



Kerosene Lamps to Electric Lights

IN THE MID-1930s America was struggling. Many were plagued by hardship and drudgery as 90 percent of rural Americans lived and labored in the dark. The big electric companies said there was no money to be made by serving rural America. But farmers needed electricity to make their farms more productive. Rural women needed electricity in their homes to ease their daily work. The people of rural America needed electric power.



Sam Houston
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

SAM HOUSTON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE • WWW.SAMHOUSTON.NET

FACEBOOK.COM/SAMHOUSTONEC • @SAMHOUSTONEC



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

SYSTEM OPERATOR



The eyes and ears of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative are found in the Cooperative's dispatch center. Keeping a close watch on the electrical distribution system is tasked to a group of six system operators and two dispatch supervisors.

In this installment of, "A Day in the Life Of," we'll share the day of Craig Duke, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative system operator.

"I didn't start off in dispatch," Duke said. "When I started at the Co-op in 1991, I was a meter reader."

Duke said he stayed in the Co-op's meter department for about five years until an opportunity came open for him to make the move to become a system operator.

Sitting with Duke in the dispatch center, one might feel overwhelmed by four computer monitors at his work station, not to mention the televisions mounted across the wall in front of him. But each one shows a piece of the Cooperative's "central nervous system" that the dispatch center closely monitors.

Supervisory control and data acquisition, often referred to as SCADA, plays a vital role in helping Sam Houston EC deliver power to its members in a reliable, and above all, a safe manner.

Within the SCADA system, data is gathered

from remote locations in order to control equipment and conditions on the Cooperative's electrical distribution system.

When he walks through the door at the beginning of each shift, Duke said one of his first actions is to check SCADA, which provides a log of all activity across the system. He explained that SCADA produces an alarm that allows the system operator to quickly spot and address problems, such as malfunctioning equipment, gate alarms or even outages.

"Most of the alarms we can correct and clear from our computer," Duke said. "However, sometimes we need to dispatch a crew of line technicians to the site."

Duke said most days in the dispatch center are steady, adding that system operators monitor the Cooperative's security systems, and help execute outage tickets and work orders.

But on a day like March 4, 2014, the pace quickens significantly.

The night before, a winter storm blew through the southern part of the Cooperative's service territory, leaving a thick blanket of ice on power lines and trees.

The excess weight of the ice causes tree limbs to "bow down," often breaking and falling onto power lines. The weight of the ice can even be damaging enough for the power line itself to break.

In the early morning hours, power interruptions grew as limbs gave way to the ice. At the day's peak, more than 9,000 members were without power.

With every Sam Houston EC crew dispatched and additional contract crews on site to help aid restoration, there's no better time to see the system operator's most important responsibility on display.

"The safety of our employees and contractors working on our system is our number one priority," Duke said. "It is our focus each and every day."

Duke and the other system operators have a unique vantage point of the entire system at any given time. During a larger system outage, they help orchestrate power restoration in the most effective and timely manner. Acting as "air traffic controllers," they make sure tasks, such as re-energizing power lines, are done with precision and so that all crews are clear of danger.

It takes a careful eye and a keen attention to detail when watching over more than 6,000 miles of power lines. A day in the life of a system operator represents a key component to reliably serving Sam Houston EC's 70,000 meters.

[PHOTO] Sam Houston Electric Cooperative system operator Craig Duke has been a part of the Cooperative family since 1991. Keeping a close watch on the Cooperative's electrical distribution system is tasked to a group of six system operators and two dispatch supervisors.



CO-OP CONNECTIONS



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

delivers discounts from participating businesses, both local and nationwide.

Your Co-op Connections Card is full of savings! Find out where you can save at www.connections.coop/samhoustonec.

Here are just a few of our local offers.

DWG 3 Step Waterless Car Wash

Livingston, TX 77399

936-933-2247

Hours: M-F, 8-5

www.3stepwaterlesscarwash.com

Offer: Two extra microfiber towels with the purchase of an 8 oz. kit or larger.

Floor Care & Interior

6738 US Hwy 190 East

Livingston, TX 77351

936-563-4954

Hours: M-F, 8-5

<http://floorcareinterior.com>

Offer: 10% discount on material.

CONSERVATION Corner



Consider this energy-saving and maintenance regimen to keep your refrigerator in shape. 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 over work the unit's compressor.

SOURCE: ENERGY.GOV

PREPARE FOR SUMMER HEAT, INCREASE ENERGY SAVINGS



Adding a few items to your list of spring chores can help make your home more energy efficient and deliver electric bills that won't make you sweat when temperatures soar.

