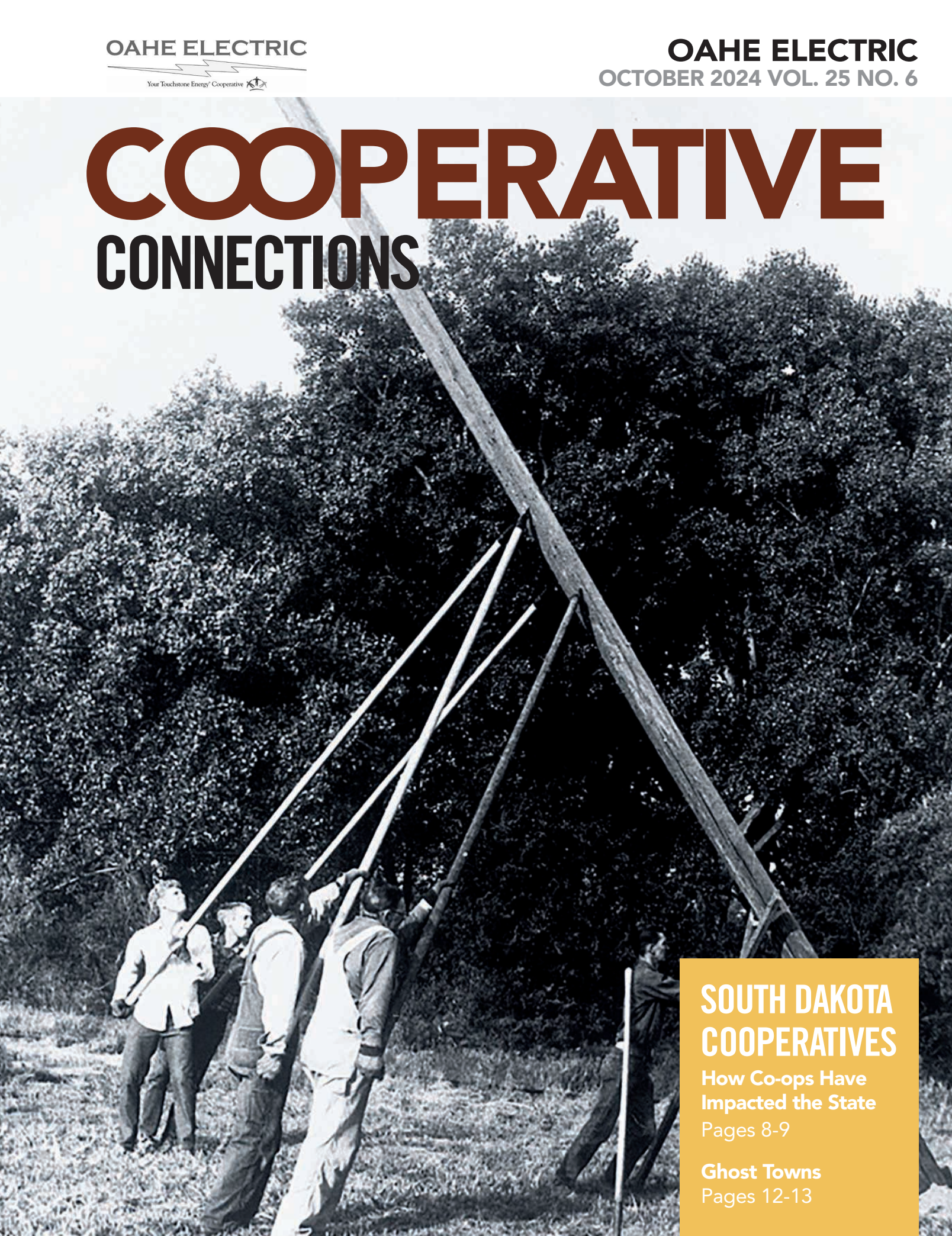




# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## SOUTH DAKOTA COOPERATIVES

How Co-ops Have  
Impacted the State  
Pages 8-9

Ghost Towns  
Pages 12-13

# In Case You Missed It – Annual Meeting Reports



**Jordan Lamb**  
jlamb@  
oaheelectric.com

As member-owners of Oahe Electric Cooperative, your interest in your cooperative underscores the very principles upon which our cooperative was founded – community, participation, and mutual benefit.

We have much to review and celebrate this year. First, I want to highlight the \$540,000 that we have been able to pay to local schools through the kilowatt-hour tax. This contribution is not just a number; it represents our commitment to investing in the future of our community. Supporting education is one of the most impactful ways we can contribute to the well-being of the next generation, and I am proud of the role we play in this effort.

In terms of infrastructure, we have made significant strides in strengthening and expanding our system. This year, we completed two new substation additions that will enhance the reliability and efficiency of our service. Furthermore, we were fortunate to successfully apply for and secure both state and federal grants, which have been allocated to projects already budgeted in our upcoming construction work plan. These awarded projects are particularly important because they allow us to upgrade aging facilities without passing the costs on to our members, who would otherwise bear the financial burden of these necessary improvements.

Additionally, our ongoing efforts to convert overhead distribution lines to underground are not only fortifying the backbone of our system but also

playing a crucial role in improving public safety. These upgrades are part of our long-term strategy to ensure that we can meet the growing demands of our members while maintaining the highest standards of service.

Speaking of growth, I am pleased to report that we have seen historical growth trends of over 3% annually, excluding our two large loads. When those loads are included, our growth rate has soared to nearly 18% over the last three years. This remarkable growth is a testament to the trust you place in us and our ability to deliver on our promise of reliable, affordable electric service.

However, with growth and progress come challenges. As we look ahead, we are facing a potential rate increase due to forecasted increases in the cost of purchased power from our suppliers. To give you a clearer picture, one mill – which is one-tenth of a cent – translates to approximately \$385,000 on our net balance sheet.

While no one wants to hear about rate increases, it is important to understand that even a modest adjustment could have a significant impact on our ability to continue providing the high-quality service you expect. We will continue to explore every option to mitigate this impact, but I wanted to be transparent about the factors influencing these decisions.

In closing, I want to express my deep gratitude to all of you, our member-owners. Your involvement in our cooperative is what makes us strong and resilient. It is your engagement and support that drive us to continually improve and innovate. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to Oahe Electric Cooperative. Together, we will continue to power our community forward.

