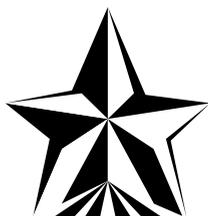
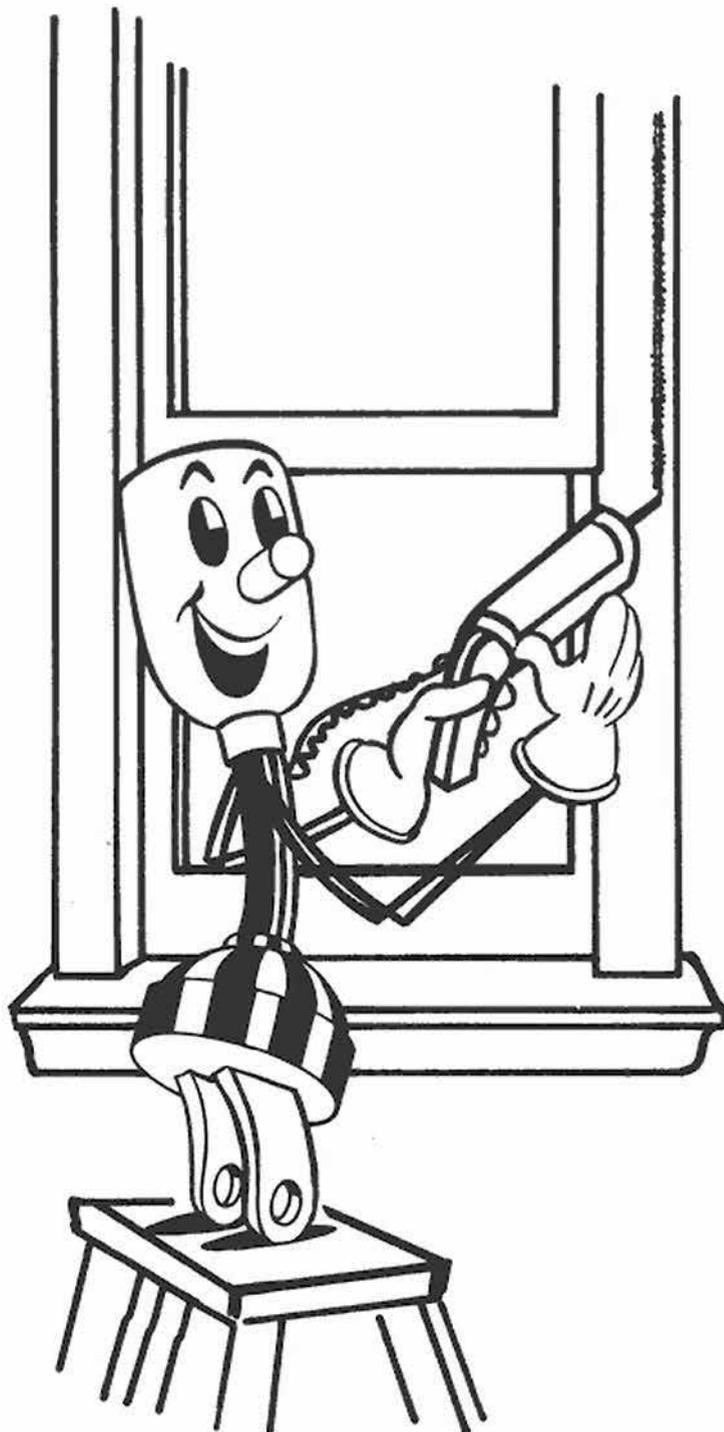


Caulking helps you save.

Willie Wiredhand reminds you that just one tube of caulk can lower heating and cooling costs and improve the overall comfort in your home. Seal around window casings to reduce air infiltration and your energy consumption.



