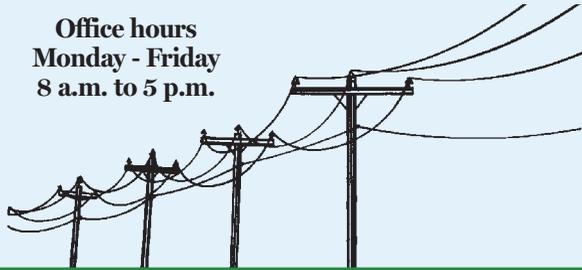


Office hours  
Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



# Tricounty Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

P.O. Box 100 Malinta, OH 43535  
Office Calls: 419-256-7900  
www.tricountyelectriccoop.coop



## TRUSTEES

Steven Hoffman.....	President
Lawrence Weirich .....	Vice President
Bradley Haupricht Sr.....	Secretary/Treasurer
Kenneth Brubaker	Johney Ritz
Dustin Sonnenberg	John Schuchert

## EMPLOYEES

Brett Perkins, Manager	Craig Wilson
Doug Hall	Jason Warnimont
Sue Bockelman	Jeremy Warnimont
Chris Okuley	Tom Jones
Tyler Flory	Deb Stuller
Sandy Corey	

### To report a power outage: 888-256-9858

Your call will be answered by the Cooperative Response Center. Give them the name on your account, service address and a telephone number where you can be reached.

They will dispatch a line crew to restore service.

Be sure to check your fuse or breaker system before reporting a power outage.

### Jackpot news!

Neither **Cole Fitzenreiter** of rural Napoleon nor **Eric Delauter** of rural Swanton reported spotting his hidden account number in the August issue of *Country Living*. Had either done so, he would have won half the jackpot and received a check for **\$35**.

Your account number is on your bill statement. Disregard the zeros at the left in the number, but consider any zeros at the right in the number when converting your number to words.

The hidden account numbers always are in the local pages of the magazine. The jackpot now stands at \$90. So read *Country Living*, find your hidden account number, report it and win!

## Co-op membership has powerful benefits

**ASK YOURSELF THIS:** What does it mean to be a member of Tricounty Rural Electric Cooperative, a Touchstone Energy® electric cooperative?

As a member of Tricounty, you have the power, a voice and control in how your electric co-op is run, in what's best for the community, in the decisions that allow us to provide affordable electricity for your home or business. This October, we're celebrating National Co-op Month, and we're recognizing the most important part of our co-op — you, our members.

Membership represents a vested interest — everyone is more engaged in and attentive to something they feel a responsibility for. Touchstone Energy co-ops work to engage their members in all the issues surrounding the co-op. One Zero Four Four Eight Zero One

In today's world, electric co-ops are doing more than just saving money for their members. Touchstone Energy cooperatives make being a member a unique experience.

Members are the reason cooperatives exist; co-ops are formed when like-minded people come together to serve a common need. When members embrace the idea that they have more than a passing interest in their co-op, and that they actually are the owners, with an ability to help guide it, that is the power of co-op membership.

The power of co-op membership is the cooperative difference, and our bottom line isn't profit, it's the empowerment of you, our member-owners. Tricounty actively engages with the communities we serve.

The best part about being a member of a Touchstone Energy cooperative: It's *your* Touchstone Energy cooperative. Power to the people, for the people, from the people. ☺



**Bret Perkins**  
General Manager

# Cowboy cooperatives

The history of electric co-ops shows grit, resiliency and persistence that's as relevant today as it was in the 1930s

BY TOM TATE

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP Month, so it's fitting for Tricounty to look back to our beginnings and reflect on the reasons for the creation of electric cooperatives. This is a remarkable story that demonstrates the exceptional nature of the Americans who populated rural America, then and now.

Nineteen hundred and thirty five. It's hard to imagine what life was like outside urban areas in those days, especially through the lens of our 21st-century existence — news taking days to reach you, dirt roads, manual labor and no electricity. Life for a large portion of the American population was, for all intents and purposes, a frontier life.

