

DISPLACED TO SAVE THE WORLD:
STRATEGIES FOR USING HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION TO
INTERPRET PRE-1942 COMMUNITIES IN OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE

by

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To COL Bruce H. Gibbons
for inspiring my love of history and storytelling and for teaching me that
“Education is no sign of intelligence, only stick-to-itiveness.”
I miss you, Papa.

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ABSTRACT

In U.S. history, the displacement of marginalized groups is unfortunately common. In many instances, displacement occurs when government authorities use eminent domain laws to seize land for large-scale projects such as parks, dams, roads, military installations, or urban development. East Tennessee is a microcosm for such federal displacement, which has led to modernization and progress but at the risk of disregarding the lives and livelihoods of displaced residents, in addition to their traditional cultures and cultural landscapes. The region's residents encountered many examples of federal project displacement between the 1920s and 1970s, a misfortune that some families experienced more than once. This dissertation will take existing scholarship on the significant impact various federal constructions had on East Tennessee as a point of departure to explore the demographics, stories, and significance of displaced Oak Ridge communities with a particular attention given to how they have been remembered and interpreted by historians and the public.

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ABBREVIATIONS

American Museum of Atomic Energy (AMAE)

American Museum of Science and Energy (AMSE)

Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)

Department of Energy (DOE)

East Tennessee Historical Society (ETHS)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP)

Historically Black College and University (HBCU)

Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association (ORHPA)

Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL)

Teaching with Primary Sources— Middle Tennessee State University (TPS—MTSU)

Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation (CHP)

National Park Service (NPS)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Social Studies Practices (SSP)

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

INTRODUCTION

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and other federal officials learned about Nazi Germany's attempts to develop nuclear weaponry. In response, the United States secretly launched the Manhattan Project, a top-secret plan to develop atomic bombs to be used during World War II. As Director of the Manhattan Project, General Leslie R. Groves chose three sites for research and development: Hanford, Washington; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

In Tennessee, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the City of Oak Ridge, seemingly overnight. The federal government displaced approximately 3,000 former residents from their farms in late 1942 and early 1943. Over 75,000 newcomers, who flooded the once rural hills and valleys to contribute to the United States' secret effort to end the war, replaced them.

Historical writings about Oak Ridge almost always mention those displaced from the pre-war communities of Elza, New Bethel, New Hope, Robertsville, Scarboro, and Wheat. However, historians have recorded little else about the Appalachian families who, willingly or not, gave up everything they owned to a nation in need. For decades, pre-Oak Ridge communities have been overshadowed with tales of nuclear discoveries, the World War II home front, Cold War-era weaponry, and continued scientific advancements. Due to the tremendous impact of Oak Ridge since 1942, this focus is no surprise. However, the history of Oak Ridge began before 1942, which should be reflected in education

n materials and historic preservation efforts.

The dispossession of pre-war residents in Oak Ridge's Anderson and Roane Counties can be viewed as part of a larger story of serial displacement that occurred in East Tennessee over six decades of the twentieth century. Portions of the city's tale are similar to countless other examples of federal project displacement nationwide, a phenomenon that overwhelmingly affects marginalized communities, which only adds to the difficulty of recording their history.

Though Oak Ridge's story is unique, its similarities to other displacement narratives makes it a useful example to analyze how reviving community engagement can safeguard the history of displaced communities and enhance the historical record of those communities or projects that replaced them. Knowing more about pre-Oak Ridge villages can help answer questions, like What can we, as public historians and educators, do to ensure that people understand a fuller story of the federal government's spectacular success in Oak Ridge? How do we preserve the stories of life in Anderson and Roane Counties before Oak Ridge's creation so that future generations understand the cost of that success? When communities are erased from the physical landscape, how can we prevent their subsequent erasure from the historical record? How can we keep displaced communities engaged so that their histories are not lost?

With Oak Ridge's international prominence, the opportunity to broaden the historical narrative—to include the voices of the displaced—could also bring about lasting change in interpretation at other historic sites. Displacement of marginalized groups is a persistent issue in U.S. history. Publicizing the stories of those who lived

through such experiences in Oak Ridge would not only create a richer history but could also serve as an example of how to reach new audiences, enhance heritage tourism, and provide the public with a more thorough understanding of the site and its significance.

This dissertation contains five chapters divided into three sections. Section I: A Lack of Public Engagement includes three chapters that explain displacement as a broader trend in East Tennessee's history before transitioning to Oak Ridge's specific story. In each example discussed in Section I, a lack of engagement among displaced community members has contributed to erasures of such communities from history as physical landscapes change and dispossessed residents move away. Chapter I will place Oak Ridge's displacement narrative in the context of twentieth-century serial displacement caused by large-scale federal projects conducted by organizations like the National Park Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the Department of Transportation. In this chapter, I describe the similarities of several examples of displacement in East Tennessee as well as how the crisis of World War II made Oak Ridge's story unique. Given that Oak Ridge is one example in a much larger arc of federal displacement, Chapter II shifts to a much narrower focus on the histories of pre-Oak Ridge communities. Wheat, Robertsville, Scarboro, and Elza are described from their settlement periods to 1942. Next, Chapter III explains the process by which the federal government sought portions of Anderson and Roane Counties to create Oak Ridge as part of the Manhattan Project to develop nuclear weaponry during World War II. This displaced 1,000 families, as the Army Corps of Engineers acquired an initial 56,000 acres

in late 1942. This chapter uses specific examples to detail how families reacted, moved on, and in some cases fought against their dispossession.

Section II: The Engaged Public Historian discusses the status of Oak Ridge's historical assets and what public historians can do to broaden the city's historical narrative. Chapter IV discusses historic preservation and interpretation of pre-war life in modern-day Oak Ridge. At various times in the city's history, a lack of engagement between stakeholders—like city officials, community members, government entities, and public historians—has isolated pre-1942 stories from those who visit and study Oak Ridge. In this chapter, I provide strategies to combat this erasure from the historical record and suggestions for interpreting Oak Ridge's historic landscape.

Finally, Section III: Engagement with the Present includes one chapter that focuses on using local primary sources in the secondary classroom. Chapter V provides approaches for educators looking to introduce their students to multiple historical perspectives that will encourage community engagement, curiosity, and empathy.

To conclude, there are many ways to ensure that fuller versions of history are shared. The displacement of people and communities complicate this mission, as seen in Oak Ridge. However, the use of historic preservation and education are two strategies that can lead to increased public engagement that is critical to understanding, documenting, protecting, and sharing more accurate versions of history.

SECTION I: A LACK OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

CHAPTER I: SERIAL DISPLACEMENT IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EAST TENNESSEE

“[O]ur area had gotten a lot of the people when they took the Smoky Mountains. We got a lot of people. And when they started Norris Dam, we got a lot of people. God rest them, they hardly got their things put down, when they had to move again.”
 – Dorathy Moneymaker¹

In a 2001 study, psychologists M. Carmen Hidalgo and Bernardo Hernandez define “place attachment” as “an affective bond or link between people and specific places.”² Many variables, such as age, location, and gender, affect how people view their homes and home places. However, a common thread emerges in Hidalgo’s and Hernandez’s research. After interviewing 177 people, they found that social attachment to place was always greater than physical attachment.³ Home places, then, are more than physical landscapes; they are places filled with memories, ancestral and community connections, and in most cases, futures.

Myriad scenarios exist as to why people may become separated from places to which they are attached—new careers, the pursuit of adventure, caring for aging family members, and even natural disasters. However, when residents are forcibly removed from their home places, they are more likely to view their detachment with discontent or anger.

¹ Dorathy Moneymaker, “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” interview by Mick Wiest, April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/291/rec/3>.

² M. Carmen Hidalgo and Bernardo Hernandez, “Place Attachment: Conceptual and Empirical Questions,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 21, no. 3 (September 2001): 274.

³ *Ibid.*, 279.

A phenomenon of discontentment is seen throughout the mid-twentieth century in the Appalachian region of East Tennessee where residents experienced serial displacement due to large-scale federal projects including national parks, dams and reservoirs, military installations, and interstate highways.

This chapter discusses the role Southern culture, and the strong social and familial ties that exist therein, played in how East Tennesseans viewed their Appalachian home places and eventual dispossession. Southerners' attachment to home and land make the colossal number of involuntary displacements in the region ironic and at times tragic. The South's agricultural heritage and rurality made dispossession more disruptive for its residents when compared to urban citizens who were more apt to relocate in order to improve their lifestyles.⁴ In contrast, for rural Southerners, the land itself was and is an essential part of their cultural preservation; without it, their communities are often forgotten.

In addition to a strong connection to the land, politics have shaped the displacement experience of Southerners. Tinges of Anti-Federalism from the Early Republic and support for states' rights during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries still saturate the political fabric of the South, where the notion of small government reigns supreme. Excluding large cities and the Black Belt, a region that stretches from Southern Virginia to West Texas and is known for its lush black soil and larger populations of African Americans, the South's politics are primarily conservative. Residents usually

⁴ Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 241.

oppose high taxes and are skeptical of government intervention. This tendency stems not only from the financial struggles that burden the region but also from the intrinsic pride that is associated with individualism. Providing for one's family is a common goal throughout the world, but the stigma of government assistance seems more prevalent in Southern culture. Consequently, Southerners value self-reliance and typically view eminent domain, government acquisition of private property for public use, as unjust. Therefore, the frequently used paternalistic claim that dispossessed people would benefit from relocation did not yield much support from the displaced during the mid-twentieth century.

On the other hand, regardless of how critical Southerners were and may still be about government intervention and assistance programs, their support for the nation as a whole remains strong. Patriotism is an imperative part of the Southern ethos. Lyrics in country music, 4th of July celebrations, and the number of flags flown at homes, businesses, and on truck tailgates are telling signs of the region's love of country, in addition to more concrete statistics such as the high volume of military volunteerism and U.S.O. (United Services Organization) participation.⁵ In most cases, regardless of their patriotism, displaced people felt like victims of government overreach. However, this chapter argues that while residents were undoubtedly upset by their dispossession, the story of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, is a more complex one due in part to American loyalty and patriotism surrounding World War II.

⁵ George M. Reynolds and Amanda Shendruk, "Demographics of the U.S. Military," Council on Foreign Relations, April 24, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/article/demographics-us-military>.

Finally, it is impossible to study the South without engaging the turbulent racial history of the region, which likewise guided decisions about who federal projects would displace. One need not look far to understand the complexities of race in the South, where the beauty of diversity thrives in art, food, music, and dance; yet violent undertones from a vicious past are ever-present. During the mid-twentieth century, African Americans and their allies made successful strides toward overcoming racial injustice, but discrimination faced by minorities displaced during urban renewal and highway projects continues to have lasting effects in cities across the South, not to mention the rest of the nation. The connection between race and eminent domain is striking and adds yet another layer to the complex issue of displacement in the South.

In this chapter, I will briefly summarize the serial displacement that affected East Tennesseans during the mid-twentieth century. In each of these examples, a sense of place, residents' attachment to home and their land, and the political, social, and economic characteristics of Southern culture are evident. Then I will examine the themes of displacement that are present in East Tennessee as well as other locations before moving to themes of modernization associated with displacement. Lastly, I will introduce Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the focus of this dissertation. While instances of displacement in Appalachia and the broader South are similar to one another, the story of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, stands apart and provides a case study for determining how displaced communities can be remembered and preserved even after their physical landscape has been destroyed.

Eminent Domain and East Tennessee

Despite eminent domain being the antithesis of Southern culture, the region has been consistently, and arguably more, affected by it than the rest of the United States in terms of civilian displacement and human cost. The federal government's power of eminent domain stems from the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, which states that "private property [shall not] be taken for public use, without just compensation."⁶ Essentially, the government can seize land so long as its owners are compensated fairly. However, only in rare instances does eminent domain result in satisfaction for everyone involved. The U.S. Supreme Court has debated exactly what constitutes the Fifth Amendment's aforementioned "public use," most recently in *Kelo v. City of New London*, a controversial 2005 decision that allows state and local governments to condemn private property on behalf of developers whose new construction would hypothetically benefit the greater community. Opponents of this decision worry that linking "public use" to broader economic benefits will allow private entities to take advantage of marginalized groups by preying on their land in order to create wealth. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's dissent in *Kelo* argued that "any property may now be taken for the benefit of another private party, but the fallout from this decision will not be random. The beneficiaries are likely to be those citizens with disproportionate influence and power in the political process."⁷ *Kelo* proves that the controversy surrounding eminent domain law in America

⁶ U.S. Constitution, amend. 5.

⁷ *Kelo v. City of New London*, 545 U.S. 469 (2005).

is a persistent issue, and there is no better proof of its recurring influence than in East Tennessee.

Displacement by the federal government has been more concentrated in the Appalachian region of East Tennessee than elsewhere in the United States. During each decade for the greater part of the twentieth century, large federal projects swallowed the homes of the area's citizens. However, to understand fully the context of displacement in East Tennessee, it is also necessary to look beyond the immediate region to other state and national parks, dams, urban development and highway projects, and military infrastructure that have caused displacement. While other examples, such as Virginia's Shenandoah National Park and the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, will be referenced in this chapter, the focus will be East Tennessee's arc of displacement from the early 1920s to the late 1970s.

The region's first project in which the government evoked the power of eminent domain began in 1923 when boosters from Knoxville, Tennessee, began fundraising to create a national park in the Great Smoky Mountains along the Tennessee and North Carolina border. These states obtained donations from a variety of sources, ranging from the Rockefellers to schoolchildren, to purchase land from six thousand residents; the states then donated that land to the federal government to establish Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) in 1934. Today, it is enjoyed by locals and attracts more visitors than any other national park.⁸ However, during its creation, the park's

⁸ Katia Hetter, "America's Most Popular National Park Is ..." *CNN Travel*, April 19, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/most-popular-national-park-service-sites-2019/index.html>.

boosters experienced significant opposition from lumber companies and landowners, especially residents of Cades Cove.⁹ This antagonism caused by displacement became a consistent theme in East Tennessee in subsequent decades.

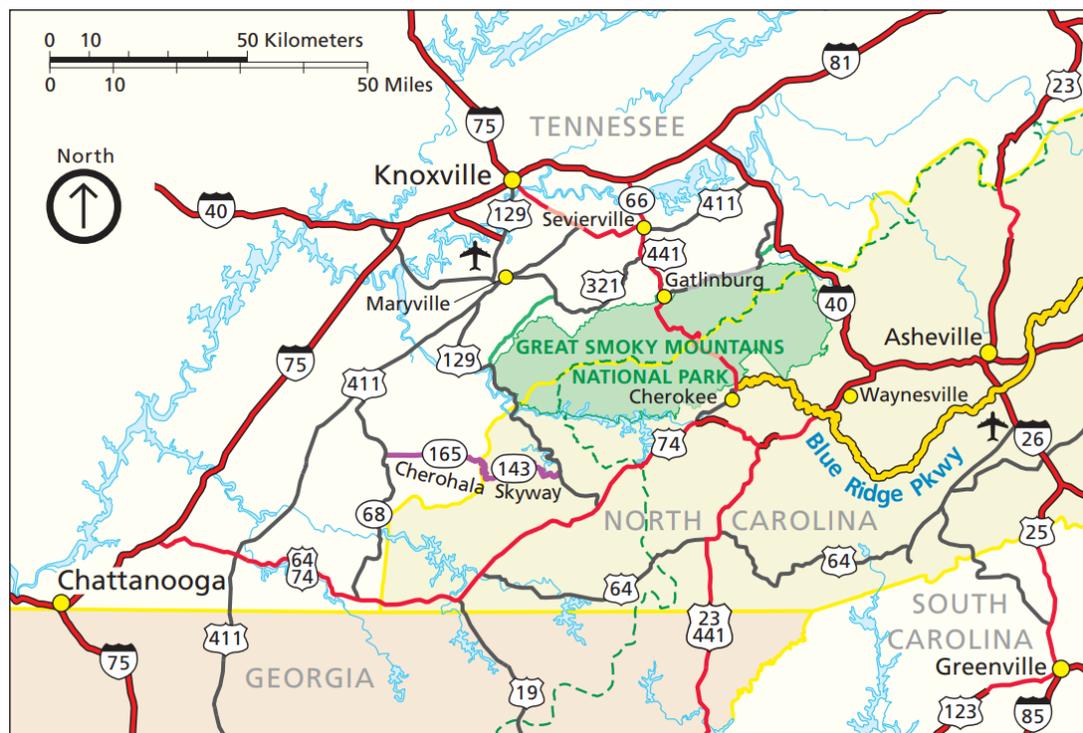


Figure 1.1: Great Smoky Mountains Regional Map¹⁰

⁹ Dan Pierce, “Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, edited by Carroll Van West (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2018), <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/great-smoky-mountains-national-park/>; See also Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

¹⁰ “Great Smoky Mountains Regional Map,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park, accessed July 23, 2018, <http://npmaps.com/wp-content/uploads/great-smoky-mountains-regional-map.pdf>.

Even before GSMNP boosters completed their seventeen-year struggle to establish the park TVA began displacing residents in Anderson County, roughly sixty miles to the north. In 1933, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration created TVA with the purpose of maintaining river navigation, controlling flooding, preventing soil erosion, generating affordable electricity, and retiring distressed farmland.¹¹ With these goals in mind, TVA initiated its first dam and planned community, Norris, located on the Clinch River, evicting residents of the "densely settled" Norris Basin prior to the dam's construction and subsequent flooding in 1936.¹² The displacement was exacerbated by recent in-migration to the area as the Great Depression brought home many young people who had previously moved to Knoxville and the industrial North during the 1920s.¹³ TVA officials claimed that the basin's farmland and economy could not adequately sustain this increase in population and controversially argued that relocating the area's population would benefit the displaced individuals as well as the larger region. Overall, TVA purchased 153,000 acres and displaced 3,000 families, making the Norris Dam and Reservoir its largest project in terms of dispossessed residents and contributing another chapter to the ongoing displacement of East Tennesseans during the mid-twentieth century.¹⁴

¹¹ Carl Kitchens, "The Use of Eminent Domain in Land Assembly: The Case of the Tennessee Valley Authority," *Public Choice* 160, no. 3-4 (September 2014): 457.

¹² McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 75.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

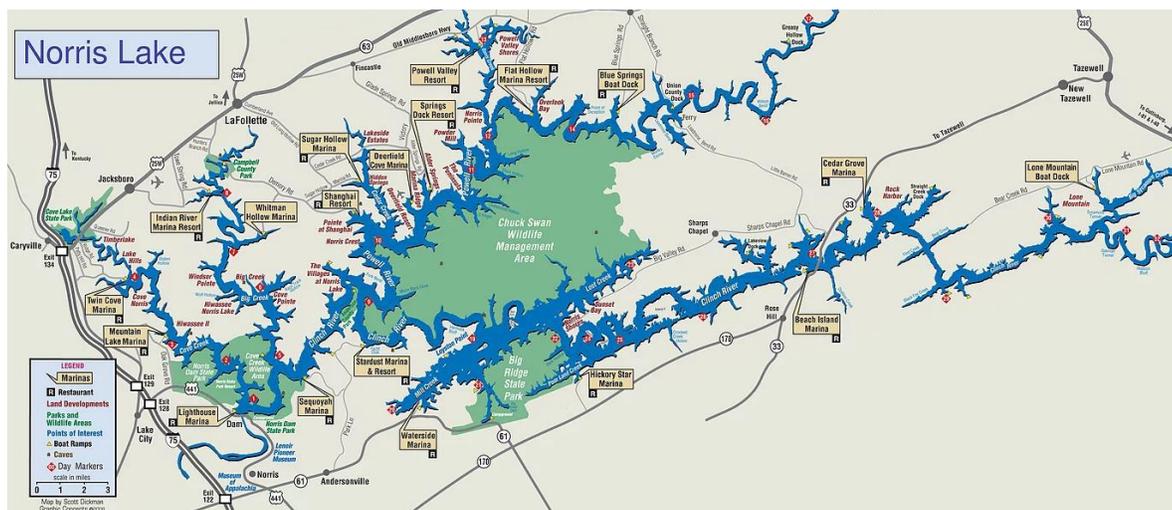


Figure 1.2: Norris Lake ¹⁵

Just six years after Norris Dam was completed, residents in the region again became victims of dispossession. In 1942, the federal government acquired 56,000 acres in rural Anderson and Roane Counties to establish the secret city of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. After displacing 1,000 families, Oak Ridge became a bustling town of 75,000 residents, whose scientific and military advancements in atomic energy helped end World War II in the Pacific.¹⁶ After the federal government successfully completed the Manhattan Project (its effort to create nuclear weaponry during the 1940s) Oak Ridgers continued to play an important role in the national security of the United States during the Cold War. The nature of Oak Ridge's creation in terms of displacement, as well as its location, connect the city to the broader story of Southerners affected by eminent domain.

¹⁵ "Norris Lake," Norris Lake Front Rentals, accessed July 23, 2018, <https://www.norrislakefrontrentals.com/norris-lake>.

¹⁶ Daniel Schaffer, *Atoms in Appalachia: Historical Report on the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Site* (Knoxville: Tennessee Valley Authority, 1982), 1, <https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/5116680>.

However, the way in which Oak Ridge’s landscape, history, and memory evolved after the federal government evicted its former inhabitants make its story unique.

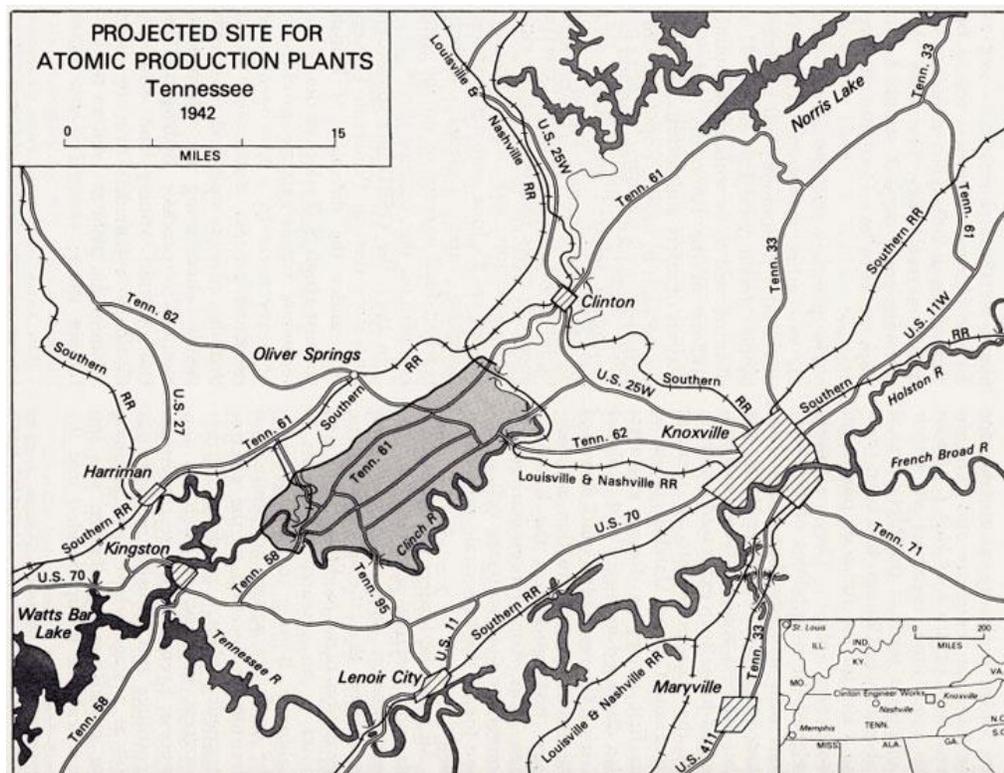


Figure 1.3: Oak Ridge: Projected Site for Atomic Production Plants, 1942 ¹⁷

During the early Cold War-era, East Tennessee experienced its most wide-reaching occurrence of displacement; said to be U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s favorite policy, the Federal Highway Act of 1956 sought to ease travel restrictions for a

¹⁷ “Oak Ridge: Projected Site for Atomic Production Plants, 1942,” The Manhattan Project: An Interactive History, U.S. Department of Energy, accessed July 23, 2018, https://www.osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/Resources/maps/oakridge_1942map.htm.

growing population, stimulate economic growth, and increase national security. From the 1950s to the early 1970s, the Interstate Highway System successfully contributed to each of those goals but displaced residents across the United States lost their homes and communities in the process.¹⁸ Interstate 40—which begins in Wilmington, North Carolina, and ends in Barstow, California—extends throughout the entire state of Tennessee. As in the rest of the United States, highway construction has adversely affected marginalized communities in Tennessee, especially African Americans in Nashville and Memphis. Typically, officials chose the location of interstate highway routes based on economic reasons as well as plans for urban renewal (the removal of “blighted areas” to make room for wealthier businesses and residents). Considering the era of interstate construction overlapped the Civil Rights Movement, it is not surprising that local and state governments often used highways as a means of “maintain[ing] white privilege” and purposefully destroying minority communities. “Transportation racism,” as Robert Bullard, a Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy, called it, was a nationwide issue,¹⁹ but in Tennessee, the displacement it caused was nothing new.

¹⁸ David Karas, “Highway to Inequity: The Disparate Impact of the Interstate Highway System on Poor and Minority Communities in American Cities,” *New Visions for Public Affairs* 7 (April 2015): 10, https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Planning/docs/trans/EveryPlaceCounts/1_Highway%20to%20Inequity.pdf.

¹⁹ As quoted in Karas, “Highway to Inequity,” 15.



Figure 1.4: I-40 Map, Tennessee²⁰

Before interstate highways in Tennessee were completed, yet another story of displacement began in the state's Appalachian region. In 1967, TVA initiated construction of its last dam, Tellico, which impounded the Little Tennessee River in Loudon County. While some locals favored the Tellico Project as a potential financial boon, other groups (including residents, environmentalists, representatives from the fishing industry, and Cherokee Indians, who considered the land sacred) heavily protested TVA's acquisition of 22,000 acres southwest of Knoxville.²¹ The last chance for this united resistance against Tellico Dam's construction was the snail darter, a three-inch-long fish found in the region in 1973, which had been included on the list of endangered species the same year. Opponents of the dam fought TVA in court and, even though the dam was almost complete at the time, forced construction at Tellico to a

²⁰“I-40 Map Tennessee,” Roadnow: I-40, accessed July 23, 2018, <https://roadnow.com/i40/map-tennessee-6>.

²¹ Stephen J. Rechichar and Michael R. Fitzgerald, “Administrative Decision and Economic Development: TVA's Tellico Dam Controversy,” *Public Administration Quarterly*, 8, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 226.

standstill with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Tennessee Valley Authority v. Hill* (1978). However, by 1979 TVA had successfully transferred snail darters to nearby rivers and streams, and construction of the dam resumed.²² Though attempts to halt TVA’s development in the area ultimately failed, Tellico’s story is one of activism. By the time of the Tellico Dam’s construction, federal projects had repeatedly displaced East Tennesseans for nearly half a century, making Tellico a fitting example of how reactions to displacement evolved in the region.

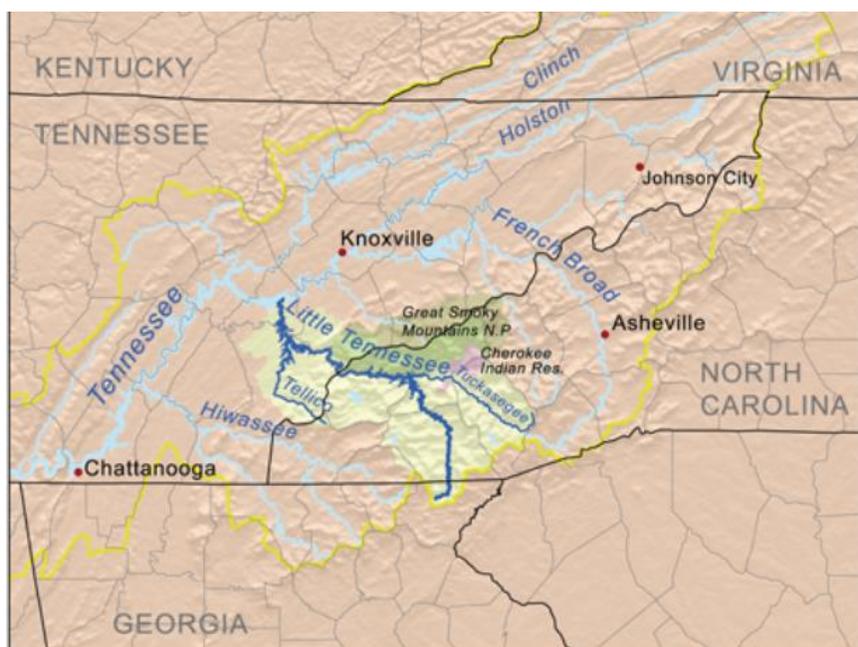


Figure 1.5: Map of the Little Tennessee River Watershed ²³

²² “Telling the Story of Tellico: It’s Complicated,” Tennessee Valley Authority, accessed July 23, 2018, <https://www.tva.com/About-TVA/Our-History/Built-for-the-People/Telling-the-Story-of-Tellico-Its-Complicated>; William Bruce Wheeler and Michael J. McDonald, *TVA and the Tellico Dam, 1936-1979: A Bureaucratic Crisis in Post-Industrial America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 217-18; Frances Brown Dorward, *Dam Greed* (self-pub., Frances Brown Dorward, 2009), 134-35.

²³ Map of the Little Tennessee River Watershed, “Little Tennessee River: Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee,” American Rivers: Rivers Connect Us, accessed August 5, 2018, <https://www.americanrivers.org/river/little-tennessee-river/>.

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, East Tennesseans were serially dispossessed by GSMNP, TVA, the Manhattan Project at Oak Ridge, and interstate highways, with each instance leaving a lasting impact on the region and its residents. Widespread displacement and construction changed East Tennessee, not just environmentally but also politically, socially, and economically. Before the region was able to recover from one displacement, a new federal project caused the eviction of residents in neighboring counties or the same one in the case of Anderson County in the 1940s. Overall, thousands of families who once occupied hundreds of thousands of acres in this region fell prey to government land acquisition. In comparing these examples, themes of displacement and modernization emerge and can be used to analyze not only Tennessee's Appalachian region but also the larger South.

Themes of Displacement

Regardless of the reasons cited for government land acquisition and the removal of residents—be they regional economics, national security, or some other interest—the anguish felt by people forced to leave their homes was universal. This hurt was true of Southerners displaced from the 1920s to the 1970s who oftentimes felt hopeless and homesick, unable to recreate their lost communities. Typically, landowners were dissatisfied with the payments they received for their land, and residents who did not own land were rarely compensated at all. Historically, marginalized communities have fallen victim to land condemnation more often than their more affluent neighbors, but as time

progressed so did resistance to displacement. Therefore, the legacies of displacement are similar across the South despite occurring under dissimilar circumstances.

Lack of Community

After dispossession, the physical destruction of a place can sometimes be compensated with new houses, buildings, and roads; however, the residents' sense of community can almost never be recreated. Cades Cove is an example. Originally an important area for Cherokee commerce and travel, whites first settled the cove in 1818, and it became part of GSMNP in the late 1920s.²⁴ Economic loss made forfeiting Cades Cove incredibly difficult for its residents, but losing the sense of home that the cove represented was even more devastating. Most residents in the cove had familial ties to the original settlers, learned of their home from hearing stories about their ancestors, and knew the colloquial name for nearly every geographical feature in the region. "[T]he cove proper contained no streamlets, no meadow fields, rocky ridges, or trees too small not to be named."²⁵ The land was deeply significant to residents of Cades Cove, and as evidenced by their wills, it was meant to stay in the family. The majority of displaced people from the cove worried about having access to the land to care for their cemeteries. As historian Durwood Dunn explains, they were concerned with more than just headstones; their culture was dependent on familial ties and stories about their ancestors.²⁶ Hence the area was more than just land; it had been the centerpiece of the

²⁴ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 7, 251.

²⁵ Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 147.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 183, 248.

Cades Cove community for over a century. Unfortunately, park boosters failed to see—or perhaps care about—the cove from the perspective of its residents.

TVA did not do a much better job of empathizing with dispossessed residents. Historians Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny, who have written extensively about TVA, note that isolation in the Norris Basin similarly contributed to close-knit ties that community members could not replicate after displacement. For instance, a 1937 TVA follow-up study showed that church participation among residents had drastically decreased after the region was depopulated. Just a few years prior, churches and their ministers had served as a link between TVA representatives and the larger Norris Basin population; the church therefore served not only a religious purpose but was also as an organizational and social hub for the community.²⁷ Nonetheless, this decline in church attendance—in a region where the church was a cultural focal point—was a significant change in the lives of the displaced and further proves it was difficult for them to adjust to their new surroundings. TVA may have been able to provide electricity and access to greater job opportunities, but residents longing for their old communities remained dissatisfied. As Carroll Van West observed in *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape*:

TVA dams did more than destroy home places; it destroyed the fabric of community by demolishing or relocating local churches, cemeteries, and community landmarks. Those dispossessed of their land, especially older residents, often had difficulty sustaining a sense of family and community in their new homes, no matter how modern and improved the dwellings appeared to outsiders. The power and importance of a sense of place and belonging to the people of the Clinch River was rarely understood by New Deal planners, engineers or social experts.²⁸

²⁷ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 113.

²⁸ Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 226.

A similar dissatisfaction occurred in the communities displaced in South Carolina after World War II. Historian Kari Frederickson's research focuses on the Savannah River Plant, a Cold War-era hub for nuclear energy built near Aiken, South Carolina, in the 1950s, which provides an interesting comparative story to Tennessee's Oak Ridge.²⁹ Because the Manhattan Project was no longer a secret, residents displaced from this South Carolina atomic site were able to move entire houses and buildings when they relocated. Residents from Ellenton, South Carolina, established New Ellenton just fourteen miles away, but as political scientist William Lanouette notes, the new town never felt like home to many of them.³⁰ Frederickson explains that while locals appreciated the opportunities brought about by the Savannah River Plant and its operator, DuPont, they still wanted to retain a portion of their former lives. Regardless of what their homes were like before, rural or urban, or whether their families were struggling or self-sufficient, displaced individuals reacted similarly to being displaced, mostly agreeing that no amount of money or new opportunities could replace the community they had lost.

Unfair Payments

By law, the federal government gave "fair market value" to displaced residents in return for their land, but the prices paid in cases of eminent domain seldom if ever seemed "fair" to those on the receiving end. This perception was especially true for

²⁹ Kari Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie: Militarization and Modernization in the American South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013).

³⁰ William Lanouette, "'Our Town' v. 'National Security' (Ellenton, South Carolina, Savannah River Plant)," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 46, no. 10 (December 1990): 31-33.

families in Cades Cove and Norris who were forced to sell their greatest financial asset, their land, after Depression-era economics had caused their property values to plummet. Most residents in the region were subsistence farmers with little monetary wealth, which made losing their property even more detrimental. Rising unemployment and the inability to establish new farms on the same scale as their previous farms distressed the now-scattered former community members who were no longer able to rely on a group of close-knit neighbors.³¹ For those leaving Cades Cove, isolated from their earlier neighbors and families, Dunn notes that “a more hostile or unwelcome environment for newcomers could scarcely be imagined.”³² Similarly, in the Norris Basin, remaining farm values had increased during the acquisition period, and “back taxes, mortgages, and any liens on the land were deducted” from the price residents were given.³³ These deductions (coupled with low valuations) made nearly certain that the final sums of money received by landowners could not adequately replace what they had lost; and though “94.2 percent of the tracts were voluntarily conveyed,” families were not completely satisfied with their offers or the smaller farms they purchased once TVA relocated them.³⁴

It is difficult to fathom a group being more negatively affected by displacement than dispossessed landowners, but residents who did not own the land they worked were oftentimes even more devastated. Tenant laborers fared significantly worse than

³¹ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 29-38, 98.

³² Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 252.

³³ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 248.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

landowners in eminent domain cases. At Norris, tenants “received no compensation of any kind for removal.”³⁵ Even when sharecroppers and tenants did receive compensation for harvested crops, such as at the Savannah River Plant, they were still left homeless when landowners relocated their tenant houses to new property.³⁶ Such sharecroppers also struggled to find employment outside of agriculture, as they faced stiff competition and generally had few transferable skills.³⁷ Many times throughout the mid-twentieth century, eminent domain left Southern tenants and sharecroppers not only without a home but also without a way to make a living.

For landowners in the Appalachian region of Tennessee, land valuation and payments were only part of the reason many felt that they had been treated unjustly. Economist Carl Kitchens explains the process by which TVA purchased land privately. First, the location for a dam and flood zone would be chosen. Next, surveyors appraised the property before TVA made an offer. If the landowner accepted the initial offer, TVA then paid them; if not, TVA often adjusted the price. If the landowner again refused the offer, eminent domain proceedings moved to court. Kitchens concludes that “longer land tenures, [owning] more tracts of land, and higher debt levels [made landowners] more likely to hold out.”³⁸ In some cases, TVA appraisers purposely judged land below market value in retaliation against residents “who were difficult to deal with,” which made going

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

³⁶ Kari Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie*, 68.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁸ Kitchens, “Use of Eminent Domain in Land Assembly,” 457, 464.

to court their “only opportunity for restitution.”³⁹ Even after court proceedings, some residents did not feel they had been treated fairly. For instance, a local judge, Bennie Simpson, “saw the Tellico Project as a land grab...[and] a misuse of the law of eminent domain.” He felt there was no effective recourse for objecting to TVA’s prices, because landowners were then sent to a three-judge court “controlled by TVA.”⁴⁰ Many residents simply agreed to prices they deemed unfair, because they believed a legal battle with TVA was futile. However, landowners who did choose to fight for higher land valuations had some success. In court, “sympathy for the landowners was the defendants’ ace in the hole.” This agreeableness among the dispossessed was especially true at the Savannah River Plant, where attorney and former governor Strom Thurmond represented many displaced residents. Thurmond and others were able to leverage their clients’ patriotism. Connecting clients to military service or other “patriotic sacrifices” sometimes led to higher sale values, but as with other examples, residents of the Savannah River Valley were typically dissatisfied with payments that they considered to be unfair.⁴¹

³⁹ Kitchens, “Use of Eminent Domain in Land Assembly,” 462. See also Katrina M. Powell, *The Anguish of Displacement: The Politics of Literacy in the Letters of Mountain Families in Shenandoah National Park* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 3, 78-79, 87-89. Playing nice with the authorities in order to receive more fair treatment was common among people displaced from Shenandoah National Park as well. Katrina Powell explains how letters written by residents to park officials made attempts to make themselves seem worthy, agreeable, and wholesome. Residents at Shenandoah had a unique situation after their land was condemned. Roughly 25 percent of them remained on the now-federal land and needed permission to alter any part of it, such as planting, plowing, cutting firewood, or picking apples.