Sam Houston
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

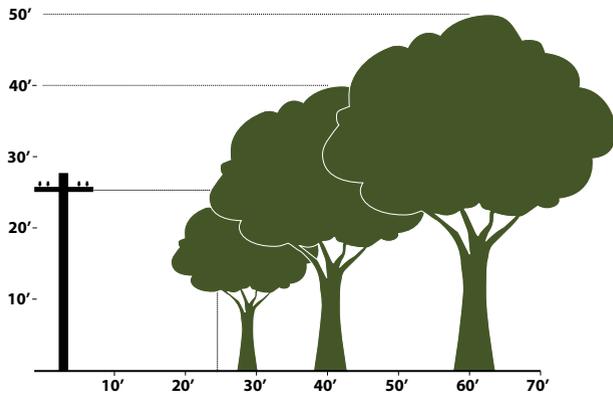
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

www.samhouston.net



Between the Lines

Spring cleaning delivers safe, reliable power



[PHOTO, above] When planting trees or shrubs, keep in mind the shape and the size the species will reach at maturity. This diagram shows suggested planting distances for small, medium and large trees.

Spring gives us a chance to thaw out after a chilly winter. Take advantage of longer daylight hours by doing a little spring cleaning and yard work. But the seasonal shift isn't all good news.

The rapid change from harsh, cold air to warmer temperatures can trigger severe weather. To protect our lines and keep power flowing safely to your home, Sam Houston

Electric Cooperative maintains our rights-of-way. Think of it as spring cleaning for power lines.

Right-of-way (ROW) maintenance keeps tree limbs and other obstacles away from high-voltage power lines. It's an important part of the service we provide to you, our members, for three reasons: safety, reliability and cost.

Our primary concern is the safety of our workers and members. Properly maintained ROW keeps our crews safe when they are restoring service and maintaining our system. Keeping trees clear of power lines also keeps your family safe. From making sure a child's tree house doesn't hit power lines to creating a safe environment while doing yard work, a well-maintained ROW helps avoid tragedy.

Power lines are a constant part of our landscape; it's easy to forget they are around. We work hard to keep the area around our lines clear, but we need your help. Be alert this spring. Don't plant trees or tall vegetation under power lines, and keep an eye out for power lines when working in your yard.

If severe spring weather blows through, a well-maintained ROW leads to fewer outages and faster response time. Trees are less of a threat. When trees do fall, crews are able to restore service more quickly than they could with poorly maintained areas.

As a not-for-profit company, Sam Houston EC strives to keep costs affordable for you, our members. Maintaining our ROW is an important part of controlling costs. Fewer and shorter outages save money for everyone. When crews work in well-maintained areas, we can reduce risks for employees and equipment, too—another way to keep costs low. Safety, reliability and cost: this is why we believe in ROW 'spring cleaning.' If we compromise on one of these areas, it impacts the others. At Sam Houston EC, we aren't willing to compromise. Maintaining our ROW is a priority for your safety, comfort, and pocketbook.

When It's Time for a Trim

Trees are vital to our economy. But trees are dangerous when they contact power lines. Regular trimming to direct growth away from lines helps prevent the outages and damage trees can cause.

The skilled employees and contractors working for the Co-op are committed to establishing the clearance required to bring you years of dependable electric service, while retaining the beauty and value of your trees.

Here are a few tips you can put into practice to help us better serve you:

- Don't store items in right-of-way areas, even for short periods of time. Rights-of-way must be kept unobstructed at all times to allow access for trimming, maintenance and repair crews. Personal property in right-of-way areas should be removed.
- When planting trees or shrubs, keep in mind the shape and the size the species will reach at maturity. Select sites that are far enough from rights-of-way to ensure future growth will not interfere with power lines. See the diagram [at left] showing suggested planting distances for small, medium and large trees.
- Keep landscaping elements out of the designated rights-of-way.
- Report dead, weak or damaged trees near power lines to the Cooperative promptly so they can be cut before they cause an outage. Give us a call toll-free at 800-458-0381.



Dining in the Dark



USDA

Monitoring the temperature of refrigerated foods during a power outage can keep you and your family safe and minimize the loss of perishable items. Use a food thermometer to ensure that that food stays at an optimal 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

thermometer can be one of the most useful tools you can wield in your battle to preserve food. The gadget checks the internal temperature of food, ensuring items are cold enough to eat safely. Also, keep appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. When the power is out, an appliance thermometer will always indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer no matter how long the power has been out.

Use these food safety tips to help you minimize food loss and reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Find more tips at www.FoodSafety.gov, including helpful charts to evaluate individual items in your refrigerator and freezer.