Start with your air conditioner.

Spring and early summer are good times to make sure that your air conditioning unit is ready to work when you flip the switch:

- Get help from a professional who can inspect and service your unit.
- Give your air conditioner a do-it-yourself cleaning. Shut the unit off, and clear away leaves and yard debris outside. Clean or replace filters that can restrict air flow and reduce overall efficiency by making the air conditioner work harder. Dust the fan blades if you can do so safely. Make sure air can flow freely over the inside

and outside coils. Vacuum registers to remove any dust buildup.

- Check weather stripping. When using window units, ensure that weather stripping is in place. Placement should be between the middle of the top window pane and the bottom pane.

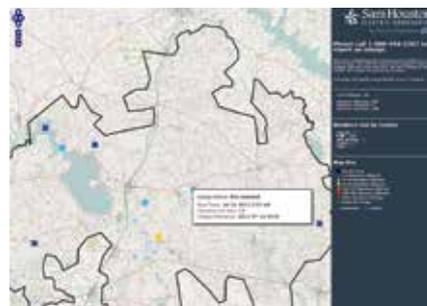
Check out your roof. See how well your roof has weathered the winter. Few things can shorten the life of your home faster than a roof leak, even a minor one can damage your attic insulation before you know it. A roofing professional can assess and repair things like loose or missing shingles, repair leaks, and clear gutters.

Make your electric cooperative

a resource. Sam Houston Electric Cooperative energy advisors can help you determine the right steps for your home, including whether an energy audit will help find more savings. You can also visit TogetherWeSave.com to find out how little measures around the house can add up to big energy savings as temperatures outside climb.

[PHOTO] This spring, top your household to-do list with a call to Sam Houston Electric Cooperative. Help from an energy efficiency expert now can pay off later with lower utility bills during the summer.

CHECK THE STATUS OF POWER RESTORATION ONLINE



Members can access the latest outage information through the Cooperative's outage viewer.

The online application can be accessed by visiting www.samhouston.net and clicking on the "Outage Viewer" button. Or, members can access the application through the direct URL: <http://outage.samhouston.net:89>.

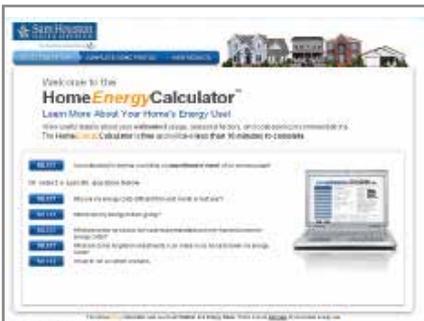


75 DAYS OF CELEBRATION



Sam Houston Electric Cooperative has been celebrating “big” this year. Leading up to the Cooperative’s 75th anniversary May 16, 2014, Sam Houston EC has been serving up 75 days of prizes, trivia, games and special events. The festivities began March 2, but there’s still time to get in on the celebration. Stay tuned to the Co-op’s website, social media pages and e-newsletter for details.

WHERE ARE YOUR ENERGY DOLLARS GOING?



Sam Houston Electric Cooperative knows there are members who want to understand the real story behind their home’s energy use. These consumers try to conserve...switch out light bulbs...even add insulation in the attic. But they still ask – are they making a difference?

Sam Houston EC members can find these answers and more with a couple clicks of a computer mouse.

Located on Sam Houston EC’s www.samhouston.net, the HomeEnergyCalculator offers residential consumers a complete analysis of energy use based on simple information they provide. From the Cooperative’s home page, click on “Member Services” and then “Home Energy Suite” to launch the online calculator.

With easy navigation, indicate your home’s square footage, age, number of occupants and a few other variables. You’ll be asked to input types of

appliances, windows, even TVs (yes, it makes a difference!).

The calculation takes less than 10 minutes. It’s free and available 24/7.

The analytic “engine” behind the calculator factors in local energy rates, weather data and even a member’s billing history. Within seconds a colorful pie chart appears showing what portions of your monthly bill went for heating, cooling, lighting – even the TVs.

The HomeEnergyCalculator lets you try various scenarios like adjusting heating or cooling settings, adding insulation, or installing storm windows. You can also preview cost-saving actions that would fit your budget and see the impact of longer-term investments.

“The tool meshes perfectly with the needs of our consumers who are super-focused on controlling energy costs,” said Sam Houston Electric Cooperative chief communications officer Keith Stapleton.

“There’s plenty of information out there about how to save energy. This shows members exactly where their energy dollars are going, the month-to-month differences, and the cost savings of implementing the suggestions the tool gives them.”

