

Electricity Comes to ND: Electric Cooperatives and Rural Farmsteads

The Rural Electrification Act helped fund construction of electric power lines in rural North Dakota. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the introduction of electricity to rural farmsteads in North Dakota.

Archival Collections

10157 North Dakota Oral History Project Records

Oral history interview transcripts, indexes to recorded oral history interviews, interview referral files, interview files, photographs, lists of donations to the Project, oral history interview transcripts relating to the Governor's Mansion, family histories, biographies, reminiscences, and manuscripts.

10928 StoryCorps (North Dakota) Collection

Interviews, reminiscences, and stories by North Dakotans recorded at story booths that were set up in Bismarck, Fargo, and New Town (N.D.). Collection also includes photographs of the interviewee and interviewer. The StoryCorps stops in North Dakota have been sponsored by Prairie Public Broadcasting, the Library of Congress, the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Bismarck State College, and AARP of North Dakota.

10958 William E. "Bill" Shemorry Paper

The collection consists of office files (research, newspaper and magazine clippings, article drafts, and published articles), slides, photographs, negatives, and glass plate negatives related to Shemorry's career as a newspaper publisher, photographer, reporter, historian, researcher and author in Williston, N.D. biographies, reminiscences, and manuscripts.

11040 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Records

Consists of color slides, three films on DVD, and photographs of coal mining at the Glenharold Mine, groundbreaking ceremonies for Basin Electric's Leland Olds Station Unit 1, and the Basin Electric 1980 annual meeting. The original accession dates from 1963-1983.

Useful Search Guidance

Subjects

- Rural Electrification Act (REA)
- Rural Electrification Administration
- Baker Electric Cooperative
- Distributive cooperatives

People

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1882-1945
- Governor Fred G. Aandahl, 1897-1966

Locations

- North Dakota farms
- Rural North Dakota

Journal Articles

State Board of Electricians
North Dakota Blue Book 1942

Energy
North Dakota Blue Book 2007-2009

11055 Steele Light and Power Company Records

Consists of one ledger with minutes and general information about the company and its stockholders.

11342 Barnes County Oral History

Consists of 249 audio recordings of North Dakota residents, most of which were compiled by Valley City students between 1970-1984. Includes cassette tapes and magnetic tape recordings. Subjects range from pioneer life to wars, depression, businesses, recreation, home and family life.

11504 Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc. Records

Founded in 1945 by 129 farmers who wanted to bring power to the prairie, Capital Electric Cooperative has come a long way from its humble beginnings. Today, the co-op provides affordable, reliable power to more than 18,000 members along 2,700 miles of distribution line.

30425 Public Service Commission. Public Utility Division. Formal Case Files.

Series consists of correspondence, reports, applications, contracts, agreements, memoranda, licenses, petitioner's briefs, and transcripts of hearings concerning public utilities.

31194 Agricultural Experiment Station. Reports and Studies.

Agricultural Experiment Station. Reports and Studies. Series consists of reports, studies, and other data relating to developmental farms, cooperative cereal investigations, annual reports of branch stations, and research projects conducted by the Agricultural Experiment Station and the United States Department of Agriculture. Inventory available.

Books

Electric Farm Power

1982 - prepared by NDSU Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service and North Dakota Power Use Council
Call Number: 333.793 E382

Energizing the Peace Garden State: The Early Days of Electricity in North Dakota

2017 – David Dahle; edited by Cathy A. Langemo
Call Number: 333.7932 D131e 2017

How Electricity is Used on the Farm

1939 – C.N. Turner
Call Number: 333.7932 T944h 1939

Electricity on Farms in North-Central North Dakota

1952 – Roy M. Gilcreast
Call Number: 338.47 N814 379

Home Heating with Electricity

1958 – Richard L. Witz, Richard W. Guest, Ernest W. French
Call Number: 338.47 N814 420

The Farmer Takes a Hand: The Electric Power Revolution in Rural America

1952 – Marquis Childs; introduction by Senator George D. Aiken
Call Number: 363.623 C437 1952

The Farmer's Electrical Handbook: Containing Such Electrical Information and Practical Working Directions as Every Farmer and Country Resident Will Find Useful

1917—Western Electric Company
Call Number: 631.37 F234 1917

Farm Power in the Making of America; A History of the Uses of Mechanical Power in American Agriculture from Pioneer Days to 1930; Featuring More than 200 Engravings and Pictures of Treadmills, Windmills, Steam Engines, Gas Tractors & Cars

1978—Paul C Johnson
Call Number: 631.37 J636

Online Resources

[First Rural Power Line in NW Finished](#)

The Bismarck Tribune—August 6, 1936

[SHSND Photobook](#)

State Historical Society of North Dakota's Online Search Portal for all digitized photographs

[Digital Horizons](#)

Online consortium of historic photographs from the collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota

[WorldCat](#)

State Historical Society of North Dakota's publication search portal

External Resources

[Rural Electric Magazine; Flashbacks:](#)

[Electricity Comes to a North Dakota Farm](#)

Article about Pauline Olson's diary and the introduction of electricity to rural North Dakota

[NDAREC](#)

Website of the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives

State Archives

For more information related to the collections and resources available at the North Dakota State Archives, please email archives@nd.gov or call (701) 328-2668.



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