Refrigerated Food

- Keep refrigerator doors closed as much as possible. An unopened refrigerator keeps food cold for about four hours.
- If food (especially meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) has been exposed to temperatures above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two or more hours, or has an unusual odor, texture, or color, get rid of it. Remember the American Red Cross food safety rule: “When in doubt, throw it out.”
- Never taste food to determine its safety or rely on appearance or odor.
- Use perishable foods first, then frozen food.
- To keep perishable food cold, place them in a refrigerator or cooler and cover with ice.

Frozen Food

- A full freezer stays colder longer. Freeze containers of water to help keep food cold in the freezer. If your water supply runs out, melting ice can supply drinking water.
- If you keep the door closed, a full freezer keeps the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full).
- If food in the freezer is colder than 40 degrees Fahrenheit, is partially thawed, and has ice crystals on it, you can safely refreeze it.
- Always discard frozen or perishable food items that have come into contact with raw meat juices.

SOURCES: AMERICAN RED CROSS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Co-op Connections Deals



The Co-op Connections Card is a member benefit program that delivers

discounts from participating businesses, both local and nationwide. Visit www.connections.coop for more deals.

Rhodyo Painting

162 Perch Lane
Trinity, TX 75862
936-594-3659
www.rhodyopainting.webs.com
Offer: 10% discount

Davis Real Estate Services

406 N. Temple
Caldwell, TX 77836
979-739-1867
M-F, 8-5
www.davispropertytexas.com
Offer: \$100 off any real estate we sell

Charmaine's Embroidery

140 Jackson St.
Coldspring, TX 77331
936-653-8155
M-F, 10-4:30
Offer: 10% discount on shop items. No set-up fee on special orders.

Conservation Corner



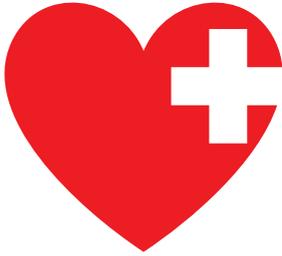
These days, it may be easier to trim your refrigerator's energy use than it is to trim your waistline. Set the refrigerator temperature

above 37 degrees Fahrenheit. Make sure door seals are in place and are snug when closed. And keep outside coils unobstructed and clean; dirty ones could overwork the unit's compressor.

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



National Red Cross Month



Are you ready to save three lives? Join your community as we celebrate the American Red Cross in March.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt began the tradition in 1943, proclaiming March the month to recognize the work of the American Red Cross. The group began during the Second World War as a blood donor service. The President called on the public

to help by giving blood, volunteering time, or donating money. Seventy-one years later, every U.S. president has echoed the proclamation.

The Red Cross collects 6.3 million units of blood a year from roughly 3.7 million blood donors. The group provides 40 percent of the nation's blood supply. Donors—called everyday heroes by the American Red Cross—may save up to three lives with each donation.

5 Easy Ways to Pay

As a service to our members, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative provides a variety of payment options designed to simplify bill paying. For more information about any of these programs, contact a member service representative.

- 1. Pay with Cash, Check or Credit**—Payments can be made in person at one of our office locations, online by logging in to your account or via phone 1-800-458-0381 by calling with a credit card number. Visa, MasterCard and Discover cards are accepted. Payments can also be made via check-by-phone. There's no check to write, and no waiting for the mail to deliver your payment.
- 2. Budget Billing**—Qualifying accounts can divide anticipated annual electric costs out evenly over the year, ensuring that your bill doesn't fluctuate from month to month. Budget billing is a great way to combat the impact fluctuating energy use can have on your monthly budget.
- 3. Automatic Payments are Easy**—When you enroll in our automatic payment program, Sam Houston EC will draft your bank account or charge your credit card in the amount of your electric bill each month. Sign up for this safe and free program. We'll take it from there.
- 4. Fidelity Express Payment Centers**—Sam Houston EC has teamed up with Fidelity Express to offer members the ability to pay their bills with cash, check or money order at conveniently located payment stations in stores and businesses throughout the Cooperative's 10-county service area. There is a \$1.50 fee per transaction for this service.
- 5. The Deferred Payment Plan Can Help in a Pinch**—Members who maintain a payment record with no more than two delinquent notices during the preceding 12 months are eligible to request a deferred payment plan, which allows payment of outstanding debt in monthly installments.

