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Annual Meeting
June 17th, 2025



Turning 80

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Eighty years can seem like forever, even ancient history.

Events 80 years ago included Germany surrendering in May 1945, signaling an end to World War II in the European Theater, and Americans bringing their lives back to a “new” normal.

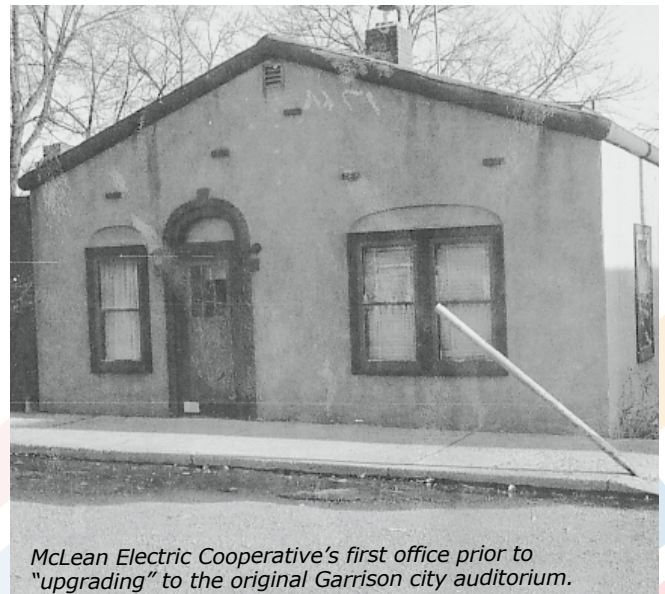
Across rural McLean County, the “new” normal meant the world wouldn’t be the same. It meant something almost magical.

The “new” normal would bring electricity.

In 1945, McLean County farmers and ranchers tirelessly volunteered their time, money and efforts to bring the magical concept of electricity to their families and neighbors – the same magic their “city” brethren enjoyed for years.

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) officially incorporated Aug. 26, 1945. The fledgling cooperative’s first pole was set Aug. 8, 1946.

While rural McLean County residents began striving to energize their farms and ranches, it was those tasked with the massive undertaking of the Garrison Dam construction and Missouri River impoundment who would ultimately be the first benefactors of cooperative electricity. The first section of line was energized March 31, 1947, serving the Garrison Dam construction “boom



McLean Electric Cooperative’s first office prior to “upgrading” to the original Garrison city auditorium.

towns” of Big Bend and Dakota City.

Farms and ranches soon followed, fueled by a Rural Electrification Administration (REA) \$500,000 loan funding construction, whatever equipment,

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The basement of Garrison's original city auditorium served as McLean Electric Cooperative's office before moving into its present headquarters east of Garrison in 1958.

contractors, new employees and office supplies the early board of directors could find, and folks willing to pay a \$5 cooperative membership with the promise to buy electricity.

As cherished as the thought of magical electricity was those 80 years ago, that \$5 and a promise still marked a major commitment on the part of McLean County's rural residents.

Yet, it was a lack of commitment that motivated the grassroots rural electrification movement across the county and throughout the United States, as investor-owned utilities (IOUs) serving small towns and cities were unwilling to reach out to provide those same amenities to rural folks, not just in North Dakota but throughout the country.

It wasn't profitable.

There were too many miles of power lines, electrical wires, meters and everything else it took to plug in a refrigerator, turn on a water pump for indoor plumbing or put heat lamps in a calving barn based on the number of customers it would serve.

Rural folks were left to rely on kerosene lamps, homemade generators requiring massive batteries, windmills and hard labor.

An old adage served the cooperatives well: "In order to know where you're going, you've got to know where you've been."

As rural McLean County, the rest of the United States and most of the world continue experiencing an ever-increasing reliance on electricity, it can be a stark reminder the electric cooperative concept and 1936 Rural Electrification Act signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt brought rural America, agriculture and rural McLean County into the modern world.

Baker Electric Cooperative (named in honor of the



McLean County farmers and ranchers organized meetings to promote forming an electric cooperative in the county in the mid-1940s.

tiny hamlet where it was founded) was the state's first electric cooperative, which energized a farm near York in northeastern North Dakota in November 1937. It was the first farm in North Dakota to receive electricity. Other cooperatives followed and the electric cooperative and gained momentum across the state, including MEC.

Fast-forwarding to 1949, the challenges of bringing electricity to a growing number of rural North Dakotans, including McLean County residents, is why eight electric cooperatives formed Central Power Electric Cooperative (CPEC), to ensure the cooperatives would have a reliable wholesale supply of electricity.