## Statement of Non-Discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1.) mail - U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; 2.) fax: (202) 690-7442; or 3.) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

#### Board of Directors:

James Feller – Assistant Secretary  
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Brandon Haag – President  
605.215.6758

Ryan Noyes – Treasurer  
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Ross Sperry – Secretary  
605.280.7770

Kirk Yackley – Vice President  
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#### Employees:

Tyler Arbach – Journeyman Lineman

Austin Bergeson – Journeyman Lineman

Mark Bruning – Line Foreman

Matt Eldridge – Chief Operations Officer

Trudie Feldman – Custodian

Brady Gaer – Journeyman Lineman

Sidney Geigle – Journeyman Lineman

Sam Irvine – Executive Services Specialist

Megan Jaeger – Membership Director

Les Job – Journeyman Lineman

Jordan Lamb – Chief Executive Officer

Dan Lettau – Journeyman Lineman

Steve Long – Power Supply Specialist

Valerie Marso – Chief Financial Officer

Tory Smith – Journeyman Lineman

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#### Our Mission

Oahe Electric delivers high quality, low-cost electric service to our local member-owners. As a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, we are committed to meeting the highest standards of customer satisfaction. We do business with accountability, integrity, innovation and commitment to community. As an electric co-op, we are part of America's most trusted network of high quality energy providers.

# Energy Assistance Available to Those That Qualify

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) helps eligible South Dakotans pay for home heating costs. Energy assistance may not pay for all your home heating costs but it will help ease the strain of the heating season. Energy assistance is applied to energy usage from Oct. 1 through May 15.

#### Eligibility for the program is based on:

- The number of people in the household.
- The gross income of everyone in the household.
- The type of heating for the home.
- Geographic area you live in.

Applications can be obtained by calling toll free 1-800-233-8503, online at [www.dss.sd.gov/energyassistance](http://www.dss.sd.gov/energyassistance), or at the local Department of Social Services office.

## New Faces at the Co-op

You may see a new face around the service territory this fall, so we'd like to introduce you to Grayson Hunsley! Grayson is enrolled in the Powerline Maintenance and Construction course at Mitchell Technical College beginning next fall. He will be with us, getting some hands-on experience throughout the rest of this construction season. Welcome, Grayson! We're happy to have you on board.



## Lineman's Lens

Just a reminder, never attach anything directly to electrical boxes. Attaching items is very dangerous for both you (you never know what you might hit while drilling into the box) and our lineman.



# FIRE SAFETY

Cooking and heating are the leading causes of home fires and fire injuries, and winter months are the peak time for fire-related deaths. **Fire Prevention Week (Oct. 6-12, 2024)** is the perfect time to review and practice fire safety.

### Minimize Your Risks

The good news: Deaths from home fires in the U.S. have trended downward since the 1970s, according to Injury Facts, but even one death from a preventable fire is too many. While fire doesn't discriminate by age, it is the third leading cause of death for children 1 to 14.

**When cooking, make fire safety a priority by keeping these tips in mind:**

- Be alert; if you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the oven or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, boiling or broiling food.
- Keep anything that can catch fire away from your stovetop.

**Heating is the second leading cause of home fires. Follow these tips:**

- Keep all flammables, like paper, clothing, bedding, drapes or rugs, at least three feet from a space heater, stove or fireplace.
- Never leave portable heaters and fireplaces unattended; turn off heaters and make sure fireplace embers are extinguished before leaving the room.
- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, nonflammable surface, like ceramic tile, not on a rug or carpet.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- When buying a space heater, look for models that shut off automatically if the heater falls over.

### Working Smoke Alarms Are a Must

About three out of five fire deaths happen in homes without working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan providing early warning to reduce your risk of dying in a fire. The National Fire Protection Association recommends you:

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas on the ceiling or high on the wall.
- Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen, at least 10 feet from the stove, to reduce false alarms.
- Use special alarms with strobe lights and bed shakers for

- people who are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Replace batteries in your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector annually.
- Replace smoke alarms that are 10 or more years old.

### When and How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

Always put your safety first; if you are not confident in your ability to use a fire extinguisher, get out and call 9-1-1. The American Red Cross cautions you to evaluate the situation and ensure:

- Everyone has left or is leaving the home
- The fire department has been called
- The fire is small, not spreading, and there is not much smoke
- Your back is to an exit you can use quickly

### Remember the acronym PASS:

**P**ull the pin.

**A**im low at the base of the fire.

**S**queeze the handle slowly.

**S**weep the nozzle side to side.

*Source: National Safety Council*



### Power Line Safety "Watch Out for Power Lines!"

#### Archer Rindels, Age 7

Archer Rindels warns readers to be careful around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Archer! Archer's parents are Kyle and Rochelle Rindels, members of Sioux Valley Energy.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

# Delicious CHICKEN

## CHEESY CHICKEN BUNDLES

### Ingredients:

- 1 (11 oz.) can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 3/4 cup Velveeta, shredded or cubed
- 1 (10 oz.) can chunk chicken, drained and flaked
- 1 (8 oz.) can crescent rolls

### Method

Combine soup, milk and cheese. Heat until melted and smooth. Pour into a 7x11 inch pan that has been sprayed with vegetable oil.

Separate crescents into 8 triangles. Place 2 tbsps. of chicken on wide end of crescent roll. Pinch to seal. Place on top of sauce.

Bake uncovered at 375 degrees for 25 minutes and until golden brown. Serve with sauce on top.

Yields eight chicken bundles or four servings.

**Janet Ochsner**  
Box Elder, S.D.

## CROCKPOT CHICKEN PARMESAN SOUP

### Ingredients:

- 3 boneless chicken breasts
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 can crushed tomatoes (28 oz. can)
- 1 can tomato sauce (15 oz. can)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup parmesan cheese (freshly shaved)
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 8 oz. rotini pasta (uncooked)
- 1 1/2 cup shredded Mozzarella

### Method

Add the chicken breast, minced garlic, crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, salt, pepper, Italian seasoning and chicken broth to the Crock-Pot.

Cover Crock-Pot with lid and cook on low for 6-8 hours.

Shred the chicken. Stir in the shredded parmesan cheese, heavy whipping cream and rotini pasta. Cover and cook on low for 30 minutes.

Top the individual soup servings with mozzarella cheese.

