

Dirt Roads to Downtown

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

Photographer **Mark Fox** explored all 53 of North Dakota's counties over five years to collate a photographic journal, "Dirt Roads to Downtown."



From Adams County to Williams County and the 51 in-between, photographer Mark Fox made it his goal to photograph all the counties in North Dakota. What started as a labor of love and homage to his home state slowly evolved into the idea of "Dirt Roads to Downtown," a photography book showcasing each county in North Dakota.

Fox was born and raised on a farm outside of Cando. He grew up as a typical farm kid, who helped his parents tend to the fields and raise pigs. Fox loved the outdoors and as far back as he can recall, he always enjoyed taking photos of people and nature, but never thought about it seriously until college. Fox still holds tight to one of the first photographs he captured around the age of 12, an image of a tornado on the North Dakota prairie just outside his doorstep.

"I remember my mother pulling on my arm to get back inside the house," Fox recalled. "As I was getting pulled back inside, I was yelling, 'No, one more shot!'" It was a precursor to other adventures with his camera.

After graduating from North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton with a degree in graphic arts in 1979, he moved to Colorado with adventure on his mind.

Right away, the greenhand photographer secured a job at a newspaper as a photojournalist. Although Fox enjoyed his job, he had a strong urge of wanderlust and started to travel. During his travels, he spent time as a landscaper and bartender before returning to photography.

"I decided it was time to get serious about photography," he said, so he enrolled at the Art Institute of Colorado in Denver, graduating in 1986 with an associate degree in photography.

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MARCH 2023

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A herd of buffalo included the spiritual white buffalo in Jamestown, Stutsman County. March 2019.

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After a two-year stint in California working at a newspaper, he found his way back to Colorado. Over the years, Fox worked for various daily newspapers in the Rocky Mountains. Fox put himself where the action was. Whether it was standing on the side of a mountain in a snowstorm, on the sideline of a Denver Broncos game or documenting a community event, he always got the shot.

Nearly a quarter-century accumulating images from Summit County and beyond sparked the idea to put together a photojournalistic book of his work. His first publication, titled “Colorado’s High Country,” was published in 2011, and Volume II succeeded in 2015.

During his years in Colorado, Fox traveled home to Cando multiple times a year, always stopping along the roadside to capture whatever called to him. On one of his trips back, it hit him. Why not photograph every county in North Dakota?

“Perhaps it had been done before, but not by me! And most likely not in the photojournalistic style that has defined my work for more than three decades,” Fox said.

In 2019, after five years of traveling, planning and scheduling, Fox covered his home state end to end and top to bottom. He has captured small-town events, found oddities along the open highway, and discovered beauty in the old that at one time was new.

What started as a personal goal resulted in his third photographic journal. With two books under his belt, he felt he could do his home state justice.

“I titled the project ‘Dirt Roads to Downtown,’

because that’s basically what it’s been,” Fox said.

He describes projects like these as “never-ending,” and felt he had to cover some areas multiple times. As you flip through the book, most counties have photographs dated in two to four different years.

With hundreds of photographs to cull and sort, Fox put together 253 pages of over 500 images of North Dakota’s best features. In the book, you can find images of quiet prairies in Kidder County, a moment of excitement at a rodeo in Richland County and a bartender working at a local watering hole in Eddy County, just to name a few.

“Not every photo is brochure material, but I like to think every photo has a story to tell – a sum of all parts,” Fox said.

“Dirt Roads to Downtown” was released in November 2022.

“I got great responses,” Fox said. “It makes me feel good to be from here and show off the state. There is a lot to offer.”

Fox said this project has “tugged on his heartstrings” and has played a part in wanting to return to the Peace Garden state. After 43 years away, Fox now calls Cando home once again.

For inquiries and questions regarding purchasing or distribution of “Dirt Roads to Downtown,” contact Mint Brand Marketing at 701-371-8369. You can also purchase online by searching “Pediment/Dirt Roads to Downtown.” ■



PHOTOS BY MARK FOX/DIRT ROADS TO DOWNTOWN



The rising sun across the prairie near the Walsh/Ramsey county lines. October 2018.



Summer storm clouds roll across the sky as seen looking down Main Street Cando in Towner County. July 2000.



A bull comes out of chute No. 3 with all fours off the ground during the annual Abercrombie Rodeo in Richland County as part of Aber Days. July 2018.



Farm auctions bring people together around the state each summer, including this one in Esmond in Benson County. 2017.



A trio of barns stands in contrast to sunflowers east of Fessenden, Wells County. August 2021.



Interested in running for the board of directors?