Prior to MEC joining CPEC in 1951, MEC purchased its wholesale electricity from the private IOU serving several communities in the county, Otter Tail Power Company. MEC was dependent on the company that previously wouldn't serve the young cooperative's member-owners.

CPEC advanced its ability to provide reliable electricity with completion of the William J. Neal Station coal-based power plant near Velva in 1952.

Electric cooperatives across the multistate region soon recognized the need for broader electric generation and transmission capabilities to serve their member-owners, incorporating Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPC) during a 1961 meeting in Bismarck.

BEPC now serves electric cooperatives in all or part of nine states. It's a member of the Southwest Power Pool, a regional transmission organization (RTO) serving 14 states alone and assisting 23 states and Canadian provinces in meeting their additional electric energy needs.

As part of the "big picture" of the nation's electric grid, BEPC is also part of the Midcontinent Independent

System Operator (MISO) system, one of 10 RTOs operating bulk electric power systems serving a large portion of North America. They're independent, membership-based, nonprofit organizations – much like a distribution electric cooperative – with a mission of helping ensure electric grid reliability and maximizing supply and demand for wholesale electricity.

MEC became a BEPC member in 1965.

North Dakota's Territorial Integrity Act also became law in 1965. The legislation provided a means for member-owned electric cooperatives and private investor-owned utilities to resolve service area disputes.

To know one's history is to appreciate what our predecessors endured, providing opportunities to learn from their experiences. Beginning in July, MEC's local pages in *North Dakota Living* will explore some of the changes in the electric cooperative industry and what it means to McLean County residents and the local, regional and national economy.

Anniversaries can be a time of reflection. Yet, they can also be a time of looking forward. As MEC reflects, it also continues moving forward, helping its member-owners stay on the cusp of what makes the county – and North Dakota – such an important player in driving the nation.

MEC has changed with the times.

Yet, in many ways it remains the same, staying true to its original mission statement adopted Sept. 25, 1945: "It shall be the aim of McLean Electric Cooperative Inc. to make electric energy available to its members at the lowest cost consistent with sound economy and good management."



By 1965, six employees logged 20 years of service, having joined McLean Electric Cooperative in 1946, including front row, left to right, **Ken Hopkins, Ken Fitzsimonds and Elmer Affeldt**, and back row, left to right, **Art Gartner, Ron Erickson and Joe Walters**. Walters was the first person the original MEC board of directors hired, retiring as manager in 1981.

Please join MEC, its board of directors and staff as it looks to the past and celebrates its future, not only in upcoming local pages reflections, but at the 2025 80th anniversary annual meeting, June 17, at its Garrison headquarters. Family activities begin at 4 p.m. ■

UNDERSTANDING THE SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same set of core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance. These principles are a key reason why America's electric cooperatives operate differently from other electric utilities, putting the needs of our members first.



VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP



DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL



MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION



AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE



EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION



COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES



CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

THESE ARE THE WORDS WE LIVE BY.



A meeting worth attending

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

June is a popular month for many North Dakota electric cooperatives: It's when all but three of the state's 16 electric cooperatives hold their annual meetings.

It might be human nature to ask the value of taking an afternoon or evening out of one's busy early summer schedule to listen to numbers.

But electric cooperatives are more than numbers. As McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle suggested, "A cooperative is the purest form of American democracy. It's one member, one vote."

In addition, those numbers mean more than just what member-owners pay for their electrical use. Annual meetings are opportunities to gain an understanding of the cooperative business aspect and intricacies of the electric industry.

It's an opportunity to learn about being part of the nation's complex and dynamic electric energy grid, which is a major driver in the United States economy from the grassroots rural level to the top.

However, annual meetings are more than numbers and the business end of an industry, MEC Board Chairperson Larry Gessele, Mercer, added.

"It is a perfect opportunity to network with other members as well as the staff and board members. There is nothing as effective as one-on-one personal contact," he said.

It's a look at the past – how MEC compared to the previous year for electric sales, growth in accounts, and how and where the industry changed over the course of the year, for example.

Being a cooperative member-owner, regardless of the type of cooperative, provides opportunities for participation.

"If this were a (typical) business, you would not have the opportunity to participate. You are a customer," Doyle continued. "It's one of few business models where you have a voice through electing board members and annual meeting (involvement)."

"Attending an annual meeting provides member-owners with the opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of how the cooperative is doing, what it is doing and why it is doing it. It's also a chance to ask questions about matters of concern and, last but not least, a good meal and door prizes," Gessele said.

