

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

Co-ops Brighten the Nation's Birthday



DOUG ROLES

HAPPY SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL! The whole country is wrapped up in America250 celebrations this month. Liberty Bells are on tour as multi-day events are happening across the nation. Community gatherings, concerts and fireworks are all part of recognizing the years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

In 2016, Congress even established the United States Semiquincentennial Commission to ensure the country would be ready to celebrate the occasion. It's heady stuff.

A notable 250th detail is that Americans are going around

saying the seven-syllable word, "semiquincentennial."

I don't imagine the Latin-rooted word meaning half of 500 will get a lot of use next year. Americans probably didn't keep "bicentennial" in their everyday vocabulary after 1976, either. But we definitely enjoy celebrating milestones.

Birthdays and anniversaries can be joyous occasions. Are there milestones coming up in your life? Perhaps the "Big 4-oh" birthday or the "double nickels" of 55? Maybe it's a silver or gold wedding anniversary or a grandbaby turning 1.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative has an interesting milestone coming up. The co-op will turn 88 this fall, having incorporated Nov. 1, 1938, and energizing its first lines a year later. We have plenty of company in sharing that number because most U.S. electric cooperatives formed between 1936 and 1939.

America was in its 16th decade of existence when rural electric cooperatives became part of the nation's fabric. Despite the years between the founders signing the Declaration of Independence and rural electric co-op organizers signing their charter documents, the same spirit of determination and independence prevailed. Rural Americans started electric co-ops to bring electric service to areas overlooked by private power companies. Rural electrification represented their fight for a service that was already benefitting Americans in more urban areas.

Fast forward nearly 90 years and electric cooperatives serve 56% of the U.S. landmass and exist for one reason: to serve members. We focus on safety, reliability and affordability — not on maximizing profits. And true to the representative government idea central to the events of 1776, co-ops are locally controlled, governed by board members elected from the co-op community.

We keep the lights on in even the most remote rural areas and strive to improve the quality of life for the communities we serve. Electric co-ops being "90-ish" doesn't pack quite the punch that "America250" does, but we think our years of service contribute to a brighter semiquincentennial. Happy birthday, America! 🇺🇸

DOUG ROLES

VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

Path Valley Historians Preserve Memory of Carrick Iron Works

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

NEARLY TWO CENTURIES AGO, a Franklin County entrepreneur began an iron smelting enterprise in Metal Township that would grow into a 200-acre complex of dozens of homes and outbuildings.

Today, drivers traveling Route 75 south of Fannettsburg will see only the limestone blast furnace of the former Carrick Furnace iron works — and even this 30-foot-tall structure was in danger of fading into the past as trees and shrubs took over the surrounding area.

The iron works had become another example of how a hub of activity in one century could become a forgotten plot of woods in the next. These days, however, there are signs of life at Carrick. Volunteers with the new Path Valley Historical Society (PVHS) want people to know the story behind the remaining stone walls and tower. They have been actively working to preserve and enhance the site

since the Franklin County Historical Society deeded it to PVHS for \$1 in 2020.

“We want to get it restored to the way it used to be, to preserve the history,” says Gary McGee, PVHS vice president and retired Fannett-Metal High School industrial arts teacher. “The whole thing was going to fall down.”

“We’re still in restoration mode,” adds Tamara Adams, the society’s president and a retired office manager for a local magisterial district judge. “It was all grown up. You couldn’t even see it. There were saplings grown up. The county historical society was looking for someone to take it over. The first thing we did was go in there with a brush hog to mow it. It surprises me how many people don’t know the furnace is here.”

Forging history

The ExplorePAhistory website reports that by the late 1750s, Pennsylvania led the colonies with more than 50 iron furnaces. That number grew to more than 200 in the 1800s. But by the close of the 19th century, the rural charcoal furnaces were going cold. Local timber supplies necessary for charcoal were being exhausted, and small furnaces were being supplanted by high-production urban steel manufacturing powered by coal.

