

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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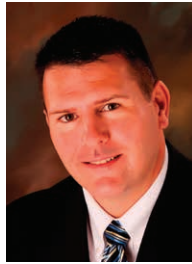
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A November to Remember



DOUG ROLES

CRISP FALL MORNINGS AND THE arrival of Thanksgiving often cause us to reflect on family traditions and to consider our shared rural heritage. Do you ever take time to think about how our ancestors lived? Can you imagine yourself on a rural central Pennsylvania farmstead, maybe in November of the 1930s?

You likely would have started your day with barn chores. Watering livestock would have been done by hand or possibly with a gasoline-powered pump. If you had cows to milk, you did it by hand. And you probably would have been in the barn

before daylight, which meant using a kerosene lantern. Watch you don't catch the hay on fire!

After barn chores, you would return to the house for breakfast, where you would stoke up the wood stove to make some coffee and maybe have some farm-fresh eggs and toast — the toast either browned in the skillet or over an open stove grate. You'd have to keep an eye on it so it doesn't burn again. And if you need milk for your coffee, it's in the "icebox" — literally.

As you ate, you might think about how much hard work had been accomplished over the summer and all that's left to do before the first snow. Hopefully, you already had a winter's worth of firewood in a woodshed or stacked near the porch. Some of the better hickory you would have likely put aside for smoking meat during the winter butchering.

With a little luck, the upcoming hunting season might add some venison to your stores. Would you smoke it or salt it?

In the farmhouse basement, the root cellar would have been filled with potatoes with bundles of onions hanging nearby. Cool, dry storage seems to work well. Of course, you would also have your canning jars — with green beans, carrots and beets — lined up neatly on shelves, and there would be enough to get your family through winter.

This time of year, you'd be focused on farm chores while being thankful for your bounty and blessings. But if this farmstead was in Williamsburg, Blair County, and the year was 1939, things were about to change. At a neighboring farm owned by the Isenberg family, the first meter of the new Valley Rural Electric Cooperative had been set. And your farm would be one of the next to get a meter.

On the 27th of that month, the new co-op energized its first line, bringing central station electric service to you, your neighbors and thousands more rural folks in the years to come.

That winter's downtime in a rocking chair near the cookstove would have been filled with the usual dreams of spring but also with new plans for how to put the oft-called "miracle blessing" of electricity to work on your property. Certainly, you could hang on to some of the old ways, but how exciting it must have been to have new options. Lights for the house and barn would have been a priority, along with a refrigerator/freezer. And one of those newfangled electric toasters was probably on your wish list, too. 🍪

DOUG ROLES

VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

Co-op Energizes New Three Springs Substation

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) energized a new substation near Three Springs in early September, replacing the previous facility at the same site in southern Huntingdon County. The new substation and upgrades to associated power lines will improve power quality and service reliability for co-op members in Clay, Cromwell, and Springfield townships.

Completion of the new facility marks the fifth substation construction project for the co-op since 2016 and the replacement of the final 1950s-era substation still in operation on the Valley REC distribution system.

“A year and a half ago we started determining what we were going to do with the Three Springs sub, and we began budgeting and getting the necessary local government approvals,” says Todd Ross, Valley REC vice president of operations. “As far as full substation rebuilds go, this is the last one for the foreseeable future.”

This project cost approximately \$800,000. As they have done with previous substation projects, Valley REC’s leaders aimed for an economical mix of using co-op personnel and outside companies.