⁴⁰ Dorward, *Dam Greed*, 45.

⁴¹ Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie*, 66.

Increased Resistance

Similar to the level of frustration felt by displaced residents across the South, resistance against eminent domain became progressively stronger over time. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, landowners in Cades Cove wrote letters to state and national politicians as well as philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr., who donated \$5 million for the GSMNP project in 1928, begging for their community to be left out of the park boundary line. Comparable to the experience at Shenandoah National Park, people from Cades Cove continued to live on federal land after GSMNP was established. One of the most well-known residents who lingered was mail carrier and Primitive Baptist minister John Oliver. Oliver was a leader in the community and significantly influenced his peers when he disputed the state's right to seize his 337.5 acre farm. In 1937, after six years and three appeals to the Tennessee Supreme Court, Oliver left his home in the cove.⁴² Oliver's personal interactions with park officials, growing more hostile as time progressed, were mimicked by others in Cades Cove.

In *The Anguish of Displacement*, Professor of English Katrina M. Powell argues that there is an "inextricable link between literacy and identity" that is relevant to the resistance of residents in the Shenandoah Valley who lost their homes to the park in 1935.⁴³ Here, government officials attempted to paint the region as backwards, in need of help, and full of "poverty, illiteracy, and isolation."⁴⁴ There was little public opposition to the establishment of Shenandoah National Park in the 1930s, because government

⁴² Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 241, 248, 251, 254.

⁴³ Powell, *The Anguish of Displacement*, 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

officials coupled paternalistic rhetoric with Farm Security Administration photographs depicting poverty-stricken Virginians. Most people who saw these assumed that the park would be a positive change for people in the mountains. Presumably, New Deal jobs and better transportation would help Virginians in the Appalachians overcome poverty. For example, the construction of Skyline Drive, a 105-mile scenic road through the Blue Ridge Mountains, offered both. While some of these expectations were agreeable to the displaced residents and many stayed after their property was transferred to the federal government, it was nonetheless a traumatic experience for those who lost property and autonomy. Powell explains how Shenandoah residents used letters to rewrite “the myth of the mountaineer” and resist the stereotypes assigned to them by proponents of the park.⁴⁵ Park residents asked for fairness, petitioned for change, and most importantly proved that mountain people were not just “innocent pawns”; they created a counter-history to the narrative told by Shenandoah National Park representatives.⁴⁶

Some displaced people found creative ways to resist, though some of their actions might not have been considered resistance by the residents themselves. For example, Lorena Stark, a local café owner displaced by the Savannah River Plant, was disheartened by the approximately 6,000 graves that were to be disinterred during the plant’s construction. Stark hid her family’s headstones so that their graves would be left alone. Another resident was much more combative in her resistance: Louise Cassell opened the door of her home to meet “the ‘Government man, Mr. Bell’” with knife in

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 119.

hand after Bell asked the Cassells to vacate. Cassell recalled another instance when Mr. Bell strung a banner on her porch that read, “This is government property.”⁴⁷ At the plant in the 1950s, as well as at Oak Ridge during the previous decade, national security concerns eclipsed resistance to displacement; this focus on defense, however, did not stop vocal opposition to displacement at both sites.

In subsequent decades, Tennessee residents continued to actively protest the dispossession of their properties. The construction of over 46,000 miles⁴⁸ of interstate highways that now span the United States was extremely controversial at each level of government during the decision-making and construction processes. While highwaymen— those involved in planning and constructing America’s interstates— were free from major objections from 1956 (when the Federal-Aid Highway Act was passed) to the late 1960s, the counter-cultural spirit prevalent during the 1960s helped activists, whom historian Raymond Mohl calls “freeway fighters,” ignite resistance.⁴⁹ To successfully oppose interstate construction in order to save communities from being destroyed or separated, Mohl argues that there had to be “persistent neighborhood activism, [and] cross-city, cross-class, and interracial alliances,” in addition to political and legal action.⁵⁰ Though highwaymen and some politicians pitched interstates as an

⁴⁷ Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie*, 59.

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, “Interstate Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/faq.cfm#:~:text=Currently%2C%20the%20Interstate%20System%20is,41%2C000%20miles%20at%20the%20time.>

⁴⁹ Raymond A. Mohl, “The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt,” *Civil Rights Research* (Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 2002): 66, <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/mohl.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Mohl, “Interstates and the Cities,” 39.

important part of national security during the Cold War, their actual construction was not an emergency, which put state and local politics, not the nation's safety, at the center of the controversies surrounding highways. In other words, state and local officials were able to decide when and where highways were built in their cities, and for the most part, only extremely well-organized activists stood in the way of their plans. In cities where activists were successful at creating alternate routes or nixing demolition plans, such as Memphis and Baltimore, local groups formed and connected with regional and national organizations. For example, the Citizens to Preserve Overton Park group, who saved a twenty-six-acre green space in Memphis, established an alternate route for I-40 that satisfied developers and preserved the park. As is obvious from the massive displacements that occurred during the mid-century, groups were not always successful in their preservation pursuits. The African American community in Nashville was devastated by the interstate in the late 1960s. As Mohl and Karas point out, Nashville's African American I-40 Steering Committee seemed to function as an island, unaware that African Americans in other cities had been somewhat successful at altering interstate plans from destroying their communities.⁵¹ Overall, resistance grew throughout the 1960s, but not before interstate highways caused irrevocable damage to marginalized urban communities across the country.

As in urban settings, sometimes enormous support from various groups was not enough to shield residents from displacement in rural areas either. However, there are

⁵¹ Karas, "Highway to Inequity," 11-12. For more on the impact of interstates on Tennessee cities, see Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's Historic Landscapes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 100 and 113.

other instances when some residents refused to put up a fight. Local historian Frances Brown Dorward explains that many Appalachian Americans declined to participate in fighting TVA to save the Little Tennessee River Valley from Tellico Dam in the 1970s. The residents' "stoic nature" meant that they accepted what they saw as inevitable after news of the dam became public and construction began in the late 1960s.⁵² Don Keeble, a former resident displaced by the Tellico Dam project, explains that farmers did not have the means to fight Washington, fishermen lacked organization and funding, environmentalists were overpowered by people who wanted industry, and politicians—overly-concerned with their own electability—were too scared to speak out against TVA. However, resistance was intense enough to temporarily halt construction with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Tennessee Valley Authority v. Hill* in 1978.⁵³ Anti-dam advocates fought TVA in court over its last and most controversial dam from many different angles, the most effective being the dam's unquestionably negative impact on the snail-darter population, an endangered fish, discovered in 1973, native to the Little Tennessee River. Similar to some protests against interstate highways, the fight against TVA at Tellico was successful, if only for a few years, because landowners and groups—such as the Tennessee Game and Fish Agency, environmentalists, scientists, and lawyers—worked together toward the same goal. Tellico therefore provides one of the clearest cases in which resistance among displaced people became stronger over time, due to increased connections between support networks and individuals with political

⁵² Dorward, *Dam Greed*, 157.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 182, 184-85.

power who shared the like-minded goal of preserving property on the Little Tennessee River, regardless of how different their incentives might have been.⁵⁴

Targeting Marginalized Communities

As we have seen, a common theme of displacement in the mid-twentieth century involves marginalized communities, who were more likely to lose their land, less likely to be compensated fairly, and in some cases, specifically targeted by authorities. Katrina Powell asserts that the “[r]emoval of Native Americans...economic development in Appalachia, rural electrification, national parks, and forced displacement” are among the examples that have “eerily similar” characteristics at the intersections of “politics, economics, racism, and paternalism.”⁵⁵ Belief that poorer, rural communities needed to be drastically altered in order to improve them led many to support massive displacement during the mid-twentieth century, especially in Appalachia. Powell claims that stereotypes created popular acceptance of the displacement of mountaineers at Shenandoah National Park. The same paternalism was evident in the comments of GSMNP supporter Horace Kephart, who argued that the residents of Cades Cove would greatly benefit and “be caught up in the current of human progress” once the park was established.⁵⁶ What was missing from each of these park narratives were the opinions of displaced people; they lacked the political or financial power needed to defend their homes and ways of life against politicians, park authorities, and advocates.

⁵⁴ Ibid. See also Wheeler and McDonald, *TVA and the Tellico Dam, 1936-1979*.

⁵⁵ Powell, *Anguish of Displacement*, 156.

⁵⁶ Dan Pierce, “The Barbarism of the Huns: Family and Community Removal in the Establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (March 1998): 64.

The construction of interstate highways highlights the most blatant attempts to displace marginalized communities. However, this was a different type of displacement. Instead of rural areas where communities were flooded or entire towns were razed, marginalized communities in urban areas were physically divided and economically and socially cut off by new roads. In most cities, the marginalized communities continued to exist but were even less able to thrive in their fragmented state. During the 1950s and 1960s, the federal government focused on “slum clearance and redevelopment” in cities across the country, which was to be “administered by state highway departments.”⁵⁷ In short, federal money allowed state and local officials to make the most politically and racially expedient decisions about where to construct highways in their cities. David Karas, who holds a Ph.D. in urban affairs and public policy, argues that they primarily targeted poor, minority neighborhoods in order to revitalize cities. By destroying impoverished neighborhoods, policymakers hoped to bring new wealth to cities. However, doing so typically caused affordable housing issues and generations of economic hardship for minority groups. Highways also provided a disguise for segregationists trying to fight integration and silence civil rights activists by allowing them to proclaim the benefits of new roads.⁵⁸ For example, despite protests and a cheaper alternative route, officials in Montgomery, Alabama, approved the location of Interstate-85 that shattered the city’s black community.⁵⁹ Overall, authorities targeted African

⁵⁷ Mohl, “Interstates and the Cities,” 7-8.

⁵⁸ Karas, “Highway to Inequity,” 9-21.

⁵⁹ Mohl, “Interstates and the Cities,” 23. For more on this theme, see Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl, *Interstate: Highway Politics and Policy Since 1939* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012) and Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out*

American neighborhoods throughout the United States at an overwhelming rate, some of which stemmed from seeking to destroy “dilapidated” areas of town that could also be obtained at a lower cost. Examples of deliberate racism were rampant. As “one former federal highway official” put it, “the urban interstates gave city officials ‘a good opportunity to get rid of the local niggertown.’”⁶⁰ Similar to how boosters used paternalistic rhetoric when creating national parks, highwaymen publicized the positive aspects of urban renewal in order to justify racially motivated intentions, allowing highway construction to devastate marginalized communities.

A marginalized community was one factor that attracted the Atomic Energy Commission to choose the Savannah River Plant’s site. A large number of black tenant farmers occupied the region who “possessed neither the financial resources nor the political clout to fight their removal from the land.”⁶¹ Frederickson asserts, “Government officials exploited the historically vulnerable position of rural blacks trapped in the economic vise that was the South’s tenant system.”⁶² Similar to Cades Cove, Norris, and Shenandoah, “planners for the [Atomic Energy Commission] as well as journalists writing about the destruction of Ellenton and the other small communities observed incorrectly that the residents lived in ‘rural isolation.’”⁶³ While those in the Savannah River Valley were detached from those in powerful positions, residents of the railroad

the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 20-21.

⁶¹ Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie*, 21.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 55.

town of Ellenton were not isolated. Claiming that communities were disconnected allowed authorities to use paternalism to justify displacement of a community identified as “other.” Throughout the mid-twentieth century, authorities dominated the narrative about marginalized groups in order to easily seize land, take control, or drum up support for their actions under the guise of public good, national security, or improving the welfare of said groups. Such targeting rarely if ever served those who were displaced, and in the end, marginalized people remained marginalized, with the added burden of displacement.

Displacement and Modernization

As we have seen, the federal government defended the dispossession of citizens in the name of modernization. When the National Park Service acquired land, officials argued that communities like Cades Cove were better off living closer to larger cities with access to varied jobs, better schools, and more opportunities. Additionally, displacement of these communities would facilitate a broader modernization by bringing electricity to the Southern Appalachian region beginning in the 1930s. Other displacement projects identified different common goods. Cold War atomic cities were said to keep America on top militarily, and proponents of interstates believed that renewed urban areas would provide an economic boost connected with increased transportation and slum clearance. Analyzing these examples from only one point of view creates a rosy picture of federal intervention in modern America; however, with each step toward progress, a corresponding community was left behind.

Who Benefits from Modernization?

The rhetoric used to describe federal projects that destroyed communities usually focused on the benefits gained by a particular region or the country as a whole, and on a local level, official narratives claimed the lives of displaced people would improve by relocating. Claims to help marginalized communities might have been well intended, but at times they were also tone-deaf, racist, or paternalistic. In many cases, displaced communities had little interest in becoming modernized, and “[d]ispossessed of their homes...[they] nevertheless continued to engage in traditional pursuits, just as their ancestors had.” Frederickson describes residents displaced from Ellenton, South Carolina, who still trespassed on the now-federally-owned property to hunt, fish, and make moonshine like they had in years prior to the Savannah River Plant’s creation.⁶⁴

Boosters who supported the establishment of GSMNP in the late 1920s similarly focused on how much the lives of people in Cades Cove and other areas of the park confines would improve if they were closer to urban centers.⁶⁵ The flaw in this justification for displacement lies in the fact that some residents, especially those in Cades Cove, were already “market-oriented” and connected to the rest of the region through established trade routes.⁶⁶ Fertile soil allowed the cove’s agricultural economy to sustain its farmers. However, the culture in Cades Cove seemed simplistic to wealthy outsiders. As Dunn points out, the ignored wishes of Cades Cove residents prove that

⁶⁴ Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie*, 70.

⁶⁵ Powell, *Anguish of Displacement*, 22-24. Powell describes the rhetoric used to increase support for Shenandoah National Park, which is almost identical to the paternalism at Cades Cove.

⁶⁶ Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 63-69.

most proponents of GSMNP were more concerned with large-scale benefits to the region, such as the potential of a growing economy based on park tourism, rather than helping to modernize rural areas of East Tennessee and North Carolina.⁶⁷

The dismissal of residents' opinions was also a reoccurring issue in how TVA operated. In many cases, TVA was more concerned with its own project costs and timelines than how valley residents would fare after their dispossession and relocation. For example, in 1945 and 1952, reviews of the Norris Reservoir conducted by Claude W. Nash, Manager of Properties at TVA, concluded that "58.66 percent of the Norris Basin purchase area was unnecessarily [acquired and] nearly 1,500 families [in the Central Peninsula between the Clinch and Powell Rivers] were removed unnecessarily."⁶⁸ From the TVA perspective, purchasing the peninsula land was more cost effective than building the infrastructure required to provide residents access to and from the peninsula once Norris Dam was constructed. These statistics are striking considering that when the Roosevelt administration created TVA in 1933, the goal was to improve the lives of "forgotten Americans" in the Tennessee Valley by supplying affordable electricity, preventing soil erosion, planting trees, and increasing industry.⁶⁹ Instead, residents in the Norris Basin were unnecessarily uprooted, and according to McDonald and Muldowny, still "unable, in many respects, to secure the advantages which TVA was created to provide."⁷⁰ Essentially, for those "forgotten Americans," TVA became an ironic

⁶⁷ Ibid., 248-50.

⁶⁸ As quoted in McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 136.

⁶⁹ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 263.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 272, 251. For example, while more households in the region were equipped with electricity after Norris Dam was built, sanitary facilities did not increase at

institution that publicized cheaper power and flood control, while they could scarcely afford electricity after displacement.⁷¹ The basin remained much the same as it had been prior to the 1930s, while the company town of Norris became “a white-collar enclave—[a] professional suburb of TVA.”⁷² Using Norris Dam as an example, McDonald and Muldowny conclude that the prosperity of the 1940s was “an accident of history and not the result of planning.” TVA’s intentions might have been noble, but World War II is what actually helped recover the people in the Appalachian region.⁷³ In short, the displaced communities in the Tennessee Valley endured many hardships so that others could enjoy modernity, but the original residents rarely could.⁷⁴

In contrast to the Appalachian communities who usually did not directly benefit from the modernization TVA provided, displaced residents near atomic cities often did. Referring to the economic boom brought about by Oak Ridge’s construction, one displaced resident explained that “although people resented the government’s action, there’s nobody that moved out . . . that wasn’t better off.”⁷⁵ As the populations of Anderson and Roane Counties increased, so did retail sales; “in Anderson County [alone,

a rate one would expect. Homeowners with indoor toilets increased by about 10 percent after relocation; however, the number of tenants in the region with indoor toilets decreased by 11.4 percent. Less than half of displaced tenants had toilets in their new residences.

⁷¹ Powell, *Anguish of Displacement*, 150-52; McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 181.

⁷² McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 215.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁷⁵ Schaffer, *Atoms in Appalachia*, 8.

sales] increased 851 percent from 1939 to 1948.”⁷⁶ Likewise, wages for most workers increased by 40 percent near the Savannah River Plant as the region profited from Cold War militarization and industrialization.⁷⁷ Connecting “postwar prosperity, modernity, and nation building” highlighted the positive side of progressivism in atomic cities and typically did not involve the paternalistic justifications used by the federal government in other instances of displacement.⁷⁸

More like the National Park Service and TVA, displacement associated with interstate highways regularly included rhetoric claiming that marginalized urban communities would benefit from a new highway plan. Ironically, plans that forced people out of their homes for the sake of progress rarely if ever directly benefitted the dispossessed. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, authorities made drastic changes to cities nationwide under the guise of “slum clearance and redevelopment.”⁷⁹ Federal administrators and highwaymen argued that new roads would increase automobility, trade, and safety as well as provide “a happy circumstance” for displaced families who could “be reestablished and permit the social as well as economic decay at the heart of the cities to be converted to a public asset.”⁸⁰ Highwaymen presented the displacement of urban communities as being for their own benefit as well as for the greater good of the community. However, relocation was an afterthought for city planners who were focused

⁷⁶ George O. Robinson, *The Oak Ridge Story: The Saga of a People Who Share in History* (Kingsport, TN: Southern Publishers, 1950), 38.

⁷⁷ Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie*, 22.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁹ Mohl, “Interstates and the Cities,” 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

on highway legislation. These planners believed that slums “were in essence a problem of deteriorated buildings, rather than a problem of low income of those buildings’ inhabitants.”⁸¹ As a result, already marginalized urban communities, who were then physically separated from their places of employment and social and cultural centers often fell further into poverty once they were displaced, especially when affordable housing was not readily available.

After the era of highway construction had come and gone, TVA’s paternalism remained evident throughout the Tennessee Valley well into the 1970s. In the case of the Tellico Dam, it was built to increase the power production at nearby Fort Loudon Dam by diverting water to Fort Loudon Lake and to provide flood water storage for Chattanooga, Tennessee.⁸² Part of the controversy surrounding Tellico stemmed from the new lakefront property it created. While TVA publicized a potential solution to unemployment and the out-migration of men ages twenty to forty who left the region looking for work, many residents at Tellico viewed TVA’s land acquisition as stealing from the less fortunate to serve developers and the wealthy.⁸³ Opponents of Tellico Dam were adamant that the project was “not needed to provide electricity, for flood control, or to propel the economy to another level,” rather they believed Tellico’s construction was simply about greed.⁸⁴ As seen at Tellico and in other examples, officials who ultimately took advantage of

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸² “Telling the Story of Tellico: It’s Complicated,” Tennessee Valley Authority, accessed July 23, 2018, <https://www.tva.com/About-TVA/Our-History/Built-for-the-People/Telling-the-Story-of-Tellico-Its-Complicated>.

⁸³ Dorward, *Dam Greed*, 10, 197; Wheeler and McDonald, *TVA and the Tellico Dam, 1936-1979*, 125.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 10, 252.

marginalized groups often used paternal rhetoric and cited claims about economic advancement; and while attempts at modernization eventually brought progress to each region, it rarely helped the displaced.

Modernization: Memory, Legacy, and Preservation

Although displaced residents rarely benefited from the progressive changes brought about in the mid-twentieth-century South, their lives, communities, and contributions can be remembered and preserved in the midst of the newness that modernization brings and its impacts on the environmental landscape. Dammed rivers became lakes, fields became roads, and communities were divided by interstates. Meanwhile, displaced people and new residents were determining how to interact with these settings and with each other.

Modernization can also lead to preservation, but the decision about what exactly is being preserved is typically left to those in power. For instance, much of East Tennessee has been industrialized since the preservation of GSMNP in the 1920s and 1930s. As the most visited national park, visitors as well as locals surely appreciate that the park's natural landscape has been saved from becoming another Gatlinburg or Pigeon Forge, sprawling with hokey tourist traps and hotels, but the park has also attempted to put its own spin on the area's history.⁸⁵ For instance, officials at GSMNP preserved cabins at Cades Cove but chose to raze frame houses and structures. Various types of architecture were present before residents of the cove vacated, but the park focused on

⁸⁵ Pierce, "Barbarism of the Huns."

“reflecting ‘pioneer’ style” and used cabins to create that image.⁸⁶ This choice by NPS to tailor the historic landscape is an important omission from the cove’s story, as the architecture once present there gave proof of some prosperity from its agriculture-based economy.⁸⁷ Consequently the park has been preserved, but a significant portion of its history is missing when tourists visit Cades Cove today.

As expected, displaced residents and their families came to view the park’s legacy, as well its original benefits to the region, differently when compared to park visitors whose sole focus is on the positive aspects of GSMNP. For some individuals who endured the trauma of displacement, bitterness and angst have lasted a lifetime. When Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander introduced a former resident of Cades Cove during a ceremony for Homecoming ‘86 (a year-long celebration of Tennessee communities) the crowd expected pleasantries. What they heard was a 98-year-old man yelling, “You stole my land!”⁸⁸ Though Governor Alexander had not yet been born when GSMNP was created, to the former resident, the governor still represented the unjust transgression of his dispossession. While most residents are never given the opportunity to air their grievances at a public forum, this man’s feelings were no anomaly. Decades after TVA’s creation, its dramatically positive effects on the Appalachian region in terms of electricity and flood control are evident. What is hidden in the current landscape are countless homesteads that have been erased by the flooding at TVA’s dams and lakes. While their legacy is mostly a successful one, the people who were displaced by TVA

⁸⁶ Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 34-35.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 36-40.

⁸⁸ Pierce, “Barbarism of the Huns,” 76.

from the 1930s to the 1970s still have strong opinions. McDonald and Muldowny assert that elderly people displaced by Norris Dam never adjusted to their new lives and that even though they were better off, they would still have rather been back home.⁸⁹ Similarly, interviews with locals displaced from Tellico contain fiery language and a disdain for TVA, even thirty years after the dam's construction was complete.⁹⁰

Oak Ridge provides a unique example in which the legacy of displacement was almost immediately spun to create a positive view of the new city. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, decisions about atomic energy and national security dominate the story of Oak Ridge. Instead of dwelling on the story of displacement, a sense of pride evolved from the city's success, not just for new residents, but also for the dispossessed. For example, historian James Sparrow explains that "Cold War territoriality" allowed Oak Ridge's legacy to be one of progressivism. When Manhattan Project engineers established Oak Ridge in 1942, blacks were offered menial jobs and forced to live in segregated hutments (temporary housing comprised of 16'-by-16' wooden panels) but in the mid-1950s, the city became a model for public school integration. Sparrow credits this to the federal dollars spent in the city and explains that "federal jurisdiction afforded by the warfare state could shield local communities from the political and normative pressures of the surrounding environs."⁹¹ Although a segregated black neighborhood still existed, Oak

⁸⁹ McDonald and Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed*, 60.

⁹⁰ Dorward, *Dam Greed*, 53, 56, 58.

⁹¹ James T. Sparrow, "Behind the Atomic Curtain: School Desegregation and Territoriality in the Early Cold War," *Tocqueville Review/La revue Tocqueville* 33, no. 2 (2012): 128. See also *Ibid*, 130, 133-34.

Ridge was spared the worst politics of white supremacy, because it was reliant on federal funds. The city's relationship to the federal government, its own diverse community, and its global significance make the legacy of displacement at Oak Ridge atypical for the Appalachian region.

Adjusting to life after displacement was different for those forced to move because of interstate highway construction. Not only were these residents living in urban settings unlike the typically displaced rural communities, they also usually stayed in the city even after displacement. Remnants of their communities still existed, albeit isolated from the rest of the city, leading to a complex history of marginalization. The urban renewal movement that sought to modernize cities by destroying their "blighted areas" left residents understandably bitter in cities nationwide.⁹² In recent years cities such as Nashville have become more aware of and willing to publicly recognize the hardships that interstates caused to some residents. For example, affordable housing options, mass transit, new trees, and murals to commemorate the Civil Rights Movement are all topics of discussion for Nashville's Jefferson Street, part of an African American neighborhood that was vibrant before I-40's construction in the late 1960s. City leaders are attempting to right some of the historic wrongs experienced by this community; but older residents remain skeptical, as they have heard several of these plans publicized for decades without corresponding action.⁹³ The great attachment residents feel to their homes and

⁹² Mohl, "Interstates and the Cities," 20.

⁹³ Jen Todd, "Gentrification or Progress? Jefferson Street Juggles Both," [Nashville] *Tennessean*, August 26, 2016, <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/davidson%20/2016/08/23/jefferson-street-community-looks-grow-avoid-pitfalls/87534300/>.

communities makes legacies of displacement complicated. Nevertheless, preserving the memories of these forgotten communities even when their physical remains are no longer extant is vital not only to reconciliation but also to solid historical research.

Secrecy and Displacement: Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Although Oak Ridge fits some of the typical displacement narrative of the mid-twentieth-century South, many aspects of residential removal in Anderson and Roane Counties and the atomic city's creation are unique. The international crisis of World War II made it more palatable for residents to acquiesce when compared to families forced to move by the National Park Service, TVA, or state officials advocating highway construction during the 1950s and 1960s; so from the very beginning, displacement in Oak Ridge was different.

The secrecy surrounding the Manhattan Project and the establishment of Oak Ridge greatly affected how residents and other Tennesseans viewed their displacement. For instance, when Governor Prentiss Cooper initially heard about Oak Ridge in July 1943, he “flew into a rage, denouncing the ‘experiment in socialism’ that had appropriated the farmlands and roads of his state.”⁹⁴ Like Governor Cooper, many residents were upset by the federal government's mandates and the lack of information provided by officials. However, the displaced were not the only ones frustrated; TVA historian Daniel Schaffer describes the plight of land assessors who likewise did not

⁹⁴ Sparrow, “Behind the Atomic Curtain,” 119.

know why the property was being acquired and had to make decisions based on unclear deed books that were full of discrepancies. However, most people's perceptions about the new city changed once World War II came to a halt and Oak Ridge's importance became public knowledge. After the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, both new and former residents of Oak Ridge began to understand the city's place within the context of nuclear science and national security, and a more complex view of the city's history emerged.

The need to develop atomic weaponry more quickly than the Axis Powers during World War II created an unprecedented national emergency that greatly impacted displacement in Oak Ridge. The nuclear arms race led to more atomic cities in the United States, such as the aforementioned town of New Ellenton, South Carolina, near the Savannah River Plant; but being built in secrecy and haste made Oak Ridge dissimilar. Prior to the establishment of New Ellenton, residents in Ellenton had protested with signs, one of which read, "It is hard to understand why our town must be destroyed to make a bomb that will destroy someone else's town that they love as much as we love ours."⁹⁵ Due to increased publicity and longer timelines for relocation, residents in atomic cities created during the Cold War protested their displacement more vociferously than people in what became Oak Ridge.

However, other aspects of Oak Ridge's displacement story, such as residents' dissatisfaction with land valuations, are nearly identical to the rest of the region. Familiar with the local dispossession that had occurred during the 1920s and 1930s, many

⁹⁵ Lanouette, "Our Town' v. 'National Security,'" 31.

residents in Anderson and Roane Counties were better equipped or had more connections than did their predecessors at GSMNP or Norris. Most of the displaced residents near Oak Ridge appealed their valuations at the federal court in Knoxville in the early 1940s and were successfully awarded more money for their property. When surveyors from the Army Corps of Engineers first arrived in 1942, locals shrugged it off, believing they were officials from TVA, but when residents of the Bear Creek Valley were given notices to vacate within a matter of weeks, it became clear that this displacement was unique and perhaps vital considering World War II was raging; yet landowners seemed just as hostile.⁹⁶ A “leather-faced old-timer put the problem of eviction into more understandable language” by comparing the displacement to the Civil War, which he concluded was different, because “when the Yankees came before, we could shoot them.”⁹⁷ Part of the frustration that residents felt certainly must have come from an inability to grasp the secret importance of what Oak Ridge eventually became.

The urgency of vacating, constructing, and resettling also made Oak Ridge’s story of displacement different. While GSMNP boosters and TVA used paternalistic language and claimed to have what Schaffer describes as “a vigilant and sensitive relocation policy” aimed at improving the lives of rural Americans,⁹⁸ the Atomic Energy Commission was not seeking the approval of landowners before acquiring their property. In 1942, time to worry about public opinion was a luxury the federal government did not have, which led to rushing residents out of Anderson and Roane Counties. Displaced

⁹⁶ Robinson, *Oak Ridge Story*, 21-22, 28.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁸ Schaffer, *Atoms in Appalachia*, 6.

people were understandably unsure how giving up their property correlated to support for the war effort. The onslaught of emotions about displacement coupled with the secrecy of the project led to skepticism and negativity among many. Therefore, the U.S. House Military Affairs Subcommittee led by Representative Clifford Davis (D-TN), who was joined by Representatives Dewey Short (R-MO) and John Sparkman (D-AL), met in nearby Clinton, Tennessee, and listened to residents air their grievances. Though the subcommittee was unable to do anything directly to aid or appease the residents, Schaffer argues that the government's willingness to meet with citizens even "at a time of unprecedented crisis ... illustrates the resiliency of American democracy."⁹⁹ In hindsight, the subcommittee's visit to East Tennessee was an effective way to encourage locals to remain patriotic and support both Oak Ridge and the war effort, despite losing their homes and communities.

In addition to the actual displacement of people in Anderson and Roane Counties, the way in which former residents remembered their dispossession also sets Oak Ridge apart from other cases of dispossession in East Tennessee. While dispossessed residents certainly felt anger and hopelessness after vacating the valley, many also felt content with their sacrifice, especially after World War II's end. Displaced resident and local historian Dorathy Moneymaker recalled that, "There was resentment, then there was acceptance and then a certain sense of pride."¹⁰⁰ The pride former residents sensed came from feeling that they had done their part to help win the war, and that pride persisted as Oak Ridge

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁰ As quoted in Ibid.

continued to play a pivotal role in the development of America's nuclear capability during the Cold War. Feeling productive and patriotic plays into the Southern ethos, in which self-reliance, independence, and love of country are critical aspects. For those displaced by the national parks, TVA, or interstate highways, lasting bitterness was much more common than in Oak Ridge. Since the lives of the displaced rarely improved in the dramatic fashion authorities had promised, the pride and positivity common to Oak Ridge—where displacement directly correlated to the Allied victory in World War II—were never enjoyed by other displaced Southerners. Overall, Oak Ridge can be viewed in the context of displacement in the mid-twentieth-century South, but because of the revolutionary purpose of the city and the way residents viewed their dispossession after war, the city's particularities allowed a positive view of displacement to emerge much more quickly than in other cases.

Historians have completed thorough research on the Manhattan Project and the atomic cities of Oak Ridge; Hanford, Washington; and Los Alamos, New Mexico, especially related to their nuclear history, postwar scientific advances, and environmental history.¹⁰¹ Many researchers have also published extensively about the formation of Oak Ridge and what life was like in the city during the war years and in the Cold War-era.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ John M. Findlay and Bruce Hevly, *Atomic Frontier Days: Hanford and the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Bruce Hevly and John M. Findlay, *The Atomic West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).; Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁰² Robinson, *Oak Ridge Story*; Clifford Seeber, "From Acorns to Atoms," *Antioch Review* 12, no. 3 (Autumn 1952), 363-380; Lindsey A. Freeman, *Longing for the Bomb: Oak Ridge and Atomic Nostalgia* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Russell B. Olwell, *At Work in the Atomic City: A Labor and Social History of Oak Ridge*,

However, the marginalized communities that were displaced in order to create the Secret City are still largely missing from that historiography. Similar to other examples of displacement, once Oak Ridge's pre-1942 villages were razed, communities ties were mostly severed (although some former residents and their families still return for annual reunions), and local history was lost.

One of the great tragedies common in each example of twentieth-century displacement in East Tennessee is a lack of engagement. First, federal employees, park boosters, and highwaymen made decisions void of reflection or input from residents who would be displaced by the large-scale projects they planned. Secondly, after the dispossessed relocated and their communities were no longer extant, it became much more difficult to preserve and share their local history. Finally, as new landscapes emerged, new residents and visitors—be they vacationers in the Smokies, boaters and water-skiers on TVA lakes, heritage tourists in Oak Ridge, or simply travelers along I-40—were disconnected from the stories of those who once resided in the areas they traversed. Eventually, displaced people and their communities suffered an erasure from history. In this dissertation, I argue that a way to combat the omission of Oak Ridge's displaced communities from the historical record is through historic preservation, public engagement, and education. First, let us discuss the history of these communities prior to their 1942 displacement in Chapter 2.

Tennessee (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004); Denise Kiernan, *The Girls of Atomic City: The Untold Story of the Women who Helped Win World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013); Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson, *City Behind a Fence: Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1942-1946* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

CHAPTER II: A BRIEF HISTORY OF PRE-1942 COMMUNITIES IN OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE

The year 1942 serves as a great divider in the histories of Anderson and Roane Counties. It marks the creation of Oak Ridge and the shift from rural Appalachian farmsteads to the fifth largest city in Tennessee, what became a scientific mecca. Consequently, histories written about this region after World War II largely concentrate on the new city and its importance both nationally and internationally. While such a focus is to be expected, it creates a gap in historiography in which Oak Ridge's pre-1942 communities and the ordinary people who resided in them are ignored.

The omission of places like Wheat, Robertsville, Scarboro, and Elza from the historical record distorts the truth about shared experiences like the World War II home front, but these distortions and omissions are also present in pre-World War II histories. For the most part, even regional histories from the pre-war era solely focus on Anderson and Roane Counties' larger towns like Clinton, Oliver Springs, and Kingston.¹⁰³ However, the same is not true regarding the work of local historians and pre-Oak Ridge residents who have helped solidify the memory of their displaced communities through written and oral histories and by preserving photographs and artifacts.

¹⁰³ M. E. Swann, Wallace Roberts, E. H. Hubbard, and H. C. Porter, "Soil Survey: Roane County, Tennessee," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Series 1936, no. 16 (Washington, DC, May 1942), 5, https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_MANUSCRIPTS/tennessee/roaneTN1942/roaneTN1942.pdf; *Goodspeed's History of East Tennessee: Thirty County Histories* (Nashville: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1887), 837-40, 1072-81; J. B. Killebrew, *Introduction to the Resources of Tennessee* (Nashville: Tavel, Eastman, and Howell, 1874), 448-57, 597-601.

Historians and proponents of local history David Kyvig and Myron Marty assert, “Careful examination of what happened to particular families and communities can clarify and illustrate the broader picture.”¹⁰⁴ In this chapter, I discuss Oak Ridge’s displaced communities and their pre-1942 history thematically. In so doing, I acknowledge that certain historical details about these places will be left out to focus on their shared experience of dispossession and their collective importance to Manhattan Project-era history. The eviction and relocation of pre-Oak Ridge village residents will be the topic of Chapter 3.

Oak Ridge is situated in the hills and valleys of East Tennessee, along the Clinch River, 25 miles west of Knoxville. In secrecy, the Army Corps of Engineers established the city in late 1942. It was opened to the public in 1949 and was incorporated in 1959. Since that time, Oak Ridge has become known as a powerhouse for public education, nuclear energy technologies, and scientific research. But prior to its current status, the land that became Oak Ridge was a pastoral setting used as Cherokee hunting grounds and later settled by European Americans and enslaved African Americans at the turn of the nineteenth century. Like the American Indians who were displaced from the region over a century before them, the approximately 3,000 people who called northeast Roane County and southwest Anderson County home in 1942 also had strong ties to the land.

¹⁰⁴ David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2012), 9.

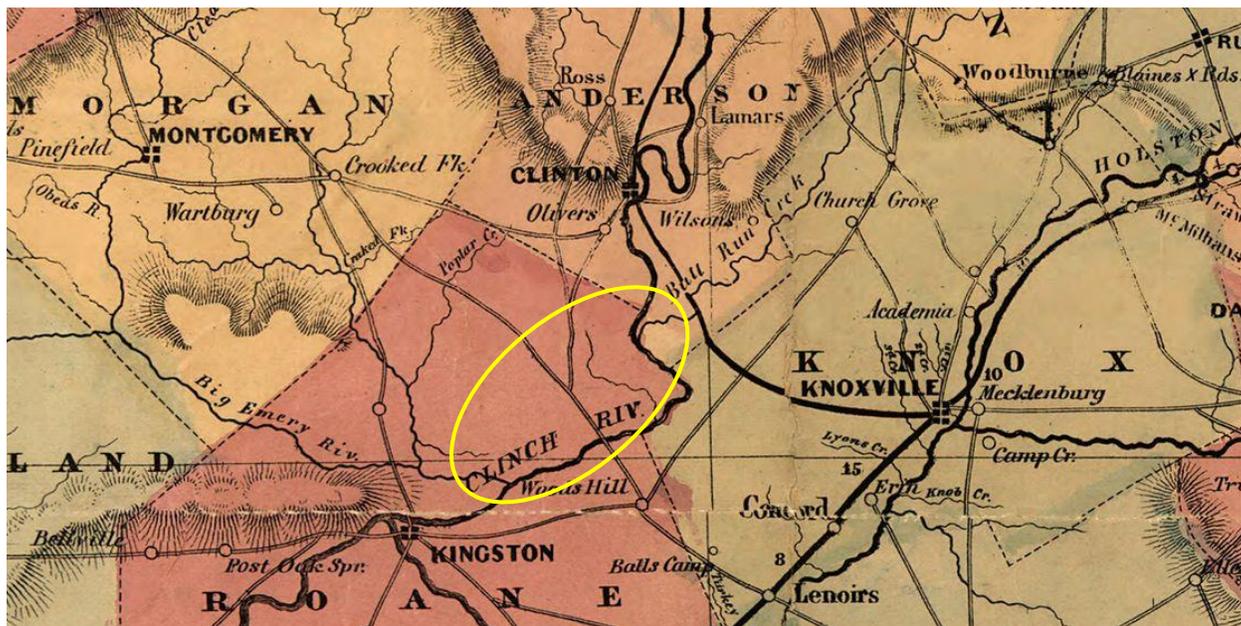


Figure 2.1: *Lloyd's Official Map of the State of Tennessee* denotes larger East Tennessee cities like Clinton, Kingston, and Knoxville. However, in the land between these cities, existing pre-Oak Ridge communities are not labeled.¹⁰⁵

To understand life in this portion of East Tennessee, one must first become familiar with its geography and the accessibility of transportation routes. A series of valleys and ridgelines encompass Oak Ridge and the communities that preceded it. This topography prevented permanent settlement prior to the 1790s, as well as large-scale plantation farming during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which helps to explain in part the region's substantial support for the Union during the Civil War—without a strong economic reliance on slave labor, there was less resistance to abolishing slavery.

