

# Decades of INNOVATION: 1930s–1940s



Our journey begins.

But before we talk about technological or engineering innovations, we need to explore a business innovation that made all the others possible.

Our countryside was dark. Ever since the 1920s, city dwellers in nearby Monroe had enjoyed the convenience of electric power. For residents of Atlanta, electricity was common as early as the late 1800s.

The electric companies, however, had little interest in serving sparse rural areas. There wasn't enough profit. Even with cheap loans from the federal government, there were no takers.

The people who were ignored decided to do it themselves. Seven Walton County community leaders established the Walton Electrical Association that later became the Walton Electric Membership Corporation.

And who owned this company? The same people that it served. This innovation of self-ownership – a cooperative – proved to be wildly successful and is as viable today as it was 90 years ago.

As for technological innovations in these early days, anything is an innovation when you start from scratch. A single lightbulb hanging from a drop cord in the middle of a room. A refrigerator that did away with the wooden ice box. A well pump that pushed water to a spigot head over a kitchen sink.

We consider these innovations low-tech today, but they changed life dramatically. Living in the country would never be the same.

## COVER PHOTOS:

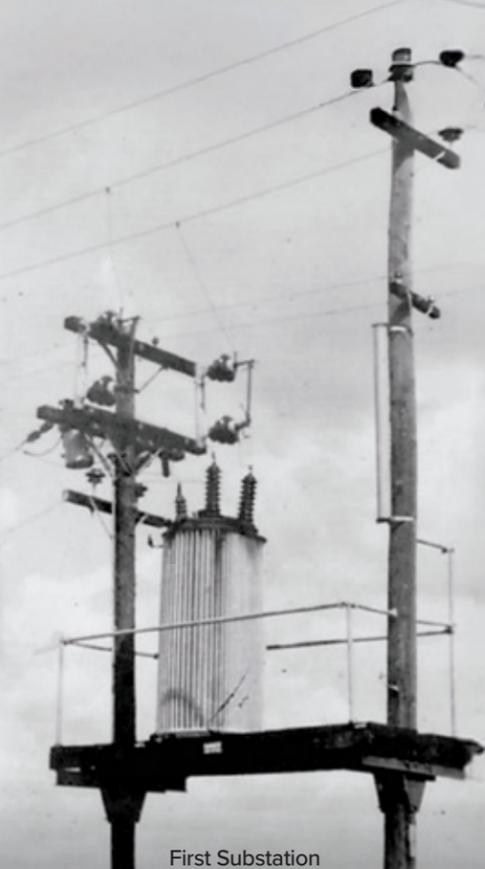
Compare Walton EMC's first substation (circa 1936) that served just a few accounts to today's Bethabara substation that serves more than 5,000 accounts.

FEBRUARY 2026

# REALITE

Walton EMC

90 Years  
1936–2026



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Walton EMC

waltonemc.com

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### quick guide

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WHEN WE'RE AVAILABLE  
Power Outages and Emergencies > 24/7  
Contact Center > M-F, 7A-7P  
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### our leaders

President and CEO Ron Marshall  
Senior VP Corporate Services Russell DeLong  
Senior VP Walton Energy and External Affairs Jim Bottone  
VP Engineering and Operations Tim Morris  
VP Power Supply Hudson Kingery  
VP Finance Darlene Butler  
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©2026 Walton EMC is a customer-owned power company. That means our cooperative focuses on service, not profit. We serve more than 135,000 accounts in Athens-Clarke, Barrow, DeKalb, Greene, Gwinnett, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Rockdale and Walton Counties.

Our subsidiaries supply natural gas and security services.

# TAP THE APP

Be in control of your power wherever you go!

On-the-go, secure access to:

- Review & pay bills
- Report outages
- Check energy use
- Schedule alerts
- Manage your account

Download it for free! Search for myWaltonEMC in your phone's app store. Log in with your Walton EMC account information.



MyWaltonEMC

# MYTHBUSTER

## WALTON EMC EDITION

Walton EMC's energy advisors are local experts who provide honest, straightforward solutions to help with your questions and concerns. We asked them to dispel a few tall tales about electricity use to help you get the most out of your energy.



**MYTH:** The higher I set the thermostat, the faster my home will heat up.

**FACT:** The system runs at full power regardless. Set the thermostat to your desired temp to stay comfortable and save energy.

**MYTH:** The auxiliary setting on my thermostat is for a quick heat-up of my house.

**FACT:** Auxiliary heat is a secondary, less-efficient heating source that should be used only in a genuine emergency. Prolonged or unnecessary use of auxiliary heat can cost about two to five times as much as running normal heat.

**MYTH:** Turning off electronics stops energy use.

**FACT:** Most electronics still draw "phantom power" (standby energy) when plugged in. They suck up roughly 10% of the electricity used in the average home. Unplugging or using smart strips is best.

**MYTH:** Sealing air leaks around doors and windows isn't worth the trouble.

**FACT:** Drafts can waste 5% to 30% of your energy use. One of the best ways to lower your winter energy bill is to seal leaks with easy-to-install weatherstripping and caulking.



**MYTH:** Space heaters are an energy-efficient way to heat my home.

**FACT:** Portable space heaters are energy hogs that can cause a surprising hit to your electricity bill.

**MYTH:** There's no difference in generic charging cables and the more expensive ones that come with the original equipment.