Many of the charcoal iron plantations were deserted when production ceased. Today, it can be difficult to imagine the level of activity that took place at sites like Carrick Furnace.

“At one time, the furnace employed 200 people,” Gary says. “There was a general store, and there would have been a paymaster.”

“There would have been a mansion house,” Tamara says, “but we cannot figure out where it was. There’s no foundation there that we’ve seen.”

Iron from the furnace was shipped by rail to Philadelphia or Pittsburgh after being transported by wagon to the nearby West Branch Conococheague Creek. Once loaded on a barge, the iron floated several miles downstream to the Cumberland Valley Railroad, which came as far north as the Richmond area in Franklin County. Carrick iron was also used to make things locally, like stoves, pots, pans and tools.

“The pig iron molds were 3-feet-long-by-12-and-a-half-inches wide, and 5 inches thick,” Gary says. “At maximum production, they were producing about 30 tons a week.”

Restoration effort

Over the past three years, PVHS volunteers have cleaned and excavated the site. The furnace walls were

DOUG ROLES



STONE FURNACE: The Carrick Iron Furnace in Metal Township, Franklin County, fronts the west side of Route 75. The photo below looks southeast toward the West Branch of the Conococheague Creek. The rear of the Carrick property adjoins a Valley Rural Electric Cooperative power line right of way.

DOUG ROLES



bulging, and stone had to be pushed back into position. A professional stone mason from Fannettsburg offered re-pointing and repair work, while volunteers transported 50-gallon drums of water to the site to mix mortar.

Accomplishments so far include the installation of a driveway and parking area. An interpretive sign has also been erected.

PVHS received a \$50,000 COVID-19 Impact grant from Franklin County and about \$4,000 of that funding remains. The society wants to increase awareness of the Carrick site and raise funds because it feels the site is truly special.

Carrick boasts a Peter L. Weimer blowing engine. Weimer engines were manufactured in Lebanon, Pa., in the late 1800s and they increased iron production by replacing water-wheel-powered cold-air bellows. Weimer engines operated on gases exiting the furnace and forced oven-heated air into the bottom of the burn.

"We're excited to have that Weimer engine," Tamara says. "You can search and not find an iron furnace with its engine. They were taken for scrap during World War II."

"It might be the only one in the nation," Gary says of the Weimer engine. "This one was probably only in use five years before the furnace shut down."

Boom then bust

The Carrick works arose from another nearby iron furnace, according to records provided by PVHS. In 1814, Thomas Dunn, John King and others took over the controlling interest in the Mt. Pleasant Furnace, where Dunn had become ironmaster in 1786. It is believed that Dunn was brought over from Ireland by the Chambers brothers, founders of Chambersburg, also in Franklin County.

When Dunn died in 1816, his son Samuel Dunn, who had studied ironmaking at Dickinson College, took over the business. Samuel — a War of 1812 veteran who became a brigadier general in the Pennsylvania militia and served in the state legislature — renamed the works Dunn & Co.

Because of difficulties with water power and the local ore supplies, Mt. Pleasant was becoming less profitable, and a decision was made to establish a new furnace. In October 1826, Samuel Dunn purchased 204 acres of land in Metal Township, north of Mt. Pleasant, for the new furnace, which he named Carrick after the family's ancestral homestead in Ireland.

In partnership with Thomas McCullough, an attorney, and James Bard, a metallurgist, work began on the forge, furnace, bellows house and blacksmith shop. A saw mill and grist mill also operated on the property.

Carrick Furnace operated until 1837, when a recession slowed the demand for iron. Chambersburg Bank acquired the property in 1843, and there were frequent ownership and management changes. In 1843, the Carrick works was



HISTORY BUFFS: Historical society members Gary McGee, right photo, and Tamara Adams visited the Carrick site in mid-May. The unique Weimer blowing engine can be seen behind Gary. Tamara is shown at the former location of the bellows house.

sold at sheriff's sale to S.F. Eagle and H.M. North, according to National Register of Historic Places documents.