In some ways, the land itself even insulated residents during the Civil War; with difficult terrain, transient armies often chose more convenient paths. Small farming

¹⁰⁵ James T. Lloyd, *Lloyd's Official Map of the State of Tennessee*, map, 1863, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/99448806/>.

communities who practiced subsistence agriculture became customary in the region. In 1942, the hilly terrain again played a critical role in the area's history, as the federal government chose the Secret City's location. When Major General Thomas M. Robins, Assistant Chief of Engineers for the War Department, identified site criteria required for success of the Manhattan Project, "land ... rugged enough [in] terrain to provide isolation for certain portions of the project" was first on his list.¹⁰⁶ Thus, what had kept these Appalachian residents somewhat secluded since the 1790s became one of the key reasons for the region's growth during World War II.

However, the region's perceived isolation is somewhat misleading, as some of Tennessee's oldest road systems pass directly thorough what is now Oak Ridge. Local historian David K. Hackett asserts, "despite its Secret City status, Oak Ridge has never been far off the beaten path and has a long history before the Manhattan Project."¹⁰⁷ The Emory Road, sometimes referred to as Avery's Trace or the Old North Carolina Road, was established by the late 1780s and passed through Robertsville to Winter's Gap (Oliver Springs) and over the Cumberland Mountains toward Fort Nashborough (Nashville). It was especially dangerous to traverse, as Cherokees defended their territory against white encroachment.¹⁰⁸ Until the 1790s, the Cherokee Nation controlled the

¹⁰⁶ Thomas M. Robins to Gordon R. Clapp, August 12, 1942, in Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Record Group 142, Office of the General Manager Administrative Files, 1933-1957, <https://www.archives.gov/atlanta/exhibits/item91.html>.

¹⁰⁷ D. K. Hackett, "Along the Road Less Traveled and the Well-Trodden Path," *Aztech Services*, 2006, <https://tnlandforms.us/greenways/EmoryGrnWy.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ James Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, VA: Donning Company Publishers, 1989), 18; Snyder E. Roberts, *Roots of Roane County, Tennessee, 1792-* (Kingston, TN: Roane County Publishing Company, 1981), 6; David Ray Smith, "Historic Trails," in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and*

region, but the 1791 Treaty of Holston and the 1798 Treaty of Tellico allowed for white settlement and forever altered the landscape. In 1797, federal troops constructed Fort Southwest Point, now Kingston. The outpost (located twenty miles from modern-day Oak Ridge) was used until 1811 to defuse tensions between European American settlers and Cherokee Indians regarding property ownership.¹⁰⁹ Still, travelers continued to come from Virginia, North Carolina, and elsewhere to settle what eventually became Anderson and Roane Counties while the Emery Road became and remained an important thoroughfare for pre-Oak Ridge communities.

Among the first pioneers to arrive was South Carolinian Elias Roberts. After living in Sugar Grove Valley—located northwest of Black Oak Ridge toward the modern city of Harriman—for two years, Roberts purchased land in 1796 and 1799. The latter purchase was a 500 acre tract along Poplar Creek in what became Wheat, the Manhattan Project-era site of the K-25 gaseous diffusion plant, and finally the modern-day East Tennessee Technology Park.¹¹⁰ Similarly, white settlers from Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas made their way into the Anderson County area throughout the 1790s. The Freels and Tunnell families were among the first to settle in what became the central and

Culture, edited by Carroll Van West (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2018), <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/historic-trails/>.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel D. Smith, “Fort Southwest Point,” in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, edited by Carroll Van West (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2018), <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/fort-southwest-point/>.

¹¹⁰ “A Brief History of Wheat,” K-25 Virtual Museum, accessed November 10, 2020, <http://k-25virtualmuseum.org/happy-valley/wheat.html>; “Elias Roberts,” Find-A-Grave, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/140261744/elias-roberts>.

eastern part of the Oak Ridge Reservation and remained there until their displacement in 1942.¹¹¹

As settlements continued to grow in number and expand eastward, new counties were formed. On December 20, 1801, Roane County, named after Tennessee Governor Archibald Roane, was officially partitioned from Knox County. The same year, Anderson County was also formed from parts of Knox and Grainger Counties. Anderson County was named after Joseph Anderson, who served as Tennessee's U.S. Senator for 1797 to 1815.¹¹² Settlers cut many trails and roads through both counties, but "construction always lagged behind," which negatively affected the economy of East Tennessee and forced most residents to rely on local market farming.¹¹³ Aside from fruit, those who were able to make a living farming grew wheat, corn, oats, potatoes, and tobacco.¹¹⁴ Livestock was another profitable venture for those who could invest in swine and cattle.

¹¹¹ Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee*, 13; Lawrence Tunnell, "ORICL Panel: Robertsville and Scarboro Communities, Part 1 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker, July 17, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/300/rec/6>.

¹¹² Jere Hall and Rachel Parker, "Roane County," in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, edited by Carroll Van West (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2018), <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/roane-county/>; Tara Mitchell Mielnik, "Anderson County," in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, edited by Carroll Van West (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2018), <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/anderson-county/>; Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History*, 13-14.

¹¹³ Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee*, 17.

¹¹⁴ Adolph von Steinwehr, *The Centennial Gazetteer of the United States: A Geographical and Statistical Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: J. C. McCurdy & Company, 1874), 78, Google Books; Carroll Van West, *Tennessee Agriculture: A Century Farms Perspective* (Nashville: Tennessee Department of Agriculture, 1986), 10-11.

Early roads, as well as railroads and Clinch River navigation, were critical for farmers who sold their crops to larger markets.

Prior to 1830, little state funding was provided for roads in Tennessee, so property owners contributed to public roads by building portions that crossed their own land. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, Anderson Countians Edward Freels, Spinar Keith, Collins Roberts, George Ramsey, and James Porter worked on roads in the future Oak Ridge Reservation.¹¹⁵ Their work helped further connect the Emery Road system.

With few large farms in Anderson and Roane Counties, slave labor was statistically less common than in the middle and western portions of Tennessee. However, some residents were engaged in the slave trade. One of Anderson County's two public slave blocks was located in Robertsville, near Oak Ridge's modern-day Outdoor Municipal Pool.¹¹⁶ Still, in 1840, enslaved persons made up just 9 percent of Anderson County's population and 12.8 percent of Roane County's. Thus, during the Civil War, the region largely supported the Union. While no major military engagements occurred on pre-Oak Ridge territory, residents did experience loss through the destruction of their farms by traversing armies.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee*, 18.

¹¹⁶ Katherine B. Hoskins, *Tennessee County History Series: Anderson County*, (Memphis, TN: Memphis State University Press, 1979), 37; Eva Wells McCarty, interview by Byron Hartzler, February 24, 2017, video of interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unjf6nud1bM>.

¹¹⁷ Larry McKee and Ted Karpyneec, *Phase I Cultural Resources Survey of the Kingston-Oak Ridge National Laboratory 161-KV Transmission Line Project, Anderson and Roane Counties, Tennessee*, Tennessee Valley Authority (November 2006), 22, <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1805/ML18054A393.pdf>.

By the 1870s, some farmers looked for alternate revenue streams and began working in nearby coal and iron mines.¹¹⁸ Growth of the mining and lumber industries fueled greater access to transportation and the extension of railroads through East Tennessee. An increase in mining and factory work in Knoxville continued through the early twentieth century. Still, most residents in pre-Oak Ridge villages maintained their work as small farmers, a trend that was especially true after the 1929 economic downturn when unemployment rose.¹¹⁹

In 1902, Anderson Countians organized a committee to urge local voters to support the allocation of public funds for transportation. Once approved, many roads and bridges were constructed throughout the county during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Infrastructure that later affected parts of the Oak Ridge Reservation included a road from Robertsville to Clinton and Andersonville, a road from Robertsville through the East Fork Valley to Roane County, and a steel bridge that replaced the Edgemoor Ferry at the Clinch River on the road from Scarboro to Clinton.¹²⁰ Also in the early 1900s, the Rock Pillar Bridge was built along the Emery Road.¹²¹ The structure is

¹¹⁸ J. B. Killebrew, *Introduction to the Resources of Tennessee* (Nashville: Tavel, Eastman, and Howell, 1874), 454-5.

¹¹⁹ McKee and Karpyne, *Phase I Cultural Resources Survey of the Kingston-Oak Ridge National Laboratory 161-KV Transmission Line Project*, 23.

¹²⁰ Martha Carver, *Tennessee's Survey Report for Historic Highway Bridges: A History of Bridge Building in Tennessee*, Tennessee Department of Transportation (Nashville, TN: Ambrose Printing Company, 2008), 57, <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/structures/historic-bridges/chapter2.pdf>; Clifford Seeber, "History of Anderson County, Tennessee" (master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1928), 96-97.

¹²¹ "The Emery Road," The Historical Marker Database, last modified September 2, 2020, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=89677>. See also Paul Taylor Hoffman, "The

still extant and is designated by a state historical marker on the Oak Ridge Turnpike near Robertsville Road.

The establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) during the following decades brought monumental attention to the region as the construction of Norris Dam began in 1934. Due to their proximity to the dam, residents of Oak Ridge's pre-1942 communities became keenly aware of the effects of federal displacement. The Norris Dam project dispossessed over 3,000 families, more than any other TVA project.¹²² And a great number of those former Campbell and Union County residents, whose land was flooded by TVA, relocated to Anderson and Roane Counties. The historiography of the pre-Oak Ridge region shifts after the introduction of TVA, and much more literature exists about East Tennessee because of it. However, as with older histories that focus mostly on Anderson and Roane Counties' larger cities, comparatively little is recorded about the small villages displaced in 1942.¹²³ Fortunately, the historiographical gap that exists in regional histories is not present in the work of local historians.

Emphasis on pre-Oak Ridge communities intensifies when researchers have a personal connection to the region. For instance, Steve Goodpasture serves as historian at K-25 and has done extensive research on Wheat. Likewise, in 1979, former resident

Old Southwest Passage: Exploring the First Road into Middle Tennessee" (master's thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, August 2012).

¹²² Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 4.

¹²³ J. B. Killebrew, *Introduction to the Resources of Tennessee*, 454-5, 598-600; *Goodspeed's History of East Tennessee: Thirty County Histories* (Nashville: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1887), 839-840.

Dorothy Moneymaker published a 245-page history of Wheat, documenting nearly every community aspect including families, religion, education, economics, and politics. David K. Hackett, who volunteers as a tour guide for Manhattan Project National Historical Park, writes and speaks frequently about Oak Ridge and its pre-war history. Byron Hartzler and Dennis Aslinger have done extensive genealogical work. Finally, Ray Smith, who has arguably done the most to document pre-Oak Ridge life, served as historian at Y-12 for decades before filling the historian role at the City of Oak Ridge. In addition to a well-researched website, Smith has contributed to the *Oak Ridger* newspaper for over a decade. His column, *Historically Speaking*, often makes note of pre-Manhattan Project-era history and news.

Furthermore, many residents have preserved boxes of photographs and documentation from pre-war communities and have willingly shared their memories through oral history with organizations like ORICL (Oak Ridge Institute for Continued Learning) and the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History (COROH). These local histories are sometimes considered less significant when compared to the incredible story of Oak Ridge, but much can be learned by examining the ordinary lives of pre-Oak Ridge residents. Studying those histories and displacement narratives of pre-Manhattan Project-era villages provides a deeper understanding of Oak Ridge, an appreciation for Appalachian life in the 1940s, and a better grasp of the nuances involved in large-scale federal projects and their effects on civilians during World War II. By including pre-1942 local history into the larger context of historical research on Oak Ridge, a fuller story

emerges that does not omit the evaluation of federal need and national security versus the impact of displacement.

Pre-Oak Ridge Communities

Apart from Wheat, which was situated in northeast Roane County, the displaced communities of Scarboro, Robertsville, and Elza, were all part of Anderson County, Tennessee. In 1942, there were approximately 1,000 families—3,000 individuals—living in pre-Oak Ridge communities.

Most of pre-Oak Ridge's population descended from European American settlers, but the area was also home to several black families, the majority of whom descended from formerly enslaved local people. During the late 1860s to the 1890s, a small number of African Americans in Wheat, and possibly other pre-Oak Ridge communities, attended schools and churches alongside their white neighbors.¹²⁴ While acknowledging the struggles of local African Americans before 1942, racial strife and segregation were much more prevalent after Oak Ridge's construction—when the region's population boomed, and blacks were segregated to the Scarboro area. Even so, a stroll through pre-Oak Ridge cemeteries shows that blacks and whites were not considered equals despite having little recorded dissension before the modern city's construction.

One of the most recognized black cemeteries in what became the Oak Ridge Reservation is the African Burial Ground located on the Oak Ridge Turnpike across from

¹²⁴ Dorathy Money maker, *We'll Call It Wheat* (Oak Ridge, TN: Adroit Publishing Co., 1979), 100.

the former K-25 site, land that was once part of the Gallaher-Stone plantation. The burial ground, also referred to as AEC (Atomic Energy Commission) #2 Cemetery, is the final resting place of at least 90-100 enslaved people and their family members whose graves are marked by field stones. Surely other black cemeteries within the reservation exist, but without modern headstones, most records of the interred and their families remain unknown. For example, Robertsville's Woods Chapel Cemetery or AEC #39, located at Michigan Avenue and Outer Drive, contains approximately eleven graves but only one headstone belonging to Elijah Wood, a veteran of the U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery.¹²⁵ Wood (1834-1913) is said to have founded Woods Chapel Presbyterian Church, the formal owner of a 0.9 acre parcel acquired by the federal government in 1942.¹²⁶ However, census records show Elijah Wood as a "Mulatto" farm laborer who was not literate, so perhaps the church was instead named in his honor.¹²⁷ In local histories and interviews, only snippets of the area's diversity prior to World War II has been recorded.

¹²⁵ "Historic Cemeteries in Oak Ridge: Woods Chapel Cemetery (AEC #39)," City of Oak Ridge Public Library, accessed November 20, 2020, <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/images/uploads/Documents/Departments/Library/AEC%2039%20Woods%20Chapel%20Cemeteryx.pdf>.

¹²⁶ Byron Hartzler, video interview by author, November 20, 2020.

¹²⁷ 1870 U.S. Census, Anderson County, Tennessee, Page 77A, Elijah Wood; Digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com>, accessed November 20, 2020); Citing NARA microfilm, Roll *m593_1513*.



Figure 2.2: Woods Chapel Presbyterian Church, Army Corps of Engineers Plot # C-254.
Courtesy of Byron Hartzler.



Figure 2.3: The grave of Elijah Wood is pictured in this 2020 photo of Woods Chapel Cemetery.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Byron Hartzler, photograph, November 20, 2020, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

While it is difficult to prove specifics regarding demographics in pre-Oak Ridge villages, the same is not true for the culture and daily lives of residents. From the settlement period to 1942, community life centered upon four things which were intensely intertwined: faith, family, farming, and education. After a brief introduction of each of the pre-Oak Ridge communities, I will discuss their features thematically.

Let us now look specifically at the history of pre-Oak Ridge villages. In Roane County, the Wheat community was especially well established. Originally settled in 1800 and known as Bald Hill (a reference to the region's cleared timber) and later called East Fork, the Wheat community was renamed in 1881 after its first postmaster Henry Franklin "Frank" Wheat.¹²⁹ With its successful school and larger number of farms with electricity, Wheat was noticeably progressive when compared to the rest of Roane County in the 1930s.¹³⁰ In 1939, a population of 734 lived in the 11,119 acre Wheat community which was comprised of 133 farms. Approximately 3,900 acres, or one-third of land in Wheat, was used for agriculture. Most of the 194 families in the area were farmers; only three percent of Wheat residents worked outside of the community.¹³¹ Of its 194 farmhouses, 131 were owned, eight were rented, and fifty-five were used as tenant houses.¹³²

¹²⁹ J. H. McLeod, "The Wheat Community," *Land Policy Review* 2, no. 5 (September-October 1939): 25, Google Books; Bonita Irwin, "Wheat: The Community Hearts, Minds Didn't Forget," *Oak Ridger*, October 2, 2012, <https://www.oakridger.com/article/20121002/NEWS/121009983>.

¹³⁰ Swann, et al., "Soil Survey: Roane County, Tennessee," 6.

¹³¹ McLeod, "The Wheat Community," 24.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 25.

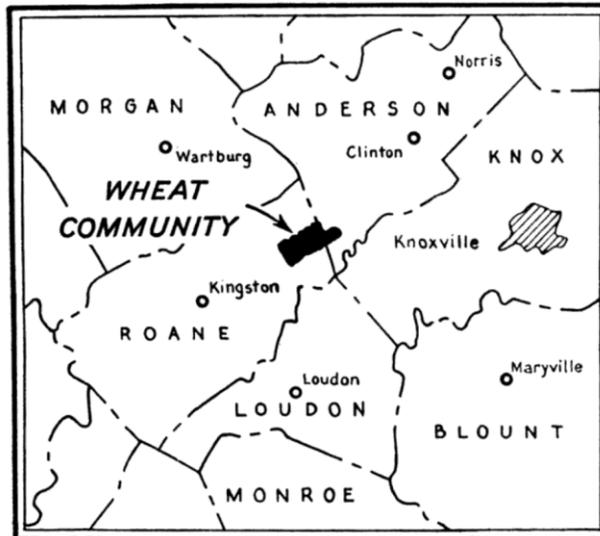


Figure 2.4: The Wheat Community, located on the Roane and Anderson County line, is shown here in a map featured in *Land Policy Review*, a 1939 publication of the U.S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics.¹³³

Located northeast of Wheat and in Anderson County, the village of Scarboro was first settled in the early 1790s when brothers Jonathan, David, and James Scarborough relocated from Virginia. Originally called Lick Skillet, in reference to a nearby mineral lick used by deer, the area became known as Scarborough Town which was later shortened to Scarboro.¹³⁴ The small farming community was located near the modern intersection of Bethel Valley Road and South Illinois Avenue, along Scarboro Creek, and in the vicinity of the present-day University of Tennessee Arboretum at Oak Ridge. The modern community of Scarboro is home to much of Oak Ridge's African American population, as it was designated for segregated housing during the Manhattan Project. However, prior to 1942, there were only ridgelines—Pine Ridge, Chestnut Ridge, and

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹³⁴ Seeber, "History of Anderson County, Tennessee," 23.

Haw Ridge—that separated Scarboro from other pre-Oak Ridge communities like Robertsville and the New Hope area, northwest and west of Scarboro respectively. Before the X-10 and Y-12 plants replaced Scarboro, and thousands of newcomers employed at Oak Ridge, the Bear Creek Valley was home to hundreds of residents. There was a school, three stores, three doctors, four churches, two grist mills, a lumber mill, a telephone operator, and a Mason’s lodge.¹³⁵ Similar to other rural villages, postal service in Scarboro varied, first being designated as Robertsville, then Scarboro, and finally Edgemoor, a nearby community just east of the Clinch River.¹³⁶ One former Scarboro resident described her former home with contentment: “We didn’t have much money, but we weren’t poor. And we had plenty.”¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Donald Raby, “Oral History of Donald Raby,” interview by Keith McDaniel, March 14, 2016, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/659>; “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 2,” April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/290>.

¹³⁶ Raby, “Oral History of Donald Raby.”

¹³⁷ “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/291/rec/3>.

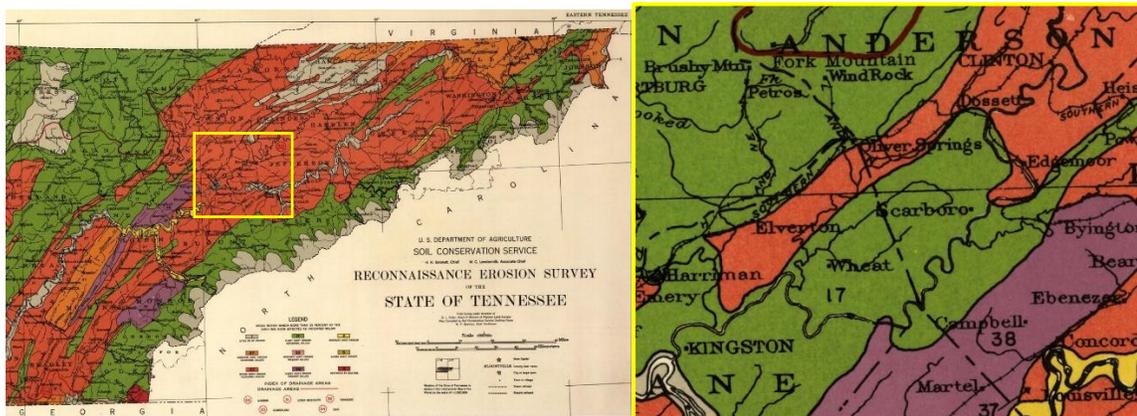


Figure 2.5: Wheat and Scarboro are identified on this 1934 Reconnaissance Erosion Survey of the State of Tennessee.¹³⁸

Adjacent to Scarboro, and with no real boundary besides the geographical ridgelines, was the Robertsville community. As early as 1792, European emigrants began permanently settling the East Fork of Poplar Creek region of Anderson County, along the Emery Road. Frenchman William Tunnell with English Lady Anne Howard, and later, Irishman Issac Freels were among the first to arrive.¹³⁹ After receiving a 4,000 acre land grant, merchant Collins Roberts established a general store in 1804 that Robertsville grew around.¹⁴⁰

What remains of the Robertsville community is mostly hidden, although buried concrete foundations and pieces of front porch stairs can still be found if one knows where to look. There are two buildings left standing: the auditorium at Robertsville

¹³⁸ United States Soil Conservation Service, *Reconnaissance Erosion Survey of the State of Tennessee*, map, 1934, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/99446156/>.

¹³⁹ Seeber, "History of Anderson County, Tennessee," 22.

¹⁴⁰ *Goodspeed's History of East Tennessee*, 837-38; Russel Langley, "Secret City Markers Missing," *Oak Ridger*, July 22, 2016, <https://www.oakridger.com/news/20160722/secret-city-markers-missing>.

Middle School, around which the modern school was built, and the old Lockett Store at the corner of Robertsville Road and Raleigh Road, a building that is currently vacant and for sale since the Kim Son Vietnamese Restaurant closed its doors. As the Army Corps of Engineers burned farmhouses and barns, sometimes before the displaced owners had left the property, Robertsville's landscape changed almost instantaneously in 1942.¹⁴¹ Those with a keen eye will still notice hints of the old Robertsville incorporated into present-day Oak Ridge. For instance, with approximately 30,000 annual visitors, the Outdoor Municipal Pool located at the corner of Robertsville Road and Providence Road in the Grove Center area has been a place for summer recreation since 1944.¹⁴² But before the city created the enormous spring-fed, concrete-walled pool—which is over three times the size of an Olympic pool—it was a pond, called Cross Springs, used to water the horses of Emery Road travelers and the livestock of Robertsville farms. The post-1942 differences around the swimming pool are obvious, but the water allows for Robertsville's historic landscape to be imagined in a way that is impossible in other areas of Oak Ridge.

¹⁴¹ Eva Wells McCarty, interview by Byron Hartzler, February 24, 2017, video of interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FteY2ove4Cc>.

¹⁴² Benjamin Pounds, "Should the Swimming Pool Be Made Smaller, Moved?" *Oak Ridger*, November 11, 2020, <https://www.oakridger.com/story/news/2020/11/11/should-swimming-pool-made-smaller-moved/6258385002/?fbclid=IwAR0oRICmn7ihtJbdhCspHVLNpUMXj29fU23C3YeyEl2ufTc7inyv6h8uJWE>; Mark Griffith, "Oak Ridge Pool Turns 70," *The Housing Hour*, June 24, 2015, https://thehousinghour.com/general/oak-ridge-pool-turns-70/?fbclid=IwAR1yng6fVjE_nWWJJu6YKEZvcuDQP8yv4JFcgm4U2OkTPVNPZCXgvUCD5Dc.

Less is recorded about the fourth displaced community, Elza. Rather than a typical village, Elza was a railroad stop at Oak Ridge's eastern perimeter. German immigrants first settled the place "in the late 1700s."¹⁴³ According to Paul Elza, the former Assistant Director of Oak Ridge Associated Universities, the village's name dates to the early nineteenth century when shipments from the L&N Railroad were dropped in the area. Paul Elza's great uncle, a construction engineer with the same surname, oversaw building tunnels, bridges, and overpasses; so, supplies would be labeled with his name to ensure a proper drop-off location. Elza was an important part of the construction supply chain for an extended period due to its location near the railroad, highway, and river. Map makers eventually picked up on the Elza Station drop-off, which became Elza, Tennessee.¹⁴⁴

At the start of the Manhattan Project, Elza Gate was the most used entrance to Oak Ridge.¹⁴⁵ Little remains of the former community besides the Worthington family cemetery that can be accessed by a walking trail approximately one-half mile south of Elza Gate Park. The Luther Brannon House, a stone house built by Owen Hackworth in 1941, was razed in 2021.

¹⁴³ Patricia A. Hope, "The Wheat Community," in *These Are Our Voices: The Story of Oak Ridge, 1942-1970*, ed. James Overholt (Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, 1987), 15.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Elza, interview by Sibyl Nestor, November 1973, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/75>.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*



Figure 2.6: The Luther Brannon House was marked for sale in early 2020.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the four pre-Oak Ridge villages, several areas such as New Bethel, New Hope, and various valleys and ridges are often used to describe the region. For the sake of clarity, I have tried to reference details based on the larger community names of Wheat, Robertsville, Scarboro, and Elza. While these communities are gone, their names can still be found throughout the modern city of Oak Ridge on places like street signs, churches, and city gates.

Post Offices

In the modern era, mail delivery can serve as verification for a place's existence and boundaries. Many post offices served the pre-Oak Ridge region before 1942. The

¹⁴⁶ John Huotari, photograph, *Oak Ridge Today*, April 5, 2020, <https://oakridgetoday.com/2020/04/05/built-before-the-war-this-home-is-for-sale/>.

first post office in the Wheat area, then Bald Hill, was established in 1838 and became part of the Rural Free Delivery (RFD), a service that began in numerous locations nationwide during the 1890s and provided mail delivery and pickup to homes and businesses. By 1904 when RFD came to Wheat, service at thirteen local post offices had been discontinued or transferred to larger, consolidated sites. Post office patrons at Burns' Mill in the Bethel Valley near the X-10 plant, Guenther at the East Fork of Poplar Creek, Selkirk in the Bethel Valley near Waller's Ferry, and Bear near the Y-12 plant, were all served at the Wheat Post Office following their site's closure; others were consolidated into the Oliver Springs Post Office. Prior to their closures, most of these post offices received mail from Scarboro once weekly.¹⁴⁷

One of Wheat's postal carriers, Baptist minister Micah Henderson Sellers, delivered mail on horseback for twenty-eight years. He and his wife were known as "Uncle Mike" and "Aunt Molly" throughout Wheat and the Bethel Valley.¹⁴⁸ Wheat's tenth and final postmaster was William Ernest Gallaher who served the community from March 1942 until mail service was discontinued on February 15, 1943. Mail sent to Wheat residents, who had been displaced by the Manhattan Project, was then sent to Oliver Springs before being forwarded.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Dorathy Money maker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 104-8.

¹⁴⁸ Barbara McCall Ely "ORICL Panel: Wheat Community, Part 3 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Patricia Clark, July 10, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/294/rec/4>.

¹⁴⁹ Money maker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 107-8.



Figure 2.7: Mail Carrier Micah Sellers¹⁵⁰

In Robertsville and Scarboro, post offices were in service as early as 1832 and 1868 respectively.¹⁵¹ In 1942, Robertsville’s post office was located at Lockett Store, a dry goods store at the heart of the community. By 1911 Scarboro’s post office had closed,¹⁵² and the region was consolidated for service from Edgemoor.¹⁵³ The postman from Scarboro would collect mail from Edgemoor and then meet Micah Sellers, who

¹⁵⁰ Photograph from Steve Goodpasture, email message to author, February 27, 2019.

¹⁵¹ “Tennessee Place Names and Post Offices, Part 4, P-S,” Tennessee State Library and Archives, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://sos.tn.gov/products/tsla/tennessee-place-names-and-post-offices-part-4-p-s>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Grace Raby Crawford, “Back of Oak Ridge,” ed. David Ray Smith (2003), 5, <http://smithdray.tripod.com/or/boor.pdf>.

would carry the mail on to Wheat.¹⁵⁴ Without a post office or general store, residents of Elza received their mail from Dossett, a community approximately three miles northwest.

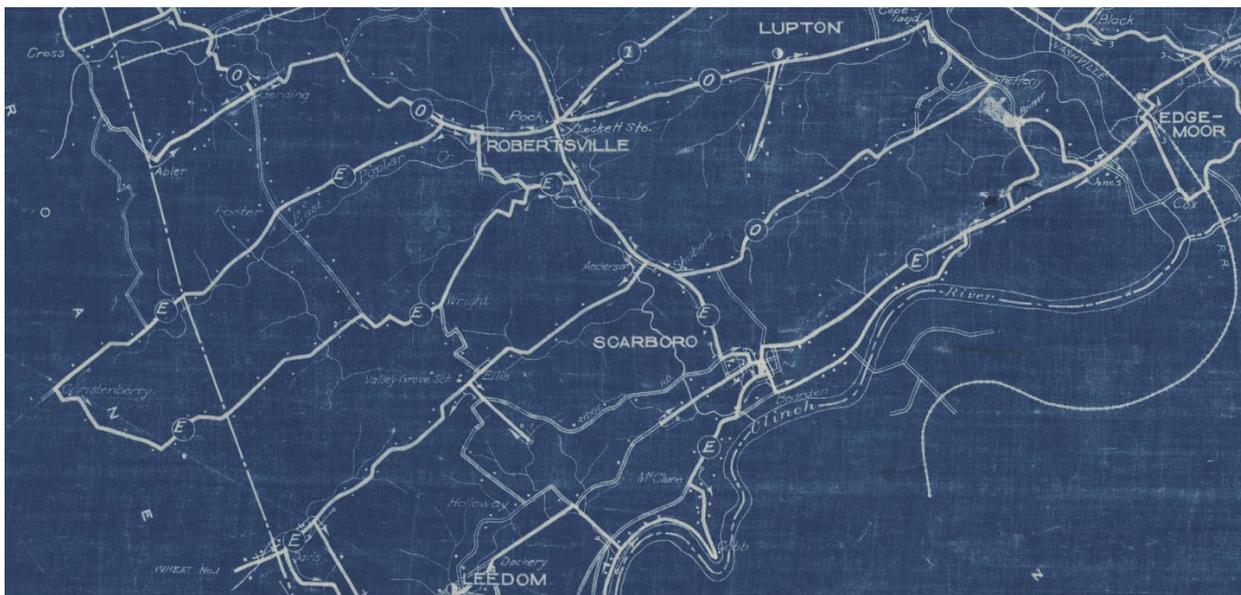


Figure 2.8: This 1935 Rural Delivery Service map shows postal routes in Anderson County. Robertsville is marked with an “O” to denote service to Oliver Springs while Scarboro, as well as Wheat—located on the Roane County line on the western border of the map—are marked with an “E” for service to Edgemoor.¹⁵⁵

While this is not a complete listing of all the post offices and postal workers that served pre-Oak Ridge residents before their displacement, the information that has been documented about the region’s mail delivery proves its connectivity and organization.

¹⁵⁴ “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/291>.

¹⁵⁵ “Anderson County, Tennessee (1935),” map, ID 36351, Tennessee State Library and Archives, <https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll23/id/356/>.

For a rural area prior 1942, pre-Oak Ridge communities received adequate service of the U.S. mail.

Pre- Oak Ridge Churches

During the early 1800s, the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant revival, spurred an increase of both church participants and their social influence in East Tennessee. It was not uncommon for residents of pre-Oak Ridge communities to travel as far as Knoxville to attend camp meetings, or religious revivals held mostly during summer months. Churches in Wheat, Robertsville, and Scarboro were the most important, unifying feature of their communities.

The local significance of Christianity is also likely true of Elza. However, due to the community's smaller size, its church history is less documented. Along Highway 61 (between Gamble Cemetery and Worthington Cemetery) Elza Church is designated on 1936 U.S.G.S. topographic maps. These maps denote approximately twenty buildings in the vicinity of Elza.¹⁵⁶ Surely some of these buildings were the homes of Elza Church members. The map does not distinguish what denomination Elza Church might have been but, based on regional trends, it was more likely than not home to a Protestant congregation.

In both Roane and Anderson Counties, church goers primarily belonged to one of three Protestant denominations: Baptists, Methodists, or Presbyterians. Congregations

¹⁵⁶ "Norris Dam, 1936," USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer, accessed November 10, 2020. <https://livingatlas.arcgis.com/topoexplorer/index.html>.

gathered outdoors, in homes, and in schoolhouses before churches were built.¹⁵⁷ It was common for members of different faiths to fellowship together each Sunday as a rotating circuit of preachers served most pre-Oak Ridge residents. An exception to the part-time ministry, in which one minister would serve multiple congregations, was evidenced at two churches in the region. New Hope Baptist Church became the first church in the region to support a full-time pastor and later, Solway Church.¹⁵⁸

More commonly, however, community members attended several different churches each month. For instance, in Wheat, churchgoers met at the Baptist church on the first and third Sundays of each month. At the Presbyterian church, the Presbyterian minister preached on the second Sunday and the Methodist minister preached on the fourth. During their off weeks in Wheat, these ministers preached in nearby Oliver Springs, Coalfield, and at the Presbyterian church in Scarboro.¹⁵⁹ If there was a fifth Sunday in the month, Wheat residents would gather for dinner-on-the-grounds at George Jones Memorial Baptist Church.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Hoskins, *Tennessee County History Series*, 28-29.

¹⁵⁸ Nash Copeland, "Oral History of Nash Copeland," May 23, 1972, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/74>.

¹⁵⁹ Dorathy Moneymaker, "ORICL Panel: Wheat Community, Part 3 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Patricia Clark, July 10, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/294/rec/4>.

¹⁶⁰ Barbara McCall Ely, "ORICL Panel: Wheat Community, Part 3 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Patricia Clark, July 10, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/294/rec/4>.

George Jones Memorial in Wheat—the only extant building in the former community—was founded as Mt. Zion Baptist Church in 1852 as a branch of the Sulphur Springs Church of Christ in Oliver Springs. In 1854, local leader George Jones, who served as the minister in the late 1800s, donated land for the church as well as \$2,500, just \$100 short of what the building costed to erect. When Jones died in 1903, the congregation approved the renaming of Mt. Zion Baptist in Jones’s honor. The church was used mostly for storage during the Manhattan Project, but residents of Happy Valley, Clinton Engineer Works’ construction camp, have recalled using the building for religious services during World War II.¹⁶¹ The church, now owned by the Department of Energy, is only open to the public during the Wheat community’s annual reunion the first weekend in October. However, visitors can now walk to George Jones Memorial as well as the adjacent cemetery via a public greenway.

Near Wheat, in the Bear Creek Valley, the New Hope Cumberland Presbyterian Church was established by 1824. After the Civil War, the church was described as Horeb or Mt. Horeb Cumberland Presbyterian Church or Campground. Camp meetings lasted for several days in which congregants would camp at Bear Creek. When a log church was erected, Mt. Horeb Cumberland Presbyterian shared its facility with local Baptist congregations.¹⁶²

In August 1873, church leaders from Mt. Horeb founded Russell’s Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Elders J. B. Russell, John Russell, George Gallaher,

¹⁶¹ Darryl Long, “Ranger-led Program: A Walk Through Wheat,” (lecture, National Park Service, Oak Ridge, TN, October 3, 2020).

¹⁶² Moneymaker, *We’ll Call It Wheat*, 78-79, 84.

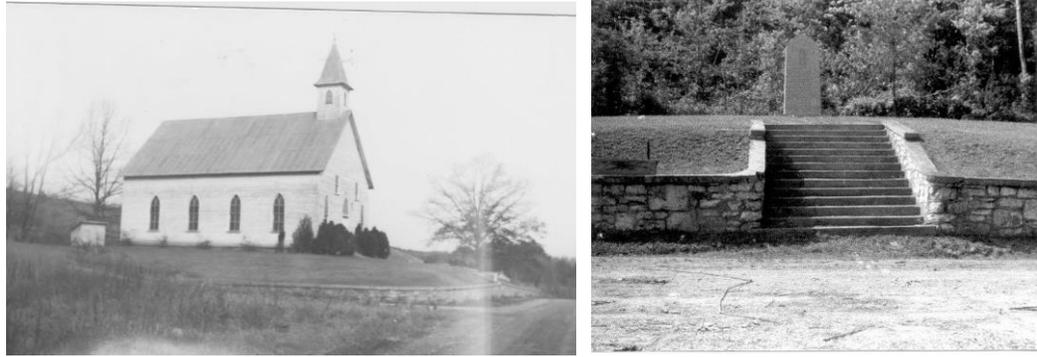
and ministers W. H. Russell and D. H. Gallaher were among those who transferred to the new church. Reverend W. H. Russell first led the church, which “was located 400 feet northeast of the [modern] bridge that crosses the East Fork of Poplar Creek, on the road from Wheat to East Fork and Robertsville.”¹⁶³

Presbyterianism continued to grow. On August 16, 1891, former ministers of Russell’s Chapel, Reverend S. B. West and Reverend W. H. Henry, formed Crawford Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Wheat. Like other Presbyterian churches, the Crawford building also served Baptists and Methodists, the same way Crawford’s congregation had previously met in other Methodist church buildings.¹⁶⁴ After October 6, 1942, when the federal government acquired the church building and land, the Presbyterian congregation bought an abandoned church in Harriman for a new meeting place. When the building was burned in the late 1940s, the congregation chose to dissolve their church. In 1950, they used their remaining assets to support local youth camps and other Presbyterian churches. The congregation also erected a memorial commemorating Crawford Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Wheat community.¹⁶⁵ The large stone memorial is located at the end of the same greenway trail as George Jones Memorial Baptist Church, northwest of the church’s former location, a site that the Oak Ridge Turnpike later replaced.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 87-89.