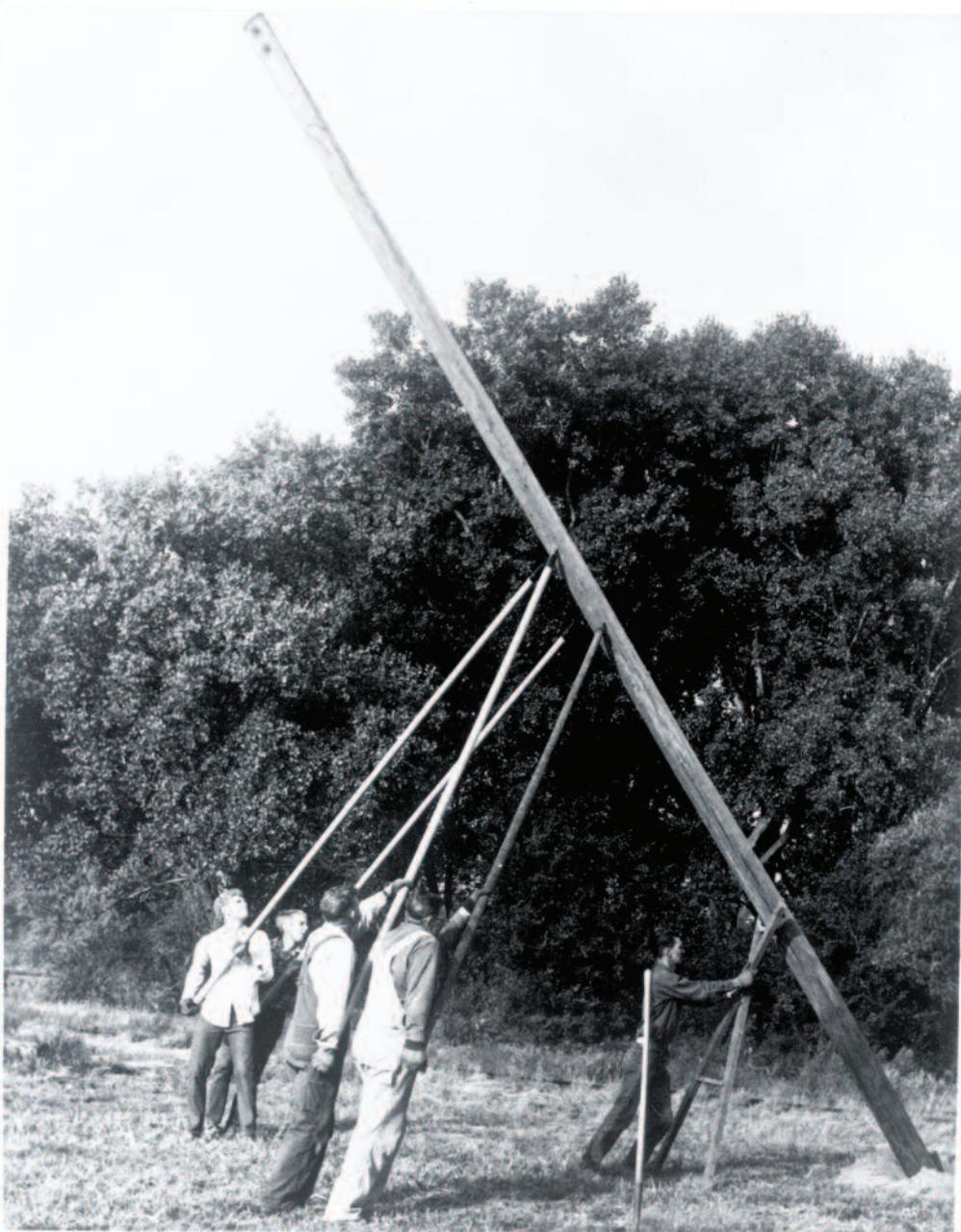
Rugged people making a living by strength, persistence and hard, often crushing, work. Relying on their neighbors when things got tough. A way of life that's alien to most of us today, though a few are still around who remember when the lights first came on. While 95 percent of urban dwellers had electricity, only one in 10 rural Americans was so blessed.

It was in 1935, on May 11, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed executive order 7037 creating the Rural Electrification Ad-

ministration (REA). Immediately, "cowboy" cooperatives took the bit in their teeth and started putting together electric cooperatives all across America. Tricounty got its start on March 24, 1936.

Some might think that so-

called "cowboy co-ops" would be restricted to the West, but the case can be made that every cooperative was formed by the "cowboys" of their area. Tough, self-reliant, hard-working, honest, resilient men and women willing



to take bold action to serve their interests and create a better life for their families. But working in your self-interest should not be confused as selfish. They were working together for their neighbors and for their communities.

The term “cowboy” conjures up Hollywood images of fighting, drinking, rugged individuals battling injustice against great odds. Today, it can also be a pejorative term describing someone who is unpredictable and unsophisticated in their actions.

While the actual character of the cowboy cooperative didn't reflect the Hollywood image, the cooperative model matched the cowboy ethic perfectly. A book written by a retired Wall Street executive, James Owen, captured this ethic and boiled it down to the following 10 points (see them at [cowboyetics.org/cowboyetics/](http://cowboyetics.org/cowboyetics/)):

1. Live each day with courage.
2. Take pride in your work.
3. Always finish what you start.
4. Do what has to be done.
5. Be tough, but fair.
6. When you make a promise, keep it.
7. Ride for the brand.
8. Talk less and say more.
9. Remember that some things aren't for sale.
10. Know where to draw the line.

Seems just another way of laying out the cooperative principles that we run our businesses by to this very day. It appears that cowboys and cooperatives were a natural fit. Two Four Seven Two Zero Zero Three

So these cowboys got busy organizing electric cooperatives and began the work of bringing light to rural America. They dug holes by hand. They walked the poles up into place to carry the electric

lines. All this had to be done with picks, shovels, ladders and whatever else was handy.

Some of us have seen these poignant photographs, sepia images of remote places with men scrambling to light the rural landscape. Wires had to be manhandled into place on the poles and cross arms. Creating the proper tension and securing the conductors to the insulators was all done by strength and by sight. And when the lines were damaged either by man or by nature, it all had to be redone the same way.

