



BIG FLAT NEWS



March 2026

www.bigflatelectric.com

St. Patrick's Day Traditions

CELEBRATED annually on March 17, St. Patrick's Day is a holiday known for parades, shamrocks and all things Irish. From leprechauns to the color green, find out how symbols we now associate with St. Patrick's Day came to be, and learn about a few that are purely American inventions.

The Shamrock

The shamrock, which was also called the "seamroy" by the Celts, was a sacred plant in ancient Ireland because it symbolized the rebirth of spring. By the 17th Century, the shamrock had become a symbol of emerging Irish nationalism. As the English began to seize Irish land and make laws against the use of the Irish language and the practice of Catholicism, many Irish began to wear the shamrock as a symbol of their pride in their heritage and their displeasure with English rule.

Irish Music

Music is often associated with St. Patrick's Day – and Irish culture in general. From ancient days of the Celts, music has always been an important part of Irish life. The Celts had an oral culture, where religion, legend and history were passed from one generation to the next by way of stories and songs.

After being conquered by the English, and forbidden to speak their own language, the Irish, like other



oppressed peoples, turned to music to help them remember important events and hold on to their heritage and history. As it often stirred emotion and helped to galvanize people, music was outlawed by the English. During her reign, Queen Elizabeth I even decreed that all artists and pipers were to be arrested and hanged on the spot.

The Snake

It has long been recounted that, during his mission in Ireland, St. Patrick once stood on a hilltop (which is now called Croagh Patrick), and with only a wooden staff by his side, banished all the snakes from Ireland.

In fact, the island nation was never home to any snakes. The "banishing of

the snakes" was really a metaphor for the eradication of pagan ideology from Ireland and the triumph of Christianity. Within 200 years of Patrick's arrival, Ireland was completely Christianized.

Corned Beef

Each year, thousands of Irish Americans gather with their loved ones on St. Patrick's Day to share a "traditional" meal of corned beef and cabbage. Though cabbage has long been an Irish food, corned beef only began to be associated with St. Patrick's Day at the turn of the 20th Century.

Leprechauns

One icon of the Irish holiday is the Leprechaun. The original Irish name for these figures of folklore is "lobaircin," meaning "small-bodied fellow." Belief in leprechauns probably stems from Celtic belief in fairies, tiny men and women who could use their magical powers to serve good or evil.

In Celtic folktales, leprechauns were cranky souls, responsible for mending the shoes of the other fairies. Though only minor figures in Celtic folklore, leprechauns were known for their trickery, which they often used to protect their much-fabled treasure. Leprechauns have their own holiday on May 13, but are also celebrated on St. Patrick's, with many people dressing up as the wily fairies. RM



SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications available now

Big Flat Electric Cooperative is offering \$500 scholarships. High school seniors whose primary residence is served by Big Flat Electric may apply for one of these \$500 scholarships.

The Trade School Scholarship is offered to students of any age who are or plan to attend a trade school. Up to \$1,000 will be awarded to a selected applicant whose primary residence is served by Big Flat Electric.

Applications can be found at our office in Malta, on our website:



www.bigflatelectric.com, and at the local school's guidance counselor office.

Due date for applications is April 1. 

Tax refund planning: Building your financial safety net

If you're expecting a tax refund this spring, resist the urge to spend it immediately. This is an opportunity to strengthen your financial foundation.

Start by reviewing your emergency savings. Financial professionals recommend setting aside three to six months of essential expenses. If you don't have this cushion yet, consider creating an emergency savings account. An accessible savings account can help you prepare for unexpected expenses, such as a car repair, medical expense or job loss, without forcing you to rely on credit.

Once your emergency fund reaches a level you are comfortable with, you might allocate your refund toward other goals, such as contributing to your retirement savings or addressing a needed home or vehicle repair.

The key is intentional planning. Consider treating your tax refund as a gift to your future self, not a windfall for today's wants. By making thought-



ful choices now, you're taking a proactive step in your financial planning.

Homestead Advisers does not offer legal or tax advice. Please consult a professional regarding your individual circumstances.

This financial wellness tip is provided by Homestead Advisers, a financial services company established over 30 years ago to help meet the investment needs of communities within the National Rural Electric Cooperative (NRECA) family.

