

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## The Days of '76 Rodeo

A Century of Grit and  
Glory

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Fort Meade Patriotism

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FEM staff meet with the Board of Directors at the May meeting.

## May Board Report

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on May 19, 2026, pursuant to due call and notice. It being determined that a quorum was present, President Gary Bachman called the meeting to order. Secretary Eric Odenbach kept the minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe, Kelly Melius and Paula Petersen. Electrical Manager Ryan Holien, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, and CEO Scott Moore.

**Guest Employee:** Crystal Thorson

**Guest Member:** Josh Heinrich

**Changes to the agenda:** none

**Changes/Additions to Minutes from April 21, 2026, meeting:** none

**Next Meeting Date:** After a review of the calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Friday, June 19, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Moved by Kelly Melius, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve administrative business.

The board and staff watched NRECA Governance Video titled "Finding the Right Level of Transparency".

Moved by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to acknowledge the manager, and staff reports along with East River Electric load management report.

Moved by Tom Thorpe seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve Work Order Inventories:

#632 - \$210,022.46  
#633 - \$122,027.00

The board acknowledges receiving and reviewing April 2026 Cyber Security Report.

### Resolutions and Contracts:

Moved by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve 2026 construction contract with K & H Electric of Linton, North Dakota.

Moved by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to nominate Scott Moore as CFC Voting Delegate.

Moved by Tom Thorpe seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to nominate Scott Moore as NCSC Voting Delegate.

Moved by Paula Petersen seconded

by Kelly Melius and carried to approve USDA Online Application Intake System Resolution.

A discussion was held on NISC/Meridan merger to be voted on May 15-July 14, 2026.

### Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

### New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Carlson Farm Specialty Products, Seneca, SD, Grain Bin; Tracy & Ursula Schock, Ashley, ND, Active Farm; Judith & John Baudler, Arden Hills, MN, Pasture Pump

**Reconnects:** Gunner & Sami McGee, Seneca, SD, Grain Bin; Dennis & Robin Wolff, Long Lake, SD, Active Farm; Glenn & Karen Beutler, Eureka, SD, Pasture Pump

**Contracts:** Anthony & Patricia Kunz, Eureka, SD, House

**Retired Locations:** None

Moved by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve contracts for Anthony Kunz.

### Capital Credits:

**Estates - May 2026:** One = \$668.64

**73 & Older - May 2026:**

Three = \$2,939.54

Moved by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve 2026 Capital Credit General Retirement as follows:

*(See chart on page 6)*

**Continued on page 6**

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### FEM ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

(USPS 189-720)

#### Board of Directors

Gary Bachman, President  
Tom Thorpe, Vice President  
Eric Odenbach, Secretary  
Paula Petersen, Treasurer  
Kelly Melius, Asst. Secretary/  
Treasurer  
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

#### CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore  
info@femelectric.coop

#### Management Staff

Sean Christiansen  
*Operations Manager*  
Ryan Holien  
*Electrical Manager*  
Rhonda Tuscherer  
*Director of Finance and  
Benefits*

#### Editor's e-mail:

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FEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc., 800 5th Ave., Ipswich, SD 57451. FEM Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to members on electric cooperative matters and better living.

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Design assistance by SDREA

**FEM Electric is an equal  
opportunity provider and  
employer.**



**Scott Moore**  
**General Manager/CEO**

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Bismarck, North Dakota broke ground mid-May 2026 on a new natural gas-fueled power plant near Ray, North Dakota that is expected to cost nearly \$4 billion.

The Bison Generation Station will have two units, each able to produce roughly 745 megawatts (MW) for a total of up to 1,490 MW. The station will harness energy from locally produced natural gas via a combustion turbine and a steam turbine to generate electricity. This project has been years in the planning and permitting stages.

Grading and site preparation began in August 2025. The project is expected to create around 1000 craft workers and engineer positions at peak construction in 2027. The generation plant is expected to be in operation in 2030.

Yes, you, as a member of FEM Electric, will be a part owner. FEM Electric Cooperative is owned by the people

we serve power to in Faulk, Edmunds, and McPherson counties. FEM Electric Cooperative owns East River Electric out of Madison South Dakota, who owns and operates the transmission lines and substations providing power to FEM Electric. FEM Electric has one board seat on the East River board which has twenty-five electric cooperative seats and one municipal board seat. East River serves all electric cooperatives in South Dakota east of Missouri River except two and six Minnesota electric cooperatives. These electric cooperatives also receive WAPA power from the Missouri River dams.