Think Safety.

Keep Children Safe.

Small children are naturally inquisitive and do not know the dangers of electricity. Teaching them the basics will help keep them safe from harm. You can protect them one step further by childproofing your home with a few simple modifications. We want you and your family to stay safe from electrical dangers.



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.”



LIFE BEFORE THE CO-OP

Celebrating the 75th anniversary of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative

Part I

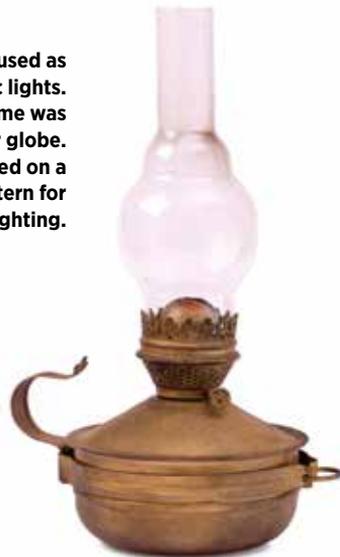
Google the phrase “rural electrification.”

Instantly, the World Wide Web presents you with a dizzying array of documents and images: How America pioneered rural electrification 75 years ago. How living standards improved after country folks got power. How a lack of power still keeps the world’s underdeveloped regions in the dark.

What better way to demonstrate the power of electricity! Push a button on your electronic device to learn about an era when such a feat was unimaginable. Not only does electricity make life easier and more entertaining, it brings knowledge. And, as philosophers have said for centuries: “Knowledge is Power.”

The following article, “Life Before the Co-op,” is the first in a four-part series celebrating the 75th anniversary of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative. Part I honors how our ancestors lived in the days before rural electrification. Part II in the May issue of *Texas Co-op Power* will recall the toil and sweat required to get the Co-op up and running. Part III in the June issue will examine how power changed the face of rural southeast Texas. And Part IV in the July issue will discuss what’s ahead for the next 75 years.

[PHOTO] Kerosene lamps were used as a source of light before electric lights. Using a wick or mantle, the flame was protected by a glass chimney or globe. The lamp was commonly used on a table, or as a hand-held lantern for portable lighting.



May 16, 1939, represents a line in the sand.

On that date, 75 years ago, a small group of rural residents in the Piney Woods received a State charter establishing Sam Houston Electric Cooperative.

After that date the Co-op began bringing power to isolated farm families and along with it the laborsaving benefits of modern life. Before that date, rural folks pretty much lived off the land the way their ancestors did a century earlier.

If you want to know about that traditional way of life, just ask anyone who lived in the Sam Houston EC service area during the Great Depression or the difficult war years of the 1940s.

Back in those days Mildred Bullock didn’t experience electricity until she was a young woman. Her family lived at what folks in Polk County called Piney Woods, a rural community near Corrigan.

Like every other farm family around, her family grew what they ate, made their own clothes and got



[PHOTO, left] Washday was an elaborate outdoors chore before electricity came to rural America. Dirty clothes and homemade lye soap went into a cast-iron pot of water boiling over an open wood fire. Photo courtesy Polk County Historical Museum.

[PHOTO, below] Polk County Historical Museum archives of traditional farm life in Polk County in the days before rural electrification.



by without needing much money. In winter they stayed warm beside an open-hearth fireplace. In summer they stayed cool by staying outdoors. They drew water in a bucket from a hand-dug well and answered the call of nature at an outhouse located away from the house. When they went anywhere they walked or rode in a wagon pulled by a mule or horse.

“We didn’t have much, but nobody else did either,” recalls 90-year-old Mildred, who’s been a Sam Houston EC member since 1947.

Life was much the same in Tyler County just west of Colmesneil where Billy Gregory was born in 1932 in the same house where his dad, Homer, was born in 1898. To make ends meet for his five children, Homer “kept a lot of irons in the fire.”

It was a fenceless era of open range ranching, so Homer and his neighbors herded wild hogs from the deep woods once a year for a community slaughter.

No farm had a refrigerator or freezer, so each family smoked or salt-cured their share of hams and bacon

to preserve them for use throughout the year.

The deep woods also supplied Homer with pine logs hand-felled with a crosscut saw and hauled out by mule teams. The same mules plowed his cotton fields, but cotton picking was done by hand.

“When I was 12 years old I remember working late one day in order to handpick 100 pounds of cotton,” Billy recalls, not so fondly.

He and his dad carried their cotton by wagon from the field two miles to Colmesneil where electric-powered engines ginned and compressed the fluffy white cash crop.

