

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

BEDFORD REC

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COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

Working Together to Lower Demand



**BROOKS
SHOEMAKER**

WHEN OUTDOOR TEMPERATURES DROP, electricity use naturally rises. Colder weather drives us indoors, where we rely more on home heating systems, lighting and household appliances. Heating systems run longer and more frequently as temperatures drop to maintain comfortable indoor temperatures. Combine that with the fact that most people use electricity at the same time — typically in the mornings and early evenings — and the result is significant pressure on our electric grid.

We work closely with Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., our generation and transmission cooperative, to plan for these seasonal weather patterns and changes, and ensure you have reliable power every day of the year. This partnership involves detailed resource and infrastructure planning to make certain that electricity is available whenever you need it. However, it's important to remember that our local system is part of a much larger regional and national electric grid.

During the winter months, when homes and businesses across the country are using more electricity simultaneously, overall demand can approach — and occasionally exceed — available supply. This is especially true during severe weather, such as ice storms, sudden temperature drops or equipment malfunctions that reduce generation capacity.

In rare cases when demand threatens to outpace supply, the regional grid operator may call for temporary, controlled outages, often referred to as rolling blackouts, to prevent broader system failures. If such a situation arises, we will provide timely updates and information to members.

To prepare for these scenarios and minimize risks, we take proactive measures to strengthen reliability year-round. Those measures include routine system maintenance, investments in grid modernization and comprehensive disaster response planning. Our most important reliability initiative, beyond normal maintenance, line inspections and replacement of aged equipment, is our right-of-way program.

We visit every line on the system at least once every four years to keep trees and brush from encroaching on them. These proactive steps ensure our portion of the grid remains resilient even under extreme conditions. Yet, maintaining a reliable electric system requires a collective effort — and every member plays an important role in lowering demand when the grid is under stress.

You can help by taking these simple actions during periods of high electricity use, especially on the coldest days of winter:

1. Lower your thermostat slightly. Even reducing the temperature by a few degrees can help.

2. Delay using large appliances and run dishwashers, washing machines and dryers during off-peak hours in the afternoon and early evening.

3. Adjust your water heater. Setting it to 120 degrees and spacing out showers helps conserve both energy and hot water.

4. Unplug unnecessary devices. Power used for lighting and electronics adds up and accounts for a significant portion of home energy use. Disconnect unused items to reduce energy waste.

Understanding how winter weather impacts electricity demand is key to

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Making Music and Memories at the Wagon Shed

GARY DIEHL, MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF the Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) service territory in an area affectionately known as Scrubgrass, there is a place blessed with entertainment and musical history. However, beyond the locals and a handful of history buffs, few people are aware of it.

In the broad scheme of things, “Jim and Jane’s Wagon Shed” really hasn’t been around that long. It was originally built in the late 1950s, and during the past few decades, has undergone some transformations by its current owners. But if those support poles could talk, rest assured, they would have a near-infinite amount of stories to tell.

My own extended family has close ties to the property along with a deep respect for its many traditions.

Putting down musical roots

Jim and Jane Claar passed away in 1991 and 2011, respectively, but their Bedford and Blair County legacy lives on through their music, their three children who still live nearby, and the Wagon Shed. I was blessed recently to sit down with Jim and Jane’s daughters, Connie Claycomb of Bedford and Audry Lair of Claysburg/Queen, to reminisce about “the old times” and confirm some stories I’ve heard throughout the years.

Audry still lives on what was part of the original farm and has been a Bedford REC member most of her life. Her son, Daren, also a longtime Bedford REC member, lives in the original farmhouse.

Before hosting events at the Wagon Shed, Jim and Jane were already established as famous musicians, entertainers, radio, and TV stars. They lived and performed in venues around State College, Williamsport, and Elmira, N.Y. Their group was known as The Western Vagabonds.

While living in State College and Williamsport, Jim built music venues in rural areas so they — as well as famous entertainers — could come and perform. In both cases, these buildings were called The Radio Corral. Some acts performing at the original Corral in State College were Eddie Arnold, Shorty May and Mary June, Jimmy Wakely, Lulu Belle and Scotty, and Jim and Tex Ritter.



MUSIC FOR THE MEMBERS: Original Wagon Shed owner Jim Claar, second from right, and Jane on the mic, with other local musicians entertain members at the Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting in 1953.

Later, they built the second Corral near Williamsport, in a town called Montgomery. Fans flocked there to see such performers as Hank Williams Sr., the Carter Family with Chet Atkins on guitar, Patsy Montana, and the Sons of the Pioneers, just to name a few.

Eventually, Jim and Jane ventured back to their roots in Bedford County and Scrubgrass, where they worked on the family farm. But the 1950s were tough times, and the Claars had an itch they needed to scratch. They hooked up with a very talented group of musicians from Somerset, known as the Coal Mountain Boys.

Their forte was playing square dance music, and they had a top-notch caller, Kenny Custer. During this time, Jim had a dream to build a huge wagon shed right on the farm to offer entertainment. By 1957, his yearning became a reality, and the 60-by-100-foot open-sided Wagon Shed was born.

A Saturday night spectacle

The Wagon Shed would operate for the next four years, hosting entertainers with a stage that was a large-wheeled wagon. Spectators and fans would sit on hay bales to enjoy the one-hour shows on Saturday nights, and then turn their attention to the square dancers in the middle of the



THE VIEW: This is the view from the top of the hill at “The Farm” looking west toward Blue Knob.

floor. People came from all over, and according to Connie, there were as many as 44 sets of dancers at times.

Audry said dancers would spill out into the parking area. Concession trailers would line the entry lane, and on Saturday nights, the Wagon Shed was the place to see famous Nashville acts, such as Rusty and Doug Kershaw, Grandpa Jones, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Jeanne Shephard, the Louvin Brothers, and many more.