East River Electric has one board seat on the Basin Electric board which consists of eleven districts spread across nine states. Basin Electric owns power plants along with transmission lines and substations and other subsidiaries related to power production including coal mines. All three levels of cooperatives have several things in common; one is we all return the annual net margins back to our

*Continued on page 6*

#### FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@FEMElectric on 

@fem\_electric on 

@FEMelectric on 

We'll post outage updates, safety tips, news and more to keep our members informed on all the latest from FEM Electric.

## Statement Mailing Dates

July 28, 2026 for July's energy  
August 27, 2026 for August's energy

Regardless of the statement mail out date, payments are due in the office by the 9th of the following month.

# BEFORE THE SMOKE: PROTECT YOUR HOME BEFORE WILDFIRE SEASON

Wildfires can move quickly, especially when dry grass, high winds and hot weather come together. In rural South Dakota, where homes, farms, shelterbelts, outbuildings and open grassland share the same landscape, preparation matters.

But there is one important point to make first: fighting a wildfire is not a job for homeowners.

If a wildfire is nearby, leave firefighting to trained professionals. Follow evacuation orders, call 911 to report a fire and stay away from downed power lines, smoke-filled areas and active fire zones. Cooperative members can do their most important work in advance, taking steps that make a property harder for fire to reach and easier for responders to protect.

One of the most effective steps is creating defensible space around the home. That does not mean clearing every tree or turning a yard into bare ground. It means reducing combustible material near houses, garages, sheds and other structures, while thinking about how fire could move from brush to trees to buildings.

Start closest to the house. Embers can collect against siding, under decks, in gutters or near steps. Remove dry leaves, dead plants, stacked lumber, cardboard and other combustible materials from next to the home. Gravel, rock, concrete, pavers and other hardscaping can be better choices near walls, decks and porches.

Gutters and roofs deserve attention, too. Leaves and needles can become dry fuel. Cleaning them before fire season can reduce the chance that embers find an easy place to ignite.

From there, look at the rest of the yard. Clear dead brush, tall grass and dried weeds, especially near structures. Keep grass mowed around homes, outbuildings, propane tanks and driveways. Trim and space shrubs and trees so fire cannot easily climb from grass to brush to tree canopies. Low branches can act like ladder fuels.

Do not overlook decks, porches and crawlspaces. Dry leaves, grass clippings and other materials can collect underneath. Cleaning those areas and using screening can help keep debris from building up.

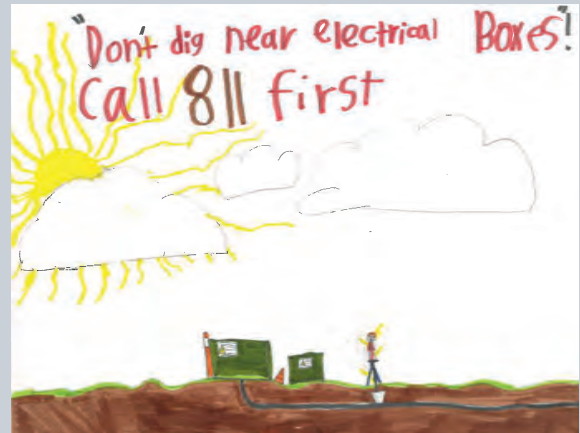
Access is part of preparation, too. Firefighters need to reach

a property quickly and safely. Keep driveways clear, make sure gates can open and trim branches that could block emergency vehicles. Clearly visible address signs can help responders find a home when visibility is poor.

Before making major landscaping changes, building fences, planting trees or adding new water lines, call 811. Underground electric, gas, water and communication lines may be closer than expected. A free locate request helps protect homeowners, utility crews and infrastructure.

Cooperative members can also make a plan. Know two ways out of the property or neighborhood. Keep important documents, medications and emergency supplies ready to go. Take photos or videos of buildings, equipment and belongings for insurance records.

Wildfire preparation is a seasonal habit, much like cleaning gutters, changing filters or preparing equipment for winter. The goal is not to fight the fire. That job belongs to firefighters and emergency responders. The goal is to give the home, property and responders a better chance before the fire ever starts.



**"Don't dig near electrical boxes!  
Call 811 first."**

**Caleb Blake, age 9**

Caleb urges members to not dig near a pad-mounted transformer. Thank you for sharing your picture, Caleb! Caleb's parents are Peter and Stephanie Blake – members of West River Electric.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

# Sweet on RHUBARB

## RHUBARB CAKE

### Ingredients:

White cake mix  
4 cups rhubarb, diced  
1 cup white sugar  
2 cups heavy whipping cream

### Method

Mix white cake as directed on the box. Pour in a greased 9x12 pan. Place 4 cups of diced rhubarb over the top. Pour 1 cup of white sugar over the rhubarb. Pour 2 cups of heavy whipping cream over the top. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

**Jeanette Kleinsasser**  
Dakota Energy

## RHUBARB SALAD

### Ingredients:

2 cups rhubarb, chopped  
4 tbsps. water  
1/2 cup sugar  
3 oz. red jello  
3/4 cup cold water  
1 apple, diced  
1 banana, sliced

### Method

Combine rhubarb, water and sugar. Stir and cook until mushy. Add jello and stir until dissolved. Add 3/4 cup cold water. Cool until it begins to set. Stir in diced apple and sliced banana. Chill and serve.

