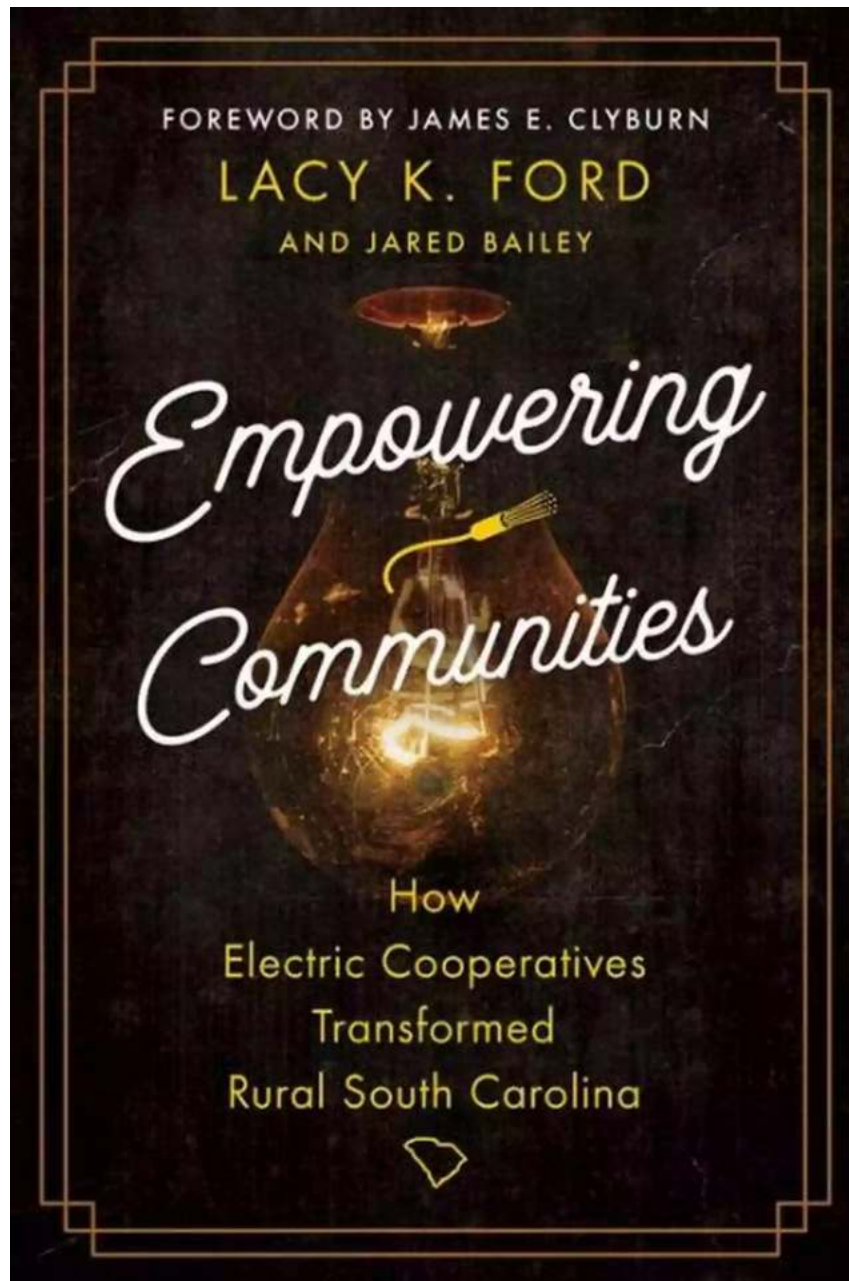


How Electric Cooperatives Transformed Rural South Carolina

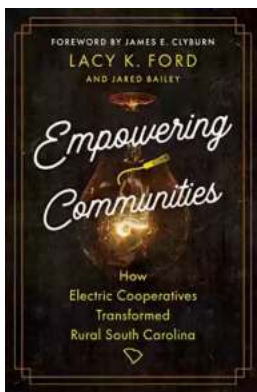


Rural South Carolina has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past few decades, thanks to the efforts of electric cooperatives. These organizations have played a pivotal role in bringing modern infrastructure and reliable electricity

to countless communities across the state, empowering residents and boosting economic growth in the process.

The Road to Revolutionizing Rural Life

Before electric cooperatives arrived on the scene, rural areas of South Carolina were often left in the dark, quite literally. While cities and towns enjoyed the benefits of electricity, those living in the countryside had to rely on kerosene lamps and candles to light their homes after the sun went down.



Empowering Communities: How Electric Cooperatives Transformed Rural South Carolina

by Lacy K. Ford (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2603 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 232 pages



However, the establishment of electric cooperatives in the mid-20th century brought about a radical change. These cooperatives, formed by local residents who pooled their resources, set out to bring electricity to their own communities and improve their quality of life.

The Power of Community Collaboration

Electric cooperatives operate on a unique business model, one that prioritizes collaboration and community engagement. Being member-owned organizations,

cooperatives are accountable to their communities and strive to meet their specific needs.

Through democratic governance, members of electric cooperatives actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring that their interests are represented. This inclusivity helps cooperatives identify the challenges faced by rural areas and tailor their services accordingly.