“We had some contractor assistance, and we also used our own



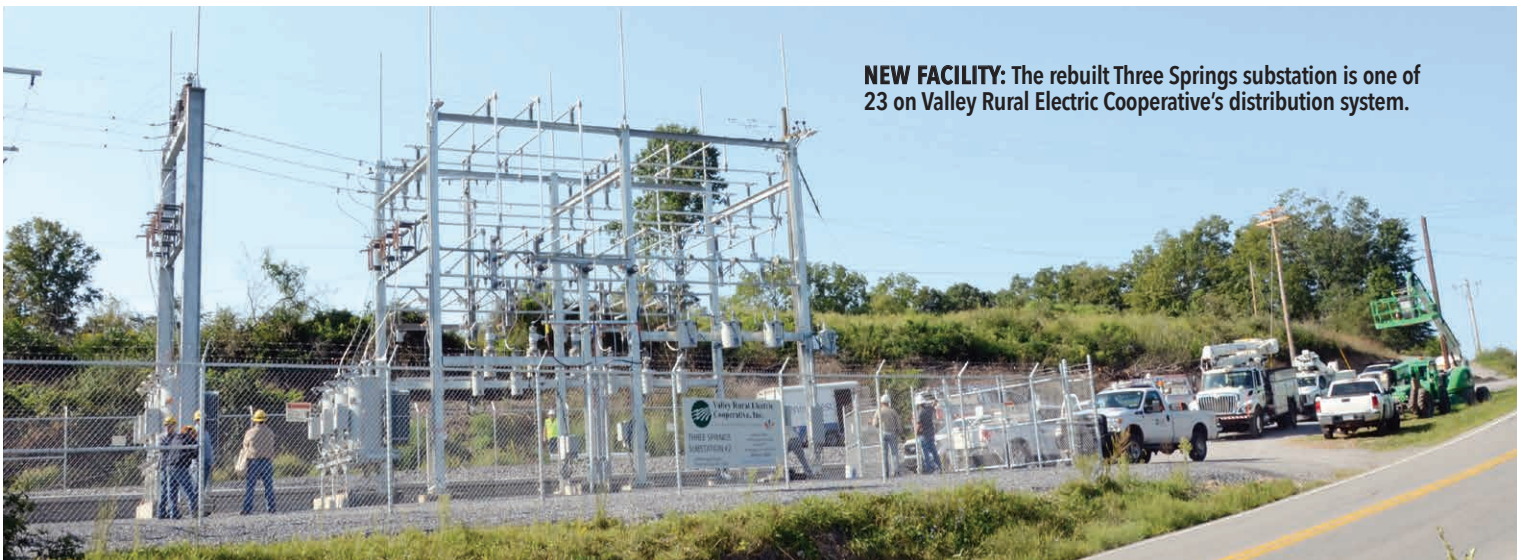
COMMUNICATIONS CHECK: Valley REC Vice President of Operations Todd Ross, second from right, and Coordination Engineer Eric Henchey, right, ensure substation communications equipment is working properly. Also shown, from left, are: Crew Leader Tink Bucher, Journeyman Linemen Logan Booher and Curtis Starr, and Second-year Lineman Nathan Berry.

crews, too,” Todd says. “We did some rebuilding of distribution feeders.”

The new facility increases line capacity and meets modern standards for clearance around electrical equipment. The feeders — main power lines that run from the substation to other circuits called taps — have been upgraded to 14,400 volts (phase-to-ground) from 7,200 volts.

Ayers Line Construction and The Tri-M Group, LLC did much of the feeder conversion work. Hickes Associates Inc. of Alexandria conducted site preparation and excavation and poured footers.

Valley REC crews had to set several poles near the substation at the start of the project to facilitate continued service to the Southern



NEW FACILITY: The rebuilt Three Springs substation is one of 23 on Valley Rural Electric Cooperative’s distribution system.

Huntingdon County High School. The co-op rerouted power from the Clear Ridge substation (in Taylor Township, Fulton County) and the Riverview substation (in Shirley Township, Huntingdon County) to keep power flowing to accounts normally served by the Three Springs substation. Service interruptions to members were kept to a minimum, and consumers were notified ahead of time about planned outages.

A substation transformer previously in use at Three Springs was moved for reuse at the Clear Ridge substation in June.

Construction included installation of a retaining wall at the south side of the substation along an East Broad Top Railroad track embankment. Big Valley Concrete, a Valley REC member, stamped the concrete, and another member, Scott Bishop of Bishop's Loggin-N-Haulin in Mill Creek, set the wall in place. Energy Test, a Tri-M company based in Lock Haven, constructed the substation's steel framework.