**Leanne Eich**  
Central Electric

## RHUBARB CHEESE CAKE

### Ingredients:

#### Rhubarb Filling

9" pie shell, unbaked  
2 1/2 cups rhubarb, chopped  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 tbsp. flour

#### Cheese Cake Filling

8 oz. cream cheese  
2 eggs, added one at a time  
1/2 cup sugar

#### Topping

3/4 cup sour cream  
2 tbsps. sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla

### Method

Stir rhubarb with flour and sugar. Put in the unbaked pie shell and bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and lower temperature to 350° degrees.

Beat cream cheese, add 2 eggs one at a time, then add the sugar. Mix well and pour over hot rhubarb layer. Bake 30 minutes at 350° degrees.

Mix the topping of sour cream, sugar and vanilla well and spread over hot pie. Cool 3 hours or more before serving. The flavors blend better the longer it cools. Refrigerate leftovers.

**Charles Lebeda**  
Sioux Valley Energy

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture by Sokor Space and Shutterstock.

**Board Report continued from page 2**

2013 Balance and 2014 Portion <b>FEM Electric</b>	\$346,766.43
2008 Balance and 2009 Portion <b>Basin Electric</b>	\$268,323.08
2005 Balance and 2006 Portion <b>East River</b>	\$69,164.79
Less Value Added Loans	(200.53)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$684,053.77</b>

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

**Financial Business:** The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information:

The check register for the month of April 2026 contained information on checks #36189 through #36265 and automatic payments/withdrawals for April 2026 totaling \$903,611.33.

April 2026 financials were reviewed.

Moved by Paula Petersen seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

**Legal Update:** Moore reported on Leola Data/South Dakota PUC case. Information he received from Attorney Vaughn Beck and East River Attorney Danny Brown.

**Meeting Report:** East River monthly board report was given by Gary Bachman and monthly video was watched.

Gary Bachman also reported on NRECA Washington DC Fly-In

The safety meeting minutes from April 22, 2026, were acknowledged along with employee meeting minutes held on April 22, 2026. Safety Committee meeting from April 23, 2026 were reviewed.

**Adjourn:** President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.



**Manager's Report continued from page 3**

members, called capital credits. With the increase in energy consumption, the need to replace aging systems, and with the need for new facilities we will see pressure on utility rates. What happens at Basin is spread across three million members in nine states.

I often wonder what our electric rates and electrical system would be if our electric cooperatives, who serve rural America, were owned by out-of-state investors, seeking large returns on their investments. The electric cooperative distribution board of directors are your friends, neighbors, agriculture producers and most of all locals, making decisions on your behalf. This is true at all three levels of the three-tier system.

If you are planning on adding any electrical load, please call Ryan Holien or Sean Christiansen (605) 426 6891.

Please be safe and enjoy your summer.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Running multiple major appliances at the same time—like your dishwasher, laundry machines and oven—can spike energy demand and strain the electric grid, especially during peak hours (typically late afternoon to early evening). Instead of stacking appliance use, spread it out throughout the day or shift chores to off-peak hours when energy demand is lower. This not only helps improve overall efficiency but can also reduce your energy costs. A simple habit change, like doing laundry in the morning and running the dishwasher overnight, can make a meaningful difference for both your wallet and energy reliability.



# CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENTS COMING



## SOME MEMBERS MAY SEE CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENTS ON THEIR JUNE STATEMENT

FEM Electric members should take a closer look at their June statement this summer, as they may have received a Capital Credit retirement this year.

Capital credit retirements are FEM's way of paying our members back for their investment in FEM. When members pay their bills, FEM uses that money to make improvements and cover expenses.

Years when FEM has a positive margin, those margins are set aside as capital credit allocations. These allocations are noted on member's April statement.

Members should review their June statement carefully, as they may not owe a payment for their

June energy. Below is an example of a statement where a member would not have to pay.

Account Number	1234567
Total Amount Due 07/09/2025	-64.04
Credit Balance - Do Not Pay	

Capital credit retirements are based on a number of factors, such as how much energy a member uses, the financial health of the cooperative, how large of margin was allocated in previous years and other reasons. There may be years where FEM does not retire capital credits due to extreme circumstances, as in 2011-2012 after the 2010 ice storm..

If members have questions about their statement or capital credits, give FEM a call at 605-426-6891 or 1-800-587-5880.

