



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOX 874, SHALLOTTE, N. C. 28459

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HOW ELECTRICITY CAME TO BRUNSWICK COUNTY

On the Permit of Incorporation duly filed and sealed by Mr. D.S. Weaver, Secretary of the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority on the 21st day of February 1939, on the line that reads ".....said corporation to be called-----, Electric Membership Corporation", the word "Brunswick" was inserted.

The official papers estimated 138 miles of lines: - 113 in Brunswick County and 25 in Columbus. Four hundred and one members were already signed, and there was a good prospect of 187 more. It was estimated that all 588 members would average 66 kilowatts each per month, giving a grand total usage per year of 466,500 kilowatts.

On March 6th, 1939, Misters T.T. Ward, R.D. Bennett, R.D. White, C.P. Willetts, L.C. Stanley, Fred Lay, S.P. Fipps, G.K. Lewis and Fronis Strickland met and signed certain papers and affixed his notary seal. These papers carried the name of "Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation".

The Certificate of Incorporation was filed with the Secretary of the State of North Carolina on March 9, 1939---recorded by the clerk of Superior Court of Brunswick County on March 16, 1939---and with the Clerk of Superior Court of Columbus County on March 13, 1939. And thus Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation came into official being.

The first meeting of the corporation was on March 18, 1929 at the Shallotte School. Present were R.D. Bennett, Fronis Strickland, G.K. Lewis, Fred Lay, L.C. Stanley, R.D. White, T.T. Ward, S.P. Fipps and C.P. Willetts.

The first order of business was the election of officers, as follows:

C.P. Willetts of Bolivia was elected President

S.P. (Teeney) Fipps of Tabor City - Vice President

T.T. Ward of Longwood - Secretary and Treasurer

The By-Laws of the Corporation were read, reviewed, commented upon, and approved.

Mr. Teeney Fipps strongly urged that the next meeting be held at Guideway School in Colombus County. According to him, the people in that area were becoming interested in better lights, and wanted to know more. Possibly the directors could meet directly after the general meeting.

The idea was agreeable to the other directors, and the date was set for March 27, 1939.

The prime business of this meeting was to select an attorney for the cooperative. Certain legal matters prior to this time had been handled by Mr. W. L. Marshall, Jr. of Wadesboro, but a local attorney was needed.

Mr. R. D. Bennett made the motion that the Cooperative engage the services of a young attorney in Tabor City named R. B. Mallard. Consent was unanimous. After some general discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

The fourth meeting of the Board of Directors was held at Guideway School on April 19, 1939. The first item of business was to accept applications for the position of "Project Superintendent". Three names were submitted to the directors: Norman Hubert White, Edson Delbert Bishop, and John Clifton White.

There were differences of opinions among the directors, and it was agreed to send the resume of each of the applicants to REA in Washington and let them suggest a choice.

At a later meeting (Sept. 2, 1939), an application by Mr. Horace Feabody Cotton of Maxton, N. N., was also considered and forwarded to REA. During this same meeting, Mrs. E. A. Porter of Tabor City and Mr. Carl Andrews of Shallotte were chosen as easement solicitors, to be paid on a per-easement basis. Also, Mr. B. O. Wannort, Ashboro, N.C., was chosen as engineer on a "fee" basis.

At the meeting of the Directors on May 24, 1939, the cooperative authorized the execution of a loan from the United States of America for \$171,000 at 2.73% interest. This money was "to construct 211 miles of transmission, distribution and service lines, together with the appurtenances thereto. The loan was for a period of 25 years.

On June 21, 1939, it was also agreed " to borrow an extra \$5,000 to be loaned to consumers for the purpose of witing or acquisition of electrical appliances or equipment ----- not to exceed \$10.00 per customer".

At a meeting of the Directors on July 24, 1939, at R. D. White's place in Shallotte, it was unanimously agreed to incorporate 86 additional miles of line in Columbus, Robeson and Bladen counties into the Brunswick Elecrical Membership Corporation and to appoint Mr. J. L. Robinson, Route 1, Whitevill, and Mr. D. H. Lennor of Boardman as members of the board of Directors.

Soon after, another loan for \$109,000.00 was authorized and executed for construction of this additional mileage. Mr. B. O. Wannort, Ashboro, N.C. was chosen as engineer for this project.

Mr. Wannort met with the directors on August 8, 1939. The salesman for aluminum wire and supplies was there --- the salesman for copper wire and supplies was there. Both were eager to make a sale.

The directors agreed that "conductors shall be of copper ---".

Mr. Wannort was also authorized to negotiate terms and to proceed with a contract with Tide Water Power Company of Wilmington for electricity for resale.

At a second meeting on August 31st bids for the construction of a distribution system for Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation were reviewed and discussed, and a contract with Melvin F. Burgess, Boone, N.C., for \$119,738.20 was approved.

The first Annual Meeting of Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation was held "at the office of BEMC in Shallotte at 6:00 p.m. on the 2nd day of September, 1939, pursuant to notice duly given to all members with the provisions of the by-laws of said corporation, and all eleven directors were present "being all of the members of said corporation, except one".

Mr. T. T. Ward reported that the corporation had a bank balance of \$171,000 from REA available, no advance payments had been made, and that there was \$2,545 of collected membership funds on hand. (\$2,545 divided by \$5 membership fee indicates a potential of 509 prospective consumers.)

Clerical work was beginning to accumulate and Miss Louise Gore was hired for thirty days at \$65.00 to take care of these clerical duties.

On October 7th, Miss Elbise Buffkin was hired on a permanent basis as bookkeeper-stenographer at the grand salary of \$70.00 per month.

"Acting Superintendent" E. D. Bishop was authorized to seek bids and to purchase a truck for the cooperative.

At a meeting of the directors on November 4, 1939, Mr. Frank Peebles from the Rural Electrification Authority in Washington was present. He entered into the discussion of hiring a permanent "Project Superintendent".

It is recorded that "E. D. Bishop is hereby appointed permanent superintendent for the project, at a salary of \$125.00 per month." The superintendent was also authorized to hire a maintenance man " at a salary not to exceed \$100.00 per month." and on December 2nd, Mr. E. M. Pearson was hired as maintenance man at \$100.00 per month.

Construction of a distribution system had been moving along briskly under Mr. Burgess and his crew; a "giant" substation containing two 50KVA and one 75KVA transformers had been built at Bellville; there was an abundance of local men ready to work on cutting right-of-way; all of the electricians and would-be electricians were wiring houses along the new lines -- a two-fuse-thirty ampere switch box and one ull-chain drop light in the middle of each room was

generally standard. Those who thought rashly and BIG, also installed a "plug-in" for their wife's smoothing iron that she hoped to buy later.

Just before Christmas of December 1939, E. D. Bishop and E. M. Pearson loaded the company pickup with meters and started house to house down the road installing meters. And the light came on in Brunswick County.

- Excerpts from

THEN AND NOW

Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation

Marvin Lewis, Author

IF YOU KNOW, TELL IT LIKE IT WAS.

There are many questions about Brunswick. For example:
How did Bolivia start and why does it have that name?
Who start the Brunswick County School System?
What happened to the railroad branch that extended into Brunswick County?
If you know anybody who knows any answers to these questions, or has written any answers, or has a copy of any answers, send them to the editor of the NEWSLETTER.

The Rev. R. T. Bliss

Rt. 1, Box 310

Ash, N.C. 28420

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, August 13th

at the Shallotte Presbyterian Church

8:00 p.m.

The Program to be presented by Wm. G. Faulk of Brunswick Town