

Mason Dansville Line

Mason-Dansville Electric Line. First Rural Electric Line to Serve only Farms

Project of Consumers Energy and Michigan State University 1927

Herman J. Gallagher joined Michigan Agricultural College in 1923. Gallagher was an assistant professor in the Agricultural Engineering Department. He also served on the Michigan Committee on Rural Electrification which was an activity of the Agricultural Engineering Department of MAC. He created a magazine called "Electricity on the Farm" and conducted radio programs called "Electricity on the Farm." Gallagher also produced a public service radio programs called "Electricity at Work."

Gallagher was the supervisor of the first rural electric line build in Michigan (and the World) for the study of electricity's usefulness in farm life. Twelve farms located between Mason and Dansville agreed to have their farms connected to a power line to demonstrate the benefits of electric power for farms. Consumers Power Company agreed to build an experimental electric distribution line to serve these twelve farm at the request of Gallagher and Michigan Agricultural College. The line was built between Mason and Dansville in 1926 and 1927. The electric line path extended from Mason east along Columbia Road, south down Meridian Road, than east on M-36 towards Dansville. The new electric line only served farms.

In those days electricity for farm applications was considered impractical, but not to Gallagher, MAC and Consumers Power. Gallagher and his students supplied the farms along the electric line with appliances, electric lights, and various mechanical equipment to test for use on the farm. The project was led by Gallagher as a laboratory for research at the College.

Over the subsequent decade more than 92,000 Michigan farms had electricity. By October, 1949, Michigan's 100,000th farm was connected to electricity. This was a first in the Nation. By 1950 it was estimated that every dairy farm with 10 or more milking cows was connected to electric power. Gallagher later went to Consumers Power Company to become a rural electrification advisor. In 1936 Consumers Energy received an award by the Edison Electric Institute for its contributions to rural electrification. Gallagher and Consumers Power became global experts on agricultural electrification.