**Kayla Beaner**  
Centerville, S.D.

## BUTTER CHICKEN

### Ingredients:

- 4 tsps. Garam Masala blend
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1/8 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 4 tbsps. butter, divided
- 1 can (14.5 oz.) petite diced tomatoes
- 1 med. red onion, chopped
- 1 1/4 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt

### Method

Mix Garam Masala, garlic, ginger, turmeric and crushed red pepper in small bowl. Heat large non-stick skillet on medium heat. Toast seasoning mixture 1 min. or just until fragrant, stirring constantly. Add 2 tbsps. of the butter to skillet, swirling to melt. Add onion; cook and stir 2 to 3 mins. until softened. Stir in tomatoes; cook 5 mins. Carefully transfer mixture to blender container; cover. Blend until smooth, scraping sides as needed. Return pureed sauce to skillet. Bring to simmer on med.-low heat. Add chicken; cook 8 to 10 minutes or until chicken is cooked though, stirring occasionally. Stir in remaining butter, cream and salt until well blended. Simmer on med.-low heat 2 to 3 minutes until sauce is slightly thickened. Stir in additional crushed red pepper to taste and serve with hot cooked basmati rice or warm naan bread, if desired. Garnish with fresh cilantro leaves, if desired.

**McCormick.com**

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

## Got a Sub Meter? Leave the Power On!

Most of you remember when Oahe Electric was at your home to install your sub meter. This meter allows your heating and cooling usage to be billed at the reduced rate.

A problem that Oahe Electric encounters from year to year is that some of these meters are being shut off. This is done by shutting off a breaker in your service panel and when this happens, the meter cannot record any usage at the reduced rate. Therefore, the electric usage consumed by your heating system is being billed to you at the regular residential rate.

This causes two problems.

First, the member calls with high bill concerns.

Second, Oahe employees must diagnose the situation.

Oahe will try to contact the homeowner via phone. If the problem cannot be fixed via phone, then we have to visit each site and check breakers, wiring and so on.

Please make certain that all of your electric breakers are turned on.

All electronic equipment has a switch or thermostat that should be used for and during maintenance. DO NOT SHUT OFF YOUR BREAKERS unless it's an emergency.



## Cooperative Connections Card Program Vendors

### Automotive

<b>Graham Tire Company</b>	605-224-8643	Pierre	Receive a 10% discount on regularly priced service work. Cannot be combined with any other offer.
<b>Lamb Motor Company</b>	800-952-2222	Onida	Receive a free alignment check with the purchase of 4 new tires.
<b>Napa Auto and Truck Parts/Farnam's Genuine Parts, Inc.</b>	605-224-8624	Pierre	Receive 10-50% off retail price.

### Food/Convenience Store

<b>Branding Iron Bistro</b>	605-494-3333	Pierre	Enjoy \$1 off your order. Limit one per visit.
<b>Grey Goose Store</b>	605-945-0794	Pierre	Receive a free 20 oz. fountain soda or coffee with the minimum of a \$30 gas or diesel purchase.
<b>The Corner</b>	605-258-2400	Onida	Buy one breakfast sandwich at regular price, get second half off.

### Health/Fitness and Beauty

<b>Anytime Fitness</b>	605-224-4011	Pierre	Receive a free two-week mini-membership.
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### Home/Garden

<b>Slumberland Furniture</b>	605-945-1997	Pierre	\$100 off a single item of \$599.99 or more. Some exclusions apply. See store for details.
<b>Lee Real Estate</b>	605-222-6003	Perre	Receive a FREE Comparable Market Analysis for real estate properties, which gives members current market values for home, land and commercial properties.

### Services

<b>Inman's Water Technologies</b>	605-224-5111	Pierre	Receive a 10% discount on the rental price of a water softener and/or reverse osmosis drinking water system by paying a year in advance. Receive 10% off of the purchase price of a new water softener or reverse osmosis drinking water system when you mention this ad. Payments made by credit cards do not qualify for discounts/specials.
<b>Olson Plumbing Inc.</b>	605-224-6436	Pierre	\$50 discount on any electric boiler, Marathon water heater, or fireplace
<b>Small Engine House</b>	605-224-5815	Pierre	10% off parts and labor

### Sports/Recreation

<b>Teton River Traders Gun Shop LLC</b>	605-224-1371	Ft. Pierre	2% discount. Payments made by credit cards do not qualify for discount.
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### Retail

<b>Fastenal</b>	605-224-4060	Pierre	10% off of fasteners and 5% off on all other products
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# Operations Report: Upgrades Underway



**Matt Eldridge**

Chief Operations  
Officer

Let's jump right into your operations report; our linemen have been incredibly busy this past year and I'd like to highlight some key projects and updates.

Last summer and again early this spring, we partnered with Exo, an independent pole testing company, to assess over 7,000 poles in the western half of our service area. They conducted thorough visual inspections and performed tests to identify any rot or damage. Out of these, 111 poles were found to be in need of replacement. Some of these poles date back to the 1950s, so they've certainly fulfilled their purpose over the past 70 years. Our team has been diligently working this summer to replace these aging poles.

Thanks to a mild winter, our linemen were able to conduct our annual line patrol in Hughes County. During this patrol, your linemen travel from pole to pole, inspecting the overhead powerlines for hazards and maintenance needs.

Also this past winter, we purchased a new property across from our main headquarters in Blunt. This property, the old Blunt Repair, includes several buildings that will enhance our storage capabilities for materials and equipment. We plan to further improve this property with a chain-link fence and concrete installations.

This spring, we collaborated with K&H Electric from Linton, North Dakota, to convert six miles of three-phase overhead powerline to three-phase underground powerline. This project, located on 293rd Avenue northeast of Pierre and serving the Mid-Dakota Treatment Plant, was partly funded by a federal grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This conversion will improve service reliability in the area. We are currently working with FEMA to secure additional grants for future underground powerline conversion projects.

This summer, East River Electric constructed

a new substation in our service area, the Lake Sharp Substation, located in the West Bend area. This new substation will support the irrigation loads in the area and provide a two-way feed to our existing Pocket Substation, enhancing overall reliability and capacity.

We've also recently installed a state-of-the-art electric vehicle charger at One Stop Travel Plaza, just east of Pierre. This advanced JuicePump model is a Level 3 charger, capable of charging an electric vehicle to 80% in just 30 minutes. While there are a few final administrative tasks to complete, we anticipate having the charger fully operational this fall.

If you're considering new service or upgrades, please reach out to us as early as possible. We're experiencing longer lead times for materials, and early planning helps us better manage and secure the necessary resources for your project.