At the same time that Saturday night visitors were kicking up dust in Scrubgrass, a TV station in Altoona was looking for an act — specifically a country and western group — to produce live shows.

So Jim and Jane, along with the kids — Connie, Audry, and their brother Ricky — auditioned as “The Jim and Jane Show.” They were joined by three members of the Coal Mountain Boys: Custer, fiddle player Jimmy Davis and electric guitar player Buzzy Brant, who would eventually become Connie’s husband and pass away prematurely in a truck accident.

In addition, a singer named Gene Pheasant from Lewistown joined the group and a very talented piano player from the Claysburg area named Duggie Potter rounded it out. Duggie’s grandson, Danny, another longtime cooperative member, and his family live just a stone’s throw from the Claar farm and often visit the Wagon Shed.

As fate would have it, “The Jim and Jane Show” was chosen as the TV station’s featured act. At first, shows were filmed live in nearby Martinsburg. Later, they were taped at the studio in Altoona — and sometimes at the Wagon Shed itself.

The music and entertainment history surrounding Jim, Jane, Connie, Audry and Ricky, along with the others mentioned, is rich. There are stories about trips the group made to Nashville to record music. They met

and became friends with many famous people, including Gene Autry and other high-profile individuals. And Connie, who has also been to Nashville to record, is a local music legend in her own right, having performed for decades with various groups throughout the area.

Fond family memories

In the 1980s, the Claars decided to subdivide and sell some of the farm where the Wagon Shed is located.

The first parcel was sold to my wife’s uncle, Richard “Bud” Dodson. At about the same time my wife and I started dating, her parents, Ed and Sherrie Dodson, were fortunate enough to buy the next two adjacent parcels. The second of these plots contains the Wagon Shed and a beautiful fish-rich pond.

In my opinion, people throw around the term “countless” a little too haphazardly. But my number of trips to “The Farm,” as we affectionately call it, is and will continue to be more than I can remember. The activities that have taken place there have created deep and lasting memories for me and my family, and hopefully those will continue for generations to come.

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FARM FLASHBACKS: Clockwise from bottom left: My son and daughter-in-law look out the front of the Wagon Shed on their wedding day; family graduation parties are often held at the Wagon Shed; and the original Claar farmhouse, back left, stands out during a Memorial Day picnic in 2021.

MAKING MUSIC AND MEMORIES

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The Wagon Shed is no longer a public venue, but several family weddings have happened there. My oldest son and his wife had both their ceremony and reception there in 2014. Fast forward to 2022 when my youngest son and his bride held their wedding reception in the Wagon Shed. Ed and Sherrie's son and daughter-in-law, Jason and Marianne, live on the property, and just this past year, their daughter (my niece) Elisabeth and her husband, John, had their wedding ceremony and reception there.

By the way, Jason Dodson is a very accomplished guitar and fiddle player, too, having performed with several bluegrass groups, as well as Connie Claycomb on multiple occasions. He still plays around the area, including at Crossroads Church, where he's the regular acoustic guitar player with the praise band. If you've never heard him play the "Orange Blossom Special," you should!

'A peaceful easy feeling'

What else happens at The Farm? Well, a lot. The past couple years, the property has hosted the Cove Anglers Charity Fishing Team and the Marauders Motorcycle Club, which sponsor a day of fishing at the pond for disabled veterans. (And, yes, there is some friendly competition during these events.)

In addition, multiple church group outings have been held there, and everything from chickens to beef cattle to pigs has been raised there. Years ago, friends raised hundreds of chukars on The Farm to sell to hunting clubs. And speaking of hunting, deer season is always fun there, if for nothing else than the awesome breakfasts.

The pond has not only been used for fishing, but also for many ice hockey games and ice skating. We've shot clay pigeons and camped there, both around the pond and up on the hill, which quite possibly has the most scenic view in Bedford County.

Dozens of picnics, plus corn-freezing parties, graduation celebrations, and even some butchering have happened there. Heck, my wife and I even lived there with our two boys for several months before my daughters came along. We stayed in a tiny trailer beside the pond while our house was being built in 2004. Plus, I can't remember when there weren't horses there. The family owned some of them while others were boarded. Riding horses, workhorse teams, ponies, and mules — you name it, they've been there.

For me, when you pull into the lane beside the Wagon Shed, time doesn't stop, but it certainly slows down. At the end of the day, what do we have but our lasting memories? The Eagles wrote a great song, "Peaceful Easy Feeling." I hope all our members have a place they can go where they can feel like that — the way I feel whenever I'm at "The Farm." ☺

FROM THE GENERAL

MANAGER & CEO

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maintaining system reliability. By practicing simple energy conservation habits at home, you not only save money on your monthly bill, but you also help strengthen the resilience of the grid that powers our community. Together, through small actions and shared awareness, we can ensure that our homes remain warm, our lights stay on and our local grid continues to serve us reliably throughout the season.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Mid-winter is a great time to ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean filters to keep your furnace or heat pump running efficiently. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating — these signs indicate that the system may need servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy. A little maintenance along the way can prevent costly repairs and keep your home cozy through winter. ☺

BROOKS SHOEMAKER
GENERAL MANAGER & CEO

OUTAGE REPORTING

In case of an outage...

1

Check your fuses or circuit breakers.

2

Check with your neighbors, if convenient, to see if they have been affected by the power failure.

3

Call the 24-hour number, 814-623-7568, OR call 814-623-5101 during office hours.

Please have the account holder's name, phone number, physical address or account number available. Any specific information about the outage will also be helpful in pinpointing the problem.

**To report an outage
call: 814-623-7568**