

# The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas history

*The Rural Electrification Administration begins bringing electricity to rural Texas*

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On March 9, 1936, a 58-mile power line near Bartlett, Texas, was energized, according to some sources the first in the nation under the Rural Electrification Administration. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt began the REA in May 1935, only about 2 percent of the farms in Texas (and only about 10 percent nationally) had electricity. The REA was originally intended to be a large-scale depression relief agency like the Work Projects Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, but became a lending agency instead with the passage of legislation cosponsored by Sam Rayburn.

The \$33,000 loan to a group of farmers at Bartlett was one of the first 10 loans made by the REA. The REA had an incalculable impact on life in rural Texas, especially in the Panhandle, which had become something of a proving ground for New Deal programs thanks to the influence of Marvin Jones, chairman of the House Agricultural Committee.

The REA first brought electric power to the rural Panhandle in Deaf Smith County in 1937. By 1965, instead of only 2 percent of Texas farms with electricity, there were only 2 percent without electricity.