

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Sullivan County REC

P.O. Box 65
Forksville, PA 18616
570-924-3381
1-800-570-5081
Email: screc@epix.net
Website: www.screc.com

Staff

Craig A. Harting, CEO
Dennis Klem, Manager,
Finance and Administration
Walt Tubach, Manager,
Electric Operations
Diane E. White, Executive Assistant

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Office Hours

Monday through Friday
7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

From the CEO



Could it happen here?

By Craig A. Harting

WE SAW what happened in Texas with record cold and the loss of power. Some of you are wondering, “Could it happen here?” The short answer is yes, BUT it already has, so we believe we are better prepared than they were.

What happened in Texas? Obviously, it was the weather plus a combination of things that created this catastrophe. Record cold temperatures shot up electrical demand and a number of power plants went off-line. These included wind turbines, coal plants, natural gas plants and even a nuclear plant.

Some of the wind turbines froze up and some kept turning. Coal piles froze and natural gas lines froze up. There was a shortage of natural gas to some power plants. The water intake for the nuclear plant froze up and briefly stopped it. Basically, the plants weren’t winterized for this level of cold.

Texas also has a deregulated energy market where you can choose your electricity supplier, but suppliers weren’t on the hook to supply during peak demands. An even bigger problem is that Texas is an island grid and it cannot import power from other areas.

Polar vortex

In January 2014, we experienced the polar vortex, and some of the PJM power plants in our grid froze up and quit working. We were able to avoid rolling blackouts by importing power and load management efforts, but it was close.

PJM revised the way power plants are paid for being available, but they also strengthened penalties for not being available. This seems to have been a major weakness in the Texas market with little incentive to winterize power plants.


No name 2015

Here’s something you didn’t know. Pennsylvania is a summer peaking state just like Texas. So every winter some plants are taken down for maintenance and improvements. Of course when they are torn apart, then they can’t be quickly put back together to run.

In the winter of 2015 we experienced an even more severe weather event than in 2014 although it didn’t get a name. Fortunately, the PJM grid changes worked and there were no shortages or rolling blackouts.

Again, our markets are set up differently and we are able to import from other areas, which is critically important. We do the same thing on our distribution grid when we are sometimes able to bring power in from other areas.

Need a plan

But we can never say never. You always need a backup plan plus a backup plan B because a real catastrophe could strike us in spite of our best-laid plans. By the way, we stock generator switches, so give us a call if you are interested in getting one of those — just in case it happens here. 

Sherlock Holmes and me throughout the years

By John Zelewicz
Penn Lines Writer

“DR. WATSON, Mr. Sherlock Holmes.” A simple introduction in a story titled “A Study in Scarlet” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. And yet the introduction of these two fictional characters launched a collection of stories, plays and movies that have thrilled people since its publication in *Becton’s Christmas Annual* in 1887. Doyle would go on to write 56 short stories and four novels about this dynamic duo.

Of course, Doyle isn’t the only writer who created well-known and loved fictional detective characters. You have your hard-boiled detectives like Sam Spade in “The Maltese Falcon.” The disheveled but sharp-as-a-tack detective, Lt. Columbo, with his wrinkled overcoat and the well-known catchphrase, “Just one more thing ...” Then you have time-tested detectives like Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot, brought to life by Agatha Christie.

Growing up, I spent many hours reading how Holmes, along with his loyal friend and biographer, Dr. John Watson, solved cases that were unsolvable by the local police of Scotland Yard.

Due to the popularity of Doyle’s creation, it wasn’t long before plays were being produced. One of the



ONLINE AUCTION PIECES: Thanks to online auction sites, I was able to purchase signed and numbered prints by the artist who designed the covers for two Sherlock Holmes stories.

earliest portrayals of Holmes was by William Gillette. He played Holmes on the Broadway stage in 1899 in a play titled simply “Sherlock Holmes.” Since then, many actors have played the part, everyone from Leonard Nimoy to Boris Karloff and Charlton Heston.

One of the most famous actors to portray Holmes in movies was Basil Rathbone, with Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson. Later, PBS had Jeremy Brett play the role of Holmes. Many believe