Bringing Light to Rural Homes

Access to electricity has revolutionized rural households throughout South Carolina. No longer reliant on candles and kerosene lamps, families now have bright and safe lighting options. Electric cooperatives have made it possible for residents to enjoy the benefits of modern appliances, such as refrigerators, washing machines, and air conditioning.

These advancements not only enhance the comfort and convenience of daily life but also contribute to improved health and well-being. Access to refrigeration allows residents to store perishable foods, reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses. Similarly, the availability of air conditioning helps combat extreme heat and ensures a comfortable living environment, particularly for the elderly and young children.

Empowering Economic Growth

Electric cooperatives have not only brightened homes in rural South Carolina but have also illuminated the path to economic growth. By electrifying these areas, cooperatives have attracted industries and businesses that were previously deterred by the lack of infrastructure.

With reliable electricity in place, businesses can thrive and create employment opportunities for the local population. The electrification of rural communities has served as a catalyst for economic development, fostering entrepreneurship and reducing the need for residents to travel long distances to find work.

Bridging the Digital Divide

In today's world, access to the internet is a necessity. Unfortunately, many rural areas still lack reliable broadband connections, isolating residents from economic and educational opportunities. Electric cooperatives recognized this digital divide and have undertaken efforts to bridge the gap.

By leveraging their existing infrastructure, cooperatives have begun to provide broadband services to rural communities. This initiative not only improves connectivity but also enables remote workers, students, and entrepreneurs to participate fully in the digital age.

Continuing the Cooperative Spirit

The impact of electric cooperatives has been significant, transforming rural South Carolina into thriving and connected communities. However, the work is far from over. These cooperatives continue to innovate and expand their services to meet the evolving needs of their members.

By embracing renewable energy sources, electric cooperatives play a crucial role in promoting environmental sustainability and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. They are actively investing in solar, wind, and hydroelectric projects, bringing cleaner and greener energy to rural areas across the state.

A Bright Future Ahead

Electric cooperatives have revolutionized rural South Carolina, illuminating homes, energizing local economies, and bridging the digital divide. Their commitment to community engagement, innovation, and sustainability ensures that the cooperative spirit will continue to shine brightly across the state.

Seven Cooperative Principles

VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP
Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL
Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

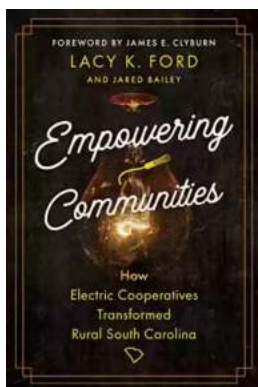
MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION
Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least should be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative, and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE
Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION
Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES
Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY
While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.



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Early in the twentieth century, for-profit companies such as Duke Power and South Carolina Electric and Gas brought electricity to populous cities and towns across South Carolina, while rural areas remained in the dark. It was not until the advent of publicly owned electric cooperatives in the 1930s that the South Carolina countryside was gradually introduced to the conveniences of life with electricity. Today, electric cooperatives serve more than a quarter of South Carolina's citizens and more than seventy percent of the state's land area, bringing not only power but also high-speed broadband to rural communities.

The rise of "public" power—electricity serviced by member-owned cooperatives and sanctioned by federal and state legislation—is a complicated saga encompassing politics, law, finance, and rural economic development. *Empowering Communities* examines how the cooperatives helped bring fundamental and transformational change to the lives of rural people in South Carolina, from light to broadband.

James E. Clyburn, the majority whip of the U.S. House of Representatives from South Carolina, provides a foreword.



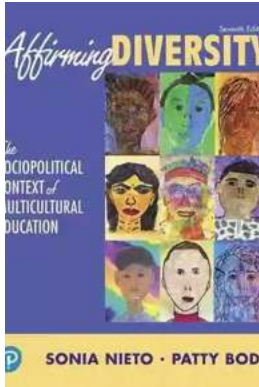
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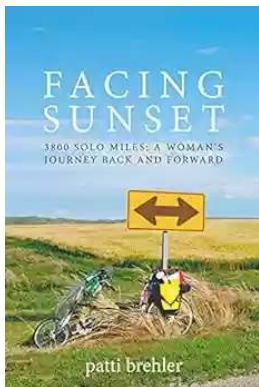
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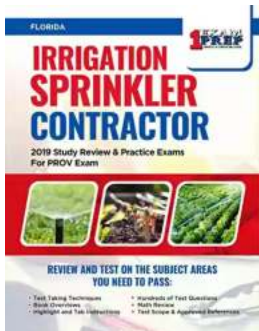
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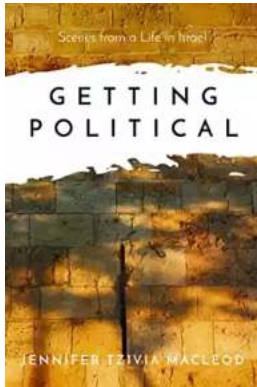
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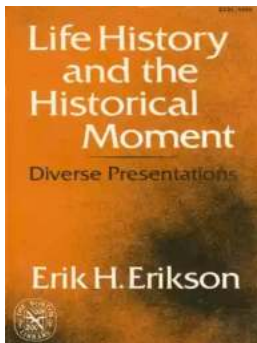
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