MARCH 2026

IN THE KNOW

HAPPENINGS AROUND BIG FLAT ELECTRIC

Key activities from January include:

- **Outages:** Continued heavy frost contributed to outages throughout our service area. Areas impacted the greatest were Turner, Hogeland, North Malta, Whitewater, Loring and Saco.
- **December Windstorm:** The Montana DES is asking cooperatives to report storm damage estimates as they are trying to determine which counties meet the FEMA threshold to be a part of the state of Montana disaster declaration. Kari compiled a detailed list of damages.
- **New Vehicle:** The 2017 F350 line truck 5 is being replaced with a new 2025 GMC Sierra 3500 truck. The truck box has been taken off the old truck 5 and will be placed on the new truck.
- **Rights of Way:** Staff is in the process of updating rights-of-way on current and new services.
- **Digger Truck:** The 2025 Digger Truck seal went out on the transfer case, not due to negligence. Joe contacted Altec and the repairs will be covered by warranty.
- **Policy Changes:** The Storage Heat and Generator Double-Throw Switch policies were modified by the Board. The Storage Heat policy now states that Big Flat Electric can order a storage heat unit for members when requested, but installation and maintenance will have to be done by an electrician hired by the member. The Generator Double-Throw Switch policy now states Big Flat Electric can quote a standby kit that goes on the meter, but the actual double-throw switch will have to be installed and maintained by an electrician.
- **Warehouse Improvements:** The new garage doors and insulation installation are scheduled for March/April. Joe will contact MDU to see about getting on their schedule for the gas installation. The heating units may have to be installed in 2027, depending on where this project comes in on the 2026 budget.



A Word of Caution

Downed powerlines can be dangerous

JUST a friendly reminder, if you see broken powerlines on the ground they could be energized.

The pictures above were taken during the heavy frost that hit our service area in January. The broken lines were still energized. You'll notice in some of the pictures the snow

melted, which was caused by arching of the lines.

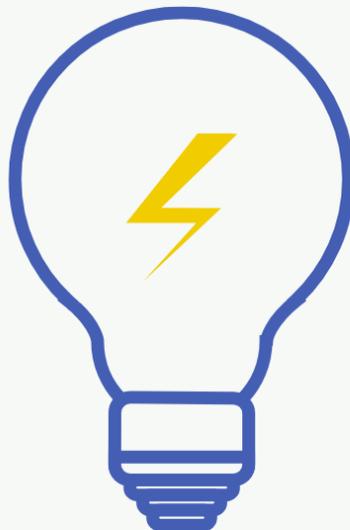
In the picture of the pole, one of the phase lines was broken, but it also was live. Please use extreme caution when near or approaching broken powerlines. RM



Big Flat Electric welcomes all members to apply for \$175.00 in energy assistance.

**Contact HRDC @
406.265.6743
for application.**

It is on a first come first serve basis.



THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- **Find us on Facebook** under Big Flat Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- **Visit our website** at www.bigflatelectric.com.
- **Sign up for budget billing** and/or ACH (auto payments) by calling our office.
- **Bills** are generated on the 1st working day of each month, and are due on the 20th of each month.
- **Bills that are 60 days in arrears are subject to disconnect.** Once disconnected, a reconnect fee will be charged. The bill will then have to be paid in full to be reconnected.
- **We have a secure, automated toll-free phone number** for members making payments by credit card and/or bank account: 1-844-968-1965. You will need to have your account number and/or phone number that is on file with our office to access the automated system.
- **Take control of your electric account with SmartHub.** You can pay your bills; set up and cancel reoccurring payments; set up notifications; obtain duplicates of your bills; and view your monthly and yearly usage, all at your fingertips. Visit our website: www.bigflatelectric.com or download the SmartHub app from your Play Store on Android or the App Store on Apple devices.
- New service and service change quotes are only **valid for 30 days**.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

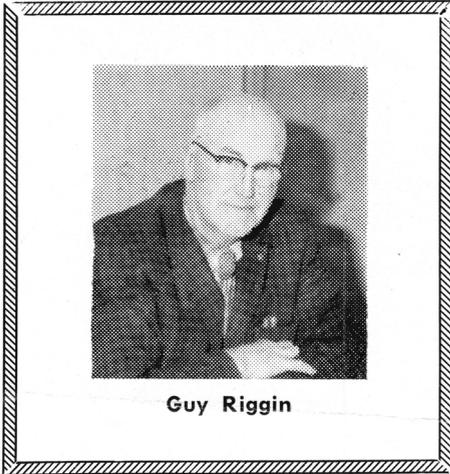


"You gotta try your luck at least once a day, because you could be going around lucky all day and not even know it."

— JIMMY DEAN

FROM MARCH 1965: *BFEC NEWSLETTER*

Guy Riggin, a prominent Blaine County rancher-farmer, and a director of Big Flat Electric Cooperative for the past thirteen years, passed away at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota on February 28.



