

# History of Electric Cooperatives

Accustomed as we are to the finer things that electricity offers us, we sometimes forget that the area in which we live, rural America, was the last to receive the benefits of electricity. Certainly, rural America was revolutionized when cooperative electric lines finally eliminated the isolation imposed by darkness. The following highlights some of rural electrification's history and takes a brief look into the future.

## Setting the Groundwork

Because electricity exists in nature, it has always been around us. It was the 1800s, however, before great visionaries such as Franklin, Edison and Faraday began to understand electricity's properties and uses and to generate it to power their inventions.

**1752:** Benjamin Franklin experiments with electricity.

**1844:** Twenty-eight weavers in England set out six "Rochdale Principles of Cooperation" and started the first successful cooperative.

**1882:** Thomas A. Edison built the first central station electric system in lower Manhattan.

## Electrification's Early Years

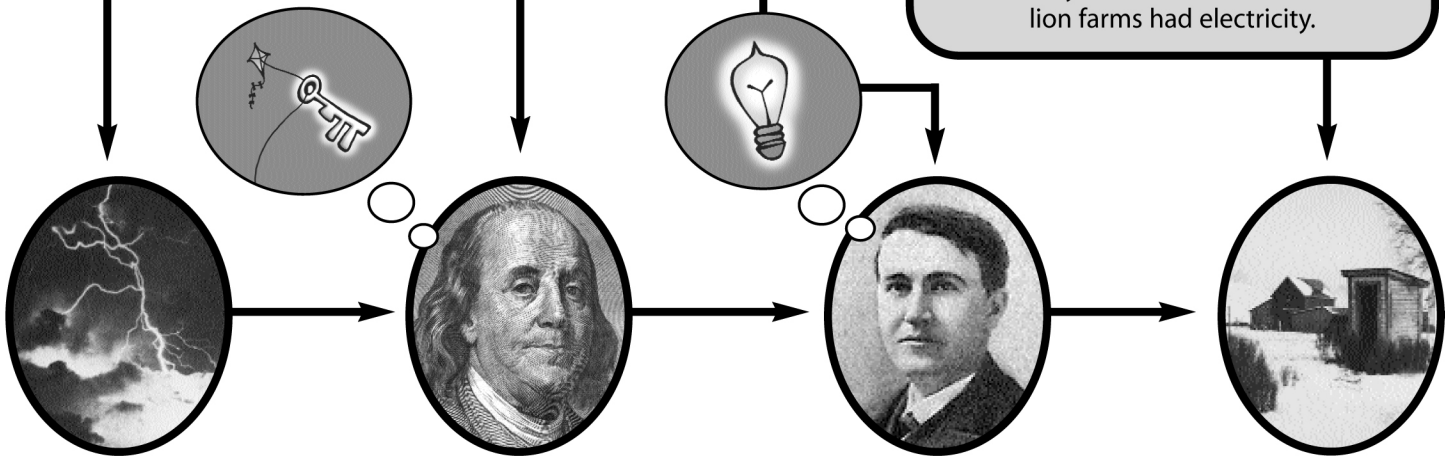
**May 18, 1933:** President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act which provided for Tennessee River Basin development — dams and reservoirs to control floods, provide navigation and supply electricity; transmission lines to serve rural areas at reasonable rates; and preference to cooperative organizations for sale of surplus power.

**June 1, 1934:** Alcorn County Electric Power Association in Corinth, Miss., became the first rural electric cooperative established in the TVA area.

**Mid-1880s:** Electricity was available in many of America's larger cities. Electrification of rural areas was deemed infeasible.

**Early 1930s:** Private power companies still considered it unprofitable to build lines in rural areas. Without the aid of electricity, the economies of rural areas were tied exclusively to agriculture.

**1935:** Only 1 million of America's 6 million farms had electricity.



1752

1882

1930s