"For the most part, it mirrors other substation builds we've done," says Eric Henchey, Valley REC coordination engineer. "It's a huge improvement and increases reliability."

Eric says the new substation provides improved access for crews and trucks. Additionally, the lines

running from substation equipment to the feeder lines are now underground, an improvement that required directional boring under Route 994 (Pogue Road).

In 2022, Valley REC built a new Sinking Valley substation in Blair County, replacing one that had been in operation for more than 60 years. In 2021, the co-op completed construction of a new Atkinson Mills substation in Wayne Township, Mifflin County, replacing a wood-frame facility from the 1950s. In 2020, the cooperative built a substation at a new location near Fort Loudon, Franklin County. And in 2016, the co-op built a new Reeds Gap substation in Tuscarora Township, Juniata County, replacing an older substation there.

In addition to substation upgrades, crews in the co-op's three service districts have continued to install line-protective devices that can isolate faulted sections from the rest of the distribution system, reducing the number of members impacted by any one power outage. And the co-op continues its aggressive approach to tree trimming, conducting vegetation management across the entire system within a four- or five-year period.

"I'm really confident in the work we've been doing to upgrade our system overall to maintain reliability," Todd says. 📍



CONCRETE FEATURE: Big Valley Concrete, a Valley REC member, cast and stamped this retaining wall, which was set in place by another co-op member, Scott Bishop of Bishop's Loggin-N-Haulin.



POWERING UP: First-year Lineman Matt Fish closes a bypass switch as crews energize the Three Springs substation on Sept. 5.



LOOKS GOOD: Shade Gap District Manager Brandon Clemens, right, inspects equipment in the new Three Springs substation. In the background, from left, are: Crew Leader Tink Bucher, Journeyman Lineman Logan Booher and Coordination Engineer Eric Henchey.

Meet Your Employees

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS COLUMN IS a recent addition to the Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) team, Logan Bisbing, a first-year lineman who works at the co-op's Martinsburg district office. He joined Valley REC in April 2023.

Logan, the son of Rodney and Bridget Bisbing of Buffalo Mills, Bedford County, is a 2022 graduate of Chestnut Ridge High School.

During his school years, he worked on the family beef and crop farm and for his father's tree-trimming business, B&L Tree Service, one of the companies contracted by Valley REC to perform vegetation management along its rights of way.

"Right out of high school, I went to work full-time for Dad for a little while and then went to a lineman school in Georgia," Logan says.

Logan, who lives in Osterburg, Bedford County, became interested in a career as a lineman through his tree-trimming work and watching lineworkers. He found the Southeast Lineman Training Center through an internet search. After completing

a 15-week program in December 2022, he went to work with Williamsburg-based Bottonfield Powerline Construction, Inc.

"We were traveling at the time, and I didn't like working out of town," Logan recalls.

While looking for local work, he heard about an opening at Valley REC's Martinsburg district. He jumped at the opportunity for a job that now entails a bit of everything. "I'm on the service crew and the construction crew," he says.

One of the things Logan appreciates most about working at the co-op is his co-workers. He says since the guys are fun to be around, "it's not even like coming to work."

Compared to his experience in contracted construction work, Logan says working for an electric distribution co-op has given him the opportunity to learn how the system works.

"It's a more settled environment here. It's easier here to take time and learn," Logan says. "It's a lot more detailed work and better explained with the older crew chiefs teaching you."



ON THE JOB: Logan Bisbing is a first-year lineman who works in the co-op's Martinsburg district.

Logan also stays involved with the farm in Buffalo Mills. His family butchers all their own meat. In his spare time, he enjoys bird hunting with his German shorthair, Tate, and he even hatches his own quail for hunts. Logan also enjoys mechanical work and taking rides on his ATV.

"I used to race sport quads. It's a lot of fun, but when I got this job, I didn't want to get hurt. It would stunt everything," Logan says, adding he looks forward to being promoted to a second-year lineman and eventually becoming a journeyman.

We hope Logan races up the line-worker ranks safely. He's one of the people you can count on. 📌

Happy Holidays!

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