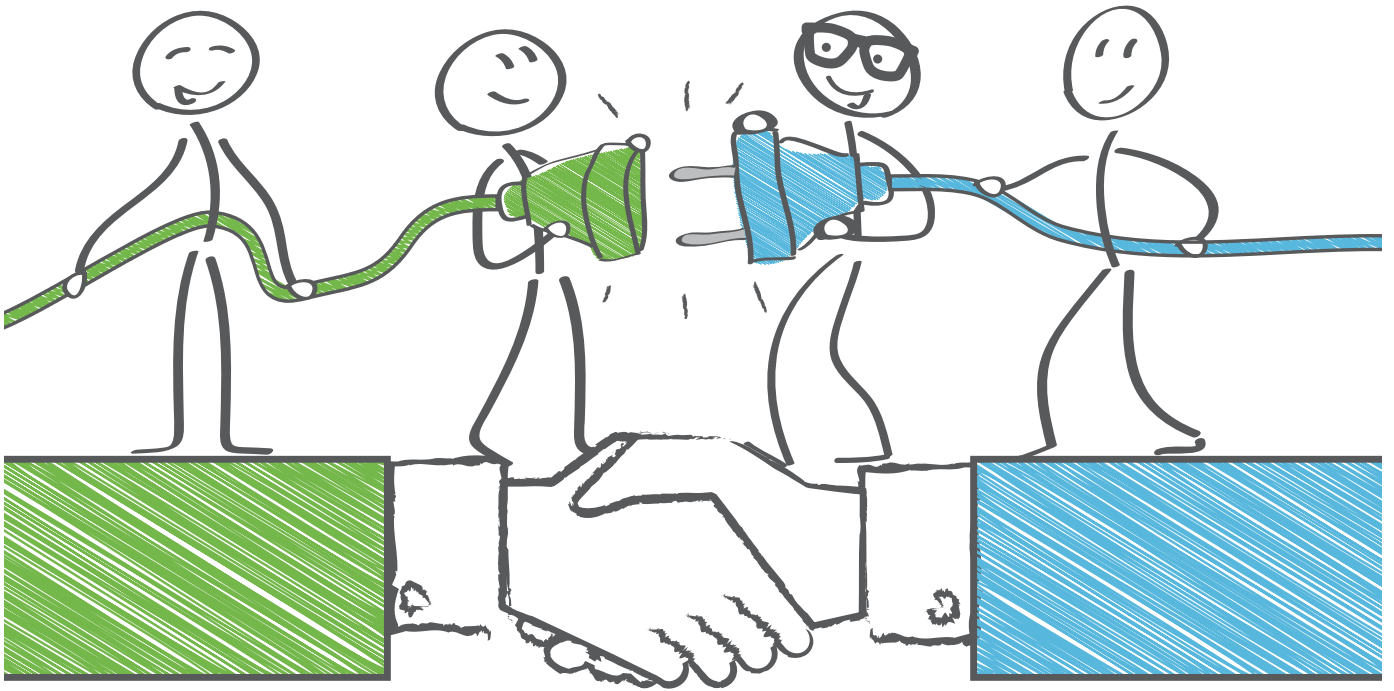
Nine board members make up the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's (NPEC) board that sets policies and makes decisions to guide the cooperative into the future. With the annual meeting just a few short months away, now is the time for members to start thinking about whether they have the time and desire to serve their electric cooperative.

The board meets on the fourth Monday of each month to make decisions regarding budget, policy, rates and other co-op business. Meetings alternate between the Carrington and Cando offices and typically last a good share of the day. In addition to monthly meetings, NPEC directors often attend meetings and conferences of the statewide association. Directors are compensated for their time. ■

To run for director, members must:

1. Receive NPEC electric service at your primary residential abode and may only run in the district in which you reside.
2. Obtain a petition from our offices in either Carrington or Cando, or call for one to be mailed.
3. Obtain at least 15 signatures from NPEC members.
4. Submit a petition by April 10.
5. Attend the annual meeting on June 13 in Maddock.

For more information, call 800-882-2500 or email justask@nplains.com.



CO-OP 101:

Co-ops need member involvement!

The most important part of an electric cooperative is YOU!

Electric cooperatives exist to meet the needs of their members. And members are the owners, too!

Electric cooperatives are owned and democratically controlled by their members – the people who use the electricity.

Use your voice!

By attending your cooperative's annual meeting, you learn more about your electric cooperative's financial standing, its past accomplishments and future plans. An informed member can be a valuable asset. And members also elect their representatives to the board of directors.

Cooperatives operate on the principle of "one member, one vote." So, each member of a cooperative has the same voting power. And as

a member, you have a voice in how your co-op operates, by electing directors to represent you.

Get involved!

Those directors are your representatives on the board. Without their involvement, your electric cooperative would not be able to operate!

Members who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions are vital to a cooperative. They help decide how active an electric cooperative will be in the community, such as providing scholarships or sponsoring other activities to develop young leaders in our communities.

We encourage you to become involved in your cooperative. Attend your annual meeting, cast a ballot for directors and consider serving on the board of directors. **YOU are the electric cooperative!** ■



Energy efficiency lessons for youngsters

Electronic and mobile devices, TVs, computers and gaming stations have become fixtures in our homes, particularly those with children. This ever-connected world is the modern environment in which children are growing up. With lifestyles increasingly reliant on technology, teaching youngsters to save energy is an important life lesson.

