

# Happy Birthday!



## MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO JERRY D. WILLIAMS

**LAST MONTH THE UNITED STATES CELEBRATED** its 242nd birthday on July 4. Lamar County Electric Cooperative Association is celebrating its 80th birthday this year. That's just a fraction of the age of our nation, but over time, I think Lamar Electric and the nation's more than 900 fellow rural electric cooperatives have greatly enhanced the quality of life in the rural areas we serve.

Rural Electric Cooperatives powered the American dream for farmers and rural folk who received the tool of electricity which helped them achieve the kind of prosperity their city countrymen had enjoyed for years. The origins of Lamar Electric and the hundreds of Cooperatives like it across the nation

have their roots in American democracy.

A quick review of the nation in the late 1800's and early part of the 20th century will help us understand exactly how vital the Rural Cooperatives were. During the 1880s and 1890s, Thomas Edison and his financial backer J. P. Morgan were battling with Nikola Tesla and his financial backer George Westinghouse, over AC power vs DC power. Both parties bid to light up the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago but Tesla won. This fair was lit by AC electricity provided by Tesla and the exhibit on Electricity fascinated everyone. Many believe that in addition to AC Electricity the United States was also introduced to Hershey Chocolate, Cracker Jack, Juicy Fruit gum, Quaker Oats,



A few employees from Lamar Electric's line crews, General Manager, Jerry Williams and Lamar Electric Board of Directors President, George Wood holding a celebratory cake in the shape of the number 80 for Lamar Electric's 80 years in business.

Shredded Wheat and the Hamburger at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The fair exhibited how safe AC current could be. Lighting the 1893 World's Fair helped Tesla and Westinghouse win the rights to build the large Adams Niagara Falls power station which supplied AC power to the booming city of Buffalo New York. During the next 30 years AC power spread thorough the United States, primarily powering the populated cities. This big industrial expansion came to an abrupt halt with the Great Depression.

Tuesday October 29, 1929 became known as Black Tuesday, because the Stock Market crashed and became the official start of the Great Depression. As stock prices fell, panic struck as masses of people tried to sell their stock. Much of the stock had been purchased in the Roaring 20's as people attempted to improve their financial standing by investing in stock. Instead of getting rich, they found a path to bankruptcy.

Many banks were forced to close because they had used their customers' savings to invest in the stock market. Many people lost their job as businesses cut back. This depression turned out to be different than any prior depression to hit the United States. In previous depressions, farmers fared pretty well because they could at least feed themselves. In 1930, little rain fell and by 1931 a drought started across the Great Plains (including North Texas) that lasted for 8 years. In addition to no rain, the temperatures were hotter than usual. Pastures soon dried up and cattle either starved or were sold. High winds soon caused the top soil to disappear and crops died.

By 1931 over 90% of the folks living in Cities had access to electricity, but over 90% of the folks living in the rural areas had no electricity. In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) was elected as President (and went on to be elected three more times). FDR realized the rural parts of America needed electricity if they were to ever pull out of the Great Depression. He went to the Investor Owned Power Companies and tried to convince them to extend lines into the rural areas. The for profit power companies refused because they felt they could not recover their investment and rural people could not afford electric appliances anyway. The message was sent that rural folks should move to town if they wanted electricity. The federal government's offer of low interest loans and long repayment schedules was turned down by the big power companies.

The message to move to town offended many farmers and sparked a fire under others. Rural farmers petitioned the federal government for help providing electricity to their own communities. The rural farmers banded together and formed their own Cooperatives and asked the government for the low interest loans. FDR realized the farmers had no expertise with electricity and in 1935 the Rural Electrification Administration was formed within the Department of Agriculture. The REA helped the rural farmers as they formed non-profit Rural Electric Cooperatives across Texas and the Nation. The REA produced many brochures about how to form and operate a Cooperative, similar to those produced by the Agriculture Extension Service. In many cases the founders of the Cooperatives helped dig the holes for poles leading to their own farms.