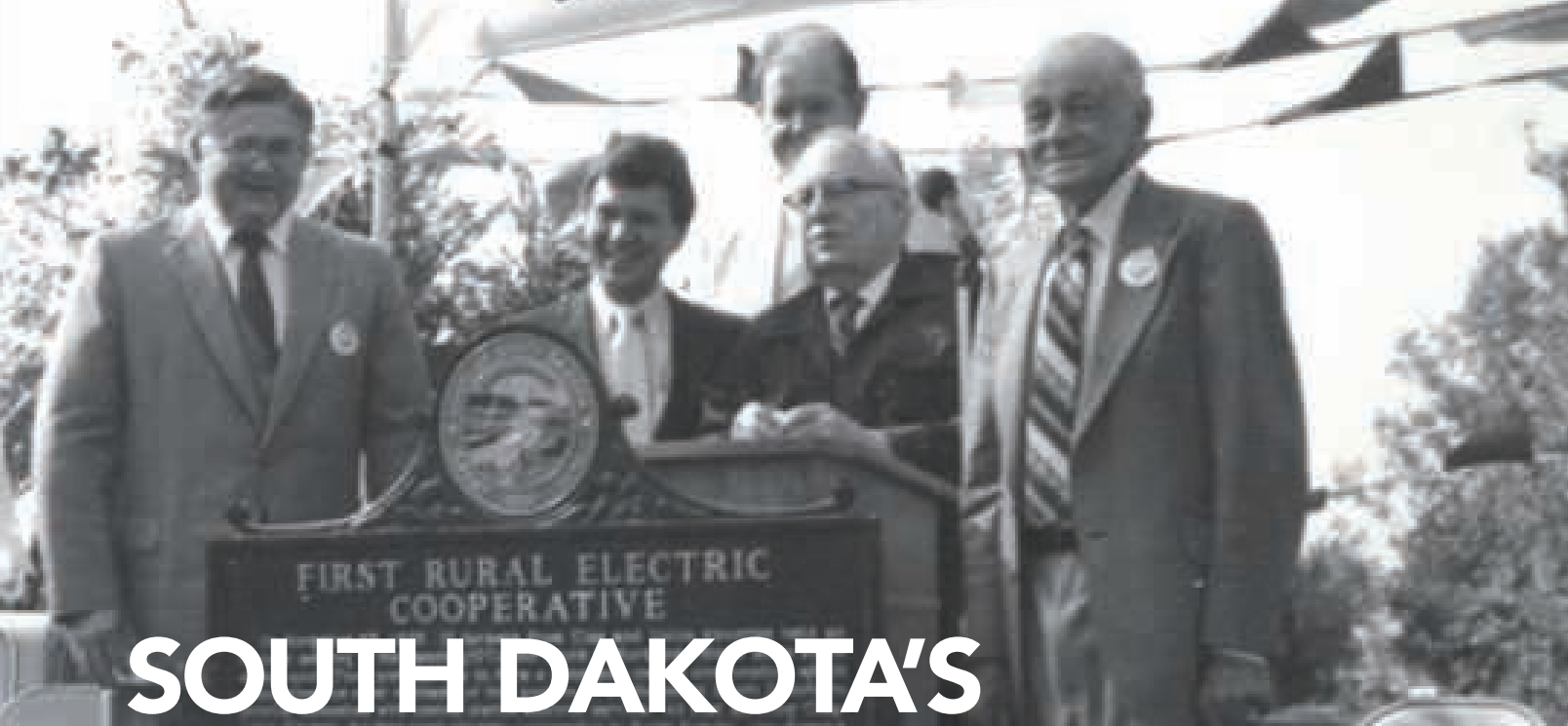
For any questions or concerns about your electric service, don't hesitate to contact us.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you recently made or plan to make energy efficiency upgrades to your home, you may be eligible for federal tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 empowers homeowners to save up to \$3,000 annually to lower the cost of efficiency upgrades by up to 30%. A few upgrades covered through the IRA include new exterior doors, windows, insulation, heating/cooling equipment and other major appliances. If you have completed or are considering an efficiency upgrade, visit [www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits](http://www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits) to learn if you qualify for tax credits.

Source: [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)





# SOUTH DAKOTA'S COOPERATIVES

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

Picture life in rural South Dakota 100 years ago. Each morning, families woke before dawn to work by the flicker of kerosene lamps, hand-pumped water to fill a gas-powered wringer-washer, and retrieved breakfast ingredients from a dripping ice box. Looming in the backs of producers' minds were fears that the market would trend downward and they may not be able to cover their debts, or even harvest their fields.

Today, South Dakota's rural farmers and ranchers enjoy virtually all of the accommodations of modern living their suburban counterparts enjoy. Past luxuries like running water, full-time electricity, internet and telephone are now standard, and many farmers enjoy stronger economic security compared to the past's tumultuous markets.

That's because for over 100 years, rural South Dakotans have pooled their resources by forming cooperatives that level out some of the disparities between rural and urban life. Thanks to members' ingenuity, rural America is not just a viable, but a thriving place to live and work.

## The First Cooperatives

The first cooperatives in South Dakota were agriculture-focused. Far too often, an

oversupply of goods led to price crashes, resulting in farmers unable to economically harvest crops or market livestock. This led to tremendous waste and crushed livelihoods.

As producers grew weary of the uncertain market, they organized to collectively market and distribute their products: they coordinated, shared risk and pooled resources.

South Dakota's earliest farm supply and marketing cooperatives started popping up a little after the turn of the 20th century. The South Dakota Secretary of State's office lists Lake Andes Farmers Cooperative, formed in 1909, as the oldest ongoing cooperative in the state.

During this early period, cooperatives operated in a legal gray area. Since producers working collectively in a cooperative setting could be viewed as monopolistic or collusive, they were under careful watch by the Federal Trade Commission as well as their larger competitors.

That changed in 1922 with the passage of the Capper-Volstead Act.

"Capper-Volstead allowed producers to come together and market their products and not be in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act," explained Brenda Forman, South Dakota Association of Cooperatives executive director. "[Cooperatives] were not considered to be a monopoly as long as they were a cooperative association formed

Clay-Union Electric Corporation was the first electric cooperative in South Dakota.

by producers, owned by the members, one member gets one vote in cooperative elections, etc."

The presence of ag cooperatives surged in the 1930s as producers looked for stability during the Great Depression, the South Dakota Farmers Union says. With effectiveness proven, the cooperative strategy has stuck around since.

Today, there are 63 farm supply and marketing cooperatives serving over 130 South Dakota communities, Forman said.