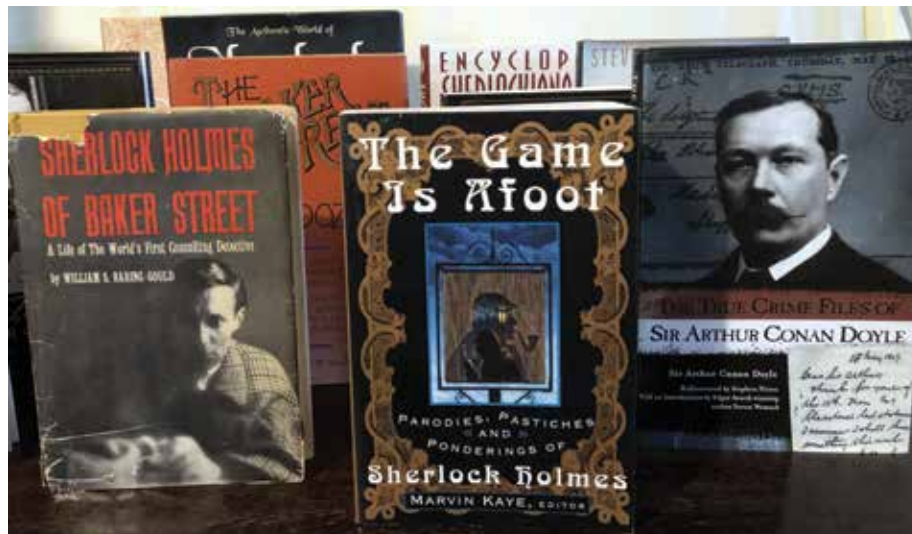
that Brett’s portrayal of Holmes was the closest to Doyle’s character. Benedict Cumberbatch portrayed Holmes with Martin Freeman as Watson for the BBC from 2010 – 2017. Robert Downey Jr. portrayed Holmes (with Jude Law as Watson) in “Sherlock Holmes” and “Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows.”

Love of Holmes leads to book collection

People collect a wide variety of items, everything from stamps to trading cards, unicorns, Star Trek figures, dolls or perhaps even pet rocks (if you remember pet rocks, you’re showing your age).

But as is often the case, people grow tired of collecting something. Prized items that once adorned a shelf are put away in a box and eventually sit forgotten and collecting dust in some closet or attic. And so it was with me and Sherlock Holmes. I collected every Sherlock Holmes book I could find. Eventually though, I got interested in reading other types of literature and got rid of the Sherlock Holmes books.

Time went by, but then one day fate intervened and rekindled my interest



BOOK COLLECTION: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote 56 short stories and four novels about Holmes, but there are also numerous other books written about Holmes and Doyle by other authors.

in Holmes. Years after getting rid of my Sherlock Holmes books, I was at a yard sale and saw “The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes” by Doyle. When I opened it, I found my name written on the inside. That chance encounter got me interested in Doyle’s works once more and eventually led me to collect other Sherlock Holmes items.

You may think that picking up Sherlock Holmes items would be a piece of cake. Simply go out to the web, click on one of the many online auctions and just start building your collection.

When I first seriously started collecting Sherlock Holmes memorabilia I didn’t have a personal computer. And once I got one, there wasn’t much I could do with it because there was no internet available at the time.

Most of the early items I collected were found in catalogs or at yard sales. Back in the mid- to late-1980s people in the United States weren’t that interested in Sherlock Holmes. That meant it was very difficult to find pieces to add to my collection. But over time, Holmes became more popular.

Go to an online auction site today, and you’ll find a wide range of items. Recently, one search showed around 53,000 items for sale.

When I first started collecting, I



FAMOUS CHARACTER: Although there have been many famous detectives written about and depicted in plays, television shows and movies, one of the most well-known and loved characters of all times is Mr. Sherlock Holmes of 221B, Baker Street.

wasn’t looking for any particular items, but I kept an eye out for more unusual pieces. Over time, I picked up everything from a Sherlock Holmes cigarette card, Holmes teapot, pipes, books, VCR tapes, and DVDs, to “Star Trek The Next Generation” figures of Lt. Data as Holmes and Geordi LaForge as Watson.

Price depends upon rarity and interest

How much does Sherlock Holmes memorabilia go for? A lot depends upon the rarity and how much interest

there is in an item. As the old saying goes, something is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it. One online auction recently had the first edition of “The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes,” published in 1892, available for sale. The asking price was only \$15,000. If that’s a wee bit out of your price range, how about a Sherlock Holmes 2019 Great Britain 50 Pence? It can be yours for around \$9,000.

Of course, many items can be purchased for a reasonable price. I don’t think I’ve ever spent more than \$50 on any one piece. I never looked for a particular item. I just bought whatever caught my eye if I liked it. I never purchased anything with the thought that it would be an investment.

It’s always been my intention to divide the collection between my two boys. Someday, when they can find the time, I’ll get everything out and let them decide what they would like to have. Who knows, there may be a couple of pieces that I find I’m unable to part with. Some pieces were given to me as gifts over the years and therefore have a sentimental attachment.