Annual meetings aren't all business and numbers: They're opportunities for family and friends to gather, enjoy a meal, maybe win some prizes and recognize accomplishments, because that's when MEC honors its

three \$500 college scholarship recipients and Electric Cooperative Youth Tour delegate.

Plus, there are family activities for children.

The 2025 annual meeting marks MEC's 80th anniversary of incorporation as an electric cooperative.

"The importance of our co-op is even more relevant today than it was 80 years ago," Gessele explained. "Electricity is more than a convenience; today, it is a necessity. This society could hardly function without it. Today our co-op provides this service with more safety and reliability than ever. Being member-owned and member-controlled, almost all of the economic benefit is returned to the community and its members, one way or another."

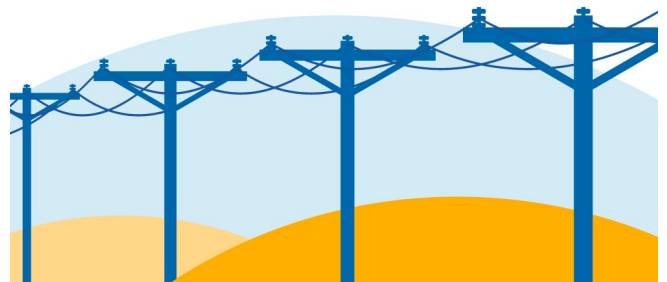
As it moves into the coming year, the anniversary could be the beginning of exciting potential within the electric cooperative industry for the cooperative, Doyle continued.

MEC is one of few North Dakota electric cooperatives that hasn't merged or formed an alliance with other cooperatives, he added. That's a testament to the strength of its diversity – a mix of agricultural, business, industrial and residential member-owners that together provide a healthy economic climate.

MEC and its member-owners have much to celebrate at its 80th annual meeting on June 17. ■



Annual Meeting
June 17th, 2025





Cameras ready! Enter photo contest

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) proudly announces its first annual MEC photo contest in celebration of its upcoming 80th anniversary.

Let's get out and celebrate living, working and recreating in North Dakota's second largest county – and showcase the photographic talents of our cooperative member-owners.

Our grand prize winning photo will be featured on the 2026 MEC annual meeting booklet and as MEC's May 2026 local pages feature photo within *North Dakota Living*, along with receiving a \$50 MEC bill credit and \$50 Visa gift card (\$100 total value).

First place winners in each category will have their photos published in upcoming issues of MEC's 2026 local pages and receive a \$25 MEC bill credit and \$25 Visa gift card (\$50 total value).

CATEGORIES:

- **Family, Furry and Friends Make Life Great:** Celebrate McLean County residents – and don't forget our furry friends – through portraiture or play in McLean County.
- **Hats off to Work:** McLean Electric member-owners or family members at work, whether in the agricultural or energy industry, business world or self-employed.
- **Our Great Outdoors:** Let's celebrate what makes McLean County an outdoor destination – its lakes of all sizes, Missouri River, wildlife of all types, flora,

fauna and its natural scenic beauty.

THE DO'S AND DON'TS – CONTEST RULES:

- Photos must be taken by MEC member-owners or a parent/guardian must be an MEC member-owner for photographers 18 years of age and younger.
- Original digital photos only.
- No AI or photoshopping, although photos can be adjusted for color, exposure and cropping. Remember, though, color and exposure varies depending on computer monitor settings.
- One entry per category per person.
- File type: High-resolution jpg, jpeg or png.
- All photos must be taken in 2025.
- Winners will be announced in the February 2026 issue of MEC's local pages of *North Dakota Living*.

ENTRY SUBMISSIONS:

- Include name, contact number and email address along with photo location and date it was taken.
- Deadline: Dec. 1.
- Submit all entries to MECphotocontest@mcleanelectric.com.
- Questions: Contact MEC Communications Manager Sonja Moe, 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922; email MECphotocontest@mcleanelectric.com. ■



5 STEPS TO DIY SAFETY

You might have the paint selected and the hammer in hand, but have you considered the safety of your next do-it-yourself (DIY) project?

Josh Eldridge, owner of Capital Inspections in Bismarck and a certified home inspector, offers five tips for staying safe during a DIY home renovation.

1. Leave wiring to the professionals.

Safety is a concern in any DIY project, but especially when the work includes a home's electrical system. Working on or near a home's electrical system can be hazardous if you don't know the rules. That's why it's a good idea to leave the installation or repair of your home's electrical system to licensed electricians.