## How to SAVE ENERGY in your HOME OFFICE

Small changes = lower bills + more comfortable workspace

### Bright ideas for lighting

- Swap old bulbs for LEDs.
- Use task lighting such as a desk lamp.
- Turn lights off when you leave and use daylight when possible.

### Cut always-on power

- Use a power strip or smart strip to shut off power.
- Avoid leaving printers on all day.
- Unplug chargers and equipment when not in use.

### Use power management settings

- Reduce screen brightness.
- Use sleep mode on computers and monitors.
- Skip screen savers; they don't save energy.

! **Tip:** Laptops use less energy than desktops.

! **Safety tip:** Don't overload outlets or daisy-chain power strips. Use a surge-protector power strip.



Safe Electricity.org



# A CENTURY OF GRIT AND GLORY

## The Days of '76 Rodeo

Photos by KSchurr Photography

Jocelyn Johnson

[jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop](mailto:jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop)

In the historic gulch of Deadwood, S.D., the past isn't tucked away in books – it rides out of old wooden chutes every July at the Days of '76 Rodeo.

What began more than a century ago as a short weekend celebration has grown into a week-long rodeo and parade tradition that draws contestants and visitors from across the country. Yet, amid the growth and national recognition, the Days of '76 remains rooted in family, heritage and a deep sense of place.

Pat Roberts, longtime board member of the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "It started in 1924, and it actually wasn't a rodeo then. It was a celebration of Deadwood and its establishment in 1876 – hence where the name came from. It was started by the community just to promote the founding."

Those early celebrations featured parades, horses, fireworks and the kind of small-town pageantry that fits a frontier

community proud of its past. The full-fledged rodeo format came a few years later in the late 1920s, but the heart of the event hasn't changed: honoring Deadwood's origins and the Western way of life that built it.

Today, the Days of '76 Rodeo is marking its 104th year alongside other milestones – the 150th anniversary of Deadwood and the nation's 250th anniversary.

The rodeo boasts a total payout of roughly \$350,000 and typically draws 700 to 800 contestants, including top names like Rocker Steiner, Lisa Lockhart and rising stars such as Emily Beisel. During a week of performances, 25,000 to 30,000 spectators pack the grandstands, turning the arena into a sea of cowboy hats and hometown pride.

The events remain classic: bareback riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, barrel racing, saddle bronc riding, bull riding and breakaway roping. No frills, no gimmicks – just the timeless contests of skill and grit that define rodeo.

"We just keep it traditional," Pat said. "Just welcome everybody to Deadwood to enjoy the best cowboys and the best bucking stock that we can get."

For a town of about 1,200 people, the Days of '76 Rodeo has earned outsized recognition.

In 2011, the Days of '76 was inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame, a distinction the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) had not extended to a rodeo in many years.

Chris Roberts, son of Pat Roberts and fellow board member on the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "We won the PRCA Rodeo of the Year every single year that we were in the medium category until we surpassed into large. We've been nominated many times in the large category and won it once. To our knowledge, we're the only rodeo that's won Rodeo of the Year in each and every category."

In Deadwood, legacy still rides out of wooden chutes, year after year, drawing generational athletes. Rodeo here is a family affair. The Roberts family has been involved continuously since the event began.

"There's been a Roberts at every Days of '76 celebration since it started," said Pat.

Pat attended his first Days of '76 Rodeo when he was four days old and serves on the board with his son, Chris.

"I'm fourth generation," Chris said. "My great-granddad was there from year one, and we never missed a single year. Then his son – my granddad – followed in his footsteps, my dad and now me."

A fifth generation is already helping behind the scenes, continuing a family legacy that mirrors the rodeo's own endurance through the decades.

That kind of continuity isn't unique to the Roberts alone. Many contestants

arrive with stories of parents and grandparents who once competed in Deadwood.

"From a contestant perspective, I'd be willing to bet that no matter where you grew up, if you are a rodeo family, Deadwood was one that was always on the map," Chris said. "I hear it every single year – contestants talking about how grandpa or great-grandpa, grandma or great-grandma competed in Deadwood, and they've always wanted to be here. In the rodeo world, everybody knows Deadwood."

Mackenzi Gatzke, secretary of the board of directors, says her family story is similar. She currently serves on the Days of '76 board alongside both of her parents and noted two other families who have long served on the board promoting the event.

"Our board is all made up of people who were or still are locals to Deadwood, and we're all volunteers," she said. "We really do it because we love Deadwood, and we love the Days of '76 and the tradition behind it. We actually have four different families with multiple generations on our board, and we all just work together like one big family that just loves the community."