The REA held demonstrations of electric appliances in large circus type tents. No one had ever run electric lines out through the country side and REA engineers had to develop specifications on the best way of constructing the structures to hold electric lines. To this very day, updated versions of those REA brochures are used by Rural Electric Cooperatives across the nation. This is why a Lamar Electric power line looks identical to other rural power lines across the nation. (This also helps when we send crews to help other co-ops)

The loans that made it possible to start these democratically governed non-profit cooperatives would eventually be paid back, and the program was so successful that within a generation, most rural areas in the country had access to reliable electricity. On June 15, 1938 Mark Kennedy from Sumner, M.E. Boaz from Route 2, Brookston, John R. Emmons from Route 5, Honey Grove, Harrison Wooldridge from Atlas and T. L. Hollingsworth from Route 1, Petty, signed the original articles of incorporation for



1485 N. Main St. • P.O. Box 580  
Paris, TX 75461

## GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

Jerry D. Williams

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George M. Wood, President,  
*Blossom*

Lyle Yoder, Vice President,  
*Pattonville*

Mike Williams, Secretary-Treasurer,  
*Detroit*

Matthew Albus, *Roxton*

Allen Branch, *Sumner*

James D. Floyd, *Annona*

Jeremy D. Hamil, *Sumner*

Harry R. Moore, *Clarksville*

Ron E. Tippit, *Clarksville*

## Member Benefits

- Level billing
- Automated meter reading
- Free bank draft service
- E-Bill
- Visa and MasterCard accepted

## Your Local Pages

This section of *Texas Co-op Power* is produced by LEC each month to provide you with information about current events, safety, special programs and other activities of the cooperative. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the local office.

## CONTACT US

### CALL US

**(903) 784-4303** local or  
**1-800-782-9010** toll-free

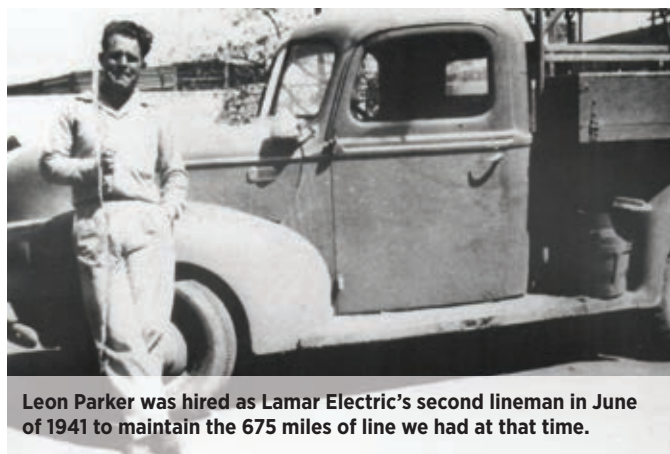
### FIND US ON THE WEB

**www.lamarelectric.coop**



Lamar County Electric Cooperative Association in front of local attorney and notary J. M. Braswell in Lamar County Texas. The Board selected Mr. Kennedy as Chairman and Mr. Boaz as Secretary. At a Board Meeting held at Brookston on July 11, 1938 Ural L. Darling of Bonham was selected as Project Superintendent to “secure membership applications and easements from the residents of Lamar County and do any and all other things as from time to time the Board may direct.” He received \$100 per month for his services and 5 cents per mile for the use of his car, with “such mileage not to exceed \$50 per month.”

On July 30, 1938 Bedford Booth, Lloyd Steele, Mrs. Dungan, Jack Wooldridge and T. L. Hollingsworth were appointed to secure applications and easements, receiving \$5 per day and 5 cents per mile. By August 13, about 800 applications had been received which was a sufficient number to begin the process of



**Leon Parker was hired as Lamar Electric's second lineman in June of 1941 to maintain the 675 miles of line we had at that time.**

constructing about 250 miles of electric line in Lamar, Delta and Red River Counties. By October there were enough applications for a \$316,000 loan application to REA at 2.73% interest and a 29 year repayment schedule. On August 27, 1938 the Board borrowed \$400 from Liberty National Bank to pay expenses. Miss Wilkerson, the County Home Demonstration agent, came before the Board and suggested the following articles be displayed in a booth at the County Fair and agreed to aid in putting it up: Iron, Washing Machine, Water Pump, Refrigerator, Lights, Radio, Cook Stove, Churn and Electric Roaster.

