

Arthur C. Spurr



Arthur C. Spurr became president of the Monongahela Power Company in 1935 and during the next twenty years established an enviable record for community and area development work, the promotion and implementation of rural electrification, and the promotion of better farming and farm living practices. One of his first projects was the organization of the Upper Monongahela Valley Association, a 10-county organization which he served as secretary throughout his career with the utility company and after his retirement. Agricultural development was from the start of a major objective of UMVA. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Spurr assembled a territorial development staff within the Company, agriculture specialists predominant among them.

The primary responsibilities of the staff were to supplement the programs of the UMVA, the Little Kanawha Regional Council which later came into existence largely because of Mr. Spurr's promotional efforts, and to cooperate with the various federal, states, and county agencies directly concerned with agricultural and rural development.

The Farming for Better Living Program, an outgrowth of the company's area development efforts, was initiated in 1940. Its principal objective was to encourage farm people to use tested farming practices to improve their economic and social well-being.

Mr. Spurr actively promoted the extension of electric lines into rural areas. In 1935, the West Virginia Relief Administration listed a total of 27,238 potential customers in countries served by Monongahela. By 1951, Monongahela had connected more than 45,000 farms and rural residences and by 1953, every rural resident desiring electricity has been connected.

It was largely the result of urging by Mr. Spurr and coordination by industrial development allies that the Carnation Company moved into Clarksburg with a milk processing plant, creating a new artificial breeding into the area, an operation that contributes to upgrading dairy production in the area. His personal efforts were largely responsible for bringing to the area new industries which provided off-the-farm employment for thousands of rural and part-time farm families.

Mr. Spurr's activities received national recognition. In 1940, he was awarded the Thomas W. Martin Rural Electrification Award, symbolic of national leadership in that field. In 1947, the Edison Electric Institute sponsored its first agricultural clinic and representatives of the industry from all parts of the country came to Fairmont to look at Monongahela's program. In 1949, he received the Henry Laurence Gantt Memorial Gold Medal for "distinguished achievement in industrial management as a service to the community."

Mr. Spurr was knowledgeable in human relations and has a keen interest in community betterment. He admitted to selfish motives as head of a utility company. "If we are to grow as a company," he told his audiences, "our customers must make money first." He enlisted allies into the programs he espoused and insisted that all concerned be recognized for their contributions.