That focus on authenticity extends beyond the arena. The Days of '76 Museum houses the largest working



collection of horse-drawn wagons in the country, along with memorabilia from across the Black Hills dating back to 1876. During rodeo week, many of those wagons leave their resting place to roll through downtown Deadwood in historic parades – matching the sight of a 19th-century streetscape.

For Pat Roberts, rodeo's relevance in modern life is still significant and comes down to identity.

"It's tradition – it's the cowboy way," he said. "These cowboys and cowgirls are athletes...and the horses are too. They're bred to buck. We're not hurting anything by doing it – that's what they want to do. Just think of Deadwood and the West. Rodeo fits right in."





# FEM REPORTS TAXES PAID TO SCHOOLS

FEM Electric is an electric cooperative based in Ipswich, SD that serves the rural communities of Faulk, Edmunds and McPherson counties including the Town of Long Lake. As a non-profit corporation, it sometimes gives people the false impression that FEM does not pay taxes. However, under state law, rural electric cooperatives are required to pay a generation tax based on kilowatt hour sales to local school districts in their service area. FEM is also required to pay a 2% gross receipts tax to cities in our territory if a service falls within the city limits.

School districts located within the FEM Electric Cooperative service area receive \$549,362 in generation tax as a result of electric sales to the members.

GENERATION TAX BY COUNTY			
COUNTY	FEM	ER/BASIN	TOTAL
Faulk	\$36,000	\$34,318	\$70,318
Edmunds	\$204,264	\$194,719	\$398,983
McPherson	\$40,594	\$38,698	\$79,292
Potter	\$303	\$289	\$592
Spink	\$90	\$86	\$176
Walworth	<1	<1	<1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$281,252</b>	<b>\$268,110</b>	<b>\$549,362</b>

GENERATION TAX BY SCHOOL DISTRICT	
SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL
Hoven 53-2	\$1,886
Northwestern Area 56-7	\$8,387
Faulkton Area 24-3	\$59,610
Edmunds Central 22-5	\$34,982
Ipswich Area 22-6	\$353,247
Bowdle 22-1	\$18,819
Warner 6-5	\$64
Eureka 44-1	\$16,777
Leola 44-2	\$55,590
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$549,362</b>

In addition to providing electric service to our members, FEM financially contributes directly to our schools through the Cooperative's generation tax - we also contribute to our schools by providing donations of bottled water for fundraising, offer scholarships, provide electrical safety programs, education programs, and provide youth tours to students in our area schools.

Of this total, \$281,252 will be paid by FEM Electric and \$268,110 will be paid by East River Electric Power Cooperative of Madison, SD and Basin Electric Power Cooperative of Bismarck, ND.

The gross revenue tax is allocated to the different school districts through the County Treasurer's office. The following table shows the gross revenue that will be paid to each school district by the County.



# FEM VISITS LOCAL SCHOOLS FOR SPRING ELECTRICAL SAFETY EDUCATION

FEM took some time this spring to visit local public and colony schools to educate students about electricity and electrical safety.

To start, FEM staff member Crystal Thorson reviewed topics from the fall visit. Then students were given the opportunity to test how conductors and insulators work with circuit boards.

**Right:** Students use different types of conductors and insulators to try to complete the path of electricity. If they place a conductor between the clips, the fan will spin. Insulators do not cause any change.



**Above:** Ryan adds pieces of a lineman's safety gear to a volunteer student. He demonstrates the fall protection harness as the student waves.

Closing out the visit, Ryan Holien discussed overhead and underground lines, electrical safety, and lineman's gear. A volunteer student is selected in each class to dress up as a lineman. Finally, Ryan demonstrates how difficult the extendo stick can be to work with, and gives students the opportunity to hold it (with assistance).



**Left:** Ryan extends the extendo stick as far as it goes, showing how high some components of the electrical system are. If linemen are working on overhead equipment and are unable to climb a pole, they will use the extendo. Students then took turns holding the extendo stick in the air.

# FORT MEADE & THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

## How South Dakota Set the Stage for a National Anthem

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdreaa.coop

This month – July of 2026 – the United States of America celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, when the Founding Fathers declared the end of Great Britain’s role as their colonial overseer.

No patriotic song captures the sacrifice and resilience of the American experiment quite like the national anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner.” However, the anthem is not from the American Revolution, nor was it immediately adopted as the nation’s official song. Its story unfolded over more than a century, from a British bombardment in Baltimore to a flag-lowering ceremony on the plains of western South Dakota.

### The War of 1812

The year is 1814. The United States of America is in the midst of its second war with Great Britain – The War of 1812 – and the nation is reeling from a recent attack on Washington, D.C., where British troops torched the Capitol and White House.

