cooperatives in the State of Montana. Fergus Electric Cooperative helped defray the expense of the trip for the group. There were 1,800 delegates, 600 of which were youths and represented 45 states in the United States and six foreign countries. The group visited various co-ops in the area and 18 bus loads of youths toured different farms. Three objectives were in mind: To give a better picture to youth about the agriculture in the northeast, picture of the farmer cooperatives in that area, and provide an understanding of how the cooperatives serve the farmers in that area. The experience was both educational and inspirational. The members showed their appreciation of Miss Frazer's talk with their applause.

• **October 1954** – The manager reported construction was completed as follows: West Winifred, Lund tap at Hilger, Brodbeck tap at Denton, Johnson tap at Buffalo, Joe Freidt at Utica, Don Bayer tap at Lewistown, Belcher tap at Moore, Settle Ranch tap at Martinsdale and new substation at Spion Kop.

• **January 1955** – The Gentry extension southeast of Roundup, Barber and Knox tap at Denton, George R. Smith tap at Grass Range and August Asbjornsen tap at Winifred are completed.

• **February 1955** – The McCaffree tap is completed, poles were set on the Johnson tap at Geyser and half the poles were set on the Ford tap at Winifred.

• **April 1955** – The Thompson tap at Winifred was constructed along with the Looney tap at Moore, the Ray Barnhart tap at Heath and the Robert Croney tap at Harlowton. The Brickley tap and Sterling taps at Ryegate are now under construction.

• **May 1955** – The manager reported on construction as follows: The Brickley tap was completed along with the Sterling tap, Horton well tap., Watson well tap, Kynett tap, Bricker tap and Van Voost tap.

• **June 1955** – The manager reported to the board on maintenance and outages as follows: A heavy snow and ice storm hit the Belt and Geyser areas on the morning of May 27th. An icing condition completely wrecked about 1-1/2 miles of the main feeder line at the Spion Kop Substation. All the members on the Spion Kop Sub were out of power for 13 hours. A few were out 10 hours longer. The manager estimated the damage at \$1,000.00.

• **November 1955** – The manager reported the Dovetail-Valentine extension

was completed and energized on October 27th; the Webb and Jackson taps were completed and the Gjerde tap was under construction.

• **March 1956** – After the demonstration of a snowmobile, the Board authorized the manager to purchase the snowmobile.

• **April 1956** – The manager reported that the Hughes tap was completed and that the new Heath Substation is completed.

• **June 1956** – The manager and Al Hull were granted permission to start an appliance allowance for the members of the Cooperative. Such allowance will allow a \$25.00 credit on the power bill of the member who installs an electric range, an electric water heater, a pressure water system or a clothes dryer.

• **November 1956** – The manager reported that one-half mile of line was constructed to Montana Power Company's new two-way radio station on Moccasin Mountain.


• **July 1957** – The manager reported that the Blakeslee extension was completed and that the Musselshell-Heintz extension was under construction.

• **August 1957** – The manager reported that the construction crew spent the month of July moving the Roy line to make room for the new highway.

• **October 1957** – The manager reported that a bad sleet storm east of Judith Gap on October 3 completely wrecked some two miles of line. Fifty members were out for four hours, and three members were out for 16 hours. The manager announced that Kenneth Wise was employed to work after school to assist Alton Hull, Power-Use Advisor. The manager advised the Board that it was necessary to purchase two new pickups. The manager was authorized to buy two new pickups and given discretion as to whether to sell the old pickups or to trade them in on the new pickups.

• **November 1957** – The manager reported that the White Sulphur Springs extension is completed. The B-Phase line down Warm Spring is completed.

• **December 1957** – Fattig Creek tap is completed. After discussion, it was duly moved, seconded and carried, that the cooperative join the Central Montana Chamber of Commerce. The manager was authorized to pay the annual dues of \$100.00.

• **January 1958** – The manager reported that the Teigen line was completed and energized on January 23, 1958. The Judith Gap line was completed, the Shawmut line is under construction and the Econom tap is completed. The manager reported that several new heating loads were connected during December. 

