

Rural Electrification Celebrates 50 Years



NORTH DAKOTA

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Fifty years ago, one out of ten rural families in the United States had electric power; and

WHEREAS, On May 11, 1935, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration; and

WHEREAS, The REA was designed to bring electric power into the countryside in order to stimulate economic growth and relieve unemployment; and

WHEREAS, Today there are 1,000 rural electric systems nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Twenty-one of those member-owned distribution cooperatives were formed in the state of North Dakota from 1937-1949 to provide the needed rural electric power for the benefit of its communities, and state and all of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The rural electric cooperatives have grown to serve electric needs of over 96,000 member-consumers in the state of North Dakota in 1985; and

Saturday, May 11, 1935—just another spring day to millions of Americans. The send-a-dime chain letter craze was at its height. Rear Admiral Byrd returned from another trip to Antarctica, and the Cleveland Indians and New York Giants led the major baseball leagues.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt hurriedly completed work left from the week prior to leaving for a weekend outing at the Woodmont Rod and Gun Club near Hancock, MD.

One last-minute task was particularly pleasurable to the President. He signed Executive Order 7037, creating a federal agency to begin a program of rural electrification.

In creating the Rural Electrification Administration, Roosevelt had hopes of realizing the righting of a wrong he had resented since the mid-1920s and earlier.

He related a few years later that his electricity bill at his rural Warm Springs cottage in Georgia "was about four times what I paid at Hyde Park, New York."

That bill, he said, set him to thinking about about a national plan for rural electrification.

This May 11, rural electric systems throughout the nation will be marking the 50th anniversary of that event.

Major events commemorating the anniversary will be held in Warm Springs, GA; Madison, SD; Washington, DC, and at hundreds of local rural electric systems in 46 states.

In 1935 rural America was in the dark—nine out of ten American



FDR recounted in 1938 in Barnesville, GA, that he first began thinking about rural electrification while recuperating from polio at Warm Springs, GA.

cottage at Warm Springs was the birthplace of rural electrification."

Bob Bergland, Executive Vice President and General Manager of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), will deliver the keynote speech during day-long ceremonies on the grounds of Roosevelt's "Little White House" in Warm Springs.

In Madison, U. S. Postmaster Paul N. Carlin will officially issue the commemorative stamp in observance of the 50th Anniversary of REA.

The Smithsonian Institute in Washington will conduct a program "Electrifying Change: REA's 50th Anniversary" with displays of rural artifacts and an oral history program