A Maryland lawyer, Francis Scott Key, had just boarded a British naval vessel. He was sent there on behalf of the U.S. government to negotiate the release of an American prisoner, and while his negotiation was successful, Key was not allowed to return ashore until the British forces completed their bombardment on nearby Fort McHenry for fear that Key had overheard military plans while on board.

Detained aboard the enemy ship, Key looked ashore to Baltimore as the American forces fended off the invasion. As dusk settled over the harbor, it became harder for Key to track the battle, his only illumination being the occasional glow of British rockets and exploding shells. Key watched through the night, not sure who was winning the drawn-out fight. At dawn, there was just enough illumination for Key to make out the American flag still flying over the fort. The Americans had held



Visitors to Fort Meade (1 mile west of Sturgis, S.D.) will see the very same flag pole used by Col. Caleb Carlton during the flag retirements. These once-a-day evening ceremonies were the first instance of the Star Spangled Banner serving as the United States’ unofficial national anthem.

*Photo submitted by Randy Bender*

the fort and fended off the British from Baltimore.

Key’s experience that night inspired him to write a poem he titled “The Defence of Fort M’Henry.” Later, it was put to song and became known as “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

### Fort Meade

Fast forward to 1892, thousands of miles west on the American frontier.

Col. Caleb Carlton is the new commander of the Eighth U.S. Cavalry at Fort Meade, a U.S. Army post in the young state of South Dakota. About a mile west, the bustling town of Sturgis is growing along with the fort, serving as an important stop along numerous trails heading toward gold country in the streams of the Black Hills.

“Fort Meade was put in place in about 1878 to help maintain the peace in the Black Hills region between the native tribes and the settlers coming in,” explained Randy Bender, a lifelong resident of Sturgis and second-generation Fort Meade Museum board member.

Carlton was eager to make his mark – not through a battle, but patriotism. He and his wife discussed how they could better instill respect for the American flag among their troops stationed at the fort. The Carltons’ idea was to have the band play an official song during the evening retreat, when the flag is retired for the night.

“Carlton issued orders that all within hearing distance were to stand at attention, and all men not under arms were to remove their hats as a sign of respect to the flag,” Bender said.

That song, chosen at the urging of Mrs. Carlton, was the Star Spangled Banner.

“We selected the Star Spangled Banner as it was written under very unusual circumstances,” Carlton later wrote in a 1914 letter.

Carlton’s daughter, Mabel, recalled the first ceremony in her journal.

“As the final notes of the song faded away, the flag landed gently in the arms of the waiting troops,” she wrote. “If it had been practiced, it could not have been done more perfectly.”

From Fort Meade, the practice began to spread as other officers and government officials visited and observed the ceremony.

“The New York Times referred to the fact that (I) was trying to establish a national anthem,” Carlton wrote. “This attracted the attention of Col. Cook in command of the recruiting depot at David’s Island, who wrote me that he was having recruits taught to sing our national air. I suggested he concentrate his instruction on the Star Spangled Banner.”

Carlton also wrote that later, during a meeting in Harrisburg with Pennsylvania Gov. Daniel H. Hastings, that the governor promised he would initiate the playing of the Star Spangled Banner among the state’s militia.

The most decisive support came during a meeting between Carlton and Secretary of War Daniel Lamont, with the two speaking about the custom. Before long,



Above: Officers of the 8th Cavalry in Fort Meade, S.D. in 1892. Photo courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society



Right: A photograph of Fort Meade with Bear Butte in the distance. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Lamont ordered that the Star Spangled Banner be played during evening retreats across the nation.

Nearly 40 years after Fort Meade’s first Star Spangled Banner rendition, Congress in 1931 declared it the national anthem.

Today, visitors to Fort Meade can stand near the place where that custom began. A historical marker near the parade ground bears the words “It Started Here,” connecting the South Dakota fort to the story of the national anthem.

“That flagpole that they lowered the flag down from for that event is still standing at Fort Meade, and still used,” Bender said.

For Bender, who grew up at Fort Meade while his father worked at the

VA hospital and mother served on the museum board, the historic post still carries the feel of another era.

“When you visit Fort Meade, it’s like stepping back in time,” Bender said.

Many visitors are surprised to learn about Fort Meade’s place in the anthem’s history.

“It’s one of those things we just take for granted that we have a national anthem,” Bender said, “We never stopped to think about how these things came to be. But every one of those stories had to start at some point, and the national anthem story got its start in Fort Meade, South Dakota.”

The Fort Meade museum is open from mid-May through the end of September 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday.



# SMARTHUB: YOUR PAPERLESS BILLING SOLUTION

## TIRED OF MAIL DELAYS? REVIEW YOUR STATEMENT THE DAY IT'S READY WITH SMARTHUB!

We've all felt it lately. That disgruntled feeling of not receiving your mail on time, your mail not making it to its destination on time, or worse - *never* making it.