¹⁶⁵ Long, “Ranger-led Program: A Walk Through Wheat.”



Figures 2.9 and 2.10: Crawford Cumberland Presbyterian Church is pictured on the left prior to 1942. The photo on the right shows the stone memorial erected in 1950 as well as the original wall in front of the church. The wall was removed in the mid-1980s when the interchange was constructed.¹⁶⁶

Along with several churches, from as far away as Oliver Springs and Coalfield, there were two others with possible connections to the local Presbytery in what became the Oak Ridge Reservation: Shiloh Cumberland Presbyterian Church which served the Scarboro community for at least twenty years before 1942 (and probably longer) and Mt. Vernon Church in Robertsville.¹⁶⁷ No available records point to whether or not the African American Presbyterian Church, Woods Chapel in Robertsville, was affiliated with other local congregations.

Near the county line along the Emery Road, the East Fork Baptist Church was founded by 1801. It dissolved after the Civil War, most likely because of heavy troop movement through the area. In 1869, a new church formed, and a log building was

¹⁶⁶ Photographs from Steve Goodpasture, email message to author, February 27, 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 97.

constructed.¹⁶⁸ The Scott-Cabbage Cemetery, AEC #19, and East Fork Baptist Church Cemetery, AEC #21, are associated with East Fork Missionary Baptist Church.¹⁶⁹

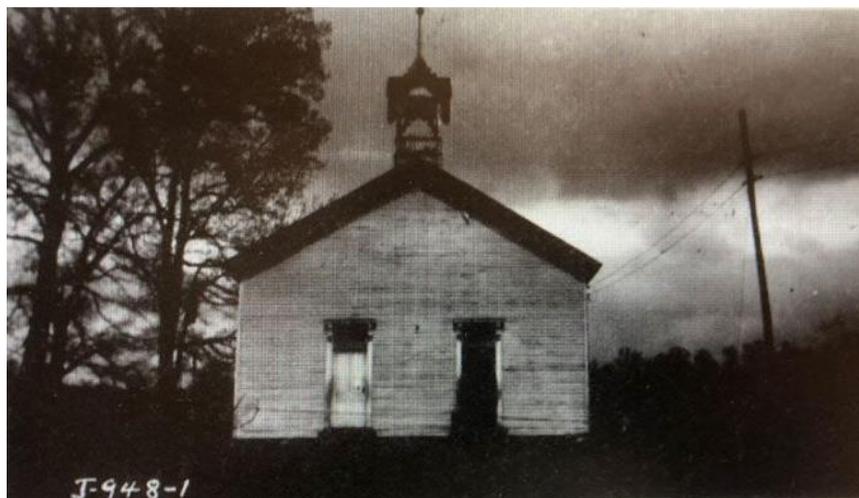


Figure 2.11: East Fork Missionary Baptist Church was located in Robertsville, Tennessee on what is now Newcastle Lane in Oak Ridge.

In the Scarboro community, and more specifically a region sometimes referred to as Bethel or the Bethel Valley, New Bethel Baptist Church is the only extant pre-World War II building. Included in the National Register of Historic Places in 1991, the 1924 weatherboarded church, along with a cemetery containing approximately 250 marked graves, is located on Bethel Valley Road across from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

¹⁶⁹ “Historic Cemeteries in Oak Ridge: Scott Cemetery (AEC #19),” City of Oak Ridge Public Library, accessed November 20, 2020, <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/images/uploads/Documents/Departments/Library/AEC%2019%20Scott%20Cemeteryx.pdf>; “Historic Cemeteries in Oak Ridge: East Fork Baptist Church Cemetery (AEC #21),” City of Oak Ridge Public Library, accessed November 20, 2020, <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/images/uploads/Documents/Departments/Library/AEC%2021%20East%20Fork%20Baptist%20Church%20Cemetery.pdf>.

Leaders founded the church in 1851 and like other churches at the time, New Bethel Baptist was used by Scarboro residents for more than religious purposes. However, documentation of the church's use for social, education, or political affairs are lacking.¹⁷⁰ Since the 1990s, New Bethel Baptist Church has served Oak Ridge as a museum.¹⁷¹

Less than two miles from New Bethel Baptist Church, Friendship Baptist Church once stood on Bethel Valley Road. For approximately a decade, Friendship Baptist served many residents who had relocated to the Bethel Valley in the late 1920s due to the formation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Other Baptist churches in the area included Gravel Hill, Mt. Horeb, New Zion, and a church that met at Thomas Gallaher's Schoolhouse and may have been a precursor to Wheat's Mt. Zion or George Jones Memorial Baptist Church.¹⁷²

In Robertsville, community founder Collins Roberts donated land to build a Baptist church in 1890.¹⁷³ The Robertsville Cemetery is now located on Iroquois Road, the original site.¹⁷⁴ Like other local churches, Robertsville Baptist Church played an important part of not only religious but also everyday life. For instance, Eva Wells

¹⁷⁰ Kimberley A. Murphy, "New Bethel Baptist Church," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 92000409 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1992), Section 7-8, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/7073cfb4-9ee3-4322-bbe5-f3fb2c5f5400>.

¹⁷¹ "New Bethel Baptist Church Homecoming Planned May 28," Oak Ridge National Laboratory, May 19, 2000, <https://www.ornl.gov/news/new-bethel-baptist-church-homecoming-planned-may-28>.

¹⁷² Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 68-69.

¹⁷³ Beverly Majors, "Robertsville Baptist Church Celebrates Its 65th Anniversary in Oak Ridge on Sunday," *Oak Ridger*, May 19, 2011, <https://www.oakridger.com/article/20110519/NEWS/305199994>.

¹⁷⁴ D. Ray Smith, email message to author, July 5, 2021.

McCarty, who lived in Robertsville from the time she was five years old until she was twelve, recalls community members bringing fruits and vegetables they had grown to the church which provided jars for canning.¹⁷⁵ And when asked to describe his home before Oak Ridge was established, local attorney and 1942 Robertsville High School graduate Lawrence Tunnell jokingly replied, “Well, actually I don’t think there was really anything much around except the Republicans and the Baptists at that time.”¹⁷⁶

Robertsville Baptist Church was razed during the Manhattan Project construction at which time its members “bequeathed \$1,000 for a church of like faith to be built near the site.” For years, various religious groups in Oak Ridge met at the Chapel on the Hill, and in 1944, a Baptist group began meeting at Robertsville School. On May 26, 1946, 143 charter members formed the contemporary Robertsville Baptist Church, which opened its location on Robertsville Road in February 1954.¹⁷⁷

In pre-Oak Ridge villages, Methodist churches were part of the Holston Conference which included churches in thirty-three East Tennessee counties and several other states.¹⁷⁸ As the population in the greater region increased during the early

¹⁷⁵ Eva Wells McCarty, interview by Byron Hartzler, February 24, 2017, video of interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygq4wPTKIEk>.

¹⁷⁶ Lawrence Tunnell, “ORICL Panel, Part 1: Robertsville and Scarboro Communities: ‘The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,’” interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker, July 17, 2000, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/300/rec/5>.

¹⁷⁷ Beverly Majors, “Robertsville Baptist Church Celebrates Its 65th Anniversary in Oak Ridge on Sunday,” *Oak Ridger*, May 19, 2011, <https://www.oakridger.com/article/20110519/NEWS/305199994>.

¹⁷⁸ Roy L. Howard, “Holston Conference,” in The Tennessee Encyclopedia, edited by Carroll Van West, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2018), <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/holston-conference/>.

nineteenth century, more Methodist churches were established, especially along the Tennessee, Holston, and Clinch Rivers. Like other Protestant ministers, Methodist leaders often rotated on a circuit, preaching fire and brimstone at different churches each Sunday.

On December 28, 1894, a white man, D. H. Gallaher, deeded land to trustees of the Negro Methodist Episcopal Church in Wheat for \$1.00 under the stipulation that it be used for religious purposes. Among the church's original trustees were W. P. Ellis, Richard Gallaher, and K. G. Gallaher. Congregants worshiped at this property in the Negro School building from at least 1903 to 1908. Local historian Dorathy Moneymaker notes that the church and school dissolved when African Americans moved away from Wheat.¹⁷⁹

Other Methodist churches in what became the Oak Ridge Reservation included Robertsville Methodist, Douglas Chapel (which was later known as Douglas Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church, whose cemetery is denoted as AEC #22), Gravel Hill Methodist, Wheat Methodist, and King's Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁸⁰

Churches were an integral part of life in pre-Oak Ridge communities. In an interview, Moneymaker once noted the region's high church attendance: "[T]hose that didn't even have the Lord ... didn't have nowhere to go, no television to watch, so they all came to church."¹⁸¹ Pre-Oak Ridge church buildings were a resource for multiple

¹⁷⁹ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 100.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

¹⁸¹ Dorathy Moneymaker, "ORICL Panel: Wheat Community, Part 1 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Patricia Clark, July 10, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/292>.

congregations, for both religious and secular purposes. It would be hard to identify a single person in the region not affected in some way by a local church. Churches and their leaders also played a key role in education, the topic of this chapter's next section. Protestants in the region, despite their denominational differences, worked together to serve their communities through educational ventures. Like church buildings, many schools in the region had ties to multiple church congregations.

Pre-Oak Ridge Schools

The legacy of quality education in Oak Ridge arguably stems from the sudden influx of professionals who worked on the Manhattan Project and stayed to raise families. To be certain, Oak Ridge's newcomers demanded high-performing schools for their children, and during World War II the federal government needed to keep its employees content and settled. However, long before Brigadier General Leslie Groves, head of the Manhattan Project, and Colonel James Marshall, District Engineer of the Manhattan Engineer District, came to Anderson and Roane Counties to inspect the Oak Ridge site on September 19, 1942,¹⁸² many schools thrived in pre-Manhattan Project-era communities, especially Wheat, which was known for its state-accredited high school and college.

Subscription schools, the earliest schools in Roane County, date back to approximately 1801. Students enrolled in the fall and were charged a subscription fee or

¹⁸² "Leslie R. Groves: Manhattan Project's Main Man," *Oak Ridge National Laboratory Review* 25, no. 3 and 4 (1992): 21, Google Books.

tuition for terms varying from a few weeks to several months.¹⁸³ Typically, children were split into two classes based on their age and educated by local ministers. Less often, girls populated a third class. The curriculum at subscription schools focused on basic math, composition, and literary requirements. Robertson School, thought to be the first school in the Wheat vicinity, was a log school organized in Bald Hill around 1850 which served students for three months each year. Educational endeavors in the region were halted during the Civil War, but in 1867 Tennessee's elected Radical Republicans pushed for free public education statewide. By 1871, Democrats had reversed these efforts to reform education for both black and white students, and Tennessee returned to privatized education until 1873.¹⁸⁴ In January 1876, Methodist leaders in Bald Hill hired Reverend John B. Dickey, a graduate of Emory and Henry College in Virginia, to teach at a new subscription school called Bald Hill School. The following year Baptist minister Reverend Joseph Goddard joined Dickey in teaching at Bald Hill School until its closure in 1878.¹⁸⁵

Throughout Roane County in the nineteenth century, there were at least eight private academies that were run by boards of trustees and operated under a charter from the state.¹⁸⁶ In 1877, Bald Hill's Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian church leaders founded Poplar Creek Seminary to serve middle and high school students. W. H.

¹⁸³ Robert Audubon Ladd, "The Development of Education in Roane County, Tennessee" (master's thesis, University of Tennessee, August 1958), 11.

¹⁸⁴ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 29-36.

¹⁸⁵ Ladd, "The Development of Education in Roane County, Tennessee," 15; Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 37.

¹⁸⁶ Ladd, "The Development of Education in Roane County, Tennessee," 12-18.

Crawford, Reverend of nearby Russel's Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, was the seminary's first president.¹⁸⁷ Crawford taught classes alongside one other teacher, Princeton University graduate Dr. G. W. Butler, who most likely joined the faculty between 1880 and 1883.¹⁸⁸ Baptist minister and school trustee George Jones and his wife, Lucinda McKinney Jones, were passionate about supporting area churches and schools. In 1879, the Joneses deeded over 250 acres to the seminary with the requirement that the land never be sold and that all its proceeds "be applied solely to the benefit of [the] institution."¹⁸⁹ The Jones family, along with many others, opened their homes to boarding students who attended Wheat schools. There was also a formal "Boarding House" that could be utilized for a small charge. Some students paid tuition or housing fees by bartering farm produce or performing other services like cooking or cleaning. Boarding students typically stayed in Wheat during the week and returned home on the weekends.¹⁹⁰ Attendance fees were required four months out of the year; the other five months of the school year were conducted free of charge. Families of teachers or local students, and those who volunteered to house boarding students, were permitted to live on the school grounds for free. On January 6, 1886, the State of Tennessee granted Poplar

¹⁸⁷ "A Brief History of Wheat," K-25 Virtual Museum, accessed November 10, 2020, <http://k-25virtualmuseum.org/happy-valley/wheat.html>.

¹⁸⁸ Ladd, "The Development of Education in Roane County, Tennessee," 15; Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 38.

¹⁸⁹ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 169; Bonita Irwin, interview by Jennifer Thonhoff, September 23, 2005, K-25 Oral History Interview, National Education Technology Solutions, LLC, <http://www.k-25virtualmuseum.org/pdf/Bonita%20Irwin.pdf>.

¹⁹⁰ Mary Elizabeth Alexander, interview by Don Hunnicutt, December 19, 2012, BBB Communications, LLC, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/376>.

Creek Seminary a charter to become a four-year accredited college for white students; the newly established Roane College offered primary and secondary classes, as well as a Bachelor's degree program that was available until 1900.¹⁹¹ Some of the unique course offerings at Roane College included Latin, Physics, Zoology, Botany, Political Economics, Sociology, and Physical Geography.¹⁹² By 1892, the college had an enrollment of more than 200 students, some from as far away as Texas and California. Depending on courses, monthly tuition ranged from \$1.00 to \$4.00.¹⁹³ In 1908, Roane County took over the college, to explicitly serve Kindergarten through twelfth grade students, and changed the name to Wheat High School, the second public high school in the county.¹⁹⁴ Students were educated in the same building until 1919 when a three-story brick facility was completed, and the old building was demolished.

¹⁹¹ Ladd, "The Development of Education in Roane County, Tennessee," 16.

¹⁹² Bonita Irwin, "ORICL Panel: Wheat Community, Part 3 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Patricia Clark, July 10, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/294/rec/4>.

¹⁹³ Staff Reports, "Wheat Community Celebrates Annual Homecoming Sunday," *Oak Ridger*, October 2, 2014, <https://www.oakridger.com/article/20141002/news/141009960>; Dorothy Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 40-41.

¹⁹⁴ Ladd, "The Development of Education in Roane County, Tennessee," 48. The county's first high school, Roane County High School in Kingston, opened in 1905. Similar to Roane College's conversion to the public Wheat High School, Roane County High School was previously Rittenhouse Academy, which was established in 1822.



Figure 2.12: Construction of Wheat High School, on the far left, began in 1916. The student dormitory is pictured on the far right.¹⁹⁵

During the 1921-1922 school year, Wheat High School was the only school in the county that served elementary students for a full 180 days. Like Wheat, three out of the county's five high schools—Harriman, Kingston, and Rockwood—were open to secondary students for a 180-day term. Wheat High School's enrollment in 1921 was 195 students, 133 of whom were elementary-aged.¹⁹⁶ The school's success, especially after school consolidation and bussing became common during the 1920s, was evidenced by the building's 1927 addition, which included indoor plumbing, fountains that utilized

¹⁹⁵ Photograph from Steve Goodpasture, email message to author, February 27, 2019.

¹⁹⁶ *Annual Statistical Report, 1921-1922*, Superintendent Roane County Schools Office, Kingston, Tennessee, as quoted in Ladd, "The Development of Education in Roane County, Tennessee," 37.

well water, a furnace for heat, lighting via a Delco system, a new gymnasium and auditorium, and a girls' dormitory that had been built in 1920.¹⁹⁷ Wheat High School's student population remained stable until the community's 1942 displacement, at which time the graduating class included twelve students.¹⁹⁸ During the Manhattan Project, Wheat High School's classrooms were used to train the K-25 gaseous diffusion plant's employees. The building was razed in 1950.

In Anderson County, a tax was not levied for education until 1874. In the years that directly followed, many changes in education were made throughout the county. Between 1877 and 1880, two charter schools in the pre-Oak Ridge area were constructed: Oak Grove Academy near Robertsville and Liberty School House in Scarboro. School enrollment continued to increase throughout the region, but the overwhelming majority of students did not attend public school past the fifth grade.¹⁹⁹

Constructed from 1914-1915, Robertsville School originally served grades one through twelve. In 1939, it became a traditional high school with grades nine through twelve when first through eighth graders began attending the newly built Scarboro School. Like others, Robertsville School briefly closed over the winter holidays in 1942 and reopened in October 1943 after the displaced Robertsville community was replaced by Oak Ridgers who referred to the school as Jefferson Junior High during the Manhattan

¹⁹⁷ Bonita Irwin, interview by Jennifer Thonhoff; Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 52-54.

¹⁹⁸ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 64.

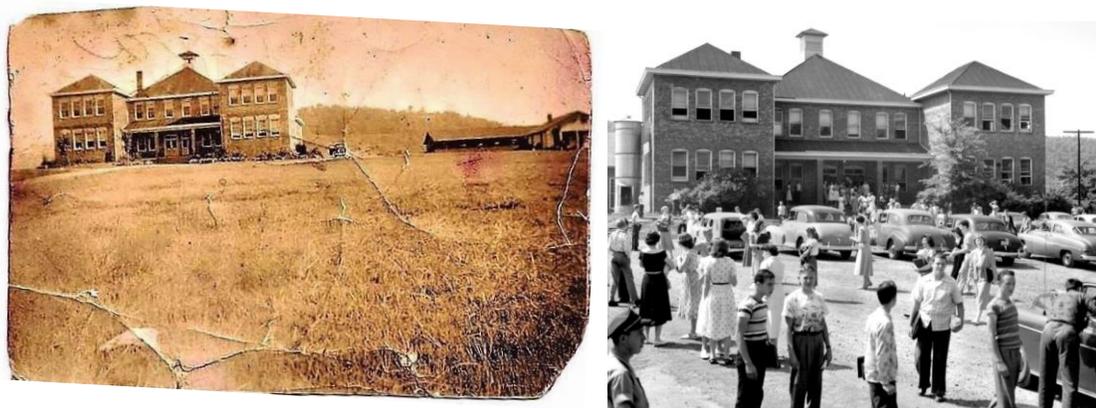
¹⁹⁹ Hoskins, *Tennessee County History Series*, 58-59.

Project-era.²⁰⁰ Once Jefferson Junior High School relocated in 1951, the building remained empty for three years. In September 1954, the original building was added to and reopened for sixth through eighth grades. As the only pre-1942 school in Oak Ridge that has maintained its original purpose, Robertsville Middle School currently serves 734 students in grades five through eight.²⁰¹ The middle school auditorium has been renovated from the original Robertsville School gymnasium, an addition completed in the early 1930s.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ In 1951 Jefferson Junior High was moved to the former Oak Ridge High School near Jackson Square. JJHS moved once more to its current location, built in 1968. It was renamed Jefferson Middle School.

²⁰¹ “Robertsville Middle School: About the School,” Oak Ridge Schools, last modified July 2020, <https://www.ortn.edu/robertsville/school-info/about-the-school/>.

²⁰² D. Ray Smith, “Education in Oak Ridge – Pre-Oak Ridge and Early-Oak Ridge Schools,” *Oak Ridger*, November 14, 2006, <http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2006/11-14-06%20Education%20in%20Oak%20Ridge%20-%20Pre-Oak%20Ridge%20and%20Early%20Oak%20Ridge%20Schools.pdf>.



Figures 2.13 and 2.14: The photo on the left shows Robertsville High School prior to 1942.²⁰³ On the right, Manhattan Project official photographer Ed Westcott captures Robertsville High School in the 1940s, after Oak Ridge's establishment.²⁰⁴

Transportation to schools evolved quickly as students went from horse or mule-drawn wagons, to homemade trucks, to proper school buses in the span of a decade.²⁰⁵ Once bus services were made largely available in the 1920s, several schools in the region were either closed or consolidated.²⁰⁶ William H. "Bill" Key drove children to school in Anderson County for thirty-eight years until 1963. When he began his career as a driver in Robertsville, he used a horse-drawn wagon.²⁰⁷ Andy Holmberg of Robertsville also owned buses and had a contract with the school district prior to his family's displacement. Many students in Bethel Valley then attended school in Wheat, especially

²⁰³ Byron Hartzler, photograph from Eva Wells McCarty, *Robertsville High School*, used with permission.

²⁰⁴ Ed Westcott, photograph, *Robertsville School, 1940s*, U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/50113181801/in/photostream/>.

²⁰⁵ Nash Copeland, "Oral History of Nash Copeland."

²⁰⁶ Smith, "Education in Oak Ridge – Pre-Oak Ridge and Early-Oak Ridge Schools."

²⁰⁷ "Obituary of William H. Key, 1970," Anderson County Tennessee Genealogy and History, September 20, 2011, <https://tngenweb.org/andersoncounty/2011/09/obituary-key-william-h-1970/>.

since Wheat was one of only two high schools in the area, Robertsville High School being the other.²⁰⁸ In Wheat, John Watson had a bus, that was used for school and church. However, students often walked to school even if they lived several miles away.²⁰⁹ By the late 1930s, students from Sugar Grove Valley, Dyllis, Orchard View, and elsewhere rode buses to Wheat, which increased class sizes as seen in the comparatively larger class of 1936 with eighteen students.²¹⁰



Figures 2.15 and 2.16: Wheat High School students board a Roane County Schools bus.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Don Watson, interview by Bart Callan, September 23, 2005, K-25 Oral History Project, U.S. Department of Energy's Oral History Program, <http://www.k-25virtualmuseum.org/pdf/Don%20Watson.pdf>.

²⁰⁹ Barbara McCall Ely, "Bethel Valley History: Part 3," 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/297>.

²¹⁰ Don Watson, interview by Bart Callan.

²¹¹ Photographs from Steve Goodpasture, email message to author, February 27, 2019.

Scarboro's school was rebuilt in 1939 after its original wooden schoolhouse burned. Scarboro School remains the community's only extant pre-World War II public building. When residents of Scarboro were displaced in 1942, the new, brick schoolhouse reopened as a white-only school for Oak Ridgers in March 1944. From September 1946 to June 1949, the school served black elementary students. The following year, black junior high and high school students began attending a vacant white school in Gamble Valley that was also called Scarboro School.²¹² In 1955, Oak Ridge High School and Robertsville Junior High were integrated while Scarboro School remained a segregated school for black elementary students.²¹³ In 1949, the original Scarboro School transitioned to an administrative facility for the Atomic Energy Commission's agricultural research program which studied radiation's effects on domestic animals and crops.²¹⁴

The old Scarboro School remains a physical reminder of the region's excellence in education and innovation. In the same way, histories of Wheat and Robertsville—and the value that schools brought to each of their communities—is part of Oak Ridge's

²¹² "UT Test Building Approved: AEC Allows Oak Ridge Renovation Contract," *The Knoxville Journal*, February 1, 1949, 1-2; D. Ray Smith, "Education in Oak Ridge-Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge Schools, Part II," *Oak Ridger*, November 21, 2006, <http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2006/11-21-06%20Education%20in%20Oak%20Ridge%20-%20pre%20Oak%20Ridge%20part%202.pdf>.

²¹³ "These Schools Involved in Oak Ridge Change," *Southern School News*, February 3, 1955, in Lorena B. Whipple, "African American Oral Histories of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Public Schools During the Early Days of Desegregation, 1955-1967" (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, December 2013), 369, https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3113&context=utk_graddiss.

²¹⁴ "UT Test Building Approved: AEC Allows Oak Ridge Renovation Contract," 1-2.

legacy, or at least it should be. Long before 1942, Oak Ridge's hills and valleys were filled with people who appreciated teaching and learning.



Figures 2.17 and 2.18: Scarboro School as it appeared in 1939 and in 2006 as part of Oak Ridge Associated Universities' (ORAU) South Campus.²¹⁵ ORAU has been a leader in scientific and health fields since 1946.

Pre- 1942 Economics

The economy in pre-Oak Ridge villages was primarily agricultural, and almost all business was done locally. As noted by J. B. Killebrew in 1874, poor farming practices in the region coupled with untillable lands resulted in agricultural problems such as soil erosion and low crop yields. In February 1936, forty local farmers met in Wheat to discuss a community planning initiative that would address the area's agricultural issues and determine how better economic returns could be reached by local farmers. On January 23, 1937, at the third meeting of its kind, sixty-five farmers unanimously approved the creation of an organization in which seven trustees were appointed and

²¹⁵ "The Scarboro School" and "Oak Ridge Associated Universities' South Campus," photographs in Smith, "Education in Oak Ridge- Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge Schools, Part II."

oversaw a survey of Wheat with the help of the University of Tennessee's Extension Service and Experiment Station. Throughout the year, monthly meetings attracted more than sixty percent of Wheat families who came to learn about programs and goals regarding "land use, cover crops, terracing, liming, forestry, livestock, and poultry."²¹⁶ Equipped with new knowledge, local farmers planted cover crops of various clovers and alfalfa, reforested roughly thirty acres of land, and continued to attend meetings and demonstrations about wood thinning and forest management. By 1938, the program in Wheat had expanded beyond landowners to include "tenant, sharecroppers, and wage hands." In addition, eight female trustees joined the original seven men.

Wheat was "a clear-cut picture of rural people working together to solve their economic and social problems."²¹⁷ In addition to small peach and apple orchards that residents grew for their own use, there were seven peach orchards in Wheat prior to 1942 with names like Gallaher, McKinney, and Williams.²¹⁸ The largest orchards in Wheat, one operated by Dyllis Orchard Company and another called Highland Orchard, each had several thousand trees and covered hundreds of acres. During the harvest, jobs were abundant for those willing to grade and pack peaches for shipment. Many former residents recall neighbors working together, especially during the fall when it was common for women to cook big meals for those who assisted their husbands and sons in the field.²¹⁹ Employees from Wheat orchards sorted peaches at a shed in nearby Dyllis.

²¹⁶ McLeod, "The Wheat Community," 26.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹⁸ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 23.

²¹⁹ Barbara McCall Ely, "Bethel Valley History: Part 3."

Grade A peaches were then shipped to Cincinnati, Ohio, via refrigerated railcars. The remaining crop was trucked to Knoxville to be sold at the farmer's market.²²⁰

In addition to a service station, there were three stores in Wheat in 1942. A portion of the Waller Store's foundation, with an engraved stone that reads "November 1, 1927," is still visible today, although in 1942 the former store was being used as a home.²²¹

The McKinney Store operated in a building owned by Nancy Hembree, located at the fork in the road between Wheat and Robertsville. Above the general store, the East Fork Masons, organized in 1874, held meetings. After Wheat's displacement, the Freemasons began meeting in nearby Dyllis.²²²

²²⁰ Bonita Irwin, interview by Jennifer Thonhoff; John Huotari, "Did You Know? Wheat Was Famous for Its Peach Orchards," *Oak Ridge Today*, October 24, 2017, <https://oakridgetoday.com/2017/10/24/did-you-know-wheat-was-famous-for-its-peach-orchards/#more-93301>.

²²¹ Long, "Ranger-led Program: A Walk Through Wheat."

²²² "A Brief History of Wheat," K-25 Virtual Museum, accessed November 10, 2020, <http://k-25virtualmuseum.org/happy-valley/wheat.html>.



Figure 2.19: C. N. McKinney and Sherman Hembree are pictured at McKinney Store in Wheat. Courtesy of Steve Goodpasture.²²³

The Adams Store was also in Wheat at the turn of the twentieth-century until 1941. Circuit Court Judge James Henry Adams relocated to Bald Hill from north Georgia in the late 1860s. During the Civil War, Adams joined the Union Army and fought in battles at Knoxville and Franklin. His family, like countless others, was torn over whom to support during the war. This familial division became eerily personal during Adams's service as he was assigned to guard Confederate prisoners of war; one was his own father, a slave owner and Confederate colonel. Adams would fight against other family members, some of whom died in combat, before returning to East Tennessee to marry Roane Countian Mary Catherine Ragle on September 20, 1865. The Adamses had sixteen

²²³ Photograph from Steve Goodpasture, email message to author, February 27, 2019.

children, thirteen of whom lived to adulthood, including Alfred Newton Adams who still resided in Wheat during the 1942 displacement.²²⁴ Newton Adams and his wife, Elizabeth “Lizzie” Wright, operated the Adams General Store which also served as the Wheat Post Office for over forty years. The building itself had once served as the Baptist church. When George Jones Memorial Baptist Church was constructed in 1901, the old church building was relocated and used as the Adams Store and Post Office. Upon Newton Adams’s death in 1903, Lizzie Adams took over as postmaster. She became the longest serving postmaster in Wheat history before her 1941 retirement. Shortly after, the building burned, and the post office was relocated to the General Store at the fork in the road between Robertsville, Kingston, and Harriman.²²⁵

There were also “rolling stores” in pre-Oak Ridge communities. Bill Shinpaugh, who was born in Robertsville’s Hardin Valley in 1930, recalls memories of his grandfather who operated one:

He had a truck with the van bed in it and selected groceries in it and he’d go out through the community, and they know when he was coming. He’d buy chickens and buy eggs from them and trade them groceries for the eggs and chickens. Then, on a certain day of the week he went to Knoxville in his truck and sold all of those eggs and chickens and things up there.²²⁶

In Robertsville, the Lockett and Key Stores formed the center of the community. The stores were across the street from one another and competed for business. Among

²²⁴ Moneymaker, *We’ll Call It Wheat*, 312-3.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 107-08.

²²⁶ Bill Shinpaugh, interview by Don Hunnicutt, October 30, 2012, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/316/rec/1>.

other products needed for farm life, William Lockett sold or traded eggs, shoes, and dry goods in his store.²²⁷ In the 1930s and early 1940s, Wheat residents travelling to Knoxville first caught the bus in Robertsville at Lockett's.²²⁸

Scarboro residents also had their choice of merchants with two grist mills and three stores. Each of these stores sold similar items such as canned goods, vinegar, salt, Coca-Cola, and kerosene.²²⁹ Locals often bartered or purchased items on credit which was problematic for some during the Great Depression.

²²⁷ Bill Shinpaugh, interview by Don Hunnicutt.

²²⁸ Barbara McCall Ely, "ORICL Panel: Wheat Community, Part 3 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Patricia Clark, July 10, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/294/rec/4>.

²²⁹ Eva Wells McCarty, interview by Byron Hartzler, February 24, 2017, video of interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygq4wPTKIEk>; Joe Magill, "Oral History of Joe Magill," interview by Bart Callan, April 15, 2005, K-25, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/114>.

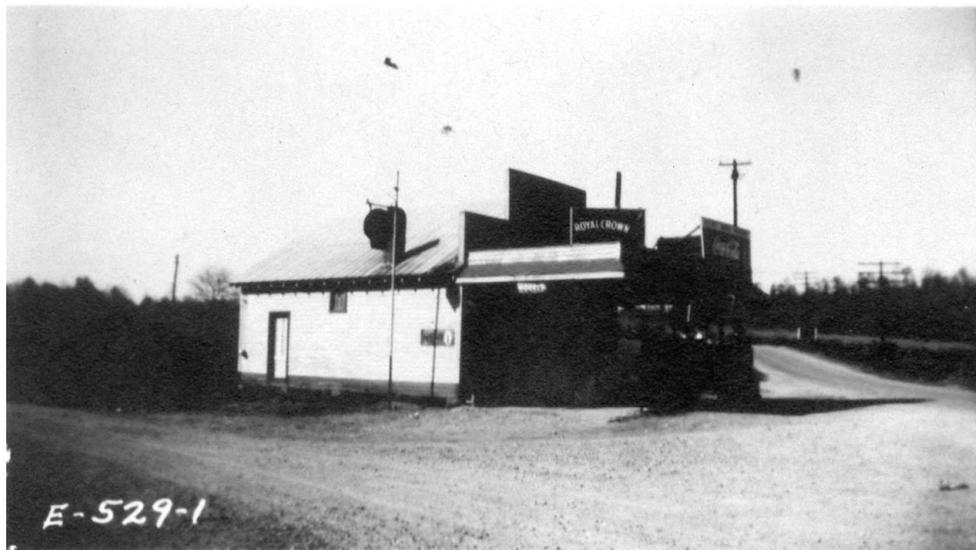


Figure 2.20: Genealogist Byron Hartzler recognized that when this photograph²³⁰ of the Key Store was taken the photographer must have been standing on the porch of the Lockett Store as they were across the street from one another on Robertsville Road.²³¹

Further east, and close to the modern intersection of East Main Street and the Oak Ridge Turnpike, J. Nash Copeland operated a store.²³² Copeland’s family moved to the area from Knoxville in 1922. Like most residents, they were farmers who were largely self-sufficient. The Copelands occasionally shopped at Hill’s store near the modern-day Elza Gate, where they would purchase “a little tobacco, fat back, [or] a little sugar” but “most of [their other] purchases had to be made in Knoxville and hauled to this part of the country.”²³³

²³⁰ Photograph E-529-1, National Archives and Records Administration, in “Kingston Demolition Range Photos: Pre-1942 Home Places Removed to Build Oak Ridge, TN,” Section E, Disc 5, Anderson County Historical Society, 2017.

²³¹ Byron Hartzler, video interview by author, November 6, 2020.

²³² William Lawrence Tunnell, interview by Don Hunnicutt, February 6, 2014, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/506/rec/5>.

²³³ Nash Copeland, “Oral History of Nash Copeland.”

From 1932 to approximately 1935, Nash Copeland operated a store in Elza that was owned by his brother, J. Glenn Copeland. He then purchased Lockett Store in Robertsville where he did business until 1942. After a stint in Clinton, Copeland was asked by the federal government to return to the new city of Oak Ridge and in March 1944 he opened a Gulf Service Station in East Village.²³⁴ Like many others, the Copeland family, despite the tragedy of their displacement, found a new place in the Oak Ridge landscape.



Figure 2.21: J. Nash Copeland Store²³⁵

To conclude: No, the people who lived in the Oak Ridge area prior to World War II were not nuclear scientists or engineers. For the most part they were not well-travelled

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

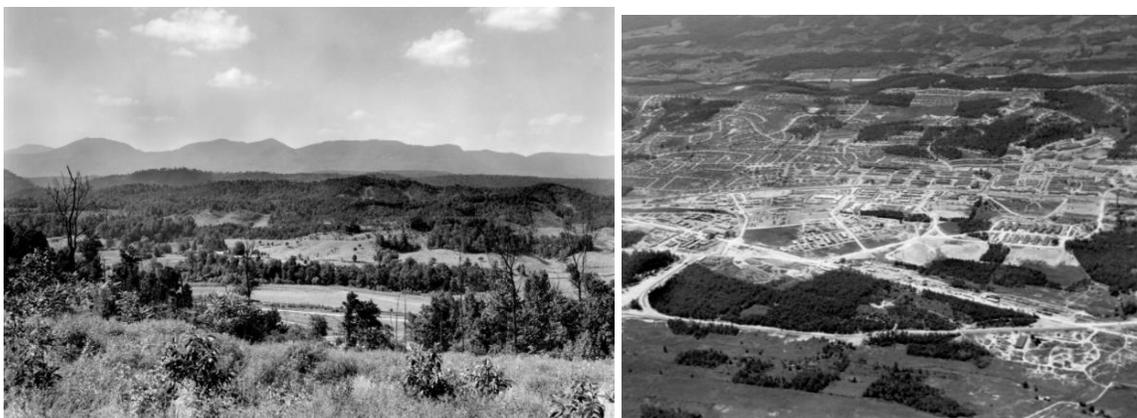
or educated in elite universities. However, the residents of Wheat, Scarboro, Robertsville, and Elza defied Appalachian stereotypes sometimes perpetrated by TVA and other government agencies—myths of illiterate hillbillies who needed outsiders to come and bring them into the modern era. While their displacement during World War II was much hastier than in other regional examples, such as Norris Dam or Great Smoky Mountains National Park, pre-Oak Ridge communities were still viewed as disposable by outsiders. However, these villages were not barren or filled with inhabitants too weak to fight back; they were well established communities with churches, schools, and neighborly networks that sought to care for one another.

Residents from these displaced communities, like the majority of those who arrived in Oak Ridge during the war, may not have understood the intricacies of the Manhattan Project, but they were complex people with established histories whose lives and sacrifices, both willingly made or forced, should not be forgotten or razed from memory the way their communities were razed from the landscape.

Though the histories of these small communities are somewhat difficult to trace, and I have no doubt made some errors and omissions, albeit unintentionally, their swift destruction ironically made them better documented than they might have been than if they were left alone to fizzle in a slower way such as through urban sprawl or being bypassed by a major thoroughfare.

The erasure of pre-Oak Ridge villages from the landscape precluded them from making any largely historical significance of their own, but their relevance comes from their demise. Beginning on September 22, 1942, less than a month after General Leslie

Groves decided on the Oak Ridge site, federal officials scouted portions of Anderson and Roane Counties for purchase.²³⁶ Once the Philadelphia Aerial Photograph Company documented aerial views of the region, appraisers from the Ohio River Division (ORD) of the Atomic Energy Commission photographed every structure that would become the Oak Ridge Reservation. Homes, churches, barns, outbuildings, and stores were all recorded, and their pictures filed with a documentation of valuation for each property. The federal government used these appraisals to determine how much money to pay landowners after their displacement. In the next chapter, I discuss the 1942 dispossession of residents of Anderson and Roane Counties and how their sacrifice contributed to the creation of Oak Ridge and Allied success during World War II.



Figures 2.22 and 2.23: Official Manhattan Project photographer Ed Westcott captures aerial views of the countryside before²³⁷ and after²³⁸ Oak Ridge's construction.

²³⁶ Donald Raby, "Oral History of Donald Raby."

²³⁷ Ed Westcott, photograph S-233, *General View of the Countryside Before Oak Ridge 1942*, U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/50094942346/in/photostream/>.

²³⁸ Ed Westcott, photograph PRO 970, *High Aerial Jackson Square 1945 Oak Ridge*, U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/50094838676/in/photostream/>.

