

## 2016 marks URE's 80th year in business

by Roger Yoder

Knowing 2016 was going to be URE's 80 year of business, I decided to research the first recorded minutes of Cooperative. I found this history to be of interest and decided to share it with you.

The movement to electrify rural America began May 11, 1935 when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 7037 establishing the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). It wasn't until 1936 that the Rural Electrification Act was passed by Congress providing low-interest loan funds to electric cooperatives to build power lines in un-served rural areas across the Country.

URE began when a group of interested Union County farmers held a meeting in the Farm Bureau office on East Fourth Street in Marysville. The very first entry in the first book of minutes read:

*"The meeting of the Rural People interested in Rural Electrification met at Marysville, August 8, 1935, for the purpose of forming an organization to secure information on preparing a project for Rural Electrification in Union County."*

A specific electrification project was required as part of the application to REA to become a certified rural distribution electric cooperative and receive federal low-interest loan funds. On May 20, 1936 URE became incorporated and on July 29, 1936 URE received its REA Ohio 50 Union designation from the REA, becoming the 50<sup>th</sup> not-for-profit distribution electric cooperative to be formed in America. On September 1, 1936 URE received its first REA loan, which allowed for the construction of the first rural distribution electric facilities in Union County after the project engineering was approved by Washington.

On October 19, 1936, the board of trustees decided to diversify and formed a subsidiary company to begin selling electric appliances effective March 1, 1937 to members.

The very first pole was set in February 1937 and by March 1, 1937, 21 poles had been set and 40 holes had been dug – all by hand! URE employed 21 men to complete this labor intensive work.

Buckeye Power did not exist back then so on March 4, 1937 URE entered into a power contract with Ohio Electric Power Co., which later became known as Marion Reserve Power Company. Marion Reserve was later bought out by the current Dayton Power & Light (DP&L). The rate URE paid for electric was the providers residential retail rate. URE then had to add the cost to service the debt of their electric plant and to operate and maintain the electric facilities. This put URE's retail rates to its members significantly higher than the other local utility customer rates.

URE began pulling wire on April 20, 1937. As a source of operating capital and to demonstrate ownership, a \$10 Membership Fee was required. Many paid the membership fee well in advance of receiving electric service.

On July 27, 1937 the first rate schedule and the terms and conditions for supplying electric service was adopted. The first rate schedule was as follows:

First 30 kWh @	\$0.07/kWh
Next 30 kWh @	\$0.05/kWh
Next 140 kWh @	\$0.03/kWh
Over 200 kWh @	\$0.0175/kWh

The minimum monthly charge was \$2.50 if no electricity was consumed.

The Cooperative would extend electric facilities at no cost for 1 span + 150 feet or approximately 500 feet. A contribution in aid of construction was charged for any extension beyond the 500 feet at 100% of the actual cost, not to exceed \$0.10/foot. In those early days the power was shut off daily from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM so the construction crews could work safely.

At the September 20, 1937 board meeting it was reported the first URE lines were energized in August. 61 members were billed for a total of 5,000 kWh's in September for August usage with 15 being delinquent over 15 days. As of the September board meeting, a total of 157 members were now connected. In those early years, the average monthly usage was around 41 kWh's.

For the sake of comparison, today's average single family residential URE member uses 1.353 kWh's per month

URE leased its first office for \$25 a month in the Farm Bureau building located on East Fourth Street until 1937 when the office moved to 126 West Fifth Street in 1944. The office moved several more times to locations including; 124 North Main Street, 906 East Fifth Street (the old Kinectico building), before moving to our current location on US 36.

The first Annual Meeting of Members was held December 15, 1937 - 208 members were in attendance.

A great deal has changed in URE's 80 years of service, but our commitment to serve our members has not. Abiding by the 7 cooperative principles and the 4 core values of a Touchstone Energy Cooperative are the guiding values of your locally member-owned electric cooperative.

\*If you remember those early years of rural electrification in Union County I would encourage you to contact our office and share your story.