On September 17, 1938 the Board met for the first time at the Cooperative office located at 28 North Main St. in Paris. By the November Board meeting they were searching for a different office location. The office space was shared with others and made having private meetings with prospective members difficult. Apparently the Manager also knew how to use a hammer and nails and installed some walls. The Cooperative continued to rent 28 North Main Street from Mr. Frank J. Wood until a building owned by W. O. Richey, located at 50 Lamar Avenue in Paris, became available in June, 1942. The headquarters continued at Lamar Avenue until August 1948 when the present location at 1485 North Main Street was purchased from the City of Paris. It is said the site had been used for dip-

ping cattle. The headquarters office was moved to a newly constructed building where we are currently located on North Main Street in November, 1949.

In November 1938 Marjorie McDowell was appointed stenographer and bookkeeper at a salary of \$60 per month. In August 1939 two Maintenance Men were hired. They were H.W. Lowery and C.H. Jenkins. They were to take care of the first two sections of line constructed.

On August 22, 1942 the Annual Meeting of Members was held at the District Courtroom in Paris. During his address to the members, Board President Paul T. Hill stated “that he was grateful for the accomplishments of the Cooperative thus far and further that if and when this World War is over the Cooperative would be in a position to complete the job it had begun.” Manager V.A. Rogers pointed out he had been optimistic about the future of the Cooperative as members had increased to 1600 but he “could not be as optimistic in the future with reference to new connections ...due to War Production Board restrictions, but that was as it should be, but the Cooperative had a big job to do in the War Program.” He continued “the rural people now had the tool that was vital to the War effort.” He pointed out that the Cooperative was serving more than 100 dairies that were in turn supplying dairy products to our armed forces. He cautioned members who had appliances to “take the best of care of them in order that they might last for the duration and suggested that members take advantage of any opportunity to purchase motors and put them to work to help in the labor shortage on the farms.”

From those 1,600 electric meters in 1942 Lamar Electric has grown to over 12,500 meters and 2,400 miles of electric lines, but we are still in the building constructed in 1949. Modern digger and bucket trucks have reduced much of the hard manual labor but 2,400 miles of line requires a lot of equipment to maintain. We have plans to move the headquarters one more time, sometime next year, which will give us much needed room and a little more efficient place to work.

Electricity changed life not only in rural areas but also in the country as a whole. The availability of electricity opened up a whole new market, because people in rural areas could finally take advantage of its labor-saving power. The demand for electric appliances created wealth with increased manufacturing and sales. Many homes started with naked light bulbs hanging in the center of each room with a pull string. The electric iron was one of the most sought after appliances. Cooperatives themselves provided good jobs in the office and in the field. Lamar Electric is still a major employer in our region. Electric Cooperatives haven't forgotten that our roots are planted in democracy. Our very structure depends on governing boards of members elected to make decisions for everyone's benefit. And we work with our statewide and national organizations to represent the interests of rural Americans in the Texas Legislature and the U.S. capital. As we celebrate the 80th birthday of Lamar Electric we would like to salute those who founded this and other Rural Electric Cooperatives. They helped transform the U.S. into the prosperous power that it is today.



## Youth Tour Winners Return From Washington

**AUSTIN PLETT AND LEXY COSTON WERE THE WINNERS OF LAMAR Electric's 2018 Government-in-Action Youth Tour essay contest. They were among 150 students from other cooperatives in Texas who made the June 6–15 trip to the nation's capital for a tour of its many historic sites.**

Coston is the daughter of co-op members Renae and the late Joe Coston of the Midway community and recently completed her junior year at Chisum High School. Plett is the son of co-op members Ernie and Rachel Plett of the Tigertown community and recently completed his sophomore year at Faith Christian School. Contestants submitted an essay addressing the topic, "How has electricity improved life in the area where I live?"

Youth Tour was born from a speech given at the 1957 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Annual Meeting by then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson. He was a longtime advocate of electric co-ops, having lobbied for the creation of Pedernales Electric Cooperative in 1937 as a young politician in Texas. "If one thing comes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represent the future," Johnson said. With that encouragement, Texas electric co-ops began sending summer interns to work in the senator's office in Washington, D.C.

In 1958, an electric co-op in Iowa sponsored the first group of 34 young people on a weeklong tour of the nation's capital.

