

## ***1940s – Co-ops Establish Permanent Roots***

### **Midwest Electric Cooperative**

In 1940, Roby residents raised \$600.00, which was donated to the cooperative for the purchase of land for a permanent co-op office. The building was completed in 1941 and housed offices, a warehouse in the back, and an upstairs meeting room. In 1948, the co-op opened a district office in Snyder to better serve the members in that area, largely due to the oil boom of the Canyon Reef oil field in Scurry County. Until this time, the Snyder area was served by a single service truck operated by Arthur Roberts and his son, who worked from their home. For several years after that, the Snyder office consisted of two trucks and four men.

World War II brought on material shortages that drastically slowed new line construction; some service lines were built out of barbed wire. After the end of the war, construction resumed at a relentless pace until every member was served. In 1940, after the cooperative's first full year of operation, average monthly usage was 39 kWh – the average electric bill was \$3.58. Membership rose to 546. In 1945, the average usage was 65 kWh per month for an average bill of \$4.58; the co-op had 1,293 members.

In 1946, the first organized annual meeting was held at the Roby High School auditorium.

In 1949, a devastating ice storm struck, causing over \$20,000.00 in damages in just 2 days. Line repairs took over two weeks and, during this time, many members were without electric service.

### **Stamford Electric Cooperative**

*Adapted from Stamford Electric Cooperative, Inc.: The First Thirty-Seven Years by C.M. Lester*

Progress continued to be made and in January 1940, the co-op was able to pay for rent and basic utilities: rent was \$20.00 per month, heat (gas) and water were \$13.00 and electricity was \$2.70. In June, Evans resigned as Superintendent and was replaced by Mr. H.L. Osment. The cooperative held its first annual meeting September 25, 1940, installing the following elected board members: Hugo B. Haterius, President; W.H. Overton, Vice President; G.J. Smith, Secretary-Treasurer; and E.W. Carlson, J.C. Harwell, E.E. Link, Ed Newquist, Arche Pardue and Ted Willoughby.

In October 1940, Stovall Construction Company received a contract for \$86,205.33 to construct "B Section" – 265 miles of new line. For \$695.00, the cooperative purchased a fully-equipped (with seat covers and a heater) Plymouth Business Coupe for the Superintendent from Prewit Motor Company.

March 1, 1941, salaries were set: Manager, \$175.00; Lineman, \$140.00; Bookkeeper, \$100.00; Assistant Lineman, \$90.00; Office Assistant, \$60.00. Board members received \$3.00 per meeting attended, and \$.05 per mile to and from the meeting at the shortest distance. Later in the year the office was moved to roomier quarters at 113 North Swenson. In November 1941, final payment for "B Section" construction was made to Stovall Construction. In May 1942, salaries were increased from \$5 - \$15 per month due to increased cost of living.

July 1942 marked the co-op's first pre-payment to the REA on loan funds and, in 1943, the co-op showed its first profit, allowing for improvements to be made to the electric system. The first automatic oil circuit reclosers were installed to assist in preventing power failures. Many power failures were due to some conductors failing; the matter was addressed with the manufacturer, who agreed to pay the

cooperative \$15,000.00 which was used to correct the faulty conductors. In July 1945, the board approved purchase of a power hole digger for \$7,500.00.

In December 1946, Riggs Sheppard, Manager of Taylor Electric Cooperative, requested to purchase some of Stamford EC's lines in southern Jones county at the original cost less depreciation, but the Stamford board rejected the offer. Additionally, the board authorized lease of the Arledge Building on West McHarg street for five years at \$130.00 per month.

Possibility of increased power costs loomed, concerning Stamford, Midwest, Taylor and Coleman Electric Cooperatives, which led to the formation of Mid-Tex Generation and Transmission Cooperative and the idea of building their own generation plant. In October 1948, Stamford EC contributed its \$1,250.00 share towards a survey to determine feasibility of such a plant. At the same meeting, the board established a contract with Southwestern Bell for joint pole use to establish a rural telephone system.

In 1949, two-way radio equipment was installed to allow for communication between the trucks in the field and the office. Noted in C.M. Lester's memoir: "A lady had just called the office to report that the power was off, and glancing out the front door, saw the lineman climbing the pole in front of the home. It had happened that the lineman as a short distance from her home when he received the call."