CHAPTER III: DISPLACEMENT AND THE CREATION OF THE SECRET CITY

Over the past century, eminent domain laws and large-scale federal projects have drastically changed the landscape and lives of those living in East Tennessee. For most people today, it is difficult to imagine the region void of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, various TVA dams and reservoirs, interstates, and the internationally recognized Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The creation of such projects has brought about lasting change in the form of environmental preservation, increased revenue, new industries, and more. However, many displaced residents whose farms and properties were destroyed during their construction suffered greatly and were never able to enjoy the positive aspects of the region's transformation. Even decades after their families' displacement, some still saw what they perceived as unjust government intervention as an attack on their personal liberties.

This chapter will explain how federal government formed the City of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in the early 1940s. Given that this process was not the first time residents in the region were subject to federal dispossession, I will use the displaced communities of Oak Ridge to detail the circumstances of one of those instances.

Mary Sue Harris, Anderson County's historian from 1993-2020, once described her family as "ready and willing to go along with progress."²³⁹ Harris's family members were

²³⁹ Mary Sue Harris, "Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 1," interview by Mick Wiest, April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/289/rec/10>.

victims of serial displacement, although, most likely they never identified as such. In the mid-1930s, Harris's grandparents were evicted from Campbell County as TVA built Norris Dam. After the Manhattan Project caused their second dispossession, they relocated to nearby Dyllis. Stories of serial displacement were common in the region, especially from the 1920s to the 1940s. However, when families were forced to relocate in 1942, the crisis of World War II and secrecy of the Manhattan Project caused hasty removals and complex emotional reactions among the displaced.

During the late fall and winter of 1942 and 1943, approximately 3,000 individuals were displaced from their homes in the pre-Oak Ridge communities of Wheat, Elza, Robertsville, and Scarboro, in addition to areas such as New Bethel and New Hope.

When locals first noticed government land surveyors in the fall of 1942, the sight was nothing new. Many residents assumed the surveyors were employees of TVA. In fact, Wheat residents had been subject to land dispossession by TVA earlier that same year. After two and a half years of construction, January 1, 1942, marked the opening of Watts Bar Dam on the Tennessee River, located between Knoxville and Chattanooga. In this effort to provide flood control, create navigable waterways, and produce electricity, TVA impounded part of the Clinch and Emory Rivers near Wheat. The Watts Bar Reservoir area displaced approximately 832 families, 70 percent of whom were tenant farmers rather than property owners.²⁴⁰ In Wheat, however, no civilian displacement

²⁴⁰ Tennessee Valley Authority, *The Watts Bar Project: A Comprehensive Report on the Planning, Design, Construction, and Initial Operations of the Watts Bar Project*, Technical Report no. 9 (Washington, DC: 1949): 44-45, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112018293735&view=1up&seq=36>.

occurred; instead, the community lost valuable river bottom land through TVA's relocation of highways and bridges along Poplar Creek and near Gallagher Ferry.²⁴¹

Thus, pre-Oak Ridge communities were no stranger to eminent domain from the federal government.

Likewise, these rural villages were not unknown to the federal government either. TVA, for instance, chose Wheat as a model community as recently as 1935. Since that time, an agricultural cooperative program was established in Wheat "to improve agriculture through fertilizers, farming techniques, and business practices."²⁴² Regardless of pleas to the federal government to bypass Wheat in 1942, residents were forced out.



Figure 3.1: Ina Lea Gallaher in Wheat, Tennessee, 1939²⁴³

²⁴¹ Ibid., 414.

²⁴² "A Brief History of Wheat," K-25 Virtual Museum, accessed March 1, 2021, <http://k-25virtualmuseum.org/happy-valley/wheat.html>.

²⁴³ *Young Girl Wheat Community 1939*, photograph 61-262 (TVAKX626), Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/28892996660/in/album-72157669441168194/>.

For the most part, both Anderson and Roane County residents were left on their own to sort out the details of their dispossession. However, Wheat resident Ina Lea Gallaher Roe, who was eleven years old in 1942, remembers her father seeking help for displaced neighbors. Roe's father, William Ernest Gallaher, was an associate of David E. Lilienthal and called the TVA chairman to seek relocation assistance for his community.²⁴⁴ Lilienthal then contacted the University of Tennessee to send county officials to provide aid. It is unclear precisely how much relocation assistance was offered, but Lilienthal was able to affect change. After President Harry S. Truman appointed him as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission on October 28, 1946, Lilienthal repaid the University of Tennessee for their role in relocation assistance for the displaced residents of Wheat.²⁴⁵ Landowners in other pre-Oak Ridge communities did not receive assistance.²⁴⁶

That said, when Army Corps of Engineers officials came to Wheat in October 1942, their presence was nothing new to residents of Roane County regardless of whether they themselves had been displaced in the past. If they had not personally experienced displacement, residents certainly knew someone who had been affected by eminent domain in recent decades.

²⁴⁴ Ina Lea Gallaher Roe, interview by Dixie Mason, March 21, 2015.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.; "David E. Lilienthal," Atomic Heritage Foundation, 2019, <https://www.atomicheritage.org/profile/david-e-lilienthal>.

²⁴⁶ Nash Copeland, "Oral History of Nash Copeland;" John Rice Irwin, "A Nuclear Family: Episode 1—I've Seen It," Y-12 National Security Complex, <https://www.y12.doe.gov/library/video/nuclear-family-episode-1-%E2%80%93-i%E2%80%99ve-seen-it-captioned>.

Manhattan Project-Era Displacement

The story of Manhattan Project-era displacement in East Tennessee begins in Washington, D.C., years earlier. On August 2, 1939, physicist Leo Szilard prepared a letter, signed by physicist Albert Einstein, that warned President Franklin D. Roosevelt about German nuclear research which could potentially lead to the creation of “extremely powerful bombs.”²⁴⁷ The letter reached President Roosevelt on October 11, 1939, via economist and presidential advisor Alexander Sachs.²⁴⁸ Convinced of the topic’s importance after his meeting with Sachs, Roosevelt established an Advisory Committee on Uranium, which became one of the first steps in creating what became the Manhattan Project.²⁴⁹

In late 1939, scientists and engineers at various research institutes and universities – the University of Minnesota, Harvard University, and the University of California, Berkeley to name a few—began hypothesizing how America could leverage potential nuclear capabilities should the country formally join the Allies during World War II.²⁵⁰

On June 28, 1942, Chief Engineer of TVA Theodore B. Parker contacted Berlen C. Moneymaker, Chief of TVA’s Geologic Branch, regarding the Anderson and Roane

²⁴⁷ Albert Einstein, letter to F. D. Roosevelt, August 2, 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/documents/356632/390886/document007.pdf/3483329d-7b68-442d-953d-eb91e0c5c9b1>.

²⁴⁸ F. G. Gosling, *The Manhattan Project: Making the Atomic Bomb*, United States Department of Energy (January 1999), vii, <https://www.osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/publications/DE99001330.pdf>.

²⁴⁹ Leslie R. Groves, *Now It Can Be Told: The Story of the Manhattan Project* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1962), 6-7.

²⁵⁰ Gosling, *The Manhattan Project: Making the Atomic Bomb*, 6-10.

Counties region. Moneymaker, whose parents had moved to Wheat in 1932 and was therefore familiar with the area, was tasked with quickly locating “a site meeting these conditions: a large area, accessible by rail, thinly populated, a relatively short distance of a sizable city (but not too close), easily controlled, a natural boundary (river or ridge desirable).”²⁵¹ The following month, the Army Corps of Engineers requested a gross appraisal of the area which Division Engineer Orrin Thacker finalized on August 3, 1942.²⁵²

After overseeing construction of the Pentagon, newly promoted Brigadier General Leslie R. Groves of the Army Corps of Engineers was formally put in charge of the entire Manhattan Project on September 17, 1942.²⁵³ Twelve days later, on September 29, 1942, Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson formally approved the procurement of approximately 56,200 acres in Anderson and Roane Counties for the Kingston Demolition Range, the original code name for Oak Ridge’s portion of the national project.²⁵⁴ “At its peak, the project (1942-1945) employed 160,000 people in 39 states and Canada,” and was successfully completed in under three years, due in large part to

²⁵¹ Moneymaker, *We’ll Call It Wheat*, iv; See also Thomas M. Robins, letter to Gordon R. Clapp, August 12, 1942, Office of the General Manager Administrative Files, 1933-1957, Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Record Group 142, 784001, National Archives at Atlanta, <https://www.archives.gov/atlanta/exhibits/item91.html>.

²⁵² “Chronological List of Events in the Acquisition of Clinton Engineer Works, Harriman, Tennessee,” *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947), Appendix F, Exhibit F-1, https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

²⁵³ Groves, *Now It Can Be Told*, 4-5.

²⁵⁴ Vincent C. Jones, *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1985), 319, https://history.army.mil/html/books/011/11-10/CMH_Pub_11-10.pdf.

General Groves's leadership.²⁵⁵ Groves relied heavily on the expertise of engineers and scientists like Drs. Vannevar Bush, James Conant, Robert Oppenheimer, and Enrico Fermi. Other military leaders, such as Colonel James C. Marshall and Lieutenant Colonel K. D. Nichols, were also selected for service. Marshall and Nichols played a particularly important role in Oak Ridge's history by selecting the region for construction of the Secret City as well as choosing Stone and Webster, a Boston-based engineering firm, to build the new city and its nuclear research and production facilities.²⁵⁶

These top-level officials were among an extremely small group who understood the goals and logistics of the Manhattan Project in their entirety, that is to use nuclear fission to secretly develop an atomic bomb before the rest of the world. Countless other government and military leaders, as well as thousands of employees were eventually involved to some extent. It is unclear how much Tennessee Senator Kenneth McKellar may have known about the project, but stories abound about his influence in making Oak Ridge a reality. In a tale that Senators Howard Baker and Lamar Alexander, newspaper editor Dick Smyser, and city historian Ray Smith retold for decades, Senator McKellar met with President Roosevelt regarding the war effort. McKellar, who had been serving in the Senate since 1917, chaired the Senate Appropriations Committee in the early 1940s. When FDR asked McKellar to "hide \$2 billion in the appropriations bill for a

²⁵⁵ Howard Isenstein, "Profiles in Research: Who Was the Man Behind the Manhattan Project?" *Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, May 15, 1995, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9510/atomic.html>.

²⁵⁶ Groves, *Now It Can Be Told*, 12.

secret project to win World War II,” McKellar is said to have replied, “Mr. President, I have just one question: Where in Tennessee do you want me to hide it?”²⁵⁷

Elected officials in Tennessee did what they could to serve their constituents, such as reaching out to government agencies and requesting information to pass along to local people. But with little knowledge and even less control over the situation, officials were ultimately left watching many East Tennesseans become victims of serial displacement, this time as an urgent response to heightened tensions in World War II.

Having known more than others about plans for the Manhattan Project, Senator McKellar warned citizens of Oliver Springs in the fall of 1942. Though he and his friend Charles Jones were skipping school to play pinball, Lester Fox, a thirteen-year-old student, happened to be at the right place at the right time to play a role in McKellar’s announcement. Fox and Jones were on their way back to class when Miss Myrtle, the town’s telephone operator, stopped them. She asked the boys to run and find Principal D.J. Brittain, Sr. at the school. When Brittain answered the telephone call, Senator McKellar told him about plans to acquire over 50,000 acres “starting at Elza community

²⁵⁷ Lamar Alexander, “A New Manhattan Project for Clean Energy Independence,” May 9, 2008, Senate Congressional Record 165, no. 51 (March 25, 2019), S1925, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2019/3/25/senate-section/article/s1922-1?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22kenneth+mckellar%5C%22%22%5D%7D&s=6&r=1>. See also Tom Wood, “Spilling the Secrets Behind Oak Ridge, the ‘Secret City’ Built to Build ‘The Bomb,’” *Tennessee Ledger* 43, no. 21 (May 24, 2019), <http://www.tnledger.com/editorial/Article.aspx?id=117947>; D. Ray Smith, interview by author, February 16, 2019, Oak Ridge, TN; Lester Fox, “Oral History of Lester Fox,” interview by Keith McDaniel, October 8, 2012, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/267/rec/1>; Joe Magill, “Oral History of Joe Magill.”

... and coming down the top of the ridge all the way down past Wheat School til it got down to the Clinch River.”²⁵⁸ Principal Brittain relayed the message to the student body at Oliver Springs and released school early so that students might warn their parents of what was to come.²⁵⁹

In addition to an Army Corps of Engineers Ohio River Division Real Estate office that opened in Harriman, Roane County, on September 28, 1942,²⁶⁰ observant citizens in Anderson County first noticed changes to the area in late 1942 when the L & N Railroad built a spur line. The spur was used to unload equipment but even the most curious workers and onlookers were unable to determine the purpose of the project. Secretive work was not just typical but a necessary part of life in what became the Secret City.²⁶¹

In October, government officials began surveying individual properties. Their presence was the source of many rumors such as TVA taking more land, plans for the construction of a new baseball complex, and an American Indian myth about there being “enough gold and silver buried in [the] area to shoe horses,” wealth that “Uncle Sam had found out” about and come to collect.²⁶² Other speculations about the project were closer

²⁵⁸ Lester Fox, interview by Keith McDaniel.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.; D. Ray Smith as quoted in “Civilian Displacement: Oak Ridge, TN,” Atomic Heritage Foundation, July 17, 2017, <https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/civilian-displacement-oak-ridge-tn>.

²⁶⁰ Jones, *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb*, 320. This Harriman office is also commonly referred to as the Clinton Engineer Works Land Acquisition Section.

²⁶¹ “A Nuclear Family: Episode 1—I’ve Seen It,” Y-12 National Security Complex,” <https://www.y12.doe.gov/library/video/nuclear-family-episode-1-%E2%80%93-i%E2%80%99ve-seen-it-captioned>.

²⁶² John Rice Irwin, “Lecture on Life in Early Oak Ridge,” June 26, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/261/rec/1>.

to the truth, such as rumors that it was “a great artillery range or a bombing practice location, ... [or a] great new secret weapon.” These of course came after the land acquisition was publicly referred to the Kingston Demolition Range and later, by January 1943, Clinton Engineer Works (CEW), both of which purposefully referenced nearby cities so as not to draw unwanted attention to the project.²⁶³ Not until 1949 was the city formally called Oak Ridge, a shortened version of Black Oak Ridge, the reservation’s northern border.

The process by which the War Department acquired property in Anderson and Roane Counties was lengthy and involved, albeit evaluations of the land were completed as quickly as possible. First, appraisers from the War Department, Federal Land Bank, or TVA prepared tract maps of the original 56,200 acres that were acquired. Appraisers used aerial photographs, planimetric sheets, deeds, and ground observations in lieu of field surveys, which were more costly and time consuming.²⁶⁴ Appraisers also examined local court records from 1937 to 1942 to determine typical property values. They found that on average, land costs ranged between \$12 and \$23 per acre.²⁶⁵

Fred Morgan, the project manager of Clinton Engineer Works’ office at Harriman, Tennessee, noted that the appraisers’ tract maps were “better than 99% accurate” despite the fact that many property deeds in the area “were found to be

²⁶³ Jones, *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb*, 319.

²⁶⁴ Fred Morgan, letter to Joseph G. Colgan, August 6, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-I, 1.
https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

inaccurate.”²⁶⁶ Once appraisers completed assessments for individual tracts, CEW’s supervising appraisers, Willis Alexander and E. W. Trussell, reviewed each one. Then, the appraisals were sent to Chief Appraiser A. F. Cardon at the Office of the Division Engineer. Lastly, the Office of the Chief of Engineers in Washington, D.C., formally approved each appraisal.²⁶⁷

The War Department and CEW diligently prepared appraisals for 758 individual tracts of land. Owners of 465 tracts, some of whom held more than one tract, signed stipulations to willingly sell their properties to the government.²⁶⁸ Others fought for more money in federal court, but almost no owners were satisfied with their final payments.

With very few exceptions,²⁶⁹ the citizens of Wheat, Scarboro, Elza, and Robertsville were forced to vacate, sometimes in as little as fourteen days.²⁷⁰ Without other modes of transportation, many pre-atomic residents left on horses and in buggies. It “looked like the Grapes of Wrath, but the people didn’t know what to do. And the Oak Ridge facility was not helping anyone.”²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 1.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁶⁹ Some pre-Oak Ridge residents whose work was deemed essential for the new city were permitted to stay longer than their neighbors, and sometimes indefinitely. Examples are discussed later in this chapter.

²⁷⁰ John Rice Irwin, “Lecture on Life in Early Oak Ridge;” Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History*, 130.

²⁷¹ Ina Lea Gallaher Roe, interview by Dixie Mason, March 21, 2015. Roe’s grandmother made this reference to eleven-year-old Ina Lea Gallaher Roe as they watched neighbors vacating Wheat. The Gallahers had owned their property for five generations prior to their displacement.

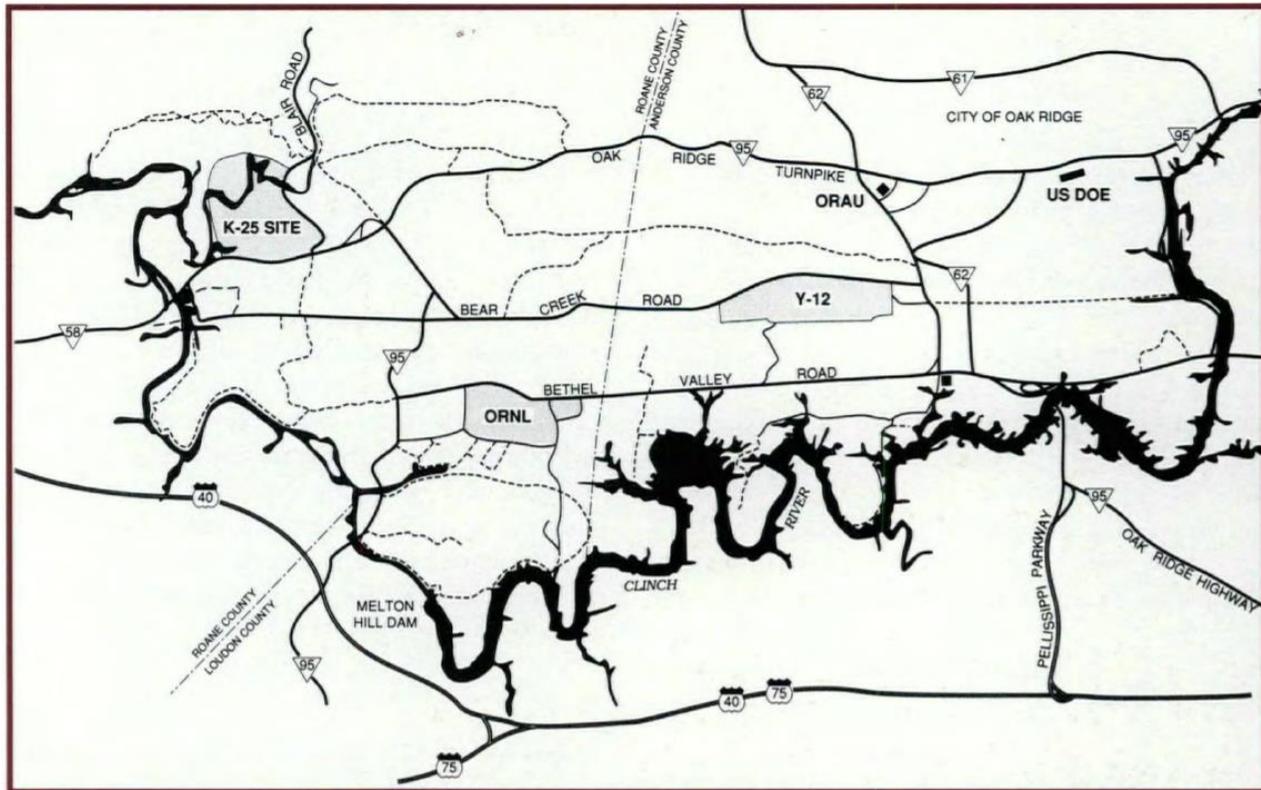


Figure 3.2: When completed, the Oak Ridge Reservation encompassed over 59,000 acres between the Black Oak Ridge and the Clinch River.²⁷²

Reactions and Resistance to Displacement

Serial displacement previously experienced in the region, especially with TVA, produced an “aura of suspicion and expectancy that seem[ed] to permeate the immediately surrounding area.”²⁷³ Pre-Oak Ridge residents “had seen engineers and surveyors come into the area, roam around driving stakes and looking through spy

²⁷² “Modern Map of the Oak Ridge Vicinity Shows the K-25, Y-12, and X-10 (ORNL) Sites,” map, *Oak Ridge National Laboratory Review* 25, no. 3 and 4 (1992): 4, <https://www.ornl.gov/sites/default/files/ORNL%20Review%20v25n3-4%201992.pdf>.

²⁷³ Paul Elza, interview by Sibyl Nestor.

glasses, as they called them, and then very shortly here came people insisting that they sell their land and move off of it.”²⁷⁴

This time, however, land acquisition was different from what any of the region’s residents had experienced before. “Surveyors appeared on our property and wrote down everything that was nailed down. Soon after, we received our notice to vacate in less than thirty days because of a war emergency,” recalled Bruce Hendrix.²⁷⁵ There was little help for landowners and tenants being forced from their homes and while the process was methodical and well-planned by government agencies, it seemed hasty to Anderson and Roane Countians who lacked full understanding of their property’s important function in the Manhattan Project.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Bruce Hendrix as quoted in Myra Mansfield, *The Story of John Hendrix: The Prophet of Oak Ridge* (self pub., Myra Mansfield, 2013), 49.



Figure 3.3: Many families were caught off guard when Army Corps of Engineer employees came to survey their land in late 1942, as shown in this photograph of J. H. Gallaher’s privy and clothesline that was in use when officials arrived.²⁷⁶

After hearing rumors, many locals formally learned of their impending dispossessions by finding notices nailed to their fence posts or attached to their doors. “Declarations of Taking” informed residents to vacate before various dates depending on where their property was located within the reservation.²⁷⁷ Their hurried removal

²⁷⁶ Photograph K-1005-5, *J. H. Gallaher Privy*, National Archives and Records Administration, in “Kingston Demolition Range Photos: Pre-1942 Home Places Removed to Build Oak Ridge, TN,” Section K, Disc 9, Anderson County Historical Society, 2017.

²⁷⁷ Reba Holmberg, “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” interview by Mick Wiest, April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/291>.

prevented some families from bringing along all of their possessions. Farming equipment, harvested crops, and livestock were commonly left when owners had no way to transport them or no place to store them once they left. Other families got creative about hiding possessions from the guards when they were made of materials that were rationed during the war; the Moneymaker family was able to smuggle out a set of window and door screens wrapped in quilts as they left their home in Wheat.²⁷⁸

Reba Holmberg of Robertsville recalls, “They couldn’t take the crops out of the field. With high security, [government officials] were scared somebody would hide someplace among the bales of hay or the stacks of corn. So, they were not allowed to take any of the crops.”²⁷⁹ A more likely reason for the prohibition of harvesting crops was based on timing and accessibility. Even those who had owned farms that were clearly out of construction range for both new housing and nuclear facilities were forbidden from reentering the Oak Ridge reservation. These decisions were based on the necessity of secrecy, but also with the intent to simplify relationships—that is, cut ties quickly—between former landowners and the federal government.²⁸⁰ Displacement was the most

²⁷⁸ Dorathy Moneymaker, “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” interview by Mick Wiest.

²⁷⁹ Reba Holmberg as quoted in “Civilian Displacement: Oak Ridge, TN,” Atomic Heritage Foundation, July 17, 2017, <https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/civilian-displacement-oak-ridge-tn>.

²⁸⁰ “Crop Gathering in Project Area Seen as Prospect,” *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-g, https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf; P. E. O’Meara, letter to Vick Foster, May 14, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-g.

important part of Oak Ridge's story to those subjected to it, but for Clinton Engineer Works, clearing the region of residents, buildings, and structures was merely step one in the arduous process of creating an atomic bomb.

Since World War II-era displacement in Oak Ridge affected approximately 3,000 former residents, it is important to resist overgeneralizing their experiences. While most families were given just weeks to relocate, there were some outliers whose stories are unique from their neighbors.

One of the most well-documented stories of antagonism between local people and government officials who informed them of their forced removal involves local historian Dorathy Moneymaker. In late 1942, Moneymaker was expecting her first child. Her husband, Russell "Joe" Moneymaker, was away at work when a man working for Clinton Engineer Works served her eviction papers.²⁸¹ Without missing a beat, Dorathy Moneymaker asked the agent, "Did you know that there is a law in the state of Tennessee that will not allow you to evict a pregnant woman?" Moneymaker had only just made up the quip, but the agent left, and the Moneymakers were able to stay in their home for the time being.²⁸²

https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf; Vick Foster, letter to Honorable John Jennings, May 15, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-g.

https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

²⁸¹ Dorathy Moneymaker, "Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3," interview by Mick Wiest.

²⁸² Dorathy Moneymaker, "ORICL Panel: Wheat Community, Part 1 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Patricia Clark, July 10,

When the Moneymakers eventually relocated from Wheat to Rockwood, Tennessee, in April 1943, only eight pre-Manhattan Project-era families remained within the Oak Ridge Reservation. Since Joe Money maker was employed as a fireman in Oak Ridge, the family had petitioned once more to stay in their home, but by then security had become stricter. After eighteen years, the family returned to Oak Ridge in 1961. Joe retired from the fire department ten years later.²⁸³ Dorothy taught Sunday School at Robertsville Baptist Church, something she had once done in Wheat, and remained in Oak Ridge until her death in 2003.²⁸⁴

Though it was certainly an exception to the rule, a handful of families were able to remain in what became the Oak Ridge Reservation even longer than the Moneymakers. One such family was the Bakers who operated a gristmill in Wheat until 1944. Their work was considered essential as they provided flour to newcomers working for Clinton Engineer Works.²⁸⁵

Other families who were supposed to vacate took much longer than their allotted time frame to do so. In a story that, decades after the war, received much laughter from local audiences, members of the Wright family described the plight of their displacement which must have been devastating to them at the time. One such narrative was retold by

2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/292>.

²⁸³ Money maker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 175-176.

²⁸⁴ Obituary for Dorothy "Dot" Sellers Money maker, *Oak Ridger*, April 11, 2003; "Dorothy Smith 'Dot' Sellers Money maker," Find-a-Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/103634139/dorathy-money maker>.

²⁸⁵ "Ranger-led Program: A Walk Through Wheat," (lecture, National Park Service, Oak Ridge, TN, October 3, 2020).

Reverend Ernest Wright who moved to Bethel Valley, roughly two miles south of Scarboro, when he was twelve years old. The relocation occurred after TVA displaced the Wrights from Union County in 1934.²⁸⁶ In 1942, Wright, along with his parents John and Mossie Wright, and four brothers, were subjected to their second dispossession in eight years.²⁸⁷

Participating in a different panel on pre-Oak Ridge history, Roaul Wright tells a similar version of the Wrights' story. It begins when "the Army showed up [and] gave us two weeks" to leave the 960 acre farm. Roaul Wright explains that his grandfather, the owner of the property, informed the surveyor that "It ain't for sale," before "[t]hey dynamited all the bridges from Bethel Valley over to the farm which [was] on the river" for the purpose of forcing the Wrights' removal.²⁸⁸ The family and farm laborers were unmoved. After several attempts to evict the Wrights, "they brought a barge up" and loaded up the farmhouse to move them across the Clinch River to the banks of Hickory Creek, near the X-10 plant but outside of the Oak Ridge Reservation.²⁸⁹ When Roaul's grandfather purchased tents for his large family and settled in on the creekbank, military

²⁸⁶ Ernest Wright, "ORICL Panel: Robertsville and Scarboro Communities, Part 3 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker, July 17, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/300/rec/1>.

²⁸⁷ 1940 U.S. Census, Anderson County, Tennessee, Enumeration District 1-14, Page 8A, Ernest F Wright; Digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com>, accessed February 23, 2021); Citing NARA microfilm, Roll *m-t0627-03871*.

²⁸⁸ Roaul Wright, "Roane State Community College, Tape 1," interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker, July 11, 2001, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/401/rec/2>.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

police (MPs) were stationed on the farm. For approximately six months, the Wright family would cross the river and return home when the MPs were not present. Eventually, officials in Oak Ridge grew tired of the charade and bulldozed the large farmhouse and outbuildings. Only an old silo remained of the Wrights' property as they finally were driven to leave.²⁹⁰

Roaul Wright's immediate family briefly relocated to Kentucky for his father's job with the Army. Shortly afterward, the Wrights were relocated to the Secret City without knowledge of where they would end up. When they arrived in Clinton and traveled through the Elza Gate, it seemed as though they were home, at least in a sense. Among other family members, Roaul Wright spent the remainder of his life in Oak Ridge; he worked as an electrical engineer at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory where he later retired. Wright later recanted his displacement experience by noting, "So we were gone, but not for very long. We're still Oak Ridgers."²⁹¹ The Wright family's persistence, or perhaps stubbornness, is comical looking back. Family members even seem a bit prideful in claiming they were "the last family to leave Oak Ridge before Oak Ridge."²⁹² However, it is hard to imagine the despair they must have felt in 1942 as their home and livelihoods were stripped from them.

²⁹⁰ Ernest Wright, "ORICL Panel: Robertsville and Scarboro Communities, Part 3 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker.

²⁹¹ Roaul Wright, "Roane State Community College, Tape 1," interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker.

²⁹² Ibid.

Upon receiving their “Declarations of Taking,” of which the first were issued on November 20, 1942,²⁹³ many residents appealed to higher authorities to make sense of the Kingston Demolition Range and to protest the large swath of property being taken from them. Initial reactions to the federal government’s land acquisition varied. Later that month, concerned locals gathered at Scarboro and Robertsville Schools as well as area churches to discuss their forthcoming dispossessions.²⁹⁴ At one such meeting, Congressman John Jennings, who represented Tennessee’s 2nd congressional district from 1939 to 1950, joined his constituents at a church in Robertsville. Those in attendance were hopeful that Jennings would take action to help them seek justice in their fight with the federal government. Landowners urged Jennings to ask officials for fairness in their dealings with local people. In late 1942 and early 1943, Jennings’s appeals to the War Department seemed rational, but his constituents were denied various requests such as salvaging fences and buildings from their farms.²⁹⁵ Perhaps most importantly, appraisals that the federal government deemed fair were not considered so by the dispossessed, who were almost always discontented with their payouts.

John Rice Irwin, who was twelve years old in 1942, recalled that “at that time, the office of Congress was viewed with a great deal more respect and we thought that there’s

²⁹³ Jones, *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb*, 321.

²⁹⁴ Nash Copeland, “Oral History of Nash Copeland;” Eva Wells McCarty, interview by Byron Hartzler, February 24, 2017, video of interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-QJlonJbRI>.

²⁹⁵ Robert P. Patterson, letter to John Jennings, Jr., February 27, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947), Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-d. https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

nothing that a congressman couldn't do."²⁹⁶ Irwin noted that "[m]ost people with any means at all [went to] federal court in Knoxville" to try and receive more for their land.²⁹⁷ When Irwin's grandfather disputed the original \$10,500 appraisal of his 325 acre farm, it was reappraised for \$18,000. Still, many in the region were not fortunate enough to fight in court. Even those who were successful with their cases "were not able to buy even half [as] much land" as they had lost.²⁹⁸ The large amount of property that had been seized in such a short period of time by the Manhattan Project, coupled with farmers just beginning to recover from the Great Depression, as well as recent TVA projects that made bottomland near local rivers unavailable, caused farmland to be especially scarce in 1943.

Like many Anderson and Roane Countians, Tennessee Governor Prentice Cooper resisted federal intervention during the Manhattan Project. On July 12, 1943, Army Captain George B. Leonard, an intelligence officer at Clinton Engineer Works, informed Governor Cooper that land acquired for the Kingston Demolition Range would fall under federal jurisdiction, thus removing the state's authority in the area. Governor Cooper reacted angrily by ripping up Captain Leonard's notice in front of him. General Leslie Groves later noted that interactions with the Tennessee governor were not handled

²⁹⁶ John Rice Irwin, "Lecture on Life in Early Oak Ridge," interview by Joan Ellen Zucker, June 26, 2000, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/261/rec/4>; Irwin's family owned a 325 acre farm and was well off compared to most in the region. The Irwins, who previously had been displaced by Norris Dam, once again relocated their farm to north of Clinton. Irwin is best known for founding the Museum of Appalachia in 1968.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

properly and that Governor Cooper had been both surprised by the content as well as offended by the junior rank of Captain Leonard in making such an announcement.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the higher-ranking Lieutenant Colonel Thomas T. Crenshaw of the Army Corps of Engineers replied with another letter dated July 14, 1943. Crenshaw assured Governor Cooper that he would be glad to speak with him and “that the Clinton Engineer Works project [was] not an experiment in socialism,” but that the project would continue “regardless of any action taken by local or State authority ... [to protect] the best interests of the nation as a whole.”³⁰⁰ So, despite discontentment and confusion from Tennesseans and their elected officials, the Manhattan Project progressed.

Like Governor Cooper, Congressman Jennings was unable to stop the dispossession of his constituents or successfully fulfill many of their requests; however, Jennings did call for an investigation by the House Military Affairs Subcommittee, which was carried out on August 11, 1943, in Clinton, and on August 12 in Kingston. During this investigation, Representatives Clifford Davis (D-TN), Dewey Short (R-MO), and John Sparkman (D-AL) heard from witnesses called to defend federal officials as well as from several dispossessed residents. The House Subcommittee investigation publicized the debate over land acquisition in Anderson and Roane Counties, but it did not create any significant change in how this portion of the Manhattan Project was handled. Neither the War Department nor the Army Corps of Engineers altered their interactions with

²⁹⁹ Leslie R. Groves, *Now It Can Be Told*, 26-27.

³⁰⁰ Thomas T. Crenshaw, letter to Honorable Prentice Cooper, July 14, 1943, Governor Prentice Cooper Papers, 1939-1945 (GP 44, Box 140, Folder 2). <https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll18/id/603>.

displaced residents based on suggestions in the post-investigation committee report. However, historically speaking, documents related to the investigation provide evidence of diverse perspectives among the displaced which is critical for understanding the topic of dispossession in Oak Ridge.³⁰¹

Given the inequalities faced by minorities and marginalized groups in America, the distrust of government agencies present in these communities is not surprising. In the case of the Manhattan Project, necessary secrecy, among even high-level federal employees, further fueled skepticism. Well-intentioned journalists also contributed to misunderstandings about land acquisition, payment, and the rights of landowners. For example, when detailing the House Subcommittee investigation, an article in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* included the story of Dicey Griffith, a seventy-seven-year-old African American landowner from Anderson County. According to the article, Griffith was offered \$75 for her eight-acre farm and told that “she wouldn’t receive more than \$5 from the court” should she choose to oppose the appraisal value.³⁰² Griffith did not agree to the sale, yet her name was signed on the sales stipulation. The article insinuates that a negotiator from Clinton Engineer Works forged Griffith’s signature as she was unable to write.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Jones, *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb*, 323-327.

³⁰² “Clinton Land Appraisers Are Assailed by Owners,” *Knoxville News Sentinel*, August 12, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-J, https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

However, several details of this story proved to be false during the House Subcommittee investigation in August 1943. Dacey Griffith was offered \$300 for her farm, Tract #C-218; the \$75 payment was made to Horace Griffith, Dacey Griffith's son, who owned a one-acre property noted as Tract #C-280.³⁰⁴ In the newspaper as well as witness testimony by Dacey Griffith, details about the two properties were muddled. However, documents show that Dacey Griffith did sign a \$300 stipulation for her farm, along with her other son and daughter-in-law, Jim and Margaret Griffith, as well as CEW negotiators R. C. Lynville and H. R. Boswell.³⁰⁵ Following the House Subcommittee investigation, Dacey Griffith's experience seemed less scandalous. However, the loss she and her family sensed, as well as the coercion that she felt subjected to, were genuine. Numerous other landowners shared and recorded similar hard feelings.

Negotiators working for Clinton Engineer Works attempted to convince landowners to accept appraisals and willingly sell their properties to the government. Cooperation among most landowners was critical to the Manhattan Project's success; however, several cases document how some negotiators were coercive and unethical.

³⁰⁴ Fred Morgan, "Report of Proceedings: House Military Affairs Subcommittee," August 14, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-Q, 3-4,

https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

³⁰⁵ "Stipulation Signed by Dacey Griffith," January 23, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit F-5-C, 1-3,

https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

Negotiators who testified during the court hearings denied using intimidating tactics.³⁰⁶ In one such instance, Harvey Gray, the owner of Tract # D-367 in Anderson County, describes his experiences. In his statement, Gray claims that Tom Pritchett, who was employed as a negotiator, threatened a lawsuit and assured Gray that he “would be making money” to accept the offer of \$7,500. Later, Oliver A. Smith, Jr., of the Farm Security Administration, the organization in which Gray had a \$7,601 loan for the property, advised Gray otherwise. However, by this point, both Gray and his wife, Eva Jane Fraker Gray, had agreed to the \$7,500 stipulation.³⁰⁷ Cases like the Grays’ were not uncommon, and many residents were left not only without homes and farms, but also without funds to relocate.

Many residents felt that negotiators had coerced them into signing real estate stipulations in which they agreed to accept what they viewed as low-ball offers for their homesteads. Often, CEW appraisals were 40 to 50 percent lower than what landowners believed their properties to be worth. Those with financial means or connections to fight for more money in court were almost always successful, though their appraisals were

³⁰⁶ R. G. West, letter to Chief of Engineers, Washington, D. C., August 30, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-m, 2-3. https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

³⁰⁷ Harvey Gray, Statement of Harvey Gray, December 4, 1942, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix F, Exhibit F-5-a, https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

never increased as much as they anticipated, especially once legal fees were deducted from their rewarded financial gains.³⁰⁸

Regarding the court hearings, prominent store owner J. Nash Copeland was one of the more privileged landowners: “I bought 15 acres with the store and a four-room house in 1935 for \$6,000 I added to the house and put in water and improved the store. They offered me \$6,000. I finally got \$8,000.”³⁰⁹ Comparatively, Copeland fared better than many of his neighbors in court but considering price increases since 1935 and additions and improvements he had made to his property (such as electricity, a bathroom, and a warehouse building), he was not content with the verdict. In a 1972 interview, Copeland noted, “there wasn’t anyone satisfied with what the government paid them for their property.”³¹⁰

Once the court hearings concluded, the total percentage of those willing to sell their properties rose from 61 percent to 66 percent.³¹¹ However, the displaced still felt hardships since property owners were not paid until their appraisals were completed, meaning that some families who were forced to vacate by the end of 1942 were not paid until as late as 1944 or 1945.

