

W. H. Brown, engineer of the Farmers Rural and Dr. J. R. Travis, president, map plans for Virginia's first electricity cooperative.

Cooperation Turns on Lights

BY R. C. DORSEY

ELECTRIC power lines now going up in Caroline County, Virginia, mark the start of the first farm electricity cooperative in the state and furnish the incentive for a vast rural electrification program scheduled to bring electricity for the first time to farmers throughout entire Northern Virginia.

Thanks to the efforts of a group of Caroline County truck farmers, a wide-awake country newspaper, and a loan of \$366,000 from the Rural Electrification Administration, the Farmers Rural Utilities, Incorporated, with headquarters in Bowling Green, will provide electricity for farmers, who, for ten years waited in vain for a means of tapping nearby electric current at a reasonable cost.

Begun last Winter by farmer-members of the Caroline County Cooperative Sweet Potato Association, the cooperative electrification movement spread to the adjoining counties of Spotsylvania, Hanover and Orange. The contract signed with REA will make electricity available to more than 3,000 prospective farmer-customers.

Another approved project will take electricity to the counties between the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers—

the "Northern Neck." Fourteen other projects will hook up the Caroline and "Northern Neck" organizations with Central Virginia and extend rural electrification from the Chesapeake Bay to the Shenandoah Valley, providing electric light and power to more than 16,000 prospective farmer-customers.

Sponsored by Cooperative

The Caroline County Cooperative Sweet Potato Association which sponsored the electrification project last year handled some 25,000 bushels of sweet potatoes and over 3,000 barrels of cucumbers.

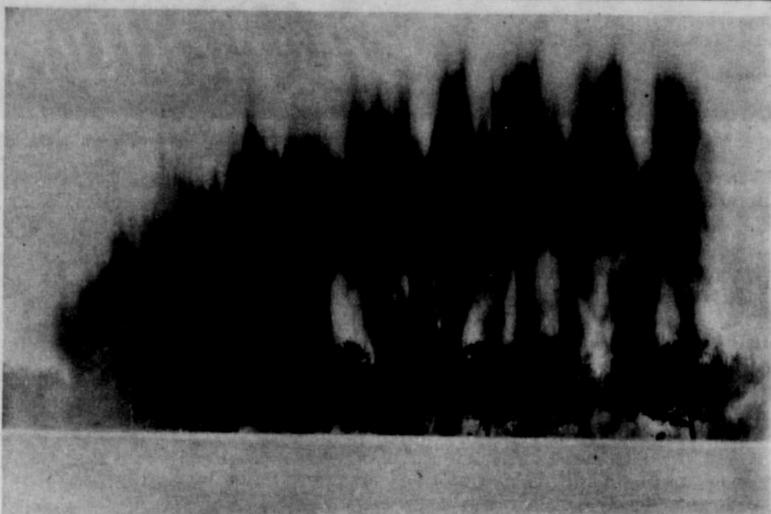
REA said the Caroline electrification scheme was feasible on a cooperative basis provided the farmers could get the cooperation and sign up a majority of farmers to be served.

On their own initiative, and at their own expense, members of the cooperative made a house-to-house canvass. To pay its way, a rural electric line should have at least three customers to a mile, Caroline farmers got four customers to a mile. The cooperation of the county board of supervisors was obtained. Ringing appeals in the *Caroline Progress* created enthusiasm. The Farmers Rural Utilities, Incorporated, was organized and chartered; rights of way for electric lines were obtained. The Farmers Rural obtained the REA loan on the usual terms: interest at 3 per cent a year and repayments spread over a period of 20 years.

Loan Provides Capital

The REA loan solved the problem of capital and the Virginia Electric Power Company contracted to furnish electric current to the Farmers Rural at wholesale rates. Through the non-profit set-up of the cooperative, electricity will be retailed to farmers at a cost comparable or lower than that of city customers. More than 10 times as many farmers have contracted for electricity from the Farmers Rural as the entire

The electric motor does the work now for this cooperative-minded Virginia farm woman.



Real estate in lower Sussex County, Delaware, took a real "boom" the other day when over 2,000 pounds of dynamite sent thousands of tons of earth skyward. To farmers and truckers it meant more and better crops. The occasion was the digging of a 1,200 foot drainage ditch three miles south of Laurel. And now, just wait and see how those farmers cash in on their drained land!



Mrs. Emma Casto, a widow of Upshur County, is the winner of the grand sweepstakes award for the entire show at West Virginia's first strawberry festival at Buckhannon. Mrs. Casto won with a crate of Chesapeake strawberries exhibited in Class 1 for the upland region of the area. She is pictured above with A. L. Keller, extension specialist in vegetable gardening (left) and Glenn L. Ford, Upshur county agent.

number previously served in the four counties.

In the Caroline set-up, a farmer who needs and can pay for about \$3 to \$3.50 worth of electricity per month can get the service if he lives within a reasonable distance of an approved line. The minimum amount per month will pay for enough electricity—40 or 50 kilowatt hours—for ordinary lighting and minor farm appliances. Rates for additional electricity above the minimum drop sharply bringing the electric washing machine, electric water pump, and refrigerator within the means of many farmer-customers.

REA is a business proposition for farmers who want to get electricity on a business basis at a reasonable cost within the farmer's means. Each project approved must provide reasonable expectation of paying out over a period of years. No Caroline farmer has mortgaged his farm to get REA electricity. The terms are reasonable. The farmer agrees to take so much electricity for three years.

Where needed, farmers will be as-

sisted by long-term REA financing to properly wire and equip their homes and buildings, but farmers will not as a rule be required to wire premises before the lines are built. REA does not make any unsecured grants. The loan to the Farmers Rural is for the entire cost of the project; but the farmers' guarantee to purchase electricity, and the lines and equipment, will constitute a reasonable security to the government for the money loaned.

Mistakes Made, Too

President of the Farmers Rural is Dr. J. R. Travis, farmer of 200 acres, who also heads the sweet potato cooperative. Directors from the Sparta community is Frances Pitts, young V. P. I. graduate, and R. F. Holberton, farm supply dealer of Milford, Va. Director R. D. Denison is assistant editor of the farmer-minded *Caroline Progress*. Directors from the Port Royal area are A. J. Gouldman, farmer-merchant, and C. J. Holloway, District Supervisor. W. H. Brown, graduate engineer of Penn State, left a large private utility company to supervise construction of lines and facilities.

Congress has just passed a bill providing \$400,000,000 for a 10-year program of rural electrification. Getting the electric lights out to the farm may now seem simple. The people of Caroline have not found it so. "If we had only known at the start what we know now, we could have done it in half the time," said Editor Denison. "Mistakes were made; estimates were made too high; others were made too low; confidence was placed in the wrong people in some instances—until the farmers learned better."

Bringing electricity to farm homes in Caroline County and other sections of rural Virginia will mean a considerable benefit in any case, but if the cooperative effort and determination that marked the organization of the Farmers Rural Utilities is carried forward into other farm problems, it will mean a greater benefit than even electricity can give.

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