Those same visionaries who established the first ag cooperatives identified another need that was not being met. Using the same cooperative model that changed their lives once already, farmers would bring power to the prairie.

## Electricity

Before energy infrastructure was widespread, many small towns in South Dakota relied on local power plants. However, with distribution lines only serving the city, living even a mile or two out of town was the difference between flipping a light switch and carrying a lantern.

Despite requests from farmers to run lines to their homes – some of whom even offered to pay installation costs – most municipalities and investor-owned utilities (IOUs) refused because undertaking the effort didn't lead to any meaningful profit.

Even many of the state's elected representatives seemed resigned to the idea



that the future of energy for their farming constituents was tied to on-site generation, like the modest Delco–Light plants that could power a few small appliances and light bulbs. To them, it seemed laughable that there was any feasible way to run lines in a state where the service would average out to a sparse 2.2 customers per mile of line, and for many, that was the end of the conversation.

The narrative changed when President Franklin D. Roosevelt expanded his New Deal programs to modernize rural America, creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to finance ambitious projects.

The profit-minded IOUs were largely uninterested in expanding into sparse territory for measly returns, and little progress was made toward Roosevelt's vision.

In 1936, once it was apparent IOUs wouldn't be making the foray into rural territories as farmers had hoped they would, Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act. Now, cooperatives could organize and receive REA loans while the IOUs idled.

A group of 17 farmers from Clay and Union counties jumped at the opportunity to finally bring their homes into the modern age. Just months after the REA was established, and at a time when just 5% of South Dakota farms had power, the group hatched out a plan to secure an REA loan for their newly-formed Fairview Rural Electric System, today Clay-Union Electric Corporation.

Going door to door and collecting \$5 sign-ons from neighbors ranging from ecstatic to skeptical, the cooperative finally got the REA's green light and received a \$70,000 loan to build 67 miles of line that would serve about 300 members, according to a 1936 Argus Leader report.

The success of South Dakota's first electric cooperative brought hope to still more than 90% of South Dakota farmers without power. It wasn't long before dozens more newly-formed cooperatives were each going door to door collecting sign-on fees to secure their own REA loans.

## Serving Everyone

In 1946, roughly 10 years after the state's first electric cooperative debuted, rural farmers and ranchers from the state's

remote northwest corner met in Lemmon to form their own cooperative. The board understood securing a loan from REA to serve such a vast and sparse territory would be a big ask, so they opted to charge members a \$10 monthly minimum, which was twice the minimum rate of most South Dakota cooperatives, and equal to about \$170 today.

Even so, would-be members agreed to the terms of the longshot project and paid their \$5 membership fee. Despite federal hesitation about the feasibility of such a project, the REA loan was approved.

Grand Electric Cooperative received more than \$1.8 million over two loans that would build 1,127 miles of line and serve 948 members. The investment amounted to one of the REA's largest and riskiest yet in the state, but proved to be a success.

Cooperative members did the impossible; the wires in northwest South Dakota had finally been energized. Board members then eyed another ambitious goal – bringing telephone to Northwest South Dakota.

West River Cooperative Telephone Company was formed as a separate entity, but in the spirit of cooperation, the telephone and electric cooperative would be jointly operated. The two would, and still to this day, share a building, staff and infrastructure.

“Up here, we cover almost 8,000 square miles and have 4,000 miles of wire, but we only have 1,800 members,” explained Eric Kahler, the cooperatives' joint general manager. “When you look at the economics of this type of service territory, if you're in the business to make money, you're not going to be too successful here. The cooperative model is really the only model that could work here.”

And the community knows that fact and is grateful for their cooperative, says Patricia Palmer, who has spent much of her last 63 years working in Grand Electric and West River Telephone's member services.

“They're thankful,” she said. “Very thankful. We have a terrific telephone work crew and line department. At times, they work tirelessly in horrible weather conditions... You can't believe the thank you notes that we get.”

Growing up on a farm near McIntosh, Palmer has a firsthand account of the impact

of cooperatives. And she says it's one she will never forget.

The night she watched her family's farmhouse light up for the first time was also the beginning of a new chapter, she recalled. A chapter with an automatic washer, a refrigerator and a toaster.

As times change, cooperatives continue to be at the forefront of bringing service that might otherwise be out of reach.

“When I came to the cooperative, it was just telephone and electricity, and now we have high-speed internet and TV,” Palmer said. “Over the years, the cooperative has really grown!”

## Other Applications

The cooperative model is also used in many other sectors; there are 34 South Dakota credit unions that offer member-owners better interest rates and reduced fees compared to for-profit banks.

Even some rural water systems, while not wholly cooperatives themselves, borrow some of the cooperative fundamentals to make serving large areas more practical.

“Cooperatives are pretty significant in the impact they've had,” Forman said. “And the other cooperatives we have – there are daycare co-ops, food co-ops, education co-ops – there's a number of different structures that the cooperative model has been used for, because of that ownership and one member, one vote.”

Today, there are 141 cooperatives in the state, providing more than 78,500 jobs, \$2.8 billion in worker salaries and \$3.9 billion in gross domestic product (GDP), according to a South Dakota State University study titled *The Economic Impact of Cooperatives in South Dakota*.

That means cooperatives contribute almost 13% of South Dakota jobs, more than 11% of salaries, and 6.2% of the state's entire GDP.

“In a cooperative, your board is local,” Forman said. “[The co-op board and employees] support and participate in sports functions, 4-H barbecues, you may go to church with them, or they may be at family dinner. Which means when something is a concern or challenge, you have somebody to go to and you have contacts close that know you and understand the system.”

# The Value of Co-op Membership



**Valerie Marso**  
Chief Financial Officer

I want to highlight the unique value of your Oahe Electric membership because there truly isn't anything else like it. Let's explore how, over the past 25 years, our cooperative has made a significant impact on both our members and the communities it serves.

Oahe Electric members play a crucial role in sustaining our cooperative's financial health by using our electric services and allowing us to retain funds collected beyond our operating costs to be returned to you in the future in the form of capital credits. This is what makes you a member-owner and gives you a voice in your cooperative by being able to run for the board, vote on cooperative issues and more.

These funds are invested in building and maintaining the infrastructure necessary to serve our members and are crucial in managing our long-term debt. This capital will be returned to members at a future date. Over the last quarter of a century, we have returned nearly \$7 million in capital credits. This is \$7 million less in loan funds that we have to pay interest on while still maintaining some of the most competitive electric rates in the state.