"Calling an electrician is always the best," Eldridge says. If you are doing any electrical work yourself, shut off the appropriate breaker, then use an outlet tester to be sure the electrical circuit is de-energized.

2. Set the ladder properly.

Be sure the ladder's feet are on a solid, even surface and not on soft or frozen ground. Always have three points of contact going up and down the ladder, and extend the ladder four or five rungs above the roof line to help you get onto the roof. Always have a spotter. And look up when working outside, so the ladder does not contact power lines.

3. Remember your PPE.

Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as safety goggles and ear protection, when using power tools.

"Eye safety is huge," Eldridge says. ANSI-rated safety goggles should be used whenever you are working with power tools or where particles could be in the air.

4. Operate saws and power tools safely.

"Know the tool, know how to operate the tool and always wear protective eyewear, a good pair of gloves and steel-toe boots. And always use sharp saw blades. Sharp blades are always much safer than dull blades, because they cut easier and you don't have to force it," Eldridge says. "You have to be familiar with each tool you're operating and how it works."

Use ground-fault circuit interrupters with every power tool to protect against electric shock hazards. Unplug tools when cleaning or fixing, or while changing blades or bits. Do not use power tools with an extension cord that exceeds 100 feet.

5. If your project involves digging outside, call 811 first.

After providing your project details to North Dakota One Call, utility line owners will locate and mark their lines. These locates do not include any lines you may have installed to your private facilities, such as detached garages, wells or yard lights. Go online at ndonecall.com or call 800-795-0555 or 811. ■

McLean County community calendar: Events and activities to see and do

McLean County area food pantry May and June distribution and donation thrift store dates, times and locations:

- **Garrison: Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry,** Noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. May 22 and June 26.
- **Makoti, Parshall, Plaza, Roseglen, Ryder, White Shield and others in need:** Community Food Pantry, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. May 24 and June 28. Community Thrift Store, 3-6 p.m. Tuesday, 4-7 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, except holidays, 181 Ellsworth St., Makoti.
- **Max: Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry,** noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. May 19 and June 16, Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **Turtle Lake: The Lord's Pantry,** 2-4 p.m. May 8, 10 a.m.-noon May 24, 2-4 p.m. June 12 and 10 a.m.-noon June 28, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Turtle Lake: Free Community Clothing Share & Exchange Store,** every Thursday, noon-6 p.m., 221 Main St.
- **Underwood: Community Cupboard of Underwood,** food distribution available for all county residents, 10 a.m.-noon May 10, 4-6 p.m. May 22 and 4-6 p.m. June 7, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook (Community Cupboard of Underwood) for distribution dates, thrift store and other information.
- **Washburn: McLean Family Resource Center,** McLean County residents can contact the center, 701-462-8643, for an appointment to pick up baskets along with more information or assistance through the center's services, 205 Seventh St.
- **Washburn: McLean Family Resource Center Clothing Outlet,** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 205 Seventh St.
- **Wilton: Wilton Food Pantry** "mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone. Full food distribution, 4-6 p.m. May 15 and June 19, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.
- **Wilton: The (free) Clothes Closet,** 3-5 p.m. May 15 and June 19, First Presbyterian Church, 401 Dakota Ave.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for the following items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna, chicken, vegetables, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, macaroni and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, spaghetti, Alfredo and pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups and chili, and household items, such as body wash and soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Contact local food pantries for drop-off locations, information or a list of additional needs in your community.

May events:

- **May 2-12:** Audubon National Wildlife Refuge Migration Game, self-guided hiking along its headquarters' Interpretive Trail. Activities for all ages and selfie photo opportunities celebrating World Migratory Bird Day, May 10. Located a mile east of Highway 83 along the south shore of Lake Audubon.
- **May 4:** Turtle Lake Hospital Auxiliary Annual Salad and

Sandwich Fundraising Luncheon, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

- **May 9-10:** Evening Hike Series, Full Flower Moon Fairy Hike, 9:30 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison. Hike a trail accompanied by a kaleidoscope of glowing objects.
- **May 9-10:** Citywide Rummage Sales, Washburn.
- **May 10:** Annual Children's Bike Fest. Activities get underway in front of Rexall Drug, Main St., Turtle Lake, at 8:30 a.m.
- **May 12-16:** Citywide Cleanup Week, Washburn.
- **May 24:** EMS Kid Event, emergency and medical service (EMS) organizations host family activities with tours of EMS equipment, 4-7 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **May 24-26:** SkyFest over Fort Stevenson, kite flying and an array of family activities celebrating kites. Go to the festival's website, skyfestnd.com, for details.
- **May 26:** McLean Electric Cooperative closed for Memorial Day holiday.