**FACT:** Using cheap, uncertified generic phone chargers is risky and not recommended, as they can cause overheating, battery damage, electric shock, and even fires, potentially voiding your device's warranty.

**MYTH:** The temperature setting on my electric water heater doesn't significantly affect my electric bill.

**FACT:** Many conventional water heaters are set to 140° by installers, but most households don't need that much steam, and end up paying for it. Lowering the temperature to the warm setting (120°) can reduce your water heating costs by up to 10%.

**MYTH:** The ENERGY STAR labels on major home appliances, like refrigerators, are just advertising.

**FACT:** The ENERGY STAR certification indicates appliances that are energy efficient. Compared to models with no efficiency rating, they can reduce your average monthly electric bill.



## Giving for Good

Walton EMC's member-funded community assistance program, Operation Round Up (ORU), pours funds into organizations that fill vital roles in local towns and counties.

They include organizations like recent ORU grant recipient Global Growers Network, Georgians who preserve agriculture heritage and land sustainability by planting, tending and harvesting community food gardens. Through their AgriCULTURE Connects program, network participants offer engaging, educational and team-building programs to build awareness of regenerative agriculture and its role in the production of fresh foods.

Thanks to the work of groups like Global Growers Network, the cooperative principle of neighbors helping neighbors continues.

### RECENT GRANTS

**Athens Parent Wellbeing** – Mental health support for perinatal parents

**Canopy Studio** – Movement education/performance classes scholarships

**Freedom Path Counseling** – Mental health counseling for all ages

**Global Growers Network** – Support for education/outreach programs

**Hope 139 House** – Safe housing for single mothers and children

**Magenta Momz Inc.** – Mental health support for caregivers of special needs children

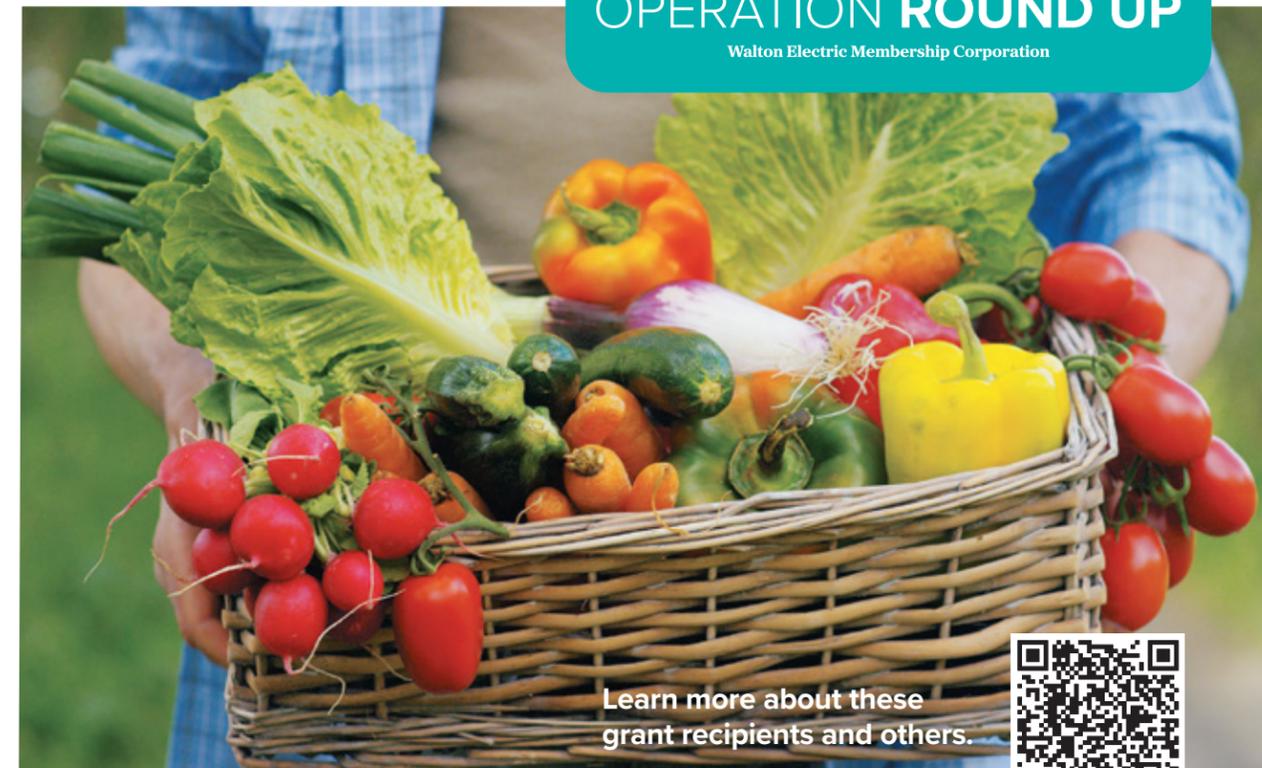
**Mercy Health Center** – Medical care for uninsured adults

**Skye Precious Kids** – Equipment and therapeutic support for children with life-threatening diseases and disabilities

**Walton Empowers** – Recovery treatment program scholarships

## OPERATION ROUND UP

Walton Electric Membership Corporation



Learn more about these grant recipients and others.