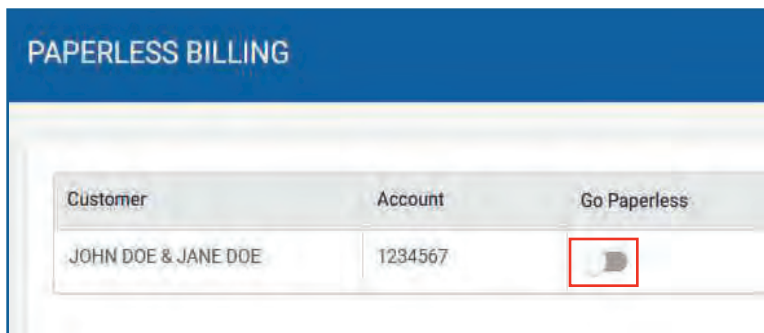
Members have been reaching out for solutions, and while we offer a variety of ways to pay, the simplest way to make sure you receive your statement is through FEM's payment portal, SmartHub.

If you do not already have SmartHub, you can sign up by visiting [www.femelectric.coop](http://www.femelectric.coop), or downloading the SmartHub app on your phone. Once you've signed up, you can turn on paperless billing where you receive a notification when your bill is available via email. We've provided the steps below to turn on paperless billing.

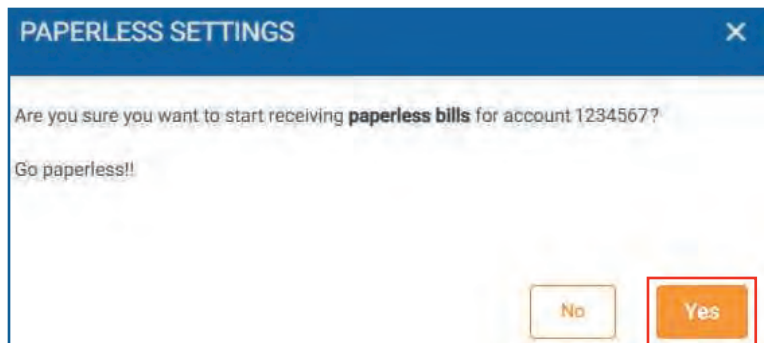
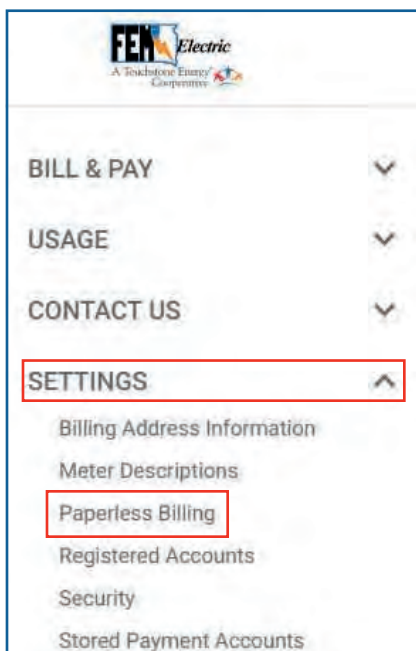
First, login to your SmartHub account. Then move to the settings section, and click the arrow to expand the section. You will want to select "Paperless

Billing" from the available options.

On the "Paperless Billing" screen, you will see your customer name, account number, and the "Go Paperless" toggle turned off. Click or tap the toggle to switch it to the on position (it will turn blue).



A pop up will appear named "Paperless Settings: This is where you will confirm that you want to receive your statements via email. Click "yes" to go paperless!



Going forward, you will receive a notification email from FEM Electric through SmartHub stating that your bill is available. In that email, you will be able to jump to SmartHub to view your total and your statement if you wish.

You can also set up automatic payments through SmartHub. Save time, save money, and avoid the stress of paying bills with FEM's payment portal, SmartHub!

# Electrical Safety *around* Water

*Prevent*  
shocks around  
pools, hot tubs and  
spas before  
they happen.



- Use a qualified electrician for any new pool, hot tub or spa wiring.
- Use covered outdoor outlets.
- Make sure outlets are GFCI-protected and tested monthly.
- Keep cords away from water. Don't use extension cords for pool equipment.
- Replace cracked outlet covers, frayed cords, loose plugs or damaged equipment.
- Choose battery-operated and waterproof TVs, radios and speakers.
- Don't handle phones, tablets, laptops or charging cords when you're wet, and keep them away from pools, spas and sinks.
- Check power line clearance with an electrician or your utility when installing pools, spas and structures like diving boards; and have utilities marked before digging.
- Schedule periodic electrical inspections and upgrades for your equipment.
- Have an electrician show you how to shut off all power in an emergency and make sure the shut-off switch is labeled.