While capital credits are distributed over 20 years, Oahe Electric has also issued over \$1.3 million in bill credits through power cost refunds. What does this mean? Simply put, it means some years our actual costs have been lower than expected, our sales have exceeded projections or even possibly both! Any excess funds collected are returned to the members who contributed to those funds the same year they were collected.

Supporting education makes a big difference over time for both our community and industry. Since 1999, Oahe Electric has awarded 88 scholarships worth

\$63,000. We're dedicated to backing local students and creating strong connections that boost community growth.

Our Operation Round Up Program rounds your electric bill up to the next dollar. Participants' money is pooled together and donated to local charities by a board of trustees. Since its inception in 2009, the program has made 121 disbursements, contributing over \$150k to support community causes such as volunteer fire departments, backpacks for kids, veterans programs and more.

Oahe Electric is a proud participant of the Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) Fund that is dedicated to lending investments to improve the infrastructure and economic base in our region. Over the past 25 years, we have approved over \$7 million in loan funds in Hughes and Sully counties for businesses, agribusinesses and community development.

These five programs amount to over \$15 million reinvested into our local economy over the last two and a half decades, directly benefiting the people and businesses within our service area. How cool is it to be an electric cooperative member?

Now an overview of the financial statements that are printed in your program.

The key takeaway is that your electric cooperative has once again wrapped up the 2023 fiscal year in excellent financial health. Let's start by examining the statement of operations. Total electric revenue was up over \$2 million. Operating expenses, which are the day-to-day activities, increased \$172,000. Fixed expenses or uncontrollable expenses, including purchased power, interest on debt and depreciation, increased approximately \$1.9 million. We also received capital credit allocations from East River and Basin Electric of just under \$1 million.

The balance sheet reflects the following: Net utility plant for 2023 was \$21.8 million. Add this to the other investments and cash, and your cooperative has assets totaling nearly \$42 million. The

Cooperative's debt and other liabilities total over \$26 million, which leaves patronage capital due to you, the members, of \$15.50.

Each year, an independent firm, Eide Bailly, conducts a thorough audit of your electric cooperative's financial statements. In their recent report, they confirmed that Oahe Electric's operations and cash flows are free from any material misstatements and comply with the Government Auditing Standards set by the Comptroller General of the United States, as well as generally accepted accounting principles.

Oahe Electric had a very solid financial performance in 2023 and we are dedicated to continuing that trend. Stay in the loop with everything happening at your cooperative by diving into the Cooperative Connections newsletter, exploring our website, checking out your bill inserts and following us on Facebook!

If you have any questions or would like more details on the financials, please feel free to reach out to me anytime. I am here to help and would be happy to discuss them with you.

## Statement of Operations for 2022 and 2023

	2022	2023
<b>Revenue:</b>		
Farm & Residential	\$ 4,899,581	\$ 4,763,358
Irrigation	1,633,483	1,454,137
Commercial	6,235,581	8,211,896
Onida	668,622	677,916
Public Highway & Lighting	4,704	4,697
Other Income	(405,043)	135,515
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 13,036,928</b>	<b>\$ 15,247,519</b>
<b>Operating Expenses:</b>		
Operations & Maintenance	\$ 1,342,028	\$ 1,456,046
Consumer Accounts	178,083	183,902
Consumer Services & Informational	105,349	83,837
Administration & General	934,120	1,011,346
Other	8,689	5,883
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 2,568,269</b>	<b>\$ 2,741,014</b>
<b>Fixed Expenses:</b>		
Purchased Power	\$ 8,510,233	\$ 10,390,994
Depreciation	992,456	1,022,491
Taxes	236,168	264,406
Interest (Long Term Debt)	588,801	595,386
<b>Total Fixed Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 10,327,658</b>	<b>\$ 12,273,277</b>
<b>Total Cost of Service</b>	<b>\$ 12,895,927</b>	<b>\$ 15,014,291</b>
<b>Patronage Capital Credits &amp; Margins</b>		
Operating Margins	\$ 141,000	\$ 233,227
Non-operating Margins (Interest)	75,757	247,649
G&T Patronage-East River & Basin	1,065,135	993,920
Other Patronage	36,808	33,212
<b>Total Capital Credits &amp; Margins</b>	<b>\$ 1,318,700</b>	<b>\$ 1,508,008</b>

## Balance Sheet as of December 31

	2022	2023
<b>Assets (what we own)</b>		
<b>Utility Plant</b>		
Total Utility Plant	\$ 32,216,851	\$ 34,118,458
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(11,420,205)	(12,267,732)
<b>Utility Plant - Net</b>	<b>\$ 20,796,646</b>	<b>\$ 21,850,726</b>
<b>Other Property &amp; Investments</b>		
Investments in Associated Companies	\$ 8,078,356	\$ 8,723,604
Other Invest./Non-Utility Property	987,083	886,618
Special Funds	1,000,000	1,000,000
<b>Total Other Property &amp; Investments</b>	<b>\$ 10,065,439</b>	<b>\$ 10,610,222</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 3,231,322	\$ 5,359,387
AR, net of allowance	1,057,173	2,220,392
Materials and Supplies	715,200	1,688,162
Prepayments	68,073	42,317
Interest Receivable	3,422	44,380
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,075,190</b>	<b>\$ 9,354,638</b>
Deferred Debts	56,874	34,441
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 35,994,149</b>	<b>\$ 41,850,027</b>
<b>Liabilities (what we owe)</b>		
Long Term Debt	\$ 17,536,503	\$ 19,598,325
Accounts Payable	1,195,550	3,662,178
Customer's Deposits	308,375	549,950
Other Liabilities	1,429,168	1,438,687
Deferred Credits	1,064,846	1,071,806
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 21,534,442</b>	<b>\$ 26,320,946</b>
<b>Net Worth (member equity)</b>		
Patronage Capital & Other Equities	14,459,707	15,529,081
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Worth</b>	<b>\$ 35,994,149</b>	<b>\$ 41,850,027</b>

## COVE HEAT SALE

Oahe Electric Cooperative is offering great deals on our remaining Cove Heat inventory!  
Call 1.800.640.6243 today to learn more!

# GHOST TOWNS

## South Dakota's History Remembered

Jacob Boyko

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Scattered across open fields and through narrow mountain gulches, a careful eye can spot many of South Dakota's nearly 250 long-lost prairie villages and prospecting towns.