June events:

- **June 7:** National Trails Day & American Legion Walk promoting veterans and suicide awareness in conjunction with Military Service Personnel Day, Fort Stevenson State Park Visitor Center, Garrison, beginning at 2 p.m. Free park admission for veterans and active military personnel.
- **June 6-8:** Riverboat Days, Washburn. Activities include Friday kiddie parade, firefighter rodeo and inflatables; Saturday parade, car show, ranch rodeo, street dance; Sunday church at Fort Mandan and firefighter breakfast.
- **June 13-15:** McLean County Fair, Underwood.
- **June 14:** National Marina Day, Fort Stevenson State Park deTrobriand Marina Open House, 1 p.m., Garrison.
- **June 21:** Prairie Lake Festival, quilt and craft auction, food and bake sale, 11 a.m., Camp of the Cross, Lake Sakakawea, west of Garrison.
- **June 15:** Fly-In Father's Day Breakfast with freewill donations supporting the Garrison Fire Department, serving 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Garrison Airport, a mile west of Garrison.
- **June 17:** McLean Electric Cooperative's 80th annual meeting at Garrison headquarters with registration and supper 5-6:30 p.m. and business meeting at 6:30 p.m.
- **June 18:** Blue Goose Day, Audubon National Wildlife Refuge, a mile east of Highway 83 along the south shore of Lake Audubon, featuring children's educational activities. Free registration begins at 5 p.m., activities at 5:30 p.m.
- **June 28:** Mid-summer Classic Car & Bike Show, Underwood.
- **June 28:** Children's Stick Horse Rodeo, noon-2 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park Guardhouse Interpretive Center, Garrison.
- **June 28-29:** Frontier Military Days, Fort Stevenson State Park and Guardhouse Interpretive Center, Garrison, noon-4 p.m., living history demonstrations with military encampment and maneuvers, skills, and crafts

Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County can contact Patricia Stockdill at stockdill.patricia@gmail.com or 701-337-5462 to submit community events. ■



Conserve by harvesting rainwater

Collecting rainwater to reuse is a good way to conserve water and energy.

Reducing the use of household water to water plants, particularly for irrigating ornamental plants, may reduce your water bill.

"It saves water, it will save power. But there are added benefits as well when you utilize it on plants," says Jaden Deckert, urban conservationist with the Burleigh County Soil Conservation District.

One inch of rain will collect 600 gallons of water from a 1,000-square-foot roof. Based on a water treatment study, it would require 6.6 kilowatt-hours (kWh) to treat 600 gallons of

water. So, collecting 100 gallons of rainwater would save enough energy to operate a 60-watt bulb for 18 hours.

That's a lot of water to use to irrigate flowers, trees and shrubs. Collected rainwater is especially beneficial for plants in North Dakota, because it is slightly acidic and will release nutrients in the soil.

Rain barrels for home use are available in a variety of materials, shapes, designs and colors. You can also find plans online to build a rain barrel. Rain barrels usually come with a water outlet and hose, an overflow outlet and a screen to prevent debris and small animals from falling into the barrel.

A simple rain barrel kit can be purchased, assembled and placed next to a rain gutter system. Most barrels hold 30 to 55 gallons.

"They're just really beneficial. If you're going to have rainwater run out the downspout anyway, that water is really not getting utilized to the best of its ability, so a rain capture system is really nice," Deckert says.

Rain barrels placed at a higher elevation will allow water to be drained into a bucket or water can gravity flow into a hose.

"I've seen people put pumps on them and run it through a sprinkler. There are a variety of different ways to get the rainwater out," Deckert says.

Barrels also include overflow systems, such as flowing to the downspout when full, so water doesn't spill from the barrel and puddle by the home's foundation.

To maintain a rain barrel, remove algae growth throughout the summer, then drain the barrel completely and place it upside down when cold weather begins.

Water collected in a rain barrel is not considered a potable water source, meaning it is not drinkable and has not been tested to meet microbial water quality standards to protect public health, advises the University of Minnesota Extension. But using rainwater on ornamental plants, trees or even household plants will save water and energy through the summer. ■

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Wendy Kinn, Finance Manager

Office: 701-463-6700
Toll-Free: 800-263-4922
Fax: 701-337-5303
Email: mclean1@mcleanelectric.com
Website address:
www.mcleanelectric.com