The fascination with Sherlock Holmes seems to only grow stronger over time. He’s so popular that many organizations and societies have been formed to pay honor to Doyle and his famous detective. One such society is The Baker Street Irregulars. This society was formed in 1934 by Christopher Morley. Morley was born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. This, however, wasn’t the first society formed by Morley. At the age of 12, Morley along with three friends formed a group known as “The Sign of the Four.”

If you like a good mystery I’d suggest picking up one of the Sherlock Holmes books written by Doyle. But be careful — you may find yourself lost in a back street of London with fog so thick you can barely see your hand in front of your face. Dark shadows of indistinct figures pass by you. But rest assured, you’ll know things are well in hand when the quiet of the street is broken by Holmes exclaiming, “The game is afoot!” 🕵️



PART OF THE COLLECTION: The list of items I have collected relating to Sherlock Holmes is large and varied. Here are just a few of the items in my Sherlock Holmes collection.

From the Operations Department

By Walter Tubach

I AM SO GLAD 2020 is in the rear-view mirror. With the entire political hubbub, the pandemic, and trying to balance the workload and keep all employees healthy, it has been very difficult, to say the least. We are lucky as only a couple of employees have had positive tests for COVID-19. The co-op has worked hard at ensuring our employees wear masks, social distance and work in separate crews, so when we did receive a positive test, we did not have to worry about losing the entire staff. Because we have only 19 employees, it would have been devastating to our members if this would have happened. I've had numerous people ask me what our plans are in the event we had to deal with numerous employees off because of COVID-19.

My response is, "The cooperative family of rural electric cooperatives across the state would have helped us out with linemen for outages, and the office personnel have the capability to log into the system from their home, so we could have made it through for a couple weeks until we had healthy employees return to work."

That is the beauty of being a rural electric co-op; we can always count on our sister co-ops to come help, or we go there in the event of an emergency situation. So you can rest easy and know that we do have a plan in place even though our hope is that we do not have to use it.

This article will be an overview of 2020 outages and problems. We receive electricity delivered over Penelec lines at our substations in Laporte, Dushore, Estella and Kellyburg. Our Mill Creek Substation near Heilman Road is served by PPL lines. The Kellyburg Substation experienced the most power supply outages with 12. The

Mill Creek Substation is our most reliable, and it has been a number of years since we experienced a power supply outage at that substation. Our Estella and Dushore substations experienced four power supply outages each and the Laporte Substation experienced five power supply outages. The total outage time our members experienced from power supply outages was over one-third of the total outage time last year! The total average outage time per member was 9.4 hours with power supply accounting for 3.6 of those hours. We can only hope that power supply will be improved over the course of this year so reliability will be better for you.

During the year, I scheduled 43 planned outages to replace bad insulators, broken cutouts and bad poles. I try very hard to repair or replace items as we find them so we do not have to look for the problem in the middle of the night when it would take three times longer to find and repair. Preventive maintenance is very critical to providing reliable service to you, and we will continue to do our best to see that happen.

On our system of over 900 miles of line and 21,000 poles across the three counties we serve, equipment failures caused 56 outages. This equipment can be anything from a transformer going bad to an insulator breaking down.

Weather played another part with lightning causing five outages, high wind causing 14 outages, and ice and snow causing 13 outages. Animals coming into contact with the lines caused 21 outages, while member, public, and vehicle accidents caused 23 outages.

One hundred and five outages occurred due to a tree falling on the lines. This occurred even after the three Spako Tree brushing crews cut 11,812 trees and trimmed over 7,400 trees. Trees will always be the largest cause of outages on our system, but

we will continue to work at keeping the lines cleared the best we can.

This year, we will continue to rebuild lines, replace poles, continue our right-of-way program and work each day to improve the service to you. Remember, you are a member of the cooperative and we work for you, delivering reliable electricity to you at the lowest possible cost.

I hope that you have enjoyed reading this article about your electric system and the projects we will be working on.

Please remember that we are only a phone call away if you need assistance. Stay healthy and safe! 🌞

Please send in your ballot

THE 2021 Director Election ballot was sent out for the three districts up for election this year, as well as the special election for vacant District 7.

Please vote for all of the districts and send your ballot back to us by Wednesday, May 19, in the blue envelope that was enclosed with the ballot. You may drop them off at the office provided they are received by 10:30 a.m. on May 19.

Do not include any payments or other correspondence because the blue envelopes will not be opened until May 19.

2021 election districts up for election and the people seeking to serve in those districts are:

District 3 – James F. Lambert
Noreen R. Keeney

District 4 – Jeffrey S. Hamilton

District 8 – David L. Aumen

District 7 – David R. Rakestraw
(Special Election)

Remember, all members vote for directors in all districts.

Thank you for your participation in this important activity. 🌞



Walter Tubach
Manager, Electric
Operations