Many of these communities were once thriving outposts, railroad hubs, farming villages and mining towns, but were dealt their final blows by the hardships of the dust bowl, changes to railroad systems and the depletion of natural resources.

Most of the towns are long forgotten, their existence marked only by the rotted shell of an old wood barn or a crumbling foundation poking up from the ground.

Thanks to the work of local historical societies who have pieced together the history of the communities' "booms and busts" through old newspaper clippings, plat maps and land records, we can get a glimpse into the lives of the first rural South Dakotans and learn about the communities that once bustled with life.

### Galena

Unique among a cavalcade of abandoned Black Hills gold-rush towns, Galena's roots are in its silver. The town was settled in the late 1870s after prospectors Patrick Donegan and John F. Cochran discovered layers of lead and silver ore near Bear Butte Creek while searching for gold deposits.

The U.S. government removed the two men from the area in accordance with Native American treaties. However,

their exile turned out to be short-lived. Donegan and Cochran returned shortly after to mine their claim as more and more gold-hungry settlers tested the increasingly unenforceable treaties.

The claim, which would later become the Sitting Bull mine, turned out to be a mother lode, according to Galena Historical Society member Jeff Jacobsen.

Over the next several years, other mining operations popped up in the gulch as the miners' families made Galena their new home. The town soon had multiple houses, a hotel, restaurant, stores, a catholic church, cemetery and school, attracting new settlers through its peak between 1881 and 1883.

Arriving from Chicago in hopes of expanding his fortune, Col. John Davey soon became a Galena mining heavyweight, buying up claims along the Bear Butte Creek, including the Sitting Bull claim.

Davey's more than 125-man operation was running smoothly until trouble arose from a claim dispute. The owners of the nearby Richmond claim suspected Davey was digging too far into the hill and mining their silver. Davey claimed he was following the path of the ore, which according to mining law, he was allowed to follow onto another claim. The Richmond claim owners said the law didn't apply to a horizontal blanket formation of ore, like the one in Galena.

A lengthy court battle ensued, and the judge shut down the Sitting Bull mine

until the ruling. Galena was suspended in controversy as many of the townsfolk found themselves out of work.

Thus began Galena's rocky "boom and bust" cycle, Jacobsen explained.

"The boom time was when Col. Davey and other mines were producing, and then the lawsuit shut that down and you have a bust," he said.

The judge ruled against Davey, and the operation never recovered. Galena would never again be the bustling town it was in the early 1880s.

"In 1892, some more people came into town and tried to start up again, so that was a boom, and then they went bankrupt, so there's a bust," Jacobsen continued. "There's like three or four cycles like that in Galena."

By the mid 1930s, the town had seen its final bust. The mining wasn't comparable to the riches of the past, and interest in the gulch slowly started to fade. The tracks were removed and the school house closed in 1943.

Today, Galena is the best-preserved Ghost Town in South Dakota. On the second Saturday of each June, visitors can tour the town, visit the maintained graveyard and go inside the newly-restored schoolhouse, courtesy of the Galena Historical Society.

"It just kind of stands out," Jacobsen said. "Galena is just one of the very few silver mining areas in the Black Hills when almost everyone else was trying for gold."



Galena School  
Photo Credit: Galena Historical Society

## Did You Know

In 1947, Deadwood resident Ollie Wiswell came across an orphaned coyote pup while he was out on a hike. He gave the pup, named Tootsie, to Fred and Esther Borsch of Galena. Tootsie gained fame as the mascot for the Borschs' Deadwood liquor store, famously appearing on the store's sign. Fred taught Tootsie to howl along to his singing, and the two recorded the album "South Dakota Tootsie."

Tootsie, at this point a South Dakota mascot, rode through parades, was featured in an airline advertising campaign, and even embarked on a nationwide tour where she visited the White House and performed for President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon.

Gov. George Mickelson, a fan of Tootsie himself, signed legislation in 1949 making the coyote the state's official animal. Tootsie died in 1959 and is buried near her home in Galena.

## Argonne

About nine miles northwest of Howard, just off state Highway 25, lay the remains of the ill-fated farming community, Argonne.

Marked by a blue historical sign, travelers-by can catch a glimpse of the town's massive cement bank vault with its swinging iron door, an old silo bearing the town's name, several concrete foundations, and a house falling into its own footprint.

The town's founder, Dr. Louis Gotthelf, was a Prussian-born physician who emigrated to the United States in the aftermath of the Prussian revolution. Gotthelf staked his claim in 1881 and established the townsite in 1886.

The town was originally called St. Mary's, named after Gotthelf's daughter, and was strategically positioned along the Chicago and North Western railroad, with the streets running parallel to the railroad rather than the traditional east-west layout. Confusion with another St. Mary's led to the residents voting to change the name to Argonne in 1920, which was chosen to honor local soldiers who had served in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive during World War I.

Despite having what should have been a prime location, Argonne failed to grow to Gotthelf's satisfaction, and he left with his family for Parker in 1889.

A 1919 land boom in South Dakota finally turned things around for Argonne, Miner County Historical Society member George Justice Forster said.

"Most of the growth that happened initially was when it kind of took off as a

trade center," he explained. "Suddenly the town had a railway depot, lumberyard, farmer's cooperative and general store."

In the early 20s, Argonne's population boomed to about 100 residents, and the town offered new amenities including a school, blacksmith and post office.

Argonne's peak was short-lived, and by 1930 the population had fallen to about 65 residents.

When Doug Jerlow moved to town in 1953, much of what was built in the town's prime was left abandoned, and most of the businesses that did remain were struggling.

"It was past the peak," Jerlow recounted. "One general store closed when the post office inside it closed, and that was an elderly lady who ran that and lived in a house by herself. The Haxby family's store was open for maybe a year or two after that."

Though the town was facing a bleak outlook, there remained one huge point of pride for Argonne: high school basketball.

Delbert Gillam, also known as the

Argonne Ace, led the Argonne Arrows to a 10-1 start in his junior year in 1953. Gillam also broke the state record for the most points scored by a player in a single game, making 31 field goals and 10 free throws, scoring 72. Argonne still holds this record.

The high school closed in 1956, but the community limped on for a few more years before the grade school closed in 1970 when the railroad picked up and left.

Doug Jerlow's family, the last residents of Argonne, left town that same year.

Jerlow pointed out that while many other communities along the rail line like Unityville, Canova, Carthage, and Esmond struggled to recover from the abandonment of the line, for Argonne, it was the death blow.

Now, Forster and other members of the Miner County Historical Society are working to preserve the history of Argonne.