Though their rushed exits left residents downtrodden and a bit shellshocked, the large majority of the 1,000 local families initially left without incident. This cooperation

³⁰⁸ Fred Morgan, “Report of Proceedings: House Military Affairs Sub-Committee,” 2-3.

³⁰⁹ Marvin West, “Oak Ridge: The Atomic City,” *Tennessee Valley Perspective* 4, no. 1 (Fall 1973): 17, Google Books.

³¹⁰ Nash Copeland, “Oral History of Nash Copeland.”

³¹¹ “Clinton Land Appraisers Are Assailed by Owners,” *Knoxville News Sentinel*.

is largely, though not always accurately, attributed to patriotism that permeated the region and the country during World War II. By the fall of 1942, the war had touched nearly all Americans and they were willing to do their part to assist U.S. service members.³¹²

Historians and others who have studied Oak Ridge with a critical eye often discuss the absence of nuance—the omission of diverse perspectives—in some versions of the city’s history. This critique is valid, especially surrounding the topic of displacement. Stories of patriotism and a willingness to leave their homes in support of the war effort overshadows much of the intensity, bitterness, and confusion felt by pre-Manhattan Project-era residents.

Nevertheless, there are firsthand accounts to verify reports of amicable compliance by pre-Oak Ridgers. Bill Shinpaugh, for instance, recalls his parents “thought nothing about it. They just moved and that was it. They didn’t think anything about it.”³¹³ Perhaps their displacement from Wheat, was made easier by the fact that the Shinpaughs did not own the farm on which they worked. Instead, the Shinpaughs owned another farm located in the Hickory Creek Community in Hardin Valley. When they left Wheat, the Shinpaughs relocated to Clinton.³¹⁴

Don Watson shared a similar account of local willingness to relocate. After graduating from Wheat High School in 1936, Watson left his hometown. By 1942, he was living and working in Harriman, Tennessee. His widowed mother, Hattie Watson, still owned approximately forty acres in Wheat. When she learned of the government’s

³¹² Nash Copeland, “Oral History of Nash Copeland.”

³¹³ Bill Shinpaugh, interview by Don Hunnicutt.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

intent to acquire her property, Hattie Watson is said to have replied, “Well if it will get the boys home sooner from the war, they can have it all.”³¹⁵ After her displacement, she joined her son in Harriman. Displacement was a profoundly individualized experience for those involved, disproportionately affecting some in negative ways. By and large, those who seemed to welcome their displacement as a patriotic duty had fewer ties to the area or were fortunate enough to have obvious relocation options. For the other families who were not so lucky, the dispossession of their properties and livelihoods was a tragic event that they never recovered from. For many, the hills and valleys that became Oak Ridge were all their families had ever known.

Accounts of serial displacement in the region range from those who lost their property when Norris Dam was flooded and “were always homesick ... and just never got over it,”³¹⁶ to Paul Elza’s “personal impression ... as far as Oak Ridge was concerned, [that] it was not nearly the resentment that one found in the case of some of TVA’s places.”³¹⁷ Elza—who was a pre-Oak Ridge native, an employee at TVA, and later worked in Oak Ridge—went on to explain that TVA “had pioneered” displacement in the

³¹⁵ Don Watson, “Roane State Community College, Tape 1,” interview by Joan- Ellen Zucker, July 11, 2001, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/401/rec/2>; During World War II, 157 men from Wheat, Tennessee, served in the military. One of those was Hattie Watson’s son, Don, who was in the Army from December 1942 to 1946.

³¹⁶ Beverly Stooksbury Leitner, “For the Greater Good: Norris Dam at 80,” *WBIR*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovEi1eWCfek>.

³¹⁷ Paul Elza, interview by Sibyl Nestor.

region and that due to the crisis of World War II, those forced to move for Oak Ridge's creation "were in the mood of sacrifice ... the mood of being cooperative."³¹⁸

Naturally, not all pre-Manhattan Project-era residents supported or recognized the necessity of their removal; but contributing to the war effort did mitigate the frustration experienced by some displaced individuals, namely "the middle aged or younger generation [who did not] protest much."³¹⁹ Displacement seemed to affect the elderly most severely as they were the most attached to the land and their neighbors and felt the most anxiety and hopelessness from their uprooting.

While it seems logical that older generations who had more time and life experience tied to the region would be most negatively affected by their upheaval, the adverse impacts of displacement on young people and children are also documented. Some families, like Eva Wells McCarty's, were "not even out of sight" before the federal government burned their house and others in Robertsville to the ground, an act she described as "so cruel of them."³²⁰ The purpose of this rapid destruction was to clear the land as quickly as possible. Of the buildings which housed approximately 3,000 prewar residents, only 181 remained after Oak Ridge's creation, most of which were newer or equipped with electricity.³²¹ Even after the war and with a better understanding of

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Eva Wells McCarty, interview by Byron Hartzler, February 24, 2017, video of interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FteY2ove4Cc>.

³²¹ Kimberley A. Murphy and Philip Thomason, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Oak Ridge, Tennessee," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 91001109 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), 16, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=eaab0405-0095-48c4-a2c8-eb3e9cf3edc8>.

Manhattan Project-era events, witnessing the destruction of her Robertsville home as an eight-year-old had a profound impact on McCarty.

Likewise, eleven-year-old Barbara McCall Ely was in fifth grade at Wheat School when her grandfather received \$39 per acre for his property in Bethel Valley. She remembered her grandfather reassuring her that their displacement was an important part of the war effort: “This would be something that would bring our boys back, the war is going to be over, and everyone would be coming back.” However, as a young girl Ely weighed that against the deaths of community members, like Sydney Arnold and K. B. Johnson, who died during their time in the service. Unlike others who saw displacement as their patriotic duty, she resented the federal government’s invasion of their property and lives. In 1998, with great emotion, a then-66-year-old Ely stated:

I hate them, we never got to go back home. It’s still restricted. I never laid eyes on it. But I understand that all they did with our homes was bulldoze them off the hills. They never used them. Why they wanted to go in our homes and invade it, I don’t know. But they just bulldozed them off of the hills. So all the stuff that they said we couldn’t have just went in the ground. And that’s fine. I understand that perhaps I will be able to look at Wheat, my home from a distance someday. One man told me that they would take me over as close as they could get to my home. Just to look at it.³²²

Pre-atomic residents adjusted to their new lives differently, but for some children and young people, like Ely, the shift was especially difficult to accept.

Life prior to World War II centered around religion and education, especially in Wheat. Attendees of Wheat High School and others who grew up in the community

³²² Barbara McCall Ely, “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” interview by Mick Wiest, April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/291>.

remember their time at school fondly, often noting Wheat's successful girls' and boys' sports teams and the togetherness of their neighbors. The difference in sentiments about new schools attended by former Wheat High School students after their displacements are somewhat drastic. Even decades later, students recall Wheat fondly while noting their new schools were "quite a come down" and did not have amenities that Wheat High School enjoyed such as "running water, electricity, [and] a big cafeteria" where crops grown by students and employees on school grounds were canned and served.³²³

Wheat High School was closed in December 1942, never to reopen again, although the building was used as a temporary training facility for Manhattan Project employees. For the few families who remained in Wheat after the school's closure, buses were provided for transportation to a school in nearby Dyllis. Other pre-Oak Ridge school buildings in Scarboro and Robertsville were used for their pre-1942 purpose as elementary and secondary education facilities. Like in Wheat, attitudes about the quality of pre-Oak Ridge schools were positive in comparison to other area schools. Ruby Daughtery Shanks, who moved to Oak Ridge in October 1943 and attended both Scarboro School and Robertsville High School, recalled that education in the new city was "more advanced than what we were used to [in Morgan County.]"³²⁴

³²³ Joe Magill, "Oral History of Joe Magill."

³²⁴ Ruby Shanks, "Oral History of Ruby Shanks," interview by Bart Callan, May 18, 2005, K-25 Collection, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://oakridgetn.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/124/>.



Figure 3.4: “Here is shown one of the last assemblies held at the Robertsville High School in October 1942. Courtesy of Gene Tipton”³²⁵

The legacy of quality education was consistent both before and after 1942, as Oak Ridge still boasts some of Tennessee’s highest-rated public schools. Mary Elizabeth Anderson, who moved to Oak Ridge in 1945 and graduated from Oak Ridge High School in 1953, said:

I was really amazed at the school. I remember that because I had not had art. I had not had music. I had not had PE and I walked in and thought I had died and gone to heaven when I saw the library. I hadn’t never seen so many books before because we didn’t have a library, per se. Each room had a little shelf of library books in my previous school. So I was thrilled to death. I just thought it was wonderful.³²⁶

³²⁵ Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History*, 128.

³²⁶ Mary Elizabeth Alexander, interview by Don Hunnicutt, December 19, 2012, BBB Communications, LLC, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/376>.

While many newcomers to Oak Ridge recollected similar enthusiasm regarding their educational opportunities, resentment festered among pre-atomic residents who had to forfeit attending school in places like Wheat.

Starting Over in a New Place, An Inability to Recreate Home

When a new place is to be built, the first thing that must be done is to be rid of the old place, even though all buildings are removed the impression already made on the people who lived in the old place cannot be erased. These people go to live at another place, but they are still what they were. They become a part of their new community and add to that community those characteristics 'left over' from the place that is gone.³²⁷

– Dorothy Moneymaker

³²⁷ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, iv.



Figure 3.5: Moss grows on stones that mark the side of an abandoned roadbed in the former Wheat, Tennessee.³²⁸

By 1945, the secret was out about Oak Ridge but for displaced residents the transformation was complete. Once displaced, rural communities cannot revive themselves. Dispossession caused tremendous hardships for Anderson and Roane Countians. Some former residents relocated to nearby towns or lived with relatives until they were able to find affordable farms to purchase. Others were unable to replace their homesteads and reverted to sharecropping to make ends meet.³²⁹ Harriman, Dyllis,

³²⁸ Photo by author, March 14, 2021, Oak Ridge, TN.

³²⁹ Joe Magill, "Oral History of Joe Magill."

Kingston, and Knoxville were common relocation sites, but some pre-Oak Ridge residents resettled as far away as Texas or Hanford, Washington.³³⁰ After their evictions, families moved wherever they could find property. “And a lot of the people hadn’t even been out of the county, didn’t know which way to go. Didn’t have transportation to go.”³³¹

Many details surrounding relocations were unpredictable, but one thing was for certain, pre-atomic residents, dissatisfied with their property appraisals and final payments, were not able to recreate a life like the one they had experienced in pre-Oak Ridge. Once property sellers in neighboring counties became aware of the Kingston Demolition Range, land prices increased, making the relocation of those displaced by Oak Ridge even more difficult.

In 1940, 26,504 people lived in Anderson County’s 338,000 square miles, 23,743 of whom lived in rural areas. Similarly, 27,795 people lived in Roane County’s 379,000 square miles out of which 18,194 people were denoted as rural population.³³² During the Manhattan Project land acquisition, Anderson and Roane Counties each lost over 10 percent of their land. Eliminating such a vast swath of land so quickly greatly drove up the prices of available farmland in the surrounding areas. Land acquired for the Oak

³³⁰ Barbara McCall Ely, “Bethel Valley History: Part 3.”

³³¹ “Lady in Green,” “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” interview by Mick Wiest, April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/291>.

³³² U.S. Census Bureau, “Table 2: Area and Population of Counties, Urban and Rural: 1920 to 1940,” 1015-1016, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1940/population-volume-1/33973538v1ch09.pdf>.

Ridge Reservation's original 56,200 acres was \$1,922,226 with an average of \$36 per acre.³³³

However, what was “fair market value” when the first residents were displaced from Anderson County was not “fair” the next day as prices continued to inflate.³³⁴ “[I]t was sad because [by the time] the people ... were notified to move out, word had got out to the other counties and they raised the prices of houses and a lot of the people from around here, around Scarboro, didn't have bank accounts. They couldn't borrow money to buy a house with. A lot of the families moved in two or three families in one house until they could find something. It was sad. But people were humble and went ahead.”³³⁵

Former residents moved on and created new lives elsewhere, but their communities were lost forever. Farms and businesses could be replaced in some instances, but the relationships between neighbors and families were heavily based on tradition, spatiality, and the significance of place. In nearly every interview, pre-Oak Ridgers describe their old homes as close-knit and familial. Barbara McCall Ely explained how as children she and her older brother, Gene McCall, were looked after by people in Wheat: “We were just like a big family. I didn't know I didn't belong to

³³³ Fred Morgan, letter to Joseph G. Colgan, August 6, 1943, *Manhattan District History, Book I- General, Volume 10 – Land Acquisition CEW* (Atomic Energy Commission, April 2, 1947) Appendix B, Exhibit B-2-I, 4, https://www.osti.gov/includes/opennet/includes/MED_scans/Book%20I%20-%20General%20-%20Volume%2010%20-%20Land%20Acquisition%20CEW.pdf.

³³⁴ Donald Raby, “Oral History of Donald Raby.”

³³⁵ “Lady in Green,” “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” interview by Mick Wiest.

everybody and it was a loving community.”³³⁶ The rurality and culture in pre-Oak Ridge communities made taking care of friends, family, and neighbors in good times and bad commonplace. Once residents physically relocated, there was no way to salvage the tremendous loss of security that community members provided to one another simply by being nearby.

Those who were not in the area at the time of displacement, especially service members who were overseas, experienced different forms of grief. Those who did return to Anderson or Roane County after the war found the region forever changed. Many pre-Oak Ridge residents relocated to nearby towns such as Lenoir City, Harriman, and Oliver Springs, but the sense of community that they left behind was never replicated, which was especially difficult for the elderly, some who had spent their entire lives in their former homes.³³⁷

Tracking down neighbors and friends who had hastily moved, often more than once, was difficult.³³⁸ The once close-knit communities had relied on physical proximity for connectivity through activities like church, school, and employment. Once displaced, most families did not keep up with their old neighbors like they once had. Travelling long distances to visit friends was not common practice during the 1940s³³⁹ and some former residents found it hard to keep in touch “because it was difficult to write a letter without

³³⁶ Barbara McCall Ely, “Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 3,” interview by Mick Wiest, April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/291>.

³³⁷ Don Watson, interview by Bart Callan.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Carolyn Cox, interview by author, October 25, 2020, Fairfield Glade, TN.

crying.”³⁴⁰ Former resident Bill Shinpaugh joked, “[W]e didn't – vacation [to see old neighbors]. That word hadn't been invented then. Vacation came along later.”³⁴¹ While families kept in touch, the sense of community in pre-Oak Ridge villages was lost.

Despite having lost their communities and livelihoods, some positive aspects to post-1942 life for the displaced emerged. Their removal from agrarian life, albeit forced and hurried, provided employment opportunities that otherwise would have been non-existent in 1940s Appalachia. For many, who had farmed their entire lives, employment in Oak Ridge provided the first opportunity for steady salaried or hourly labor. Though the displaced suffered an “unproportionate share” of “the rough end of the stick,” the area, and later the world, benefitted from Oak Ridge's creation.³⁴² Still, for some, the hastiness of their eviction did nothing to ease the stress and resentment they felt about losing their communities.

Post-War Attitudes

Attitudes about displacement among pre-Oak Ridge residents changed over time. How could they not evolve when so much of the Manhattan Project was a secret until the United States used its new atomic weaponry on Japan in August 1945? The violence experienced by those involved in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki coupled with the loss suffered by East Tennesseans who were forced to leave their homes three years prior only adds to the complexities of the displacement narrative. Like Oak Ridgers who

³⁴⁰ Barbara McCall Ely, “Bethel Valley History: Part 3.”

³⁴¹ Bill Shinpaugh, interview by Don Hunnicutt.

³⁴² Joe Magill, “Oral History of Joe Magill.”

played a role in creating the atomic bombs, some former residents felt unease with their involvement in atomic history, regardless of what some may have understood about the true purpose of their displacement and the Manhattan Project.

Some Oak Ridgers who worked on the Project “took great pride in the fact that they had a part in it.”³⁴³ It is no surprise however that, like the World War II-era, the post-war period was viewed differently by the dispossessed:

The displaced farmers who had given up their homes in Elza, Scarboro, Robertsville, and Wheat hoped that they might be able to return and repurchase their old places. This seemed only right to them since they had continued to think of the land as theirs. After all, Oak Ridge served as only a temporary home for those who lived there now; but to the displaced it was home, it was where their grandfathers and great-grandfathers had settled when they came to America. Could anyone doubt the fairness of returning them their land? ³⁴⁴

Once displaced residents realized Oak Ridge’s permanence, resentment—reminiscent of other examples of dispossession by TVA and the National Park Service—became more evident. The war was over and many Anderson and Roane Countians, feeling as though they had sacrificed enough, just wanted their land back. Begrudged that their properties had been taken and often not used or improved, some pre-Oak Ridge residents tried to buy their land back from the City of Oak Ridge. The large majority were unsuccessful.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History*, 158.

³⁴⁵ “Roane State Community College, Tape 1,” interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker, July 11, 2001, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/401/rec/2>.



Figure 3.6: A pre-Oak Ridge house is seen in the foreground of the K-25 plant's construction progress in 1942.³⁴⁶

What Remains

I can remember when the gates slammed behind us after they searched us. My brother and I look back and say goodbye. There will never be another home. So that was home. It's still home. I can't see it, but I know my mountains are here ...³⁴⁷

– Barbara McCall Ely

³⁴⁶ Ed Westcott, photograph MED245, *Early Construction K-25 Plant with One of Original Houses in the Oak Ridge Area, 1942*, Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/6963816846/in/album-72157629597751359/>.

³⁴⁷ Barbara McCall Ely, "Bethel Valley History: Part 3."

Even decades after the Secret City was opened, rumors and confusion about the Manhattan Project and those who were forced to vacate their properties remained rampant. About her community's displacement, former Wheat resident Bonita Irwin said, "It has been mentioned in some of the radio, television programs that it's a poor community and that we were ready to leave there, we wanted to move out. And that is farthest from the truth. Hey! We didn't have a lot of money, but we had everything else it took to be happy."³⁴⁸

In "The Wheat Community," author Patricia A. Hope claims that former residents of Wheat "kept their pride, their memories, and above all their traditions."³⁴⁹ Hope is referring to annual reunions that have been held since 1932 but became even more meaningful to attendees after the community was displaced. At the reunions, "It's almost like there was no time between. We don't talk about when we had to leave. We talk about how happy we are to be back."³⁵⁰

The first ten years of reunions were held at Wheat High School. From 1943-1946, attendees met in Harriman, at the new facility of Wheat's Crawford Cumberland Presbyterian Church.³⁵¹ In 1947, when the Atomic Energy Commission permitted the group's annual temporary access, roughly 1,000 attendees gathered for the reunion at

³⁴⁸ Bonita Irwin, "Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 2," interview by Mick Wiest, April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/290>.

³⁴⁹ Hope, "The Wheat Community," 14-15.

³⁵⁰ Barbara McCall Ely, "Bethel Valley History: Part 3."

³⁵¹ Moneymaker, *We'll Call It Wheat*, 56.

George Jones Memorial Baptist Church.³⁵² An unfortunate series of events occurred in 2020 when Oak Ridge lost ninety-nine-year-old Bonita Irwin, a Wheat native who helped preserve memories and organize the reunion for decades. Like so many other events, the 2020 reunion was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Displacement transformed reunions in Wheat from school alumni functions, which were still heavily attended due to Wheat High School's tremendous educational and community impact, to a time for annual remembrance, nostalgia, and fellowship. A typical reunion began in the morning with a call to order, followed by songs, prayer, speakers, and a roll call of Wheat alumni who had died during the previous year. Especially after 1942, Wheat reunions came to represent a persistence of community, and neighbors would come from near and far to visit with one another and enjoy a potluck "Dinner on the Grounds" and be together once more.³⁵³

Conclusion

In August 1943, Oak Ridge's first businesses opened at Jackson Square, the heart of the new city. By 1945, the once rural area was home to 165 businesses in twelve commercial districts, a far cry from the country stores that once served pre-war

³⁵² Bonita Irwin, "Wheat: The Community Hearts, Minds Didn't Forget," *Oak Ridger*, October 2, 2012.
<https://www.oakridger.com/article/20121002/NEWS/121009983>.

³⁵³ Carolyn Cox, interview by author, October 25, 2020, Fairfield Glade, TN; Dixie Mason and Annabelle Harvey, interview by author, August 7, 2020, Kingston, TN; Bill Shinpaugh, interview by Don Hunnicutt.

communities.³⁵⁴ At its most heavily populated, 82,000 people worked in Oak Ridge and 75,000 were residents of the township.³⁵⁵ Today, the City of Oak Ridge touts a population of approximately 29,000 and is recognized as home to some of the world's more significant scientific research.³⁵⁶

Today's visitors in Oak Ridge will find a landscape drastically different than the rural farming communities found there in 1942. This is surely true throughout many parts of Appalachia, but for some, the quickness of change still adds a sting to Oak Ridge's story, or at least it should. Instead of the educational mecca of Wheat, Tennessee, one will find the East Tennessee Technology Park and remnants of the K-25 gaseous diffusion plant. In Scarboro, a vibrant black community now thrives after being segregated away from the heart of the town when official established it in 1942. In Robertsville, a modern visitor would find the hustle and bustle of downtown Oak Ridge. The Oak Ridge National Laboratory has replaced New Bethel. New Hope is now home to the Y-12 National Security Complex where remnants of a closed city are still present with gates, limited public access, and ongoing nuclear research. Elza, no longer a rural stop on the L&N Railroad, is a park that focuses on its history as a busy gate to the Secret City.

³⁵⁴ Kimberley A. Murphy and Philip Thomason, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Oak Ridge, Tennessee," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 91001109 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), 20, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=eaab0405-0095-48c4-a2c8-eb3e9cf3edc8>.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁵⁶ "Business: About Oak Ridge," City of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 2011-2021, <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/content/BUSINESS/About-Oak-Ridge>.



Figures 3.7 and 3.8: On the hiking trail in the former Wheat, Tennessee, daffodils bloom near remnants of a foundation. Nearby, a fallen tree still holds electrical wires and a circa 1930s ceramic insulator.³⁵⁷

Still, if one looks hard enough, pre-atomic history can still be found throughout Oak Ridge. The George Jones Memorial Baptist Church, the Wheat African Burial Ground, the auditorium of Robertsville Middle School, New Bethel Baptist Church, numerous cemeteries, and even daffodils that sprout in seemingly random clumps in the woods at what used to be the entrance to a displaced family's home all bear witness to a time before the nuclear era.

³⁵⁷ Photographs by author, March 14, 2021, Oak Ridge, TN.

Large-scale government projects like the Manhattan Project have caused serial displacement in East Tennessee for much of the twentieth century. Appalachian residents of pre-Oak Ridge and other marginalized groups have been more heavily affected by such projects and their dispossession often leads to their subsequent erasure from history. In the next chapter, I will discuss historic preservation and historical interpretation efforts in Oak Ridge, as well as how pre-1942 history—especially displacement narratives—are currently being shared with the public. When employed successfully, preservation efforts and historical interpretation can help to eliminate gaps in historical narratives so that a fuller history of Oak Ridge and the Manhattan Project might emerge.

SECTION II: THE ENGAGED PUBLIC HISTORIAN
**CHAPTER IV: HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND INTERPRETATION IN OAK
RIDGE, TENNESSEE**

History is, roughly speaking, a form of collective memory. Both history and our personal memories rely inevitably on interpretation. Memory, like history, “is something that is done, something that, is constructed.” – Robert E. Butchart³⁵⁸

Pre-Oak Ridge resident Dorathy Moneymaker once claimed that Wheat, Tennessee’s history was unable to “be erased” despite the community’s destruction; to that comment, sociologist Lindsay A. Freeman remarked that “the impression of those who came before is often in the hands of those who come afterward.”³⁵⁹ Freeman’s assertion is true and hints at why the work of public historians is so critical. Beginning in 1949, outsiders from the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and the Department of Energy (DOE) interpreted Oak Ridge’s history using a top-down narrative, that at times has been much more filled with government or nuclear propaganda than the experiences of local people.

To successfully preserve and interpret the history of Oak Ridge, especially when attempting to include stories from displaced pre-war communities, public historians must engage with local people, not just larger government institutes who have dominated the historical narrative since Oak Ridge’s formal opening in 1949. In this chapter, I will identify strategies and examples of effective historic preservation and historical

³⁵⁸ Robert E. Butchart, *Local Schools: Exploring Their History* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1986), 3.

³⁵⁹ Freeman, *Longing for the Bomb*, 19.

interpretation methods. The bottom line, however, is that a robust dialogue among stakeholders must be maintained to determine and achieve goals set by historical organizations and the city. Oak Ridge has a unique opportunity to be a leader in history and heritage tourism, a designation that can be fulfilled only if the city's historic assets continue to be preserved and well utilized.

Pre-Atomic Historic Sites in Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Before discussing historic preservation and historical interpretation efforts in Oak Ridge and how they might be improved to include more diverse perspectives, I will provide a brief assessment of historic sites in the region. Since Oak Ridge was established in 1942 and experienced its most significant historical period during World War II and the Cold War-era, preservation efforts in the city have been largely focused on mid-century and modern architecture. However, this section will highlight the important places that represent Oak Ridge's pre-atomic communities in today's landscape. Rather than provide an inventory of extant pre-1942 buildings and structures, which has already been documented in the National Register of Historic Places,³⁶⁰ I will note several examples to suggest how local history might be incorporated to the more dominant historical narratives publicized in the city today.

³⁶⁰ Kimberley A. Murphy and Philip Thomason, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Oak Ridge, Tennessee," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 91001109 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), 2-6, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=eaab0405-0095-48c4-a2c8-eb3e9cf3edc8>.

As engineers and developers quickly transformed the Oak Ridge region into a modern, scientific hub, they also destroyed most of the historic landscape of Elza, Robertsville, Scarboro, New Hope, and Wheat. Of the homes occupied by approximately 1,000 displaced families, only 181 farmhouses remained standing in 1942. Most houses and other buildings were considered “ill-equipped” without running water and electricity, and were torn down immediately.³⁶¹ This decision of course was ironic considering TVA’s establishment in the region nearly a decade earlier. Nevertheless, not much of pre-Oak Ridge physically remains, which makes preserving and utilizing extant, pre-1942 properties vitally important to the city’s history.

Listed on the National Register in 1991, the J. B. Jones House is the only extant, twentieth-century pre-Manhattan Project-era house in Oak Ridge. The War Department used the 1920s Bungalow-style farmhouse during the 1940s. It is suspected that the Jones House may have been spared from destruction because of its relative newness and indoor plumbing, a feature that most pre-Oak Ridge farmhouses lacked. In 1975, the Anderson County Board of Education purchased the Jones House from the Department of Energy to use as the Daniel Arthur Rehabilitation Center.³⁶²

³⁶¹ Kimberley A. Murphy and Philip Thomason, “Historic and Architectural Resources of Oak Ridge, Tennessee,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 91001109 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), 16, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=eaab0405-0095-48c4-a2c8-eb3e9cf3edc8>.

³⁶² Philip Thomason and Kimberley Murphy, “J. B. Jones House,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 91001107 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, September 5, 1991), <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail/9f1d2c2e-fdcf-439a-b4e7-7369a7a2909c>.



Figures 4.1 and 4.2: J. B. Jones House and Barn³⁶³

The city's oldest pre-war building is Freels Bend Cabin, a circa 1810 and 1844 log house located in Anderson County. The Edward Freels family was one of the first to settle in Anderson County and owned the property for over a century. Howard Van Glider, Sr., eventually purchased the house and most of the Freels' acreage, which the federal government in 1942 as part of the Manhattan Project.³⁶⁴ During World War II, the Daugherty family from Morgan County, Tennessee, lived in the cabin after being hired to raise chickens for soldiers stationed in Oak Ridge.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Philip Thomason, photograph, *J. B. Jones House, Old Edgemoor Road, November 1990*, in Philip Thomason and Kimberley Murphy, "J. B. Jones House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 91001107 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, September 5, 1991), <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail/9f1d2c2e-fdcf-439a-b4e7-7369a7a2909c>.

³⁶⁴ Kimberley A. Murphy and Philip Thomason, "Freels Cabin," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 92000407 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, April 5, 1991), 1-2, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=aa6b8aae-8011-40eb-afe1-4fe93df1c661>.

³⁶⁵ Ruby Shanks, "Oral History of Ruby Shanks."

Freels Bend Cabin is located on Department of Energy land and public access to the site is typically restricted. Unfortunately, these restrictions to public sites are also true of the city's two extant pre-1942 churches. Like Freels Bend Cabin, visitors can view the exterior of George Jones Memorial Baptist Church (via a hiking trail through the former Wheat community), but access to the interior of the building is mostly prohibited. One exception to visiting the church occurs annually during the first weekend of October when former community members, as well as newcomers, celebrate a homecoming reunion.

Perhaps the most difficult pre-war site to visit is New Bethel Baptist Church, located near the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in what was the pre-war Scarboro community. As I will detail in the next section, public access to New Bethel has been mostly eliminated due to heightened security, changes in bus tour routes, and decisions about heritage tourism.



Figure 4.3: D-416-1 Photo Courtesy of Don Raby; The Luther Brannon House as photographed by the Army Corps of Engineers circa 1942.

Prior to 2021, the Luther Brannon House was one of the best-known landmarks in the former community of Elza. Owen Hackworth built the house in 1941, just one year before his displacement from the region. Again, the house’s newness is most likely what saved it from being demolished during the 1940s.³⁶⁶

Today, the Brannon House serves as an example of why historic preservation efforts are urgent. In early 2021, brothers Rick and Ryan Chinn of R&R Properties

³⁶⁶ Kimberley A. Murphy, “Luther Brannon House,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 91001108 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, September 5, 1991), <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/d973e297-138c-4a69-b481-b51d1fca3f99>.

purchased the property.³⁶⁷ Citing the house's damage due to a kitchen fire in 2014³⁶⁸ and high restoration costs, the Chinns demolished the property three weeks after their purchase. Naturally, the demolition of the Brannon House was upsetting to the local preservation community, especially to the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association (ORHPA), who was not notified prior to the Chinns' decision. Mick Wiest, who serves as the current Executive Director of ORPHA also noted that the property was razed without "full consideration of its value as a historic site."³⁶⁹

In Oak Ridge, there are mixed emotions about the care and maintenance of some pre-1942 historic sites. Cemeteries are one such example. Over seventy extant cemeteries predate the modern city, thirty-one of which are still located on Oak Reservation property.³⁷⁰ During the Manhattan Project, the federal government acquired these cemeteries. Displaced families were told that the government would maintain the cemeteries and for the most part that has been the case. After the City of Oak Ridge was formally incorporated in 1959, the city became responsible for maintaining several cemeteries within the former Oak Ridge Reservation. As in other instances of

³⁶⁷ Benjamin Pounds, "Controversy Over Demolition of Stone House," *Oak Ridger*, March 10, 2021, <https://www.oakridger.com/story/news/2021/03/10/controversy-over-demolition-stone-house/6949271002/>.

³⁶⁸ WBIR Staff, "Fire Damages Former Manhattan Project Headquarters," *WBIR 10News*, July 7, 2014, <https://www.wbir.com/article/news/local/oak-ridge-anderson/fire-damages-former-manhattan-project-headquarters/51-312181085>.

³⁶⁹ Mick Wiest, as quoted in Benjamin Pounds, "Controversy Over Demolition of Stone House," *Oak Ridger*, March 10, 2021, <https://www.oakridger.com/story/news/2021/03/10/controversy-over-demolition-stone-house/6949271002/>.

³⁷⁰ Mick Wiest, "Life in the Oak Ridge Area Before 1942: Part 1," April 18, 1998, American Museum of Science and Energy, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/289>.

dispossession, families and church congregations in pre-Oak Ridge communities struggled with the idea of leaving their buried kinfolk behind.

The Department of Energy allowed residents of Wheat to enter the Oak Ridge Reservation annually to hold a reunion at George Jones Memorial Baptist Church, where one of the largest pre-Manhattan Project-era cemeteries is located. It is well-kept and can be accessed on foot without formal approval today.

The same is not true of other pre-Oak Ridge cemeteries such as the East Fork Cemetery on Newcastle Lane in Roane County, which was associated with East Fork Missionary Baptist Church.³⁷¹ In 2018, Connie Hackworth of nearby Oliver Springs was caring for the cemetery but wanted to know who should have actually had the responsibility. The DOE once maintained the cemetery but then supposedly transferred it to the City of Oak Ridge. City officials did not have records of this property transfer so neither entity was cutting the grass or keeping up with necessary maintenance there. Roane County historian Robert Bailey described the situation this way: “A lot of times, if they’re public cemeteries, they’re not owned by anyone. Technically the person who’s buried there is the legal occupant of that space.”³⁷² The East Fork Cemetery is an example of how historic sites in Oak Ridge represent not only a physical connection to the land for local families but remain, to this day, a point of contention for some

³⁷¹ “Historic Cemeteries in Oak Ridge: East Fork Baptist Church Cemetery (AEC #21),” City of Oak Ridge Public Library, accessed March 2, 2021, <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/images/uploads/Documents/Departments/Library/AEC%2021%20East%20Fork%20Baptist%20Church%20Cemetery.pdf>.

³⁷² Ben Pounds, “Who Owns East Fork Cemetery?” *Oak Ridger*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.oakridger.com/news/20180626/who-owns-east-fork-cemetery>.

descendants of pre-Oak Ridgers. Public accessibility and clear communication with local stakeholders is pertinent to solve issues like the ones Hackworth faced.

The issue of accessibility can also present problems for heritage tourists and visitors; for instance, consider New Bethel Baptist Church. After being removed in 1942, congregants believed their church would be razed like so many other local buildings in the region. However, the church's location across from the X-10 graphite reactor and its sturdy, circa 1924 construction made New Bethel suitable for government use. First organized in 1851, the church became a meeting place for engineers and scientists during World War II. In 1949, church members were allowed access to the site for a Memorial Day service in which they erected a stone monument commemorating a final session.³⁷³ Past tense language on the monument's text noting where the church "stood" in comparison to the stone demonstrates that community members still believed their church would eventually suffer the same fate as the rest of their devastated former community. Along with the names of deacons and trustees, Revelation 21:4 was also included on the monument. The passage served as a fitting reminder for congregants that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" and that there shall not "be any more pain, for the former

³⁷³ Kimberley A. Murphy, "New Bethel Baptist Church," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 92000409 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1992), Section 7-8, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/7073cfb4-9ee3-4322-bbe5-f3fb2c5f5400>; Michael Thomas Gavin, Sarah Jane Murray, and Stephen P. Smith, "Historic Site Analysis of the New Bethel Baptist Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee," MTSU Center for Historic Preservation (April 2004).

things are passed away.”³⁷⁴ As the only extant building from the pre-war community of Scarboro, former residents – especially church members and those with family members buried in the adjacent cemetery—were surely thankful for the building’s survival.



Figure 4.4: A tour group from AMSE (the American Museum of Science and Energy) is pictured at New Bethel Baptist Church in August 2013. The 1949 stone monument can be seen in between the church and cemetery.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ Revelation 21:4; Lynn Freeny, photograph 17-066-9120, *New Bethel Church 2017 Oak Ridge*, May 4, 2017, U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/34310055462/in/photostream/>.

³⁷⁵ John Winder, photograph, *New Bethel Baptist Church, Bethel Valley, Oak Ridge*, August 23, 2013,

For years after the Secret City was opened in 1949, visitors could travel along Bethel Valley Road to visit the church as well as the X-10 Graphite Reactor. Attacks on the country during 9/11 caused unlimited public accessibility to be removed. Still, tourists could visit New Bethel Baptist Church as part of AMSE's bus tour, a drive around the city that included stops at Oak Ridge's DOE facilities. The church was a stop where patrons could exit the bus, view interpretive panels inside the building, and walk around the cemetery to learn more about Bethel Valley and its displaced community.

However, according to online information about the bus tour, this stop was eliminated in 2020 when the K-25 History Center was opened. The K-25 History Center located in the former Wheat community focuses on the scientific advancements of the gaseous diffusion plant and also includes information about life in the region before 1942. The focus of pre-war history at the K-25 History Center is naturally Wheat, not the other displaced villages. And while the inclusion of Wheat's history at the former K-25 site is praiseworthy, its positive effects are overshadowed by the harm of excluding New Bethel Baptist Church from public tours.

This exclusion is problematic to Oak Ridge's holistic historical interpretation in several ways. First, the Wheat community is more easily found in the current landscape. It is larger and better documented through signage and historical records, making this community the least likely of Oak Ridge's displaced communities to be forgotten.

Though its one extant building, George Jones Memorial Baptist Church, is not an open site, visitors and Oak Ridge natives may access the church's exterior, as well as cemeteries in Wheat with few restrictions. Hiking trails and several historical markers also designate the displaced community. One might argue that historians and historically minded citizens are succeeding in sharing the history of Wheat.

Secondly, due to their locations, sizes, and other indicators, other pre-atomic communities are not as heavily interpreted in Oak Ridge today. Elza, for instance, was a small railroad stop community. With fewer amenities, there are less documented details to pass along to the public. The modern city of Oak Ridge has all but engulfed Robertsville. While interpretation is certainly possible, the historic landscape is difficult to determine without a keen eye and heavy research.

In the Bethel Valley, one church building survives, which has now been excluded from public viewing. To be sure, visitors can see New Bethel Baptist Church, but it is not easy. During one of my visits to Oak Ridge in March 2021, I attempted to gain access. However, since the church is beyond the gates to Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), visitors are prohibited entry. At the gate, I briefly explained my research and my university affiliation, noted that I worked for Tennessee's state historian at the Center for Historic Preservation, and reassured three employees that I did not intend to go anywhere but the church and cemetery so as not to be confused with a laboratory visitor. As the wife of a Marine, I even flashed my military I.D., but all to no avail. Respectfully, I inquired about the proper channels to gain admittance and after making phone calls at the gate, a security manager told me that the only way I, or anyone for that matter, would

be allowed into the ORNL complex was as the guest of someone who worked at the laboratory. Since my interest is in the displaced—those who came before ORNL and X-10 and nuclear research—there was no one I could “easily get a guest pass from,” and so I drove away. I share this story not to antagonize the tremendous importance of security officials, gate guards, and visitor center employees. I recognize that there are rules and restrictions for good reason. Nevertheless, if I—a public historian who knows a bit of New Bethel’s history or even that the church and cemetery exist—could not figure out a way to see this nationally recognized historic place during my visit, what does that say about how other inquiring visitors might fare? I imagine it has always been a bit more difficult to view this portion of the Oak Ridge reservation due to security, but tourists who were interested enough to sign up for AMSE’s bus tour once learned about the New Bethel area, about what came before X-10 and ORNL. Now, unless they have a personal connection at the laboratory, they can only read about it.

