

GASCOSAGE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE GETTING ORGANIZED - 1945

by Pat Swinger

*Reprinted and edited from People Helping People Since 1945:
The History of Gascosage Electric Cooperative*

As long as World War II was occupying the nation's attention and its efforts, farmers in the area reconciled themselves to life without electricity. However, once the war was over and VJ Day celebrations came to a close, discussions once again picked up regarding the possibility. At the time, the city of Dixon was already receiving electricity from Sho-Me Power Corporation. Mr. Skaggs, who owned the power plant by the old Dixon Pond, had sold it to Sho-Me back in 1925.

The closest REA cooperatives were located at Licking, Lebanon, and Linn, Missouri. While they surrounded the Gascosage area, these co-ops had their hands full stretching scarce materials to serve the farmers in their own territories.



A dedication took place September 18, 1956 as Gascosage Electric Cooperative moved into their new headquarters building on Ellen Street in Dixon. Shown L-R: Board President Joe Lischwe, REA Administrator Dave Hamil, Manager Luther Riddle, and Mr. Fine.

Submitted to facebook by Georgia Sooter Beydler

A few men who had assumed leadership among the farmers wrote to the REA, which was headquartered in St. Louis at the time. The REA did a study deeming the project feasible and sent a field man to furnish information on how to get organized. According to one account, on September 5, 1945, a REA man stopped at a filling station south of Dixon. "This is nice country, but you don't have electricity," he remarked to the attendant. "Oh, no. We'll never get anything like that in these hills," replied the man. "You might get a surprise!" the REA man retorted.

These men drove throughout the countryside trying to convince friends and neighbors to pay five dollars and sign up as a member of the cooperative. The reception they got was mixed. Some folks were eager to get on board and some were fearful of something they didn't understand. Some didn't have the five dollars regardless of how they felt about getting electricity. Former lineman Jim Williams recalled being told of one man who said, "I'll give the \$5.00 but I don't think it'll ever amount to anything."

Those farm leaders prevailed and became the incorporators and first board of directors of Missouri 68 Gascosage Electric Cooperative. They held their first meeting in Dixon's city hall on September 24, 1945. Joseph B. Lischwe presided as president and Victor D. Street acted as secretary. The other seven directors and original incorporators included Willard Humphrey, L. W. Keeth, John Woolery, Ferrel H. Roam, Barney Stokes, A. W. Davis, and Adam E. Copeland. The bylaws and corporate seal were adopted, forms were selected for application for

membership, action was taken regarding insurance and signing of checks, and an engineer was selected. to prepare p r e - a l l o t m e n t maps and provide engineering services for the cooperative. Annual meetings were set for the fourth Thursday in September of each year, beginning in 1946.



Gascosage's 2008 Board of Directors: Dean Baker, Gene Meredith, Joe Krause, Burl Harris, Norma Riddle, Jim Humphrey, Jake Warren, Bill Davis, and Grover Johnson. From - People Helping People Since 1945: the History of Gascosage Electric Cooperative

The following month, Homer Hill of the Applications and Loans Division of the REA met with the board to give them instructions on mapping and the submission of loan requests. The funds were available and getting their application and documentation in on time would expedite the receipt of their first loan for \$206,995.

Setting poles and stringing electrical lines were new for the men of Gascosage. To help out, the REA drafted plans and set engineering standards. To make the funding reach as far as possible, the REA saw to it that the specifications were as economical as possible. Materials were standardized to provide economies of scale for the materials suppliers.

REA crews traveled through the countryside intalling wiring in houses and barns. A standard REA installation in a house consisted of a 60-amp, 230-volt fuse panel with a 60-amp range circuit, a 20-amp kitchen circuit, and two or three 15-amp lighting circuits. A ceiling-mounted light fixture was installed in each room, controlled either by a pull chain or a single switch mounted near a door. Electrical appliances were scarce so, at most, one outlet was installed in each room.

Like any newcomer, Gascosage had to find its place among existing power providers. In November of 1945, the board learned that Sho-Me Power Corporation was willing to sell its interests, including 450 consumers, in Miller, Pulaski, and Maries Counties to Gascosage for \$140,512. In addition, Sho-Me was willing to lease some of its electric distribution facilities to provide a more effective coordination between Sho-Me and Gascosage. Laclede Electric Cooperative of Lebanon owned and operated lines that were nearer Dixon than Lebanon. Negotiations began on April 29, 1946, Gascosage purchased Laclede's distribution system in Iberia; the distribution line from Crocker to Iberia; and the distribution line from Crocker south 3.3 miles, serving 148 members with an annual revenue just under \$10,000. Laclede's asking price was \$15,000 plus the cost of recently made captial additions totaling \$2,726.

The board received word from the REA in March of 1946 that they would receive an allotment for 150 miles of line. On June

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