

## **1950s**

### **Midwest Electric Cooperative**

In 1950, the area suffered a severe drought. Many people found it impossible to continue farming their dry-land farms, sold out, and moved to areas where water or work could be found. During the seven-year drought period, the Co-op lost many members.

Fortunately, about the same time the drought began, the Scurry County Oil Boom hit and oil wells began appearing all around Snyder. Refineries were built to process the oil, pipelines and pump stations were installed to transport oil products, and oil camps were built to house the workers and their families. Many workers moved into the homes that farmers had vacated. Water wells were also drilled to supply water necessary to oilfield operations.

Until this time, Midwest EC has purchased power from two private utility companies at several metering points along their lines. Due to the lack of electric power in the outlying areas, the co-op had to build lengthy transmission lines from metering points to substations at Fluvanna, Justiceburg, and Garza county. These lines helped stretch the reach of electricity to farms that were previously too far away to be reached.

Beyond line extensions, modern advances occurred in the office as well. In 1950, the board of directors voted to utilize accounting machines to ease the work load on office employees, who had previously done all bookkeeping by hand. Two-way radios were added to the co-op vehicles with base stations at Roby and Snyder, bringing better, faster service to the co-op's members.

As the co-op's membership grew following drought recovery, Midwest required larger office and warehouse space. In 1958, the co-op built a new, modern office on the western edge of Roby. The building was all-electric and included large office spaces, a meeting room and demonstration kitchen, and an office equipment room. The warehouse was constructed behind the office building in 1959 – both facilities still serve the Roby office location well. The brick matched the front office and housed an office for the line superintendent, crew room, photography dark room, and a room for the metering equipment. Additionally, a large, fenced pole yard and storage area were added to make room for poles and large equipment.

In 1950, the average meter registered 99 kWh of use per month for an average bill of \$5.46 and by 1955, that number had increased to an average of 166 kWh. For an average bill of \$6.88. In 1950, co-op membership had grown rapidly to include 3,171 members; by 1955 membership had only grown slightly to 3,243 members. Many farmers had moved away due to the drought, but the discovery of oil in the service territory was a welcome revenue source for the cooperative.

### **Stamford Electric Cooperative**

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

By this point, matters were much more routine at the cooperative, however, a few points of progress stand out. The board of directors directed the Manager to pay all employees the prevailing wage scale of the area, not the wage scale set by the Secretary of Labor. To meet the requirements of REA, Jack K. Covington was designated as the engineer responsible for checking all work orders. In keeping with the policy of maintaining a strong financial position, the board authorized purchase of "K" Bonds in the

amount of \$100,000.00 and applied surplus general funds as a pre-payment against a loan of the cooperative. Additionally, the board saw the need for improved office space, and authorized purchase of the Humphrey building at 225 W. McHarg – the co-op's current Stamford district office – and allowed for remodeling.

Of great value to employees, a sick leave program was adopted and put into operation, and a Christmas bonus for all employees.

At the beginning of the 1950s, the co-op had about 30 oil wells connected to its lines. By the end of the decade, this number had grown to just over 1,000 and became a major revenue source, representing 60% of the co-op's revenue. By 1950, with just over 10 years of operating history, the co-op had grown to 2,867 members, 1,307 miles of line, and average use was 111 kWh. By the end of the 1950s, the co-op had 3,860 consumers and 1,763 miles of line.