Think Safety.

Use Caution While Burning

Before you burn fields, ditches, or even that old pile of brush, make sure you're a safe distance away from Sam Houston Electric Cooperative's equipment. Fire can damage enclosures protecting underground cable and burn utility poles. If you plan to burn, look around first and stay clear of any potential hazards.



SAFETY DOESN'T STOP HERE.

At Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, we believe one of our most important roles in the community is to educate our members and neighbors about what to do in order to stay safe around electric power. Visit www.samhouston.net and click on "Safety Sense."



Sam Houston
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

[PHOTO] A tall brick chimney located near the commissary is all that remains of the building where furniture was made.



THE GREAT FARMING EXPERIMENT

By Janet. R Myers

72-year-old *Ben Rasbeary has never forgotten the first time he peeked into the bedroom of Mrs. Helen Maria Kerr Thompson. Ben was seven years old at the time, and he and his identical twin brother, Bill, were visiting John Lewis Thompson III, the young grandson of the well-respected Mrs. Thompson.*

It was one of many visits the twins made to the beautiful house at the invitation of the educated and idealistic community leader.

“I excused myself to go wash up in the bathroom and on the way back to join the others, I passed by the half-open door of Mrs. Thompson’s bedroom,” Ben Rasbeary says. “Curiosity got the best of me and I just had to look in. Upon entering, I saw something I had never seen before in my life; a giant, ornate poster bed with a big canopy over it. It was like nothing I had ever seen; way beyond my life experience.”

Life in the community of Willard, now known as Woodlake, Texas, where the Rasbeary twins and Thompsons lived, was anything but typical for an East Texas town of the era; a fact that would take a few more years for Bill and Ben Rasbeary to truly understand.

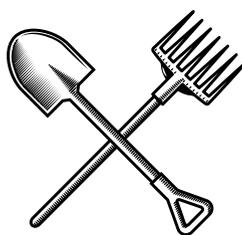
The story of the community of Willard, Helen Kerr Thompson and the Rasbeary family, actually began as the tale of Helen Kerr’s marriage in 1898 into the Thompson family and its vast holdings of East Texas timberland and logging mills.

Her husband, John Lewis Thompson, began his business career in Willard in 1891 and developed a reputation for fair dealing and honesty. The entire Thompson operation moved to the Willard area for several years while logging was underway there. After World War I, John Lewis Thompson offered his wife Helen a gift of 12,000 acres of clear-cut forestland in Trinity County, where, instead of entering politics as she considered, Helen established a model working agricultural community.

Having lived in both cities and rural areas, Mrs. Thompson came to believe that the country was a better place to raise children. So she chose the Willard area for the homesteader’s family life.

In the 1920s, Mrs. Thompson, an idealist, conceived a large farming community, where people from cities could come to work on their own land and support their families.

Collectivism subsistence farming was a movement born of the Great Depression and Mrs. Thompson hoped to persuade people in the cities, where soup kitchens were common, to come to her homestead project at Willard to learn how to grow their own food. Her husband, at that time, was involved in banking and finance in Houston and provided funds to underwrite the project.



As families settled and became tenant farmers or independent landowners, the demands on Mrs. Thompson's time grew, so she hired W.H. William (Bill) Hutchinson Rasbeary to serve as the farm manager.

“Our grandfather came down to the farm by horse and wagon from Centralia, Texas,” Bill Rasbeary says. “He oversaw the entire operation, which included not just farming but livestock management, as well.”

The farm featured sheep, poultry, hogs, dairy cattle, chickens and the first thoroughbred Hereford cattle to be brought into the area. Crops included corn, sorghum cane, radishes and tomatoes. Mrs. Thompson believed in diversification and encouraged her farming families to produce animal or plant crops year-round.

To help the new farmers adjust to life in the country, Mrs. Thompson gave each family an annual list of canned goods needed to feed a family of six—a list that included 60 cans of beans, 70 cans of okra, 50 cans of pork and beef, and 25 jars of jellies, jams and preserves.