**Know the risks: Wet skin + wet surfaces = increased risk when electricity is present.**

## **Warning signs of shock in the water:**

- Tingling sensation.
- Muscle cramps.
- Restricted movement.

## **If you suspect electrical shock:**

- Turn off all power immediately.
- Do NOT enter the water to rescue anyone.
- Use a non-conductive rescue tool (such as fiberglass).
- Call 911.

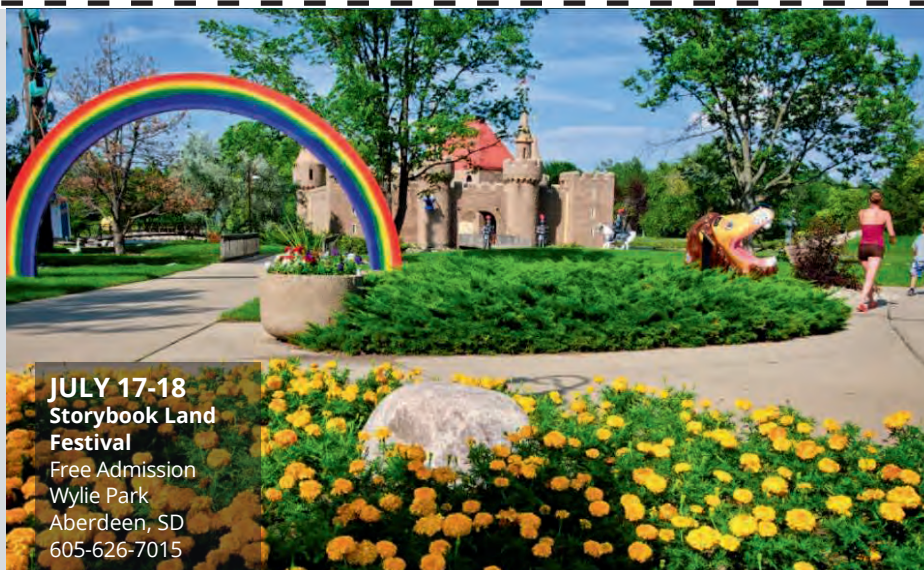
**If you feel a shock in the water, move away from the source and get out.**

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



**JULY 17-18**  
**Storybook Land Festival**  
Free Admission  
Wylie Park  
Aberdeen, SD  
605-626-7015

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

**JULY 2-4**  
**USA 250th Celebration at Mount Rushmore**  
Rapid City, SD  
[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

**JULY 3**  
**City of Eureka Celebration: USA 250th Anniversary**  
3 p.m.-11 p.m.  
Eureka, SD  
605-284-2441

**JULY 4**  
**Fishing Derby & Fireworks**  
Lake Farley Park  
Milbank, SD  
605-432-6656

**JULY 11**  
**40th Annual Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon & 5K**  
Start: 7 a.m., Savoy, SD  
End: City Park, Spearfish, SD  
Register: [www.nhcasa.org](http://www.nhcasa.org)

**JULY 18**  
**A Celebration of Johnny Cash**  
7 p.m.  
Gayville Hall  
Gayville, SD

**JULY 18**  
**Forever Simon & Garfunkel**  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**JULY 18-19**  
**10th Annual Charles Mix Saddle Club SDRA Rodeo**  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2763

**JULY 24-26**  
**Bruce Honey Days**  
Bruce, SD  
605-627-5671

**JULY 24-26**  
**Winner Elks 57th Annual Rodeo to Benefit LifeScape**  
7 p.m.  
Tripp County Fairgrounds  
Winner, SD

**JULY 25**  
**Planes, Trains & Automobiles**  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**JULY 30**  
**Spurs Grand Classic Equestrian Competition**  
9 a.m.  
Aberdeen, SD  
605-226-1099

**AUG. 1-2**  
**51st Annual Pioneer Power Threshing Show**  
MN Machinery Museum  
Hanley Falls, MN  
507-828-5437

**AUG. 4-6**  
**Farmfest 2026**  
8-a.m.-4 p.m.  
Gilfillan Estate  
28269 MN Hwy. 67  
Morgan, MN  
[ideagroup.com/farmfest](http://ideagroup.com/farmfest)

**AUG. 7-9**  
**Fur Trader Days**  
NEW Art in the Park  
Geddes, SD  
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

**AUG. 9**  
**Czech Heritage Festival**  
8-a.m.-4 p.m.  
Brechyn, MN  
320-522-1218

**AUG. 22**  
**2026 Yankton Bull Riding**  
7:30 p.m.  
Yankton Rodeo Grounds  
Yankton, SD  
605-760-4217

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**