A historical marker will soon be placed east of Argonne on state Highway 25 that will tell the story of Argonne from its founding to its final household.

Though Jerlow now lives near Madison, he still farms near Argonne and owns most of the former townsite. As the unofficial mayor of Argonne, as Jerlow sometimes calls himself, he wants to keep the memory of his childhood hometown alive.

"It was just a nice community to grow up in," he said. "Those small communities, I think it's becoming harder to find them anymore."



Argonne Arrows  
Photo Credit: Miner County Historical Society



# RELIABLE ENERGY

## How the EPA's Power Plant Rule Jeopardizes Grid Reliability

Jocelyn Johnson

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The energy future outlined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Power Plant Rule means more blackouts, greater uncertainty and higher electric bills. This is the concern of electric cooperatives and other industry leaders who are in litigation with the EPA over the legality of the power plant rule issued in May of this year.

"The administration and the EPA specifically have made it a priority to undertake a 'death by a thousand cuts' approach to regulating the utility sector," said Stephen Bell, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's vice president of advocacy, press and member communications. "They've enacted a number of rules, including the EPA Power Plant Rule. As a result, they're proposing rules and regulations at a

rapid pace that have a direct impact on our industry specifically."

Boiled down, the EPA's Power Plant Rule requires coal-fired and natural gas power plants to capture 90% of carbon dioxide emissions using carbon capture and sequestration technology by 2032. This is not attainable according to NRECA who represents electric cooperatives nationally.

Alongside other industry leaders and 27 states' attorneys general, NRECA filed a lawsuit and stay request in the D.C. Circuit against the EPA earlier this year. The stay request, which attempted to delay the implementation of the rule, was denied in July and an appeal was immediately made to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that

the Clean Air Act's Section 111 requires EPA's standards be based on technology that has been adequately demonstrated. A system that meets all of EPA's requirements has never existed and therefore cannot be considered adequately demonstrated.

"No operating coal or natural gas power plants in America exist that use carbon capture at the scale that would comply with EPA's regulation," said Bell. "Their final rule is unreasonable, unrealistic and unachievable, because it relies on technology for implementing greenhouse gas reductions that just isn't ready for prime time."

Grid reliability is a concern for many in the energy industry – including local distribution cooperatives whose mission is to provide safe, affordable and reliable energy to member-consumers.

"The numbers don't add up," said Bell. "I think we are in a situation where reliability is being put at risk

by a policy that doesn't focus on the importance of keeping the lights on."

South Dakota Rural Electric Association's General Manager Steve Barnett added the same sentiment, acknowledging that the timing of the power plant rule was troubling.

"At the same time the EPA is leading our nation down the path to fewer power plants, utilities are facing a surge in electricity demand – driven by the onshoring of manufacturing, the growth of the American economy and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce and cryptocurrency," said Barnett.

Grid reliability affects everyone's ability to turn on the lights, heat their homes and use electric appliances. However, the future of grid reliability does not have a positive outlook for many in the energy industry.

As it stands, the EPA's rule would cause debilitating pressure on an already strained grid. It would also

have a potential impact on consumer costs.

"When demand is high and supply is low, costs go up," Barnett said. "We're concerned about threats to reliability as well as cost increases to our members."

This growing demand – and shrinking supply – is why the North American Electric Reliability Corporation has warned that 19 states could see rolling blackouts over the next five years during times of high electrical usage, including during life-threatening cold snaps and heat waves.

"Demand for power is increasing and supply is not keeping up," said Bell. "Against that backdrop, the EPA has proposed a rule that will force electric co-ops to take power plants offline. They will be forced to do more with less in a situation where we need more. This is not a recipe for success."



**SEPT. 14-OCT. 27**  
**Mazing Acres Fall Festival**  
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
30851 433rd Ave.  
Yankton, SD  
605-760-2759



**SEPT. 27-29**  
**Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show**  
Meadow, SD  
605-788-2299

**OCT. 4-5**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest and Vendor Show**  
Philip, SD  
605-441-1060

**OCT. 4-5**  
**25th Annual Pumpkin Fest**  
Webster, SD  
<https://webstersd.com/home>

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Run Crazy Horse Marathons**  
Crazy Horse  
605-390-6137  
[www.runcrazyhorse.com](http://www.runcrazyhorse.com)

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Show**  
Codington County Extension Complex  
Watertown, SD  
605-881-3273

**OCT. 5-6**  
**The Black Market**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

**OCT. 6**  
**Giant Pumpkin Festival**  
Bentley Memorial Building  
Bison, SD  
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.  
605-244-5475

**OCT. 10-11**  
**Rural Women in Agriculture Conference**  
Oct. 10 from 1-9 p.m.  
Oct. 11 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.  
The Lodge of Deadwood  
Deadwood, SD  
[SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com](http://SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com)

**OCT. 11-12**  
**Junkin' Market Days**  
Ramkota Exhibit Hall  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-941-4958

**OCT. 19**  
**Buffalo County Fall Ball**  
Live Music and Food  
8 p.m.  
Fire Hall  
Gann Valley, SD

**OCT. 25-27**  
**Forest of Fears Haunted Trail**  
7 p.m.-10 p.m.  
Reclamation-Ranch  
40787 259th St.  
Mitchell, SD

**OCT. 26**  
**Hill City Children's Boo Bash and Pumpkin Festival**  
Hill City, SD  
605-574-2368

**OCT. 26**  
**Hartford Women of Today Fall Craft Fair**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
West Central Becker Center  
Hartford, SD  
605-359-2049

**OCT. 26**  
**Owl-O-Ween**  
Noon-5 p.m.  
Black Hills Raptor Center  
Caputa, SD  
605-391-2511

**OCT. 31**  
**Treat Street**  
5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.  
Main St.  
Milbank, SD  
605-432-6656  
[MilbankSD.com/Chamber](http://MilbankSD.com/Chamber)

**NOV. 2**  
**Fall Fling Craft Show**  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Dakota Christian School  
Corsica, SD  
605-366-7940

**NOV. 2**  
**Reliance Christmas Carousel**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Legion Hall  
Reliance, SD  
605-730-0553

**NOV. 22-23**  
**Holiday Arts Christmas Craft Show**  
Davison County Fairgrounds  
Mitchell, SD  
605-359-2049

**NOV. 30**  
**A Hometown Christmas Market**  
2 p.m.-6 p.m.  
Main St.  
Elk Point, SD

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

**Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**