“The people in the project were city people,” Bill says. “They had no farming in their background whatsoever. Everything they did they had to be told how to do it. Most of them came from Houston, Galveston and Beaumont and nearly all of them were getting their food from the bread and soup lines.”

When asked for advice by tenant farmers on the proper time to plant potatoes, Benjamin Baylous Rasbeary, Ben and Bill's father, who had been a farmer all his life, told them to plant the potatoes when the moon was full in February. Late one evening the next February, Benjamin went to check on a water leak and found the novice farmers out in the garden planting potatoes in the near darkness of night beneath the full moon.

Mrs. Thompson was very organized, setting up work schedules for everyone for jobs like tending the community gardens,



roadwork and feeding the animals. She paid the workers according to their work hours and provided a commissary where everyone could buy groceries.

It was the stock market crash in 1929 that dealt a double blow to the farm, causing Mr. Thompson's mortgage company to fail and also devastating markets for farm products. Mortgaging her property to keep the farm going, Mrs. Thompson continued to seek funding for expansion. With the enactment of the Emergency Relief Act in 1933, she was able to convince the Texas Relief Commission to designate Willard, renamed Woodlake, as the first rural resettlement community designed and financed by the U.S. Government.

By 1933, plans were underway for 100 family farms—now called the Woodlake Homestead Project. Each farm consisted of three acres, and featured indoor plumbing, electricity, a wood stove and farm implements. The project later included a state park with a lake, community swimming area, trading post, churches, recreational facilities and milk delivery. Other community property eventually included a 1,500-acre farm, school, water system, bakery, sawmill, canning plant, rug weaving room, mattress factory, blacksmith shop, sewing room and furniture factory.

Despite the ability to earn extra income via cooperative marketing contracts for products like eggs, many farmers in the project, accustomed to a weekly paycheck, complained about a lack of cash. Some farmers sent to work in the fields did not feel they were treated fairly. Added to these problems was

duplication of government funding and oversight.

By the beginning of World War II, jobs were becoming available in the cities and farm families began to move away in search of better financial opportunities. In 1943, the government auctioned off much of its land holdings at the Woodlake site. Many houses were sold and moved to communities close by.

Some 200 families had made Woodlake their home during the 10 years the project was in operation. Perhaps so few stayed behind to farm the soil because they had possessed a romanticized, unrealistic view of “getting back to the land,” not realizing just how much backbreaking work would be required to keep their farms afloat.

Today, the community of Woodlake is a mere whisper of its former self—nearly a ghost town. It’s been 50 years since Helen Kerr Thompson passed away, and all of her children and grandchildren have either passed away themselves or scattered



to the four winds. The Rasbeary twins, Bill and Ben, are among the few living people who personally remember Mrs. Thompson, someone they considered “a real lady.”

Although Helen Kerr Thompson’s belief in the success of a socialistic farming community thrived only a few short years, Ben and Bill Rasbeary still share Mrs. Thompson’s view that the country really is a better place to raise a family.

JANET RUTH MYERS, FROM THE LAKE SAM RAYBURN AREA, HAS AUTHORED DOZENS OF MAGAZINE ARTICLES AND FREQUENTLY WORKS WITH HER HUSBAND, PHOTOGRAPHER STEPHAN MYERS.



[PHOTO 1] Ben (left) and Bill (right) Rasbeary sit in front a log home owned by Ben, with a photo of one of the carpenters who helped build it. The Rasbeary twins were childhood playmates to one of Helen Kerr Thompson’s grandchildren.

[PHOTO 2] One of the few log houses left in Woodlake belongs to Ben Rasbeary. The lower portion of the front was rebuilt a few years back, but most of the structure is original.

[PHOTO 3] The farm’s old commissary sits along the south side of US Hwy 287 and can be viewed by passersby.

[PHOTO 4] One of the few photos of John Lewis Thompson (center), Helen’s husband. Flanking Thompson are Jason and Mary Hathorne, both of whom were in the service of the Thompson family during the Civil War.

[PHOTO 5] Chickens were raised to supply meat and eggs to the Woodlake families and to sell in the cities.

[PHOTO 6] An ad promoting the Willard/Woodlake area and cooperative subsistence farming: “Drive Out to Beautiful Woodlake.”