There is something special about physically being in a historic place. So much has been taken away from Oak Ridge’s displaced communities. To not only omit New Bethel Baptist Church from public tours, but also prohibit legal ways for researchers to visit a site that is included on the National Register of Historic Places is not only sad, but shameful. The federal government physically displaced pre-war communities in the 1940s, but what is left of them in Oak Ridge’s historic landscape should be not only preserved but shared. What use is their preservation if these sites are not accessible to the public? It is my hope that when AMSE bus tours resume in the post-pandemic era, that New Bethel Baptist Church will be returned to the list of stops.



Figure 4.5: Visitors tour the interior of New Bethel Baptist Church during an AMSE bus tour in August 2013.³⁷⁶

Historic Preservation

For many viewers and preservationists alike, the historic landscape of Oak Ridge seems to be missing little. They are unconcerned with the roots and concentrate on the modernist utopia before them. To prove it, there are numerous wartime and mid-century

³⁷⁶ Photograph by John Winder, email message to author, March 16, 2021.

buildings that have been well preserved. For decades, preservation in Oak Ridge has focused on governmental history and nuclear science.³⁷⁷ Historic sites that do not fall into this mainstream narrative, such as community histories of both the displaced and the marginalized—like modern-day Scarboro, which I discuss later in this chapter—are harder to save. As previously mentioned, descendants of Wheat residents have been particularly successful and have several historical markers to show for it like the ones denoting Poplar Creek Seminary, Crawford Presbyterian Church, and the Wheat African Burial Ground. However, in many cases where local history is recognized, communities are referred to only in terms of how they relate to the Manhattan Project. Their historical value is therefore narrowed to their importance during World War II. For example, the historical marker at Elza Gate reads:

From April 1, 1943, until March 19, 1949, this was the site of Elza Gate. Elza Gate was the primary entrance to the secret community of Oak Ridge and, along with six other entry points, it was manned by armed guards. Elza Gate took its name from a local community that predated Oak Ridge.³⁷⁸

While not every detail of the past should be considered significant enough to be included on a roadside marker, the one at Elza Gate proves how particular portions of history can overshadow lesser-known ones. Sometimes this omission happens unintentionally, or the creators of history believe they have sufficiently included marginalized narratives by making mention of them as seen in the last line of the Elza

³⁷⁷ “Preservation at Oak Ridge,” Atomic Heritage Foundation, 2019, <https://www.atomicheritage.org/preservation-oak-ridge>.

³⁷⁸ “The Elza Gate,” The Historical Marker Database, last modified December 17, 2016, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=88625>.

Gate historical marker. In Oak Ridge, however, the focus is almost always on World War II and the Cold War, modernism, and science. Frankly, this has been good for branding, heritage tourism, and increasing visitor numbers. However, is it good public history?

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism in Oak Ridge largely revolves around the city's atomic history. Efforts have been made to preserve sites like the X-10 Graphite Reactor; three gatehouses that opened in 1949 to regulate entrance into the government facilities of the newly opened city;³⁷⁹ and the Alexander Guest House, a senior living home that was formerly a Manhattan Project-era hotel.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ The three gate houses were built in 1948 and operated until 1953 as entrances to ORNL (Bethel Valley Road), Y-12 (Bear Creek Checking Station on Scarboro Road), and K-25 (Oak Ridge Turnpike Checking Station).

³⁸⁰ See Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, "National Historic Preservation Act Historic Preservation Plan: Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee," (Nashville, Tennessee, April 2004), <https://www.emcbc.doe.gov/seb/orrcc/Documents/Document%20Library/E%20-%20ORNL%20Site-Specific/ORNL%20Historic%20Preservation%20Plan.pdf>; UCOR, CROET, U.S. Department of Energy, and AECOM, *Heritage Center Revitalization Plan* (May 2017), <http://heritagectr.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Heritage-Center-Revitalization-Plan-Final-5.26.17-1.pdf>.



Figure 4.6: Oak Ridge Turnpike Checking Station ³⁸¹

On the Oak Ridge Reservation, six sites located on Department of Energy land were added to the National Register of Historic Places in May 1992. Three include the checking stations or gate houses on the Oak Ridge Turnpike, Bear Creek Road, and Bethel Valley Road. The other three are pre-1942 buildings: New Bethel Baptist Church, George Jones Memorial Church, and Freels Bend Cabin.³⁸² Even though the pre-1942 landscape has been drastically altered and mostly removed, the remaining historic sites can be used for heritage tourism.

³⁸¹ Photograph by author, March 15, 2021, Oak Ridge, TN.

³⁸² Peter J. Gross, letter to Herbert L. Harper, November 18, 1991, U.S.

Department of Energy,
https://web.archive.org/web/20060929193920/http://www.cfo.doe.gov/me70/history/NPSweb/doe_properties-multiple_property_documentation.pdf.

In June 2007, MTSU's Center for Historic Preservation prepared a heritage tourism plan for the city highlighting strategies to utilize Oak Ridge's many historic resources. Several ideas about pre-1942 communities were included, such as their inclusion on maps and adding new historic markers to note their former locations.³⁸³ On a similar note about heritage tourism, then Y-12 historian Ray Smith engaged readers in nostalgia with a long list of bygone businesses in Oak Ridge in a September 2011 news article. He concluded by urging them to become involved in moving the city forward through heritage tourism, new businesses, and using history as a revenue builder. Smith states, "I think [city manager Mark Watson] realizes our future may well be in our past -- to a large degree. We can market our history in ways we have never considered before. ... We have a tremendous heritage, let's take full advantage of it."³⁸⁴ Smith, who is now historian for the City of Oak Ridge, has been a longtime proponent of heritage tourism, something that the federal government has similarly had a stake in for decades.

Oak Ridge Interprets Its History

After the United States first used atomic weaponry against Japan in 1945, fear and suspicion about nuclear energy reached unprecedented levels. To control the narrative surrounding these fears and to "convey a message of peaceful uses for nuclear physics,"

³⁸³ *Creating the Living Story of 'The Secret City': A Heritage Tourism Plan to Significantly Expand Oak Ridge Annual Visitations* (Murfreesboro, TN: MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, June 2007): 12.

³⁸⁴ D. Ray Smith, "Do You Remember These?" *Oak Ridger*, September 21, 2011. <https://www.oakridger.com/article/20110921/NEWS/309219991>.

the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) developed public exhibits in Oak Ridge which evolved into the American Museum of Atomic Energy (AMAE) in 1949.³⁸⁵ A fixture in telling the Oak Ridge story since the weekend the gates of the city opened, the AEC changed AMAE's name to the American Museum of Science and Energy (AMSE) in 1978. Around the same time, local leaders, who worried that Oak Ridge's wartime significance would be overshadowed by stories of new science and technology, requested that a history exhibit be installed at AMSE. Subsequently, for the next forty years, various exhibits at AMSE "focused on the industrial and military perspective of the Manhattan Project with an emphasis on the government facilities' work."³⁸⁶

Another local institution, the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, opened its doors in a vacant one -room schoolhouse in March 1973 under the guidance of Executive Director Selma Shapiro. With support from the city, this modest project, launched by a group of high school Girl Scouts and their leader, Joyce Maienschein, became one of Oak Ridge's most visited tourist sites. By 1989, the Children's Museum touted 135,000 annual visitors and has continued to play a major role in storytelling in Oak Ridge.³⁸⁷ Presently, the museum is located in the Highland View Community Center and occupies more than 10,000 square feet of exhibit space.³⁸⁸ Its name, however, is a bit misleading as

³⁸⁵ Kathryn Leann Harris, "Innocent Victors: Atomic Identity at the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge, Tennessee" (master's thesis, University of Massachusetts Boston, December 2018), 31.

³⁸⁶ Kathryn Leann Harris, "Innocent Victors: Atomic Identity at the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge, Tennessee" (master's thesis, University of Massachusetts Boston, December 2018), 8.

³⁸⁷ Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History*, 188.

³⁸⁸ Beulah Brummett Braden, *When Grandma Was a Girl*, (Oak Ridge, TN: The Oak Ridger and the Clinton Courier-News, 1976), vi.

the museum has much to offer visitors of all ages. Regarding pre-1942 life in Oak Ridge, exhibits at the Children’s Museum include “a rebuilt dogtrot cabin and smokehouse.”³⁸⁹ This exhibit was reminiscent of log homes built during the latter half of the nineteenth century that joined two cabins “by a common-covered porch that served as a dining area during warm weather and as a shelter for pets year-round.”³⁹⁰

Like the Children’s Museum, the success of AMSE in Oak Ridge is undeniable. On average, the museum attracts approximately 65,000 annual visitors and remains one of the most popular destinations in the city for heritage tourists.³⁹¹ However, some of Oak Ridge’s history has been neglected as its federal overseers have sought to portray the Manhattan Project and Oak Ridge’s scientific advances only in a positive light. One example of this omission is the displacement of pre-war communities.

In 2018, AMSE was relocated from South Tulane Avenue where it had operated since 1975.³⁹² Amid these changes, AMSE also reprioritized its exhibits to focus more on science and hands-on learning. Much of the city’s World War II-era history that AMSE once displayed was removed, which left many shiny, new exhibits without a historical context. In fact, besides a gallery of Ed Westcott photos from the 1940s, little is available to teach visitors about why Oak Ridge helps lead the nation in technology and

³⁸⁹ Overholt, *Anderson County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History*, 186.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ “Our Story,” American Museum of Science and Energy, 2019, <https://amse.org/about/>.

³⁹² *Ibid.* In June 2020, the former AMSE building on South Tulane Avenue was razed to clear the site for the construction of new apartment buildings.

innovation. Even the Westcott gallery is not sufficiently interpreted to educate those who are seeing the photos for the first time.

This lack of history and historical context found at AMSE compelled Oak Ridge citizens to take action once more. Thus, on March 23, 2019, the Oak Ridge History Museum was formally opened to fill this newfound gap in Oak Ridge's historical interpretation.

The museum's founders were members of ORPHA, the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association, a non-profit established in 1999 when Charlotte Hall and Cheyenne Hall, a pair of 1940s dormitories, were demolished. This destruction raised concerns about the city's other public buildings from the World War II-era. At the time of ORHPA's founding, only six buildings remained standing, including "The Wildcat Den, Senior Citizen Center, the Alexander Hotel, the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) research building on Illinois Avenue [which was once the Stone and Webster Field Hospital], the original Energy Museum on Jefferson Avenue, and the American Red Cross building which was the original housing office."³⁹³ ORPHA also set out to document the local history of not only Oak Ridgers but also those who lived here before the city's establishment through oral history records and transcriptions. By 2000, ORPHA had attracted 150 members.³⁹⁴ Today, the organization

³⁹³ Jim Kolb and Lawrence Tunnell, "ORICL Panel, Part 3: Robertsville and Scarboro Communities: 'The Way We Were: Pre-Oak Ridge and Early Oak Ridge,'" interview by Joan-Ellen Zucker, July 17, 2000, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/302/rec/1>.

³⁹⁴ "About Us," Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association, accessed May 9, 2021, <http://smithdray1.net/orhpa/aboutus.htm>.

continues to meet monthly at Midtown Community Center, the former Wildcat Den which now houses the Oak Ridge History Museum.



Figure 4.7: Charlotte Hall and Cheyenne Hall, 1940s³⁹⁵

ORPHA's community involvement and the Oak Ridge History Museum are not the only recent cases of local stakeholders taking matters into their own hands. Those caring for the Emery Road Rock Pillar Bridge are another such example. The Emery Road has a significant history dating back to the 1780s when many North Carolinians travelled through East Tennessee en route to Nashville. A circa 1900 rock pillar bridge on

³⁹⁵ Ed Westcott, photograph, *Charlotte & Cheyenne Hall Oak Ridge 1940s*, U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/50019171761/in/photostream/>.

the old road remains along the Oak Ridge Turnpike near Robertsville Road in walking distance to the Oak Ridge History Museum. Many of the patrons who have volunteered their time and efforts at the museum have been also involved in preserving the bridge which served as part of the main thoroughfare for pre-Oak Ridge residents. Clean-up efforts from groups like Friends of the Historic Emery Road, ORHPA, Keep Anderson County Beautiful, and local Boy Scouts have been coordinated with the city for years and prove that stakeholders in Oak Ridge are interested in local history beyond the Manhattan Project-era.³⁹⁶ The preservation needs of the bridge likewise suggest that there is still work to be done.

³⁹⁶ John Huotari, “Volunteers Cleaning Up Historic Emery Road on Saturday,” *Oak Ridge Today*, April 27, 2018, <https://oakridgetoday.com/2018/04/27/volunteers-cleaning-historic-emery-road-saturday/>.



Figure 4.8: A side view of the Emery Road Rock Pillar Bridge shows the bridge's unstable retaining wall slowly being pushed into the creek. Friends of the Historic Emery Road fear the bridge's continued deterioration if preservation needs are not addressed.³⁹⁷

Just as ORHPA and Friends of the Historic Emery Road work to preserve historic landscapes, other groups in Oak Ridge seek to preserve the memories of pre-war life. Community reunions for Robertsville have stopped; however, New Bethel descendants still meet during Memorial Day weekend and an annual gathering in Wheat still draws a

³⁹⁷ Photograph by author, February 16, 2019, Oak Ridge, TN.

crowd each October.³⁹⁸ Sisters Dixie Mason and Annabelle Harvey, who are relatives of Wheat's Browder, Gallaher, and Arnold families, have attended the gatherings each year for as long as they can recall. Mason, who was born in 1938, described the annual event as "a family reunion" where community members set up tents and tables for a potluck dinner at George Jones Memorial Baptist Church. Crowds would come and go before lunch, listen to a guest speaker, and pause in respect as the names of living Wheat School graduates were read aloud. Mason remembers the reunions drawing much larger crowds when she was a child, but people still come each year from near and far to fellowship with one another and look at community memorabilia, and to remember Wheat.³⁹⁹

Oak Ridge History and the National Park Service

From the 1970s to the 2000s, local, independent entities participated in sharing the story of Oak Ridge. However, historical interpretation continues to shift, becoming more streamlined and at times, unfortunately, less diverse as a national, World War II-era focus returns to historical organizations in the city. The National Park Service's involvement in Oak Ridge has been a catalyst for this change.

As part of a heritage tourism plan in 2007, Laura Holder of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and Dr. Carroll Van West, Director of the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, urged leaders in Oak Ridge to "[e]valuate the benefits and challenges associated with the process necessary to obtain a National Park Service

³⁹⁸ D. Ray Smith, interview by author, February 16, 2019, Oak Ridge, TN.

³⁹⁹ Dixie Mason, Interview by author, August 7, 2020, Kingston, TN.

designation and determine if this strategy will help Oak Ridge.”⁴⁰⁰ Stakeholders in Oak Ridge and around the country eventually did just that as they lobbied Congress for years regarding NPS involvement at Manhattan Project sites.

In 2012, Heather McClenahan, the Executive Director of the Los Alamos Historical Society, testified during a congressional hearing to support the establishment of Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Some critics have said that a national park dedicated to the Manhattan Project will glorify the atom bomb or create a theme park for weapons of mass destruction. I disagree. I have never visited a national park that was anything like a Disneyland. In fact, the National Park Service, of all government agencies, is the most trusted for telling complete stories: the good, the bad, the painful, and the poignant. Parks and monuments that commemorate battles or massacres do not celebrate ugly moments in American history. They teach us about them, and they help us, as a Nation, to reflect and learn.⁴⁰¹

McClenahan, along with others who testified before Congress like Oak Ridge’s Ray Smith, noted the importance of partnerships, the economic impact of NPS, and what a national park could mean in terms of jobs, tourism, and education.

In December 2014, after two unsuccessful attempts, the U.S. Congress passed a bill creating the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The new park, established in November 2015, was one-of-a-kind in that it is located in three states: Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Hanford, Washington; and Los Alamos, New Mexico. Another unique feature

⁴⁰⁰ *Creating the Living Story of ‘The Secret City’: A Heritage Tourism Plan to Significantly Expand Oak Ridge Annual Visitations* (Murfreesboro, TN: MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, June 2007): 6; D. Ray Smith, ‘Heritage Tourism, Historic Preservation, and Economic Growth,’ *Oak Ridger*, November 13, 2012, <https://www.oakridger.com/article/20121113/NEWS/121119959>.

⁴⁰¹ *Hearing before the Committee on Natural Resources*, HR 5987, Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act, 112th Cong., 2d sess., June 28, 2012, 18.

of the park is the National Park Service's relationship with the Department of Energy that "ensure[s] the public access, safety, environmental remediation, and historic preservation of its Manhattan Project properties," while NPS interprets the sites.⁴⁰²

In terms of heritage tourism, NPS involvement in Oak Ridge has brought about several positive transformations. The presence of recognizable NPS signage in city has publicized the historic sites enough to account for an increase in visitors as well as online traffic on NPS webpages. However, as the National Park Service seeks to streamline the story of the Manhattan Project to connect America's atomic cities under an umbrella of nuclear science and technology, individual stories in Oak Ridge—as surely in Hanford and Los Alamos—are being forgotten. Subsequently, despite the benefits of NPS's contributions in Oak Ridge, the park has also received criticism and caused frustration among some local historians and advocates of local history and preservation.

In a 2009 PBS documentary entitled *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, environmental historian William Cronon explained,

...[T]he paradox of local resistance to the creation of national parks is a deep, deep, paradox in American ideas of democracy because on the one hand, one of our visions is that people in a local place are the ones who best understand that place, are the ones who have its interests most at heart, and who really, ideally, ought to be the ones who vote about what should happen to that land, just as on a local school board. And yet it is also true that these national parks are not in the local place that they are in. They are in the nation. They stand for the nation, and so by that understanding, the democratic institutions that should defend them are not at the local level but at the level of the nation, and as tension between federal

⁴⁰² "Congress Passes Manhattan Project National Historical Park Act," Atomic Heritage Foundation, December 12, 2014, <https://www.atomicheritage.org/article/congress-passes-manhattan-project-national-historical-park-act>.

control of our democracy and local control of our democracy is hard wired into what we think democracy is.⁴⁰³

When history is left in the hands of distant figures, though they may be highly trained professionals with all the right intentions, local understanding of historic sites change. It is up to local groups and individual stakeholders to determine whether having a national entity like the parks service is worth the risk of altering the narrative. Thus, in Oak Ridge, many locals have taken storytelling into their own hands at places like the Oak Ridge History Museum.

The omission of local stories from historical interpretation usually occurs despite the best efforts of those who work at historic sites. For example, individuals like Ranger Darryl Long are working diligently to research and preserve local stories in Oak Ridge, but often NPS officials who are in national leadership positions are in command of overall historical interpretation. This command structure is especially true of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park as NPS works to create a cohesive storyline between three unique sites.

I had the chance to talk with Ranger Long in October 2020 when he explained the complexities of running a multi-site park. I asked specifically about pre-Oak Ridge communities and how NPS was interpreting displacement. Ranger Long described different views felt by officials in Hanford and Los Alamos who wanted a greater focus

⁴⁰³ William Cronon, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, Episode 4: Going Home (Arlington, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, 2009), https://search.alexanderstreet.com/preview/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C2362503.

on the displacement of American Indians, thus encouraging those in Oak Ridge to do the same. However, since the federal government displaced Cherokee Indians from the region over a century before the Manhattan Project was established, there has been opposition to this storyline. Instead, those at the Oak Ridge park site would prefer to focus on communities that were displaced in 1942 and 1943. Ranger Long and others have successfully shared the history of some displaced communities in Oak Ridge by inviting the public to Ranger Talks in Wheat. Still, the fight to include local history, especially of the pre-Manhattan Project-era, remains difficult.⁴⁰⁴

Other Neglected Historical Narratives: Modern-Day Scarboro

With pressure to fit within national narratives and present the federal government and atomic energy in a positive light, local history—especially that of displaced communities where a historical landscape is no longer extant—is challenging. But what is even more upsetting is the omitted local history that *could* be interpreted at historic sites in Oak Ridge if only it aligned with the NPS’s outline for the park. Besides the narratives of displacement that are critical to understanding Oak Ridge in its entirety, post-World War II local history is often overshadowed. This includes the extraordinary history of Oak Ridge’s black community, Scarboro.

Prior to the Manhattan Project-era, the Oak Ridge region was home to few African Americans. The black population grew as federal jobs attracted workers from

⁴⁰⁴ Darryl Long, interview by author, October 3, 2020, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Tennessee and surrounding states. Despite African Americans being relegated to entry-level or menial positions, the pay rate was still an increase for most who relocated to Oak Ridge. During World War II, African Americans were not permitted to bring their families or even live with their spouses. The large majority lived with three roommates in segregated hutments, which were essentially 16' by 16' wooden boxes without screened windows, running water, or electricity.



Figure 4.9: African American men and women lived in different “pens” or groups of hutments that were sectioned off by a fence.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁵ “Manhattan Project National Historical Park: African American Hutments,” National Park Service, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.nps.gov/places/african-american-hutments.htm?utm_source=place&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=experience_more&utm_content=small.

Following public backlash after World War II, federal administrators finally addressed the unequal treatment of blacks in Oak Ridge. In 1947, Arizona and Robert Officer, a married African American couple, were hired as Scarboro School's first principal and teacher, respectively. Several volunteer teachers joined the Officers who educated black students in Oak Ridge before the battle for school desegregation was won. The school building that once served the pre-war community of Scarboro was thus transformed into an all-black elementary school for first through eighth graders. Older black students were bused to Austin High School in Knoxville.⁴⁰⁶



Figures 4.10 and 4.11: Scarboro Girls and Boys Basketball Teams, 1948⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Rose Weaver, "Scarboro: Education Was the Fabric of the Community," *The Courier News*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.mycouriernews.com/articles/2019/03/2145/scarboro-education-was-the-fabric-of-the-community>.

⁴⁰⁷ Ed Westcott, photograph 4266, *Scarboro Girls Basketball Team, Oak Ridge*, January 1948, U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/7139394403/in/album-72157674674051596/>; Ed Westcott, photograph 4277, *Scarboro Boys Basketball Team, Oak Ridge*, January 1948, U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/doe-oakridge/7139394455/in/album-72157674674051596/>.

In 1950, Oak Ridge replaced wartime hutments by establishing a segregated community within the city. With street names indicating well-known HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities), Scarboro Village, as it was called, was located in Gamble Valley, not in the prewar community of Scarboro which was home to rural white families prior to their displacement.⁴⁰⁸ A new, segregated school was established at Gamble Valley's former all-white school and was renamed Scarboro School. Volunteer teachers worked to expand grade levels from kindergarten to night classes for adult education.⁴⁰⁹

Following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Atomic Energy Commission (which was in charge of Oak Ridge's schools at the time) chose to begin desegregating schools in the city. Scarboro's eldest students integrated white schools, an effort that came both earlier and with more success than at other schools like nearby Clinton High where violence erupted. In the fall of 1955, forty black students attended Oak Ridge High School and an additional forty-five went to Robertsville Junior High. Teacher George Walker explained that "Oak Ridge was the first system in the Deep

⁴⁰⁸ 1940 U.S. Census, Anderson County, Tennessee, Enumeration District 1-21, Civil District 14: Scarboro, (Ancestry.com), accessed March 7, 2021, NARA T627, 4,643 rolls; <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/m-t0627-03871-00707?ssrc=&backlabel=Return>.

⁴⁰⁹ Nancy Prince, "The Scarboro Story: Oak Ridge's Own Particular Busing to Achieve Racial Balance," *Oak Ridger*, February 23, 1977, 1; Tommie Stevens, "The First Buses: A Good Day in May '67," *Oak Ridger*, February 23, 1977, 1; D. Ray Smith, "A 1950s Letter and the Integration of Area Schools," *Oak Ridger*, January 21, 2011, <https://www.oakridger.com/article/20110121/NEWS/301219984>.

South to integrate ... and was used as a model for other systems in the south.”⁴¹⁰

Integration in Oak Ridge began with the “Oak Ridge 85” but similar to other desegregation stories, a city where citizens were treated equally required decades of hard-fought battles led by community activists like Elizabeth and Robert Peelle, and many other church groups, business leaders, and politicians.⁴¹¹

Today in Oak Ridge, Scarboro is still home to a vibrant black neighborhood with schools, a community center, and four churches. The incredible story of Scarboro is unique, but like the way pre-1942 histories have been disregarded and overshadowed by national narratives, science, and atomic energy, Oak Ridge’s local black history often goes unshared. This omission of local history has occurred despite urges from public historians to include it as part of the city’s heritage tourism.⁴¹² In recent years, many community members have sought to change this and to better publicize local black history. Think of the impact sharing this story could have if NPS adopted a holistic approach to communicating Oak Ridge’s past instead of relegating Scarboro to stand-alone, traveling exhibits displayed only for Black History Month.

On a positive note, change is happening. After a 2020 documentary entitled “The Secret in Scarboro” was created, the “Oak Ridge 85” became a subject in both local and

⁴¹⁰ Nancy Prince, “The Scarboro Story: Oak Ridge’s Own Particular Busing to Achieve Racial Balance,” 9.

⁴¹¹ Elizabeth Peelle, “Oral History of Elizabeth Peelle,” interview by Keith McDaniel, February 23, 2010, Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/46>.

⁴¹² *Creating the Living Story of ‘The Secret City’: A Heritage Tourism Plan to Significantly Expand Oak Ridge Annual Visitations* (Murfreesboro, TN: MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, June 2007).

national press.⁴¹³ In 2021, the Tennessee Historical Commission approved two historical markers commemorating the “Oak Ridge 85” to be installed at Oak Ridge High School and Robertsville Middle School. Museums like AMSE and the Oak Ridge History Museum have also generated exhibits to highlight local black history.⁴¹⁴ And, while science and technology are naturally still the primary focus of AMSE and the K-25 History Center, local history is steadily appearing in public programming and driving tours of the area.

Local Autonomy in Historical Interpretation

Incorporating local history while maintaining a National Park Service status presents challenges. Recently, however, there has been a pendulum swing regarding local versus national roles at some of Oak Ridge’s historical organizations. On March 1, 2021, the AMSE Foundation, a non-profit founded in 1996 to play a supportive role in the museum’s programming, formally took charge of both AMSE and the K-25 History Center.⁴¹⁵ While the Department of Energy (DOE) will still aid the museums, the AMSE

⁴¹³ Yvonne Thomas and Elizabeth Sims, “The Secret in Scarboro: The Oak Ridge 85,” *WBIR 10 News*, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.wbir.com/article/news/history/the-secret-in-scarboro-the-oak-ridge-85/51-2a202693-2ac8-4318-b162-10ef5e43972c>; Bill Chappell, “Oak Ridge, Tenn., Will Teach History of Its Black Students Who Helped End Segregation,” *NPR*, February 23, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/23/970555503/oak-ridge-tenn-will-teach-history-of-its-black-students-who-helped-end-segregati>.

⁴¹⁴ “Black History Month AMSE,” American Museum of Science and Energy, February 24, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_b6LRynFwk&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2Tnmhd8Bn4d2-BgXKUjyQWyUvNZOm5n1Y_XGdyolXoMXjuw1L6_nllGss.

⁴¹⁵ Alan Lowe, “AMSE DOE Transition,” American Museum of Science and Energy, March 1, 2021, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48G1EehPJBE>.

Foundation will be responsible for “daily operations, mission advancement, fundraising, collections management, and developing partnerships.”⁴¹⁶ This shifts autonomy back into the hands of local leaders like Alan Lowe, Director of the K-25 History Center and AMSE. Though the sites primarily focus on science and technology, local stories are much more likely to be acknowledged due to the adjustments in management.

For instance, the K-25 Overlook (a visitors center on the Oak Ridge Turnpike) includes an exhibit on Wheat, and the displacement that occurred before the gaseous diffusion plant was constructed in 1944, as does the new K-25 History Center, which celebrated its grand opening in February 2020. DOE historian Steve Goodpasture carried out much of the research for the new museum exhibit. Though Goodpasture represents a federal agency, his insistence on honoring the displaced is no doubt connected to the close relationships he has with several Wheat descendants. Goodpasture’s work on the Wheat exhibit is an example of public history done right, with local input. The History Center was forced to close almost immediately after it opened due to the coronavirus pandemic, but upon the museum’s reopening visitors will be able to record their own oral histories there. Perhaps seeing the exhibit on Wheat will spark those with pre-atomic connections to the area to share their stories.

⁴¹⁶ “American Museum of Science and Energy Foundation Signs Cooperative Agreement with U.S. Department of Energy,” AMSE Foundation, February 2021, https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Cooperative-Agreement-signed-between-AMSE-Foundation-and-U-S--Department-of-Energy.html?soid=1131369118148&aid=YxUh0WsVu3k&fbclid=IwAR0_Ye4rDZ8I14_-35EXZEeLJbvDNUVHsk0QqfAX7u0uJv-WQEXnZZUZ9CI.



Figure 4.12: The K-25 History Center briefly opened in February 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic. A reopen date for the history center, as well as AMSE and the Oak Ridge History Museum, is yet to be determined.⁴¹⁷

Civic Engagement: Turning Local History into Public History

In August 2017, (ten years after MTSU’s Center for Historic Preservation’s original recommendations) CHP Program Manager Dr. Lydia Simpson visited Oak Ridge to discuss historic preservation with the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association. Simpson described historic preservation as “the identification, evaluation, conservation, and use of historic properties so they will continue to play integral, living

⁴¹⁷ Photograph by author, March 15, 2021, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

roles in communities.”⁴¹⁸ When discussing Oak Ridge’s historic assets and how they might be used for economic development. Simpson talked with a room full of community members:

Over the course of the conversation, attendees revealed a common feeling that the community’s history was no longer being effectively conveyed to younger generations, as well as a sense of grief over demolished structures and the changing landscape. Some participants also confessed that the controversial history of the site and its role in developing nuclear weaponry sometimes made Oak Ridge difficult to talk about with outsiders. Still others expressed the desire to promote more than just the Manhattan Project ...⁴¹⁹

Interpreting controversial history, like America’s use of atomic weaponry against Japan, can be difficult. Historian Kathryn Leann Harris notes that in a 2009 museum exhibit called “The Oak Ridge Story,” the DOE and AMSE “use[d] the *innocent victor* method to promote Oak Ridge’s atomic bomb involvement without addressing the problematic nuclear legacy.” Harris describes the *innocent victor* as a “paradigm that project[s] the local WWII history through the lens of a courageous workforce who unknowingly produced a weapon of mass destruction to end the war.” Most of Oak Ridge’s museums and historical organizations would not exist without stories of nuclear advancement. Thus, addressing the controversy of atomic bombs without deterring

⁴¹⁸ Lydia Simpson, as quoted in D. Ray Smith, “Historic Preservationist Lydia Simpson Visits Oak Ridge,” *Oak Ridger*, January 19, 2018, <https://www.oakridger.com/news/20180119/historically-speaking-historic-preservationist-lydia-simpson-visits-oak-ridge>.

⁴¹⁹ Lydia Simpson, “Open Secrets: Preserving a Controversial Past in Oak Ridge, Tennessee,” *Southern Rambles with the Center for Historic Preservation* (blog), *MTSU Center for Historic Preservation*, September 13, 2017, <https://chpblog.org/2017/09/13/open-secrets-preserving-a-controversial-past-in-oak-ridge-tennessee/>.

visitors was a difficult but necessary path forward that has kept science and nuclear technology at the forefront of historical interpretation.

Unfortunately, other portions of Oak Ridge's past—like the controversial displacement of pre-atomic communities and unfair treatment of black citizens both during and after the war—have been omitted more easily from panel text in museums or only given a brief mention during local history presentations. Besides the obvious lack of a full historical narrative, the harm in such omissions perpetuates falsities not only about World War II and patriotism, but more importantly it oversimplifies a story from which current visitors and students could learn. Socially and politically speaking, museums, classrooms, and historic sites are not neutral places (despite the best efforts of educators and public historians). Therefore, for these places to best serve the public, those with decision-making power must actively seek ways to include diverse perspectives, address controversy, and share truthful stories even when they complicate interpretation.

In her Master's thesis, Harris notes that “[e]stablished public history theory suggests that the official and vernacular voices form a dichotomous relationship when interpreting the historical narrative.”⁴²⁰ If a fuller story of Oak Ridge's history is to emerge, professional historians in the area must seek out local voices and ensure that stakeholders, such as the descendants of pre-Oak Ridgers or members of the modern Scarboro community, are given a chance to participate in sharing the city's history. Thanks to local leaders, this type of civic engagement is occurring in Oak Ridge within

⁴²⁰ Kathryn Leann Harris, “Innocent Victors: Atomic Identity at the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge, Tennessee” (master's thesis, University of Massachusetts Boston, December 2018), iv.

historical organizations like the Oak Ridge History Museum, the New Hope Center at Y-12, the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association, the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, the City of Oak Ridge Library, the K-25 History Center, AMSE, and the Oak Ridge Children's Museum which currently houses the National Park Service offices. For successful historic interpretation to be maintained, however, these entities should focus on working together, locally, to form an inclusive historic narrative to share with the public.

The type of inclusive, honest history that emerges when partnerships among historical organizations are nurtured can lead not only to better history, but also increased interest in heritage tourism and preservation. In the future, decisions must be made about what to preserve, not only regarding pre-atomic history, but also buildings and structures from the World War II-era. The perceived importance of various histories is made evident by what people work to save—civic engagement is critical to preservation. Let us hope that as preservation advocates in Oak Ridge continue the endeavors they began decades ago, that pre-1942 history, as well as other local history that has been overshadowed by national and international narratives, will be seen as an integral part of the city's story and a piece of Oak Ridge's historic landscape that is worth safeguarding.

SECTION III: ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PRESENT

CHAPTER V: PUBLIC HISTORY AND THE USE OF LOCAL PRIMARY SOURCES IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

The goal of public historians and humanities educators, and more specifically social studies teachers, are intertwined and often very similar. The shared goal is to create publics—be they students, museum visitors, or armchair historians—that are more curious, willing to engage with and learn from historical inquiry, and that ultimately become better informed decisions makers, citizens, and consumers of history.

Public historians meet audiences where they go to learn, and their publics typically come with perspectives or background knowledge that informs their view of historical events and figures. Public historians introduce primary sources for their dialogues about the significance of a person, place, or event. Placed in context with pertinent scholarship, the documents and the discussion they provoke may raise questions, create context, share multifaceted viewpoints, and sometimes combat prejudices and misinformation.

In contrast, though not always, secondary classrooms provide teachers with a *tabula rasa* for encouraging historical inquiry among students. While secondary students certainly arrive at school with their own set of preconceived notions about history, the classroom can be used as a controlled laboratory of sorts—a place that can be sheltered from outside opinions, news media, and present-day issues. That is not to say that these influencers do not exist; rather, that teachers are able to control conversations and curate sources to create an equitable exchange of ideas. When enacted successfully, parameters that allow for thinking and discussion in the classroom produce a unique learning

environment that is nearly impossible to replicate at historic sites and in other educational spaces. Classroom teachers, then, have a captive audience— an exclusive opportunity to diminish distractions and allow students to grapple with difficult questions while using the past as their guide. Few other places provide the shelter for students to hear diverse perspectives and learn to defend their own, free from societal pressures and without real-life consequences.

The original plan for this chapter was a site-based lesson plan for the K-25 History Center, a museum located at the former gaseous diffusion plant's site on Highway 58 in Oak Ridge, where uranium was once enriched to construct the atomic bomb, Little Boy, during World War II. The years-long demolition of K-25 began in December 2008.⁴²¹ While the massive U-shaped building, and now four other plants that were constructed from 1945-1955, are gone, visitors can still see K-25's footprint which measures almost a mile in length. Near the footprint, the new K-25 History Center

⁴²¹ "K-25, Once World's Largest Building, Demolished," *The Knoxville News Sentinel*, December 21, 2013, <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/local/story/2013/dec/21/k-25-once-worlds-largest-building-demolished/127201/>; U.S. Department of Energy, "Final Load of Debris Shipped from K-25 Building Demolition Project," March 11, 2014, <https://www.energy.gov/ore/ore/articles/final-load-debris-shipped-k-25-building-demolition-project>; U.S. Department of Energy, "EM Marks Another Building Demolition at Oak Ridge," February 28, 2017, <https://www.energy.gov/em/articles/em-marks-another-building-demolition-oak-ridge>.

celebrated its grand opening in February 2020.⁴²² However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the center closed the following month.⁴²³

The museum was closed until the end of May 2021, so I decided to create a lesson plan that could be completed regardless of location and one that could be easily adapted for online schooling. While being able to visit the site where K-25 once stood is a powerful learning experience, creating a lesson plan that has broader access potential serves students well, especially given the current health and economic circumstances. A site-based lesson plan is valuable, but only useful to those with the means to travel to the site. That said, if possible, a future visit to the K-25 History Center would create an appropriate extension activity for this in-class or virtual lesson plan.

Moreover, this discussion and lesson plan address the overall public history effort to study the World War II home front. In its September 2020 newsletter, the National Council of Public History announced its collaboration with the National Park Service for the American World War II Heritage Cities program. The Council and the Park Service are particularly interested in updating “questions prompted by contemporary research” about the “transformative effects of World War II on the nation’s social, cultural, and political landscapes.”⁴²⁴ Then, in 2021, the NPS contracted with Dr. Carroll Van West at

⁴²² U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Environmental Management, “Oak Ridge Opens K-25 History Center to Preserve Site’s Rich History,” March 3, 2020, <https://www.energy.gov/em/articles/oak-ridge-opens-k-25-history-center-preserve-site-s-rich-history>.

⁴²³ John Huotari, “Museums, National Park Center Closed,” *Oak Ridge Today*, March 18, 2020, <https://oakridgetoday.com/2020/03/18/museums-national-park-center-closed/>.

⁴²⁴ Lisa Baer, “NCPH and NPS Unite for a Contemporary Examination of the US World War II Home Front” *Public History News*, 40, no. 4 (September 2020): 1,

the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation to create a history book on the World War II home front, centered on NPS units that preserve that story. The lesson will introduce students to the kinds of primary sources and methods public historians use when they talk about the home front.

The goal for this chapter’s lesson plan, “Displacement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee,”⁴²⁵ is for students to understand more fully the immediate and lasting impact of the Manhattan Project by realizing the sacrifice of Oak Ridge’s dispossessed residents through oral histories, photographs, and financial records.⁴²⁶ The lesson incorporates local history, or what historian Robert Butchart refers to as “nearby history ... with which we are already familiar to some extent, or in which we have some immediate, almost intrinsic interest.” Butchart asserts that, “studying nearby history is the most natural and logical way for us to understand the broader historical currents of our society and our world.”⁴²⁷ So, after completing the lesson’s objectives, students will be able to answer these broader investigative questions: In what situations should national security eclipse individual and property rights? And, was the federal government justified in displacing residents to create the “Secret City” of Oak Ridge? In short, the lesson utilizes local primary sources to create interest and accessibility for students before connecting what is familiar to them to much larger historical events and issues that are still faced in the

<https://ncph.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-September-Newsletter-Final-Web.pdf>.