Later that same year, another busload came to Washington from Illinois. The idea grew, and other states sent busloads of students throughout the summer. By 1959, 130 students were sponsored by electric co-ops to visit Washington and see their government in action. The program has steadily grown in popularity since its beginning more than 50 years ago.

This year, the tour began in Austin for Texas participants. From there, the group flew to Washington, where they met with approximately 1,600 other students from across the nation. Once in Washington, the tour participants got to see and tour many historic places, such as Mount Vernon and the U.S. Capitol, where they visited with U.S. Rep. John Ratcliffe and toured the House chambers. Also included on the tour were historic sites like the National Cathedral, Smithsonian museums, the Washington Monument, FDR Memorial, Kennedy Center, Kennedy's burial place, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as the Jefferson, Lincoln, Korean War Veterans and Vietnam Veterans memorials.

Lamar Electric sponsors area students on this trip each year. To be eligible for the Youth Tour contest next year, a student must be a sophomore, junior or senior in high school and live in a home served by Lamar Electric or attend one of the four high schools served by Lamar Electric: Detroit, Prairiland, Roxton or Faith Christian Academy. Home-schooled students in homes served by Lamar Electric also are eligible.



# Cowan's Creations

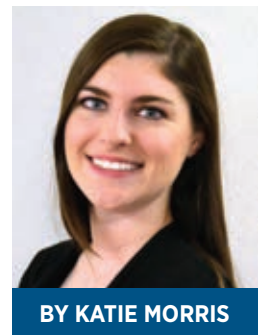
**IN THE PASTURELAND OF DETROIT, TEXAS, LIVES A TALENTED** artist by the name of Alexis Cowan. Cowan has many artistic gifts, from oil painting to pottery, but what makes this young artist stand out is her relationship with the subjects she paints. Cowan is part owner of a family cattle ranch, Bar X Brangus. She spends her early mornings and hot summer days tending to cattle alongside her family.

Cowan has a bachelor's degree in both general agriculture and fine art from Texas A&M University-Commerce. She began painting as soon as she was old enough to pick up a brush. At 12, she took painting lessons from artist Jeff Munsen. His art has been her inspiration and helped her develop her own style, which blends Western and pop contemporary art. She uses charcoal for drawings and oil paint for her paintings. She has been commissioned to draw many things, from

landscapes to people, but her favorite drawings and paintings are of cows and horses.

Growing up on a ranch, Cowan not only fell in love with the arts but animals as well. She loves to seek out a unique cow that stands out from the herd. She is intrigued by the sunlight that pours down over her subjects and enjoys capturing shadows and light in her creations. Since farm animals make Cowan so happy, those are her preferred subjects in maintaining her passion for her artistic outlet.

After battling thyroid cancer, she began to realize just how important art was in her life. "Art was my therapy," she gently stated as she discussed her struggle with depression during her



BY KATIE MORRIS



battle with cancer. Creating beautiful art brought joy to her life. That is what she hopes her art will do for others. “I want my art to bring people joy,” she said. “I want to see it in their homes, and I want them to be happy when they see it.”

While Cowan loves painting and drawing, she is most excited about her latest foray into pottery. She can sculpt teapots, ring holders, canisters, pots and much more. Her pottery has a Western feel, some adorned with cacti and shades of turquoise.

She has worked with pottery for over 10 years, developing her own style along the way. Her creative process involves a series of steps starting with molding her clay on a wheel, a process called throwing. After throwing, she moves on to the biscuit stage, which is a term used for pottery that has been fired in a kiln but not yet glazed. Once the pottery has been

fired in a kiln, Cowan then introduces her own flair by adding paint and glaze. Lastly, she increases the temperature of the kiln to 2,100 degrees, which causes the glaze to solidify. This process gives the pottery an almost glasslike texture, keeping it from crumbling and absorbing water, and gives the pottery the ability to be put in an oven. This last step is useful for making ramekins, dishes and teapots, and makes the creative process even more fun for Cowan as she thinks of what her customers will do with her finished products.

Through trade shows and networking, Cowan has marketed her artwork and sold her colorful designs, making a great name for herself. If you would like to follow Cowan’s artistic journey, like her Facebook page, Alexis Art/Cowan Creations. You also may visit her website, [thequirkycowgirl.com](http://thequirkycowgirl.com), and her family’s ranch information can be found at [barxbrangus.com](http://barxbrangus.com).