Eagle and North leased it to an outfit named Witherow and Walker in 1850, but it is unclear how often the furnace operated. The Weimer blowing engine was added in 1879, and the furnace operated intermittently until 1884.

The property was deeded to the Kittochtinny (Franklin County) Historical Society in 1934 from the Hugh M. North Jr. family. Carrick Furnace was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991 and the National Historic Landmarks registry in 2010.

PVHS future

A love of stories such as that of the Carrick works led to the establishment of PVHS in 2018. The late Alice McFeely Meloy, a local author, was an original member, along with local historian Bill Swailes, who organized the Carrick clean-up committee when PVHS received the property.

"There was a group of us in the valley that just loved local history," Tamara explains.

The society meets Wednesday afternoons at a rented space along Route 641. PVHS assists those researching their ancestors and is participating in a number of America250PA events, including a decorating contest and photography contest during next month's Path Valley Picnic and Homecoming.

"People are sort of amazed at how it has grown so quickly," Tamara says. "You wouldn't think a little historical society would have so much going on, but we're really busy here."

Check the progress of the Carrick restoration by following the Friends of Carrick Furnace Facebook page or by visiting pvhistoricalsociety.wixsite.com/pvhs. You can also contact the society at pvhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or P.O. Box 171, Spring Run, PA, 17262. 📍

What Happened?

My Lights Blinked and Now My Clocks are Flashing '12:00'

It is a clear, sunny day with not a cloud in the sky and all of a sudden, the room goes dark for a few seconds. Then power returns, joined by the clanging and clunking sound of printers and equipment "rebooting" around the home or office.

MANY FOLKS ASSUME THAT AN electrical power surge just happened. Actually, an automatic circuit recloser (ACR or recloser) just opened and then "reclosed," resulting in a momentary interruption of power, also known as a "blink."

Automatic circuit reclosers quickly respond to problems on an electric utility's power grid. They are similar to a circuit breaker in your home, but they are also different due to their ability to automatically reset themselves to restore power quickly.

Reclosers have been used to protect electric utility systems and consumer homes since the 1950s. Few consumers even knew about reclosers or blinks until manufacturers started selling digital alarm clocks in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These new digital clocks maintained time by synchronizing with the 60-Hertz frequency of the utility power wave form.

While digital clocks were found to be quite accurate, early clocks simply did not like "blinks," and when they occurred, the clock would flash 12:00 until they were manually reset, which worked ... until the lights blinked again.

The incorporation of digital clocks into large appliances and microwave ovens further exacerbated the problem of consumers arriving home to a house full of flashing "12:00s." 🕒



ALL CLEAR?: Valley Rural Electric Cooperative Linemen Matt Fish, right, and Riley Price use a tree limb to draw an arc during a safety presentation. The cylindrical device above Matt's right hand is an automatic recloser, a piece of equipment that prevents a short-duration or transient fault from causing a power outage.

WHAT CAUSES RECLOSERS TO OPEN AND CLOSE?

- ▶ A lightning strike somewhere on the utility line that creates an over-current condition.
- ▶ Vehicle impacts to power poles that briefly cause the electrical lines to slap together.
- ▶ Tree limbs falling into power lines, causing conductors to short out.
- ▶ High winds blowing tree limbs and other debris into the power lines.
- ▶ Wayward animals attempting to navigate high-voltage lines.

A typical recloser will open and close three or four times before "locking out" due to its inability to clear the line. Once

this occurs, a utility service crew will need to be dispatched to figure out what is wrong and repair the distribution line being protected by the locked-out recloser.

So why do electric utilities continue to use reclosers? Quite simply, reclosers restore power in a matter of seconds rather than the hour-plus it would take if a service truck needed to be dispatched to troubleshoot the situation.

It's worth noting that manufacturers of digital clocks have helped minimize customer complaints by adding internal batteries to keep the clocks (and appliances) working through "blinks."

Information courtesy KENICK, Inc. Established in 1989, KENICK is an engineering-based consulting firm providing surge-protection program design and operational support. For more information, visit kenick.com.