The why

But before parents can teach their children how to save energy, they must first answer the question, “What’s in it for me?” As most parents can attest, convincing kids to care about energy efficiency is a hard sell. Parents need to explain why it’s important to save energy and how it benefits the child. Otherwise, they will not understand the need to change their habits and will be less motivated to do so. In the simplest terms, less money spent on an electric bill can mean more money used for fun activities. That’s something children can relate to!

Less tangible, but just as important, using less energy means running your home more efficiently, conserving natural resources and helping the environment.

Learning by doing

Because “saving energy” is an abstract concept for children, be specific about energy-efficiency actions and set an example. We know children learn by observing what their parents do. Even if they don’t say anything, children are processing your actions. When you turn off the lights when leaving a room or unplug the phone charger once the device is fully charged, they will notice.

Learning about energy efficiency doesn’t have to be a boring lecture. Make it fun for greater impact. For younger kids, turn energy efficiency into a “treasure hunt” game to locate all the things in your home that use electricity. Depending on the age of the children, challenge them to count and group the items into categories: electronics, appliances and lights. If age appropriate, have them create a list. Ask which gadgets and appliances could be turned off or unplugged to save power every day.

For older children, show them how to program the smart thermostat and appliances. Shop with them for LED lights and discuss ENERGY STAR-rated appliances. Show them the electric bill so they can see the costs, energy use and how their actions impact the bill.

Kids of all ages can learn a few simple energy-saving habits that can last a lifetime:

- Turn off lights, devices, computers and video consoles when not in use.
- Open blinds and curtains during winter days to let warm sunlight in and close them during summer days to keep your home cooler.
- If your children are old enough to run the dishwasher or wash their own clothes, teach them to run these appliances only with a full load and during off-peak energy hours.

Rewards

Offer rewards for agreed-upon milestones. Rewards provide positive reinforcement on energy-saving actions. The idea is to create a habit of being energy efficient. And for parents, this could mean less nagging about turning off the lights!

Teaching your children about saving energy is not only a creative way to spend time with them; it helps your home to be more energy efficient and can instill good habits that will benefit your child long into adulthood. ■



Changes to the Operation Round Up board

Congratulations to Rachele Williams and Peg Hendrickson for being elected to Northern Plains Electric Cooperative's (NPEC) Operation Round Up board of directors. Williams, Maddock, replaces director Robin Arnold, Esmond, who recently moved out of the area and Hendrickson, Rock Lake, replaces director Julie McDougall, Rolla, who reached her term limit after serving on the board for six years.

The Operation Round Up board is comprised of five NPEC members who live across the service area. Williams and Hendrickson join Joan Copenhaver, Carrington, Deb Leapaldt, Woodworth, and Angie Freund, Cando.

Since the program began in October 1998, grants totaling \$900,237 have been awarded to 1,253 local charitable causes. These charitable grants are made possible through the generosity of NPEC members who voluntarily elect to have their electric bills rounded up to the next dollar. These grants are also made possible by those who have volunteered to serve on the Operation Round Up board of directors over the past 24 years.

NPEC thanks Arnold and McDougall for their years of dedication to the Operation Round Up program. Volunteers like you make the world a better place. ■

Prepare for tax season with SmartHub

Print copies of your monthly utility bills for your tax records by logging into SmartHub! Visit www.nplains.com and click "SmartHub Login" on the homepage to proceed to your billing history. If you have not signed up for SmartHub, you can set up a new, secure account. ■



Attention kids! Enter our poster contest!

Annually, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) sponsors a safety poster contest for children in kindergarten to sixth grade. The purpose of the safety poster contest is to help make children aware of the dangers of electricity. At NPEC,

safety always comes first, and we are dedicated to doing our part to teach children how to be safe around electricity. Winners will be announced on our Facebook page and featured in the NPEC local pages of *North Dakota Living*.

RULES

- Posters must be on white, 8.5x11-inch paper.
- Posters must depict the theme, "How to stay safe around electricity."
- Print the child's name, school grade, address and parents' names on the back of the poster.
- Only dependents of current NPEC members are eligible for this contest.
- Deadline is March 15 (postmarked).
- Submit entries to an NPEC office (Cando or Carrington) or mail to:
Northern Plains Electric
Attn: Brittnee Wilson
P.O. Box 608
Cando, ND 58324

PRIZES IN EACH CATEGORY

- First: \$20
- Second: \$15
- Third: \$10



ENTRY CATEGORIES

- Kindergarten to first grade
- Second to third grade
- Fourth to sixth grade



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

An equal opportunity provider and employer.

CANDO OFFICE:
609 4th Ave.
Cando, ND 58324

OFFICE HOURS:
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CARRINGTON OFFICE:
1515 West Main
Carrington, ND 58421

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