A trip to town also meant a stop at the electric-powered ice plant to get blocks of ice that would keep perishable foods cold in the icebox back home on the farm.

The Gregory farm sat only two miles from town and electricity, but with rural electrification still a dream, the comforts of town life seemed a world away.

75 YEARS

Part I



Not far away at the community of Cherokee, Jo Davis watched her mother work the fields like a man, then do “women’s work” in the house.

With no automatic washing machine, washday was an elaborate outdoors chore. Dirty clothes and homemade lye soap went into a cast-iron pot of water boiling over an open wood fire. The kids took turns as “agitator,” stirring the clothes with a stick while trying to keep from scalding their hands. The washed clothes were wrung out by hand and hung on a line to dry.

With no electricity, keeping things hot or cold was difficult—even dangerous. After hand-milking the cows, Davis’ family kept buckets of milk cool by carefully lowering them into the cool, moist air of their hand-dug water well. Cooking on a wood-burning stove meant someone had to stay in the kitchen to make sure the fire was hot enough to cook the food without burning it. Ironing clothes required heating cast-iron irons in the fireplace.

“I was heating up an iron one time,” 80-year-old Jo recalls, “when the wall suddenly caught on fire!”



Everyone rushed out safely, but the raging chimney fire burned the family log cabin to the ground. Jo and a brother lived with a relative until a new house was built.

Families simply made do with what they had. As a child, Jo Davis not only had no electric lights on the Christmas tree, but her family also had no Christmas tree.

“We didn’t even have stockings. My mother would fix up a small paper package with fresh fruit in it,” she remembers. “In winter just the idea of unwrapping

something we didn’t normally have was a treat.”

Renée Wells of Hardin County vividly remembers as a child getting fitted for a Sunday dress at the small wood house of Stella Staley.

“My mother made my regular clothes, but for anything special she’d take me to Mrs. Staley’s at a community called Plank out in the woods,” Renée recalls. “Mrs. Staley was a talented seamstress. I can still see her measuring me by the flickering light of a kerosene lantern. She didn’t

[PHOTO 1] Retired Sam Houston Electric Cooperative employee Jo Davis grew up in the community of Cherokee, where she learned that hard work makes the body and mind strong.

[PHOTO 2] With no automatic washing machine, washday was an elaborate outdoors chore. Dirty clothes and homemade lye soap went into a cast-iron pot of water boiling over an open wood fire. The kids took turns as “agitator,” stirring the clothes with a stick while trying to keep from scalding their hands. The washed clothes were wrung out by hand and hung on a line to dry.

[PHOTO 3] Polk County Historical Museum archives of traditional farm life in Polk County in the days before rural electrification.

[PHOTO 4] Before electric lights, evening activities, such as eating dinner, had to be done with the help of a kerosene lamp.

[PHOTO 5] Joe Pedigo, who grew up in Woodville, helped his father deliver goods from a Rawleigh truck to families who had a hard time getting to town.



have electricity so she did her sewing on a foot-powered treadle machine.”

Over in Tyler County, Joe Pedigo and his entrepreneurial father, Ernest, regularly traveled from their Woodville home to bring goods to farm wives who had a hard time getting to town. The two loaded the family truck with Rawleigh products—tools, clothing and food goods—and delivered them to their backwoods customers.

“I’ll never forget seeing those rough wood floors and crude

furnishings,” Joe remembers. “Life was very primitive compared to today. These folks were so scattered out that they couldn’t imagine ever getting electricity like we had in town.”

Before the federal government created the Rural Electrification Administration in the 1930s, less than three percent of rural homes in Texas had power. In the dense forests of deep East Texas, wet weather and bad roads left country folks especially isolated—bound to the traditional ways of subsistence farming.

Families who lived such a hardscrabble life, however, learned valuable life lessons as well.

“The world turned a lot slower in those days,” remembers 82-year-old Billy Gregory, who now lives at Magnolia Springs. “Everybody was in the same boat, so we didn’t complain. That was just the way people lived.”

Retired Sam Houston EC employee Jo Davis adds, “I don’t regret that life. We learned that hard work keeps your body and mind strong.”

Sam Houston EC member Mildred Bullock agrees: “In some ways the younger generation missed out. Our family would gather around when Dad played 78 records of Jimmie Rodgers on the wind-up Victrola. Every Saturday we hooked our radio up to a car battery and listened while shelling peanuts or some other handwork. We worked all the time, but we did it together. Besides, we didn’t know any other way.”

RANDY MALLORY IS A TYLER-BASED FREELANCE WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHER AND VIDEOGRAPHER SPECIALIZING IN TEXAS TOPICS.