Safety equipment was nonexistent. The hard hat was gradually being introduced, and the first mandate of its use in a public works project likely was the Hoover Dam, where falling debris was responsible for many deaths, according to the Nevada State Library and Archives. Fire-retardant clothing wasn't even a glimmer in anyone's eye, and climbing poles often involved ladders rather than spikes and safety belts.

Once power was flowing, members reported how much they used, and the cooperative sent them a hand-prepared bill by regular RFD (Rural Free Delivery) mail. No automatic meter reading systems or computerized billing options. Ledgers formed the permanent record of transactions.

Today these tasks are completed using digger and bucket trucks assisted by mechanized tensioners. Distribution systems are controlled by smart devices, and cooperatives can provide more consistent levels of service and quality at a much lower cost. The work remains dangerous and arduous, but modern safety tools, clothing and practices reduce the risk substantially. And technology continues to improve our ability

to control system operation and costs while continuously improving quality and member service. Automated systems abound that improve the accuracy of bills and simplify data management.

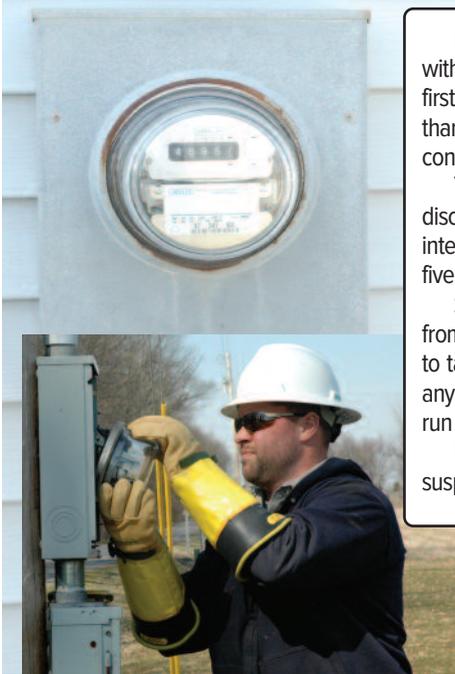
Given all that, some might think the cowboy cooperative is a thing of the past. But they would be wrong. The cowboy cooperative is needed just as much in 2014 as it was in 1935. Changes are sweeping through the electric utility industry, and if the cooperatives are to retain the benefits that electrification has brought to rural America, bold, decisive action by a new breed of cooperative cowboy will be required.

While the tools differ, the cowboy cooperative and ethic have not changed. Think about the points James Owen identified. They reflect values still consistent with the seven cooperative principles and underscore the relevance of the cowboy co-op in facing today's challenges.

The frontier life of today is different indeed. In the 21st century, co-ops will continue to work in their self-interests. This means employees and members alike pitching in and doing whatever they can individually and collectively to be sure that the interests of our community are well served and that electricity remains affordable and reliable. Just as it was in the 1930s, working in our self-interest won't be selfish, it will be for the benefit of the families in our communities — and that's who we, here at Tricounty, are here to serve. ☞

**Tom Tate** writes for the *National Rural Electric Cooperative Association*, the service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

## Electricity theft: Costly and dangerous



It is estimated that up to \$4 billion of electricity is stolen annually nationwide. And just like with shoplifting, it's the honest people who end up paying for it. In Ohio, theft of electricity is a first-degree misdemeanor if the value of the stolen electricity, plus any equipment repair, is less than \$300. It's a fourth-degree felony if more than \$300, or if the offender was previously convicted of the charge. Tampering with an electric meter carries similar penalties.

The offender doesn't have to be caught in the act. The law states that reconnecting a meter disconnected by a utility or tampering with a meter is prima facie evidence that the user intended to defraud the utility. Conviction can mean from six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine to five years in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Since we are a not-for-profit cooperative, someone who steals electric power steals directly from your pocket. But revenue loss isn't the only risk. Theft of electric power requires the thief to take significant risks and endangers not only him or herself, but also our employees and anyone who happens to be nearby the tampered equipment or lines that the thief may have run and left exposed and unsafe.

Help us to minimize your losses and keep everyone as safe as possible. If you know of or suspect someone stealing, let us know anonymously by calling our office at 419-256-7900.

**Power surging through a compromised meter can cause an electrical catastrophe. Only trained Tricounty Cooperative personnel wearing protective clothing should work on meters.**

## Cooperative principles guide co-ops to be stewards of their communities

EVERY OCTOBER SINCE 1930, not-for-profit cooperatives of all kinds have recognized National Cooperative Month as a way to educate the public about how co-ops work and to appreciate their many members.

Offering our members real value — and working to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve is one way we set ourselves apart. The seven cooperative principles lead electric cooperatives like Tricounty to do business in a better way every single day.

### The Seven Cooperative Principles, Explained

#### 1. 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.

#### 2. Democratic Member Control

— Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

#### 3. Members' Economic Participation

— Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

#### 4. 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.

#### 5. 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. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

#### 6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives

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

#### 7. Concern for Community

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