Guy Riggin

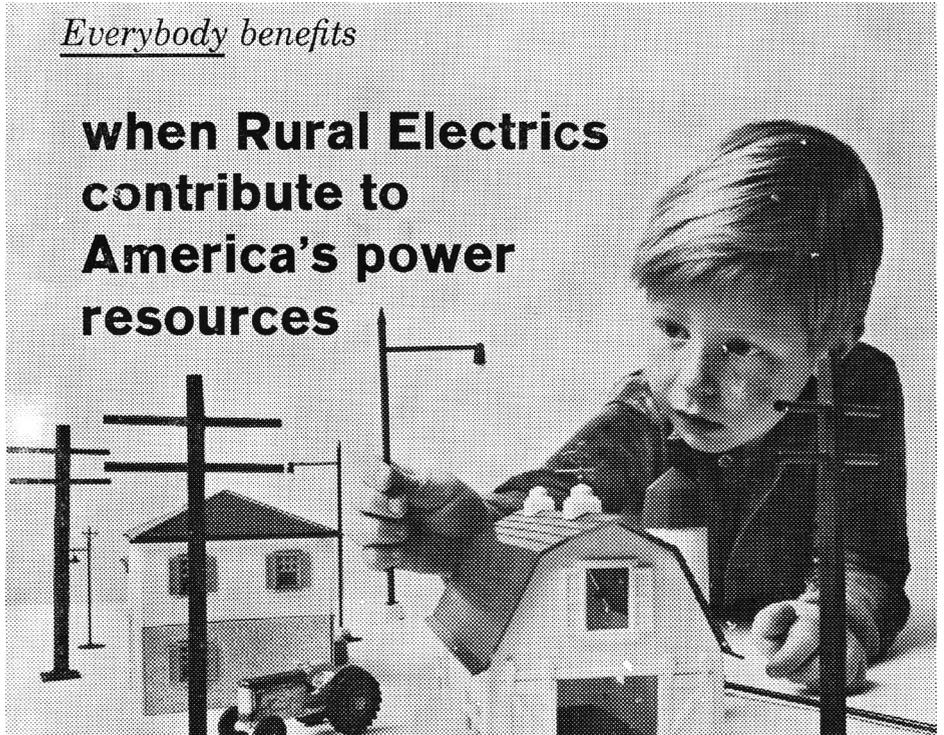
Remember?

You say things are getting tough everywhere and that may be true, but just for the fun of it will you try to remember when you last saw:

- A bank "Closed till further notice."
- A Sheriff's sale.
- Darned stockings.
- Flour sack panties.
- Cardboard over a hole in your shoe.
- A sore shouldered horse.
- A hand cranked automobile.
- A smoker rolling his own.
- A frosty toilet seat.

Everybody benefits

when Rural Electrics contribute to America's power resources



Placing power lines where they're needed is fun for a child, but it's a big job for the nation's power industry.

Doing their share are America's 1,000 consumer-owned rural electric systems—cooperatives and power districts that provide electricity to rural areas which no other power supplier would serve.

Although rural electrics generate only 1 percent of the nation's power supply, they serve more than 5 million homes, businesses and institutions in more than 1,700 of the nation's 3,000 counties. They are good customers of the commercial power companies, paying them more than \$110,000,000 a year for wholesale power.

Much of the nation's food and fiber comes from

the 54 percent of the nation's farms served by rural electrics. And in many small communities local industries meeting local payrolls have been developed with the help of rural electrics.

Today, as our country grows, rural electrics, with the continuing help of Rural Electrification Administration loans, are working hard to make sure electricity is available for whatever needs arise in the areas they serve—for the increasing demands of rural families, for defense installations, for the new communities springing up in rural areas, for the job of supplying the nation's food and fiber.

Meeting today's power needs and preparing for tomorrow takes the best effort of the entire power industry. Rural electrics are carrying *their* share of the load . . . and *everybody* benefits.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- District 1 Duane Klindworth
- District 2 Alan Van Voast, Sec./Treasurer
- District 3 Alan Wasson
- District 4 Warren Morin
- District 5 Roger Solberg, Vice President
- District 6 Patty Quisno
- District 7 Kevin Koss, President

General Manager: Gretchen Boardman



BIG FLAT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

SERVING BLAINE, PHILLIPS AND VALLEY COUNTIES

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PAYMENT OPTIONS:
1-844-968-1965 or
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