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

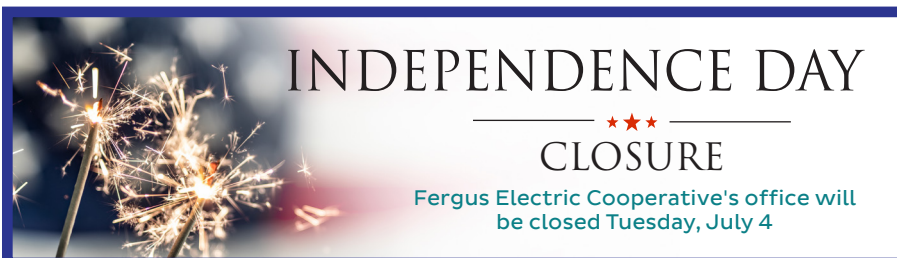
	2022	2021
ASSETS		
ELECTRIC PLANT:	\$69,272,379	\$65,636,220
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(29,411,410)	(27,223,105)
Net Utility Plant	39,860,969	38,413,115
Investments in associated Organizatoins	6,118,066	5,423,341
CURRENT ASSETS	7,898,327	9,103,855
DEFERRED DEBITS	512,580	642,804
TOTAL ASSETS	54,389,942	53,583,115
LIABILITIES & MEMBERS' EQUITY		
Total Margins and Equity	39,818,207	36,374,886
TOTAL LONG-TERM DEBT	9,366,604	12,300,408
CURRENT LIABILITIES	4,711,000	4,165,081
DEFERRED CREDITS	494,131	742,740
TOTAL EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES	\$54,389,942	\$53,583,115
COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES DECEMBER 31		
Operating Revenues	\$27,877,305	\$27,906,861
VARIABLE EXPENSES		
Power purchased for Members	16,641,854	18,157,189
Lines Cost	3,664,062	2,946,815
Administrative and Other	1,929,587	2,036,451
TOTAL VARIABLE EXPENSES	22,235,503	23,140,455
FIXED EXPENSES		
Depreciation	1,950,017	1,445,492
Interest on Long Term Debt	388,294	353,453
TOTAL COST OF ELECTRICAL SERVICES	2,338,311	1,798,945
Operating Margins	3,303,491	2,967,461
Non-operating Margins	1,214,435	3,548,725
NET MARGINS	\$4,517,926	\$6,516,186

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S STATEMENT

The balance sheet and comparative statement of revenue and expenses were taken from complete financial statements, which were audited by Smith, Lange & Halley, P.C., certified public accountants, of Sidney, Montana, who

expressed their unqualified opinion on the statements. Copies of the complete financial statements, together with the auditor's report, may be examined at the cooperative headquarters in Lewistown.

— Jason Swanz, secretary/treasurer



IDENTIFY ACCOUNT NUMBER*

WIN A \$32.50 CREDIT

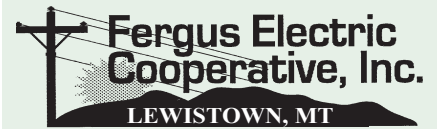
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number and you will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

**Account 320218, Account 398097
Account 398083, Account 45503
Account 317315, Account 397665**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Hobson Farm Company of Hobson, **Thomas and Jill Reed** of Lewistown, **Susan Davis** of Roundup, **Bernard Evelo** of Roundup and **William Spojka, Jr.** of Lewistown were last month's winners!

*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



2023 EMPLOYEES

Carson Sweeney, General Manager
Dale Rikala, Line Superintendent
Bret Ophus, Assistant Line Superintendent
Bret Nellerhoe, Assistant Line Superintendent, Roundup
Sally Horacek, Office Manager
Janine Rife Didier, Payroll Administrator
Erika Mattaliano, Senior Billing Clerk
Denise Jennings, Billing Clerk
Debby Petersen, Cashier
Louie Hould, Foreman
Tyson Ruff, Foreman
Owen Thatcher, Foreman, Roundup
Ryan Dautremont, Serviceman
Brian Godbey, Serviceman/Meter Tech
Mark Schwomeyer, Transformer Repairman
Darek Dygert, Journeyman Lineman
Jacob Grensten, Journeyman Lineman
Brock Pyrah, Journeyman Lineman, Roundup
Andrew Reuterskiold, Journeyman Lineman, Roundup
Danyon Rice, Journeyman Lineman
Collin Sullivan, Journeyman Lineman
Dakota Wahl, Journeyman Lineman
Jake Derosier, Row Groundman
Daniel Balster, Staking Engineer, PE
Melanie Foran, Staking Engineer, PE
Scott Olson, Staking Engineer
Jason Deffinbaugh, Mechanic