⁴²⁵ Colbi Layne Hogan, “Lesson Plan: Displacement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee,” *Teaching with Primary Sources*—Middle Tennessee State University, 2020, https://library.mtsu.edu/ld.php?content_id=59835093.

⁴²⁶ See lesson materials in Appendix.

⁴²⁷ Butchart, *Local Schools: Exploring Their History*, 5.

modern era. It also provides strategies to bring in a plurality of voices, that are often outshone, to bring about a fuller understanding of Oak Ridge's impact at home and abroad during World War II.

The uniqueness of the Oak Ridge story makes it a powerful example of how local history can be used to prompt larger societal questions. When employed appropriately, details about Oak Ridge's creation and importance beg an array of questions about governmental systems, war, fairness and justice, the role of the federal government, and civil rights. It also provides teachers with an opportunity to voice opposing viewpoints during discussions about other issues—such as eminent domain, the logistics of displacement, property ownership, legal rights, and marginalized groups in America—and encourage students to think deeply and practice historical and geographical awareness.

Professors John W. Saye and Thomas Brush advocate the use of problem-based historical inquiry and acknowledge that significant scaffolding and “spontaneous support from the teacher” is needed to ensure its success in the classroom.⁴²⁸ There is a learning curve for analyzing historical issues and leveraging the various opinions and outcomes associated with them to make better informed decisions about problems that students will encounter in their own lives. Educators should be prepared to explain the context of historical events, model what questions should be asked of primary sources, and provide

⁴²⁸ John W. Saye and Thomas Brush, “Promoting Civic Competence Through Problem-Based History Learning Experiments,” in *Civic Learning in Teacher Education* (The Social Studies Development Center of Indiana University in Association with Civitas: An International Civic Education Exchange Program, 2004), 133.

examples of multiple perspectives. “[B]y examining problematic issues as they have arisen in the past, students will gain certain habits of mind that will serve them well in making decisions about similar issues in the present and the future.”⁴²⁹ To be sure, these methods of problem-based teaching and the incorporation of local history can be used in multiple settings: by tour guides at historic sites, in museums, and to introduce visitors and residents of all ages to historical topics. For this chapter, however, I will focus on how to best use local sources to encourage historical inquiry in a high school classroom setting.

Ask any secondary school teacher about the challenges they face in the classroom, and most all of them will agree that student engagement nears the top of the list. Tapping into the interests of teenagers can be especially difficult for those who teach humanities courses. Often students do not see the value in studying history because they do not recognize how it is relevant to the present era, much less their own lives. They cannot picture themselves in stories of the past and therefore are unable to relate to them. This lack of connection and interest is especially true for topics of national or international history. One way to improve student engagement is by using local history to introduce larger topics. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot explains it this way: “History [does] not need to be mine in order to engage me. It just need[s] to relate to someone, anyone. It [can] not just be The Past. It [has] to be someone’s past.”⁴³⁰

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 128.

⁴³⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 142.

Likewise, City of Oak Ridge historian Ray Smith describes how he uses local folklore to engage his audiences during city tours and speaking engagements:

Often visitors are hesitant to ask questions as they do not want to appear to lack knowledge of Oak Ridge, yet they rarely know very much except the name and that there is some attachment to the atomic bomb. To get them to listen, [the John Hendrix] story seems to bring the conversation to something they can ask questions about or can more easily discuss than the technical aspects of what it takes to make an atomic bomb.⁴³¹

The legend of John Hendrix, which might be utilized as a lesson introduction by classroom teachers in a similar manner to Ray Smith's usage, was first published on November 2, 1944, in the local newspaper, the *Oak Ridge Journal*. Concerned about secrecy, the Army chose to publicize the story only after local curiosity spiked. The article's author, journal editor Richard "Dick" Gehman, used the pseudonym Joe Oakes.⁴³² Oakes admits:, "There is no written proof that John Hendrix actually made these predictions, no Hagiographa, no Domesday book, no local book of Morman [sic]. He never bothered to write them down, but simply told them to everyone he knew and met. They have survived until they now constitute a local legend."⁴³³ His disclaimer raises the question: is the story a local legend or just a good story well told by a newspaperman? Journalist June Adamson, who moved to Oak Ridge in 1943, says she is

⁴³¹ David Ray Smith, Introduction to *John Hendrix Story*, (self-pub., David Ray Smith, 2009), Google Books.

⁴³² Freeman, *Longing for the Bomb*, 28.

⁴³³ Joe Oakes, "John Hendrix, Prophet of Oak Ridge, Predicted Project and Railroad More than 40 Years Ago!" *Oak Ridge Journal*, November 2, 1944, as quoted in D. Ray Smith, "John Hendrix Prophecy," *Oak Ridger*, May 30, 2006, <http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2006/5-30-06%20Joe%20Oakes%20article%20on%20John%20Hendrix.pdf>.

“not sure [the Hendrix story] isn’t pure bullshit.” In her 2003 interview for the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History, Adamson describes how “journalists made hay out of it” and that if she herself was in their position she might have used the legend in the same manner. While calling the myth “hogwash” and noting that “unfortunately we will never know” if it is true; Adamson says, “it’s a good story,” nonetheless.⁴³⁴

Hendrix, who was known to his neighbors as “Uncle John” and is now often called “The Prophet of Oak Ridge,” was born in 1865. He was an eccentric man who owned a fifteen-acre farm in Bear Creek Valley, near the modern-day Y-12 plant. He and his wife, Julia Ann Griffith, married on April 29, 1888, and had five children. In 1900, their two-year old daughter, Ethel, died of diphtheria, a tragedy that Julia blamed on John because he had disciplined her the day before.⁴³⁵ After Ethel’s death, Julia Hendrix left John and took their three older daughters to stay with her widowed mother in Morgan County, Tennessee, before permanently relocating to Camden, Arkansas.⁴³⁶ As the story goes, John Hendrix became devoutly religious after experiencing this loss.⁴³⁷ He listened to a voice that told him “to sleep with [his] head on the ground for forty nights” so that he

⁴³⁴ June Adamson, interview by Keith McDaniel, April 15, 2003, Secret City Film Collection, City of Oak Ridge Public Library, <https://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15388coll1/id/835/rec/4>.

⁴³⁵ Ray Smith, “A Nuclear Family: Episode 1 – I’ve Seen It,” Y-12 National Security Complex, video, <https://www.y12.doe.gov/library/video/nuclear-family-episode-1-%E2%80%93-i%E2%80%99ve-seen-it-captioned>.

⁴³⁶ Dennis Aslinger, “Hendrix Family History,” email message to author, July 13, 2020. Dennis Aslinger, the grandson of Curt Hendrix and great-grandson of John Hendrix, has researched and written an extensive family history.

⁴³⁷ Ray Smith, “A Nuclear Family: Episode 1 – I’ve Seen It.”

“would be shown visions of what the future holds for this land.”⁴³⁸ Hendrix endured the elements, even having his hair frozen to the ground at one point, and relied on the kindness of a neighbor to bring him blankets and food during his time in the wilderness.

According to family tradition, Hendrix told locals what he had seen after he awoke:

Bear Creek Valley some day will be filled with great buildings and factories, and they will help toward winning the greatest war that ever will be. And there will be a city on Black Oak Ridge. The center of authority will be on a spot that is middleway between Sevier Tadlock’s farm and Joe Pyatt’s place. A railroad spur will branch off the main L&N line and run down toward Robertsville, and then it will branch off and turn toward Scarboro. It will serve the great city I saw in my vision. Big engines will dig big ditches and thousands of people will be running to and fro. They will be building things, and there will be great noise and confusion, and the earth will shake. I’ve seen it; it’s coming.⁴³⁹

At the turn of the twentieth century, these predictions sounded bizarre. Anderson County’s total population in 1900 was just 17,634, and an overwhelming majority of people lived on rural farms, isolated from anything that resembled the bustling city Hendrix described.⁴⁴⁰ Thus his predictions caused some locals to view Hendrix as unstable, but he continued repeating the details of his visions about Oak Ridge—though he did not call the city by name— as well as other prophecies about airplanes, railroads, and limestone rocks in his farm’s fields that would be used for building materials. In 1908, Hendrix married Martha Jane Whitefield Gregory and the couple had one child,

⁴³⁸ George O. Robinson, Jr., *The Oak Ridge Story* (Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1950), 18.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁴⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, William C. Hunt, “Population: Tennessee, Table 1: Area and Population of Counties: 1850 to 1920,” *Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Bulletin*, 5.

Curtis Allen Hendrix.⁴⁴¹ At age forty-nine, on June 2, 1915, John Hendrix died of tuberculosis, but his visions are still discussed today. Much to the surprise of his neighbors, nearly all that Hendrix is said to have predicted about Oak Ridge came to fruition in 1942, nearly thirty years after his death.⁴⁴² As Ray Smith describes in a Y-12 documentary, these seemingly correct predictions changed the way some people felt about John Hendrix, and his reputation as “The Prophet of Oak Ridge” grew:

[I]n 1942, when the Manhattan Project came in here, the first shovel full of dirt they dug was right between Pyatt’s place and Tadlock’s farm. That’s where they built the Administration Building. That’s where the Federal Office Building is today. That city on Black Oak Ridge is called Oak Ridge. That railroad spur runs right down by his property in Hendrix Creek subdivision off Lafayette Avenue, named for him. And of course, Y-12 is where the uranium was separated for Little Boy, the first atomic bomb ever used in warfare that did help win World War II.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Dennis Aslinger, “Hendrix Family History,” email message to author, July 13, 2020.

⁴⁴² State of Tennessee, State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, “Certificate of Death: John Hendrix,” June 2, 1915, Reg. Dist. No. 40108, File No. 3, Informant: Lishe Hendrix, Oliver Springs, TN.

⁴⁴³ Ray Smith, “A Nuclear Family: Episode 1 – I’ve Seen It.”



Figure 5.1: Marked as “D-349-1” in the Kingston Demolition Range photos. This dwelling was the home of Martha Jane Hendrix, John Hendrix’s second wife, who lived next door to their son, Curtis Allen Hendrix, at the time of their 1942 displacement.⁴⁴⁴

Regardless of whether individuals believe the legend surrounding John Hendrix’s prophecy, the story continues to be shared by Hendrix’s descendants and still draws the attention of various audiences. In the same way that Ray Smith and other historians have used this story to introduce Oak Ridge, teachers can utilize interesting local history and folklore to initially engage students in the classroom. In so using the Hendrix myth, it is important for public historians and teachers to distinguish between fact and folklore, a genre whose purpose is not necessarily to convey realities.

⁴⁴⁴ Ray Smith, “John Hendrix- Details,” accessed August 30, 2020, <http://smithdray.tripod.com/or/johnhendrixdetails.htm>.

Hendrix’s prophecy is a successful icebreaker, but it should not be used to overly simplify the creation of Oak Ridge or generalize those who were displaced from pre-Oak Ridge communities. To this point, sociologist Lindsey A. Freeman argues that discussing Oak Ridge as a concept ordained by God, and publicized through a prophet, creates a sense of inevitability—what she refers to as “atomic manifest destiny”—that whitewashes the city’s difficult nuclear history and replaces the story of the displaced with a caricature.⁴⁴⁵ The Hendrix legend provides a link between rural Appalachia and the modern, often futuristic portrayal of Oak Ridge, but it insulates displaced communities into a time and place—the turn of the century—that does not accurately depict the lives of pre-war residents in 1942. Freeman observes that while pre-war citizens are often portrayed as hillbillies “believing in mystics and visions,” it is actually Oak Ridgers, or post-1942 residents, “who utilize the myth of John Hendrix to justify their place in the landscape.”⁴⁴⁶

Focusing on mythic storytelling can mute “dissenting voices, counter-memories, and alternative histories,” which are plenty in the case of Oak Ridge’s pre-war communities.⁴⁴⁷ By contrast, fact-based stories of residents, Hendrix’s descendants and relatives included, some of which are referenced in this chapter’s lesson plan, can enhance historical inquiry without underplaying the truth which is interesting enough alone. Two of the primary sources I use in the “Displacement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee” lesson plan are directly related to John Hendrix’s family, thus showing that while legends

⁴⁴⁵ Freeman, *Longing for the Bomb*, 16.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

provide an attention-grabbing introduction, they should not be used in isolation of facts that can reveal diverse historical voices and perspectives.

This lesson's first primary source is a 1942 letter from War Department official Fred Morgan to Paralee Raby, whose name is misspelled as "Parlee" in the letter. Raby was the stepdaughter of John Hendrix, the daughter of Hendrix's second wife Martha Jane. When Hendrix became sick with tuberculosis, Martha Jane "set [him] out" to live in a separate cabin on their farm.⁴⁴⁸ The practice of distancing oneself from those with the deadly disease was fairly common and Martha Jane was worried about the health of her young son, Curtis; but Paralee Raby showed her stepfather compassion. She and her husband, Perry Raby, cared for John Hendrix at the home they rented as sharecroppers until the end of Hendrix's life. As a token of his gratitude, John Hendrix deeded his farm to the Rabys on April 22, 1915, a transaction that was recorded on May 17. Upon Hendrix's death on June 2, 1915, he was buried in a coffin handmade by a local man named Jim Dunlap and buried, at his request, "upon a hill overlooking his little farm."⁴⁴⁹ Today's visitors to Oak Ridge can find Hendrix's grave in the Hendrix Creek subdivision under an enormous boxwood tree that was planted by John Hendrix's son and Paralee Raby's half-brother, Curtis Hendrix.

In the letter addressed to Paralee Raby, Fred Morgan warns of her coming eviction, giving less than three weeks' notice for the Rabys to vacate. When analyzing this letter in the classroom, relating the Raby family to John Hendrix could create

⁴⁴⁸ Grace Raby Crawford, "Back of Oak Ridge," ed. David Ray Smith (2003), 13, <http://smithdray.tripod.com/or/boor.pdf>.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

familiarity for students that may increase interest and will encourage historical empathy for this displaced family and others.



Figures 5.2 and 5.3: The Hendrix (Raby) Cemetery, denoted as AEC Cemetery #40, is shown here in 1944 photographs by Ed Westcott.⁴⁵⁰ It contains only the gravesite of John Hendrix (1865- June 2, 1915). The cemetery is located near 123 Hendrix Drive in the modern-day Hendrix Creek subdivision, land last privately owned by Paralee Raby in 1942.⁴⁵¹

The lesson's second primary source related to John Hendrix is a poem written by his son, Curtis Allen Hendrix. Born in 1909, Curt Hendrix lived on a sixty-acre farm in Robertsville. After the community was evicted in 1942, the Hendrixes were paid \$300 for their homestead.⁴⁵² Hendrix relocated to a farm in Union County, Tennessee, with his

⁴⁵⁰ D. Ray Smith, "John Hendrix- Details," accessed August 30, 2020, <http://smithdray.tripod.com/or/johnhendrixdetails.htm>.

⁴⁵¹ "Historic Cemeteries in Oak Ridge: Hendrix (Raby) Cemetery (AEC #40)," City of Oak Ridge Public Library, accessed August 24, 2020, <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/images/uploads/Documents/Departments/Library/AEC%2040%20Hendrixx.pdf>.

⁴⁵² Dennis Aslinger, "A Biography," accessed August 30, 2020, <http://www.smithdray1.net/curt/biography.htm>. In a letter to Martha Jane Hendrix postmarked March 24, 1944, Curtis Hendrix tells his mother that he has received only part of this payment but plans to invest the remainder when the Hendrixes relocate to a new 65-acre farm on Pike Road in Union County.

wife, Lindy, and seven children.⁴⁵³ His poem details his family’s displacement, and while it is a sad story filled with bitterness, the poem is clever and humorous at times. Hendrix talks negatively about the federal government whose payment for his land “wouldn’t buy a pure bred bore.”⁴⁵⁴ He warns that the United States should “[s]top electing presidents for longer terms than life.”⁴⁵⁵ Interestingly enough, however, one of Hendrix’s sons, Bruce Delano Hendrix, was named after Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁴⁵⁶

To further iterate the complexity of Curt Hendrix’s character, in a letter to his mother, postmarked March 24, 1944— and not used in this chapter’s lesson plan— he describes his new life in Union County favorably. Curt Hendrix liked his new job in Oak Ridge, which he could not describe in the letter most likely due to wartime requirements of secrecy, “better than any [he had]ever had in [his] life” and said he was living in “the best neighborhood [he had] ever lived in in [his] life.” His relationships in Union County were not as cheery as this letter sounded, however. And sadly, less than four months after the note was mailed to Martha Jane Hendrix, her son was murdered by two of his neighbors on July 9, 1944. Though family members, like Curt Hendrix’s son Bruce

⁴⁵³ D. Ray Smith, “John Hendrix- Details.” Curtis and Thelma Lee (Lindy) Haney Hendrix were married on February 9, 1930. Their first child, Leon Allen Hendrix died during infancy. Their ninth and youngest child, Shollie Jane Hendrix, was born after Curtis was murdered.

⁴⁵⁴ Curtis Allen Hendrix, “The Planned and Organized Society (sponsored by Elinoir),” as quoted in Dennis Aslinger, “A Biography,” accessed August 30, 2020, <http://www.smithdrayl.net/curt/biography.htm>.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ D. Ray Smith, “Curtis (Curt) Allen Hendrix,” accessed August 30, 2020, <http://www.smithdrayl.net/curt/curt.htm>.

Hendrix, have documented details of his death, no one was ever charged with Hendrix's murder.⁴⁵⁷

It is important to note that classroom discussions about why the Hendrixes chose their son's name or whether Curt Hendrix did indeed see his family's relocation in the positive light shown in his letter would be speculative. Nevertheless, analyzing Hendrix's writings to predict how feelings toward the Roosevelt administration changed during his long presidential tenure or how complicated displacement narratives interweave triumph and tragedy, local and national stories, and generations of people, is fruitful in terms of critical thinking for students.

Similar to the way introducing the John Hendrix legend can show how folk stories are generated to explain away underlying unpleasant realities, primary sources like Curt Hendrix's writings expose students to the complexities of history and the personal stories of historical players. The primary sources humanize the story of Oak Ridge's creation so that instead of individual people, families, and homesteads becoming oversimplified statistics, referred to as codes like "D-388" and "D-392," the government reference numbers for property tracts owned by Curtis Hendrix, students can learn a more nuanced interpretation of displacement.

Due to the nature of displacement and the War Department's need to quickly remove residents, property owners—and their land and possessions—were turned into data, photographed, and documented by surveyors from the Army Corps of Engineers.

⁴⁵⁷ Bruce D. Hendrix, "The Death of Curtis Hendrix (9 July 1944)," as quoted in D. Ray Smith, "Curtis (Curt) Allen Hendrix," accessed August 30, 2020, <http://www.smithdray1.net/curt/biography.htm>.

The need to create an objective system by which displaced residents could be compensated for their losses is understandable, but by incorporating local stories when this larger history is introduced, teachers can create opportunities for meaningful discussion and critical thought.

To demonstrate, the final primary source used in the “Displacement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee,” lesson plan is a “Valuation of Improvements” document for tract number A-6, the property of pre-Oak Ridge resident J. H. “Jim” Anderson. This document, along with correlating photographs held at the National Archives in Atlanta (one of which is included for students) details every building and structure that was located on the Anderson family’s 218-acre farm. About the family’s dwelling, valued at \$1,200, surveyors noted that the home “needs paint” and that it has an “old roof.” A milk house with running water and a concrete floor was valued at \$100. Using this primary source to discuss the experience of those who lived in pre-Oak Ridge communities is powerful, especially when coupled with details, such as how Jim and Sudia Freels Anderson were given just weeks to vacate and lost money selling cattle they could not take with them. In the classroom, teachers could discuss the differing perspectives and motives of government surveyors and property owners, why most displaced residents felt that they had not been compensated adequately, and what else property owners lost even after they were paid—things that were not or could not be itemized, such as crops in their fields, hay in their barns, livestock they could not transport, and a sense of community they would never be able to recreate.

The “Valuation of Improvements” document also provides an opportunity for teachers to discuss marginalization and historical agency, the intentional action a historical player takes and the power or ability they have to do so.⁴⁵⁸ Though on paper, it seems the property owners were defenseless pawns, and many probably felt that way at times, students should ponder what actions were taken by property owners to fight back (such as petitions and lawsuits), what new opportunities they might have sought out, where they chose to relocate, and how their lives may have improved in correlation to Oak Ridge’s construction. Discussing agency when analyzing local history, in this case the decision-making power of the displaced, not only allows a more detailed understanding, it also encourages students to see the minor players in history with greater respect and empathy, which in turn allows them to recognize the active role they themselves play in their own lives and communities. This goal of creating an active citizenry is not only a tenet of social studies education, but also an important part of public history practice.

Within the lesson plan, students are encouraged to research, annotate documents, analyze historic photographs and charts, and finally to form and defend their own opinions about eminent domain, displacement, and national security. Students will have a chance to use both writing and class discussion to share their viewpoints about what

⁴⁵⁸ Peter Seixas, “Historical Agency as a Problem for Researchers in History Education,” *Antiteses*, 5, no. 10 (July 2012): 539, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276231625_Historical_agency_as_a_problem_for_researchers_in_History_Education.

occurred in World War II-era East Tennessee as well as how those events relate to current times.

Sharing the Lesson Plan with Teachers

In February 2021, I spoke at a teacher workshop coordinated by Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU (TPS—MTSU) in partnership with the East Tennessee Historical Society (ETHS). Approximately twenty participants joined a live discussion on Zoom and Facebook to discuss the workshop’s topic, the “WWII Homefront in Tennessee.” In addition to sharing my lesson plan, teachers were presented with other resources to use in their classrooms from TPS—MTSU and ETHS. Afterwards, a recording of the workshop was made available on YouTube.⁴⁵⁹

To begin my portion of the webinar, I briefly summarized the plight of displaced landowners in Anderson and Roane Counties, noting that in 1942 the region was, like most rural areas, recovering from the Great Depression and that it had been affected by serial displacement prior to World War II. After introducing the “Displacement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee,” lesson plan’s activities and resources, I received feedback from teachers and audience members. These discussions, particularly the detailed questions asked at the end of my presentation, helped contribute to a deeper understanding of the topic among those in attendance and served as a guide for my further research. In Chapter 3, I address several of the questions posed such as: What was the War Department’s

⁴⁵⁹ “WWII Homefront in Tennessee,” TPS MTSU, February 5, 2021, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02y8qrTQBiE>.

process for land seizure? How were appraisal values determined? Were there any black landowners in pre-Oak Ridge communities? And was propaganda used to convince property owners to “do their part” for the war effort and move?

Though this lesson’s topic, displacement in Oak Ridge, may initially be seen as hyper-specific because it is not explicitly listed in Tennessee’s state education content standards, its value is clear. Displacement in Oak Ridge can easily be connected to broader content standards about the Manhattan Project and World War II for courses such as World History and Geography, U.S. History, and Tennessee History. The lesson, with its local history focus, provides an access point for students who have not yet heard of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and may become more interested after viewing the lesson’s attached primary sources. In addition, the lesson includes multiple skills-based activities, including discussion prompts in which the history of Oak Ridge’s displaced communities can be tied to much larger societal questions and historical events.

Regarding these skills-based activities, in July 2017, Tennessee adopted the current state standards which include Social Studies Practices (SSP) for K-12 classrooms. These SSP standards can be applied to any content and include skills such as data collection and synthesis, critical examination of primary sources, formation and communication of arguments, citation of evidence, and the development of historical and geographic awareness.⁴⁶⁰ These standards set a precedent for bringing public history to the social studies classroom. Coupling public history practices— like asking questions of

⁴⁶⁰ “Tennessee Social Studies Standards,” Tennessee Department of Education, accessed August 23, 2020, https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/standards/ss/Social_Studies_Standards.pdf.

sources that allow for a plurality of voices to be heard and encouraging engagement from stakeholders— with local history content can create impactful outcomes for students. Instead of a stagnant list of places and dates, history becomes something more valuable that is applied to the present-day. In the case of Oak Ridge’s pre-1942 community histories, using local primary sources provides students with a more personal connection that not only safeguards the memory of the displaced, but also encourages civic engagement, critical thinking, and empathy. In short, if teachers want to create an engaged public that values and understands larger historical trends, they should first start locally.

CONCLUSION

When we document history, too often we blur or overgeneralize details about minor historical players, individual experiences, and local events. Sometimes this omission of local history is purposeful and implemented with elicited bias, but more commonly it is simply a historian's way to glean the past for what is most significant (or perhaps what has more presence in available primary sources) to a larger public or a particular audience. Unfortunately, when this narrowing of facts and details occurs—when history is created, that is—stories of small, rural areas like those in Anderson and Roane Counties can easily be lost in the magnificent tales of Oak Ridge and the Manhattan Project.

Since its inception during World War II, the city of Oak Ridge has served a vital role in advancing science and technology in the United States. While these achievements undeniably deserve praise, many stories of Oak Ridge and the surrounding region have been lost due to a focus on nuclear technology, World War II, and the Cold War. This dissertation begins to fill a portion of the historiographical gap in Oak Ridge's history by documenting more stories from displaced families. Perhaps even more importantly though, I have sought to offer strategies for public historians and educators who might use that historical information to better inform various publics in classrooms and at local historic sites. For it is only when local people are involved in safeguarding their history and historic assets that true success occurs for preservation, interpretation, and heritage tourism efforts.

There is still much to learn about and from the Appalachian villages that predate Oak Ridge. In 1942 and 1943, the region's landscape, both built and natural, were forever altered as communities like Elza, Robertsville, Scarboro, and Wheat were erased from maps. Fortunately, and ironically, it was the demise of these communities which also allows them to be remembered. Like most rural farming communities, no comprehensive written history of these places exists. However, because of their displacement and subsequent association with the Manhattan Project, these communities have been mentioned in countless books and articles about the region. These references, though they are often fleeting, would likely not have occurred had it not been for the hasty displacement pre-atomic residents experienced during World War II. In a sense, their physical destruction saved the history of these communities.

Oak Ridge's pre-atomic history is filled with strong Appalachian personalities with a deep commitment to their land and to each other. Its wartime and mid-century histories provide incredible tales of genius scientists and hardworking men and women who diligently tried to save the world from America's political enemies. In the modern era, Oak Ridge continues to push the boundaries of science and technology. However, one does not have to dig too deep to discover the city's past, and perhaps its present, that is also filled with pain, confusion, and distrust among marginalized communities. Publicizing the unsightly parts of history—like displacement, economic hardships, and racial segregation—along with the triumphs is important. Oak Ridge, then, has a unique opportunity to share a history filled with nuance that allows visitors and residents alike to learn from the past and create a better future.

To share history successfully, partnerships among stakeholders are critical. Oak Ridge's many historical organizations have distinctive relationships with both federal and local entities. These connections, and at times conflicts, make the city a valuable case study for public historians, as well as a pertinent example to other historic sites wishing to better incorporate local viewpoints and marginalized histories.

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Bonita Irwin
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APPENDIX

LESSON PLAN: DISPLACEMENT IN OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE⁴⁶¹

<p>LIBRARY OF CONGRESS TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES Consortium Member</p>	<p>MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY</p>	<p>TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU</p>
<p>Grades: 9th-12th Subjects: World History and Geography, U.S. History, and Tennessee History</p>	<p>Lesson Plan: Displacement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee</p>	
<p>Time required: Two 90 minute class periods Author: Colbi Layne Hogan, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation</p>	<p>Home of the J. H. Anderson family, Wheat, Tennessee, 1942 [Pelississippi Genealogical and Historical Society, 2003]</p>	<p>CURRICULUM STANDARDS</p>
<p>OVERVIEW When America's federal government set out to create atomic weaponry in the early 1940s, it established three closed cities: Oak Ridge, TN; Hanford, WA; and Los Alamos, NM. Though these areas were sparsely populated, thousands of Americans hastily lost their land and livelihood as part of the Manhattan Project.</p>	<p><u>World History and Geography</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> W.52 Describe the development of atomic bombs, and evaluate both the decisions to use them and the impact of their use. W.53 Describe the cultural, economic, geographic, and political effects of WWII, including: Casualties of the war (military and civilian), Changes to geopolitical boundaries, Creation of the United Nations, Destruction of cultural heritage, Division of Germany, Impact of the Nuremberg trials, Refugees and displaced populations 	
<p>Unlike displacement caused by TVA, parks, or interstate highways, building Oak Ridge and other atomic cities was a national emergency. The incredible story of the Manhattan Project has long overshadowed the history of those it displaced. Identifying the rich history of pre-Oak Ridge communities allows for a fuller understanding of World War II's impact on the home front.</p>	<p><u>U.S. History</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> US.56 Describe the Manhattan Project, and explain the rationale for using the atomic bomb to end the war 	
<p>UNDERSTANDING GOAL Students will understand the sacrifice of dispossessed residents in Oak Ridge, TN, through oral histories, photographs, and financial records. Students will defend their opinions about displacement during a class discussion.</p>	<p><u>Tennessee History</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TN.53 Evaluate TN's contributions during WWII, including the impact of Camp Forrest, Camp Tyson, and Oak Ridge as well as the influence of Tennesseans during the war (e.g., Cornelia Fort and Cordell Hull) 	
<p>OBJECTIVES Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define displacement and eminent domain. Annotate a brief history of Oak Ridge. Analyze historic photographs and land valuation charts. Defend opinions on eminent domain, displacement, and national security through writing and class discussion. 	<p><u>Social Studies Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSP.02 Critically examine a primary or secondary source in order to: Extract and paraphrase significant ideas, Discern differences between evidence and assertion, Draw inferences and conclusions, Recognize author's purpose, point of view, and potential bias, Assess the strengths and limitations of arguments SSP.05 Develop historical awareness by: Perceiving and presenting past events and issues as they might have been experienced by the people of the time, with historical empathy rather than present-mindedness 	
<p>INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION In what situations should national security eclipse individual and property rights? Was the federal government justified in displacing residents to create the "Secret City" of Oak Ridge?</p>		

⁴⁶¹ Colbi Layne Hogan, "Lesson Plan: Displacement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee," Teaching with Primary Sources—Middle Tennessee State University, 2020, https://library.mtsu.edu/ld.php?content_id=59835093.

Resources

- Home of the J. H. Anderson family, Wheat, Tennessee 19+2, [[Pellissippi Genealogical and Historical Society, 2003](#)].
- “A Nuclear Family: Episode 1— I’ve Seen It.”
- J. H. Anderson Valuation of Improvements, [Pellissippi Genealogical and Historical Society, 2003](#)].
- [Letter from the War Department to Paralee Raby, \[November 11, 19+2\]](#) (pg. 8)
- [The Planned and Organized Society \(sponsored by Elinor\)](#), Curt Hendrix Poem (pg. 9)

Materials

- “Oak Ridge” excerpt, [Tennessee Encyclopedia](#) (pgs. 4-6)
- [Primary Source Analysis Venn Diagram](#) (pg. 10)
- [Pre-Discussion Writing Prompt](#) (pg. 11)
- Smart phone or computer access

[Curt Allen Hendrix, 1909-19+4](#)



DAY 1	
Step 1	Begin by asking students to share their knowledge of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Depending on your classes' subject areas and pacing, students may have already learned about World War II's end, the Manhattan Project, and the establishment of the nuclear industry. Therefore, Step 2 may function as either an introduction or a review of the “Secret City.”
Step 2	Ask students to annotate the excerpt (pg. 4-6) of Charles W. Johnson's “Oak Ridge” entry in the Tennessee Encyclopedia and answer the follow-up questions. Read the first two paragraphs together to model expectations for annotations. For instance, students may circle unknown words, underline important individuals or groups, use bullet points to draw connections, summarize important details, or record questions they may have while reading. Once students are finished annotating, have them share their findings, help identify their unknown words or phrases, and encourage the class to add to their own annotations after hearing from their peers. *Note: Students may answer the 4 follow-up questions on the worksheet in addition to or instead of annotations.
Step 3	Have students use their cell phones or computers to look up “ displacement ” and “ eminent domain .” Discuss their findings before asking them to write definitions for the words using the context of Oak Ridge. Ask questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the “Secret City” relate to displacement? Why were residents displaced? How did Oak Ridge impact the region? What role did displaced residents in East Tennessee play during the early 1940s?
Step 4	Prepare students for the 26:42 minute documentary, “ A Nuclear Family: Episode 1— I’ve Seen It .” Ask them to listen carefully for different points of view and to notice how families reacted to the crisis of WWII and their subsequent evictions. To keep students engaged, pause the video for discussion and notetaking at the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10:04— How would you describe life in pre- Oak Ridge communities? What things were most important to residents? How did most residents make a living? • 17:35- Do John Hendrix's visions align with what you know about Oak Ridge? How do you think locals, who knew Hendrix before he died in 1915, reacted to the construction of Oak Ridge? • End- How does this documentary confirm or clarify what you read in the Tennessee Encyclopedia excerpt? How was displacement in the region different with Oak Ridge than it was with Great Smoky Mountains National Park or Norris Dam? Do you think that the crisis of WWII made dispossession any easier for families? Did the documentary answer questions you had about Oak Ridge? What new questions do you have after watching? *Note: This documentary could also be assigned as asynchronous homework/ note-taking.

DAY 2	
Step 5	Help students organize their ideas about Oak Ridge. Discuss what they learned from Day 1 by asking them to summarize important points from the Tennessee Encyclopedia annotations and their notes from the documentary.
Step 6	Distribute Primary Sources A, B, and C, (pgs. 7-9) and the Primary Source Analysis Venn Diagram (pg. 10). Students should work in small groups to complete the Venn diagram and follow-up question. As they view each source, and fill out the Venn diagram, ask them to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key takeaway from this source? Whose voice is being portrayed? What kinds of words, phrases, and themes stick out? Are their examples of personal loss, inadequate government payout, etc.?
Step 7	As a class, review the directions and have students respond to the Pre-Discussion Writing Prompt (pg. 11). Things for students to keep in mind as they complete the assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither landowners nor the Army Corps of Engineer surveyors or employees knew about the atomic bomb. • Many families who were displaced by The Manhattan Project had also been forced to move by TVA or because of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. • Regardless of what writing type and historical perspective you choose, students' final products should answer the typical investigative questions about Oak Ridge and displacement (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?).
Step 8	Facilitate a class discussion about displacement and eminent domain. Begin by asking students how those topics relate to Oak Ridge. See example discussion questions below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The examples of displacement that we have looked at occurred in 1942 and 1943; is this still a relevant topic? Can you recall a time in contemporary history where people have been dispossessed through eminent domain? Is the government justified in seizing private property for public good? Are there any instances when the government should be prohibited from doing so? Did the crisis of WWII justify the treatment of displaced residents in what became Oak Ridge? In what situations should national security eclipse individual and property rights? Considering the impact of "The Secret City," was this land seizure worth it?

EVALUATION

- TN Encyclopedia Annotations and Questions— 20 pts.
- Primary Source Analysis Venn Diagram— 40 pts.
- Written response— 20 pts.
- Participation in Class Discussion— 20 pts.

EXTENSION: ON-SITE OR VIRTUAL TOUR

Contact the [K-25 History Center](#) to schedule an in-person or [virtual tour](#) of Oak Ridge's 7,500 square foot facility. Use the K-25 History Center Questionnaire Worksheet to prepare students beforehand and guide them during and after their visit.

J. H. Anderson Valuation of Improvements, [[Pellissippi Geographical and Historical Society, 2003](#)].

Block	Area	Square Feet	Production	Condition	Value	No. of B
1. Building	4000	10000	Good	10000	1000	1000
2. House	1000	2000	Good	2000	200	200
3. Garage	500	1000	Good	1000	100	100
4. Auto	100	1000	Good	1000	100	100
5. Furniture	100	1000	Good	1000	100	100
6. Refinements	100	1000	Good	1000	100	100
7. Total	6700	16000	Good	16000	1600	1600



Over the years, "the Government" had come to East Tennessee in many forms, varying from the Civil War Confederacy to the Tennessee Valley Authority of the 1930s, but the most dramatic and least public incursion followed quickly on the heels of the Great Depression during the Second World War. Government officials, most of them wearing the uniform of the U.S. Army and the insignia of the Corps of Engineers, arrived quietly in the summer of 1942 to observe, study, consult maps, and leave. They were followed, more ominously, by men with surveyor's stakes.

The nation had been at war with Japan, Germany, and Italy since the preceding December. Even prior to the nation's military involvement, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had been informed of an unexpected and serious potential danger by concerned scientists. In 1939 Leo Szilard and Eugene P. Wigner persuaded Albert Einstein to sign a letter warning Roosevelt of the possibility that Adolph Hitler's Nazi Germany could construct a revolutionary weapon through atomic fission capable of creating vast amounts of explosive power. Heeding the warning, Roosevelt began a tentative exploration of the possibilities of constructing an atomic bomb. But only after Pearl Harbor and the American entry into the war was the project pursued with urgency.

That urgency brought newly promoted Brigadier General Leslie R. Groves to East Tennessee in September 1942. ... His task was to supervise the location, planning, and construction of whatever facilities were necessary to construct an atomic bomb before the Germans could do it.

This remote area of East Tennessee seemed to meet many of the requirements for the main work site. Approximately one thousand families, roughly four thousand people, lived in the area of primary interest to the government planners. Mostly farmers, the residents were clustered around small crossroads centers with names like Wheat, Elza, Scarboro, and Robertsville. Moving them would not present a large problem for the army.

Some of the planned processes would require vast amounts of electricity, which the TVA could provide. There was an abundance of clean water, a good rail line, adequate roads, and the land could be acquired cheaply. Topographically, the reservation was a long valley divided into smaller segments by ridges. This meant that the individual processing plants could be separated geographically, so that if, in an unforeseen disaster, one blew up, the others would not explode like firecrackers on a string. The town itself was sited on the eastern end of the reservation, away from the plants.

Land acquisition began quickly. In the fall of 1942 residents were informed, sometimes simply by notices nailed to their front fence posts, that they would have to leave; the government was taking their land. A year later, the eviction process was complete. Although most of the former residents accepted the government offers for their land, a few brought legal action challenging the valuations. ... The reservation site was approximately seventeen miles long, averaging seven miles in width, and encompassing some 59,000 acres. ...

Beginning with the arrival of construction workers in spring 1943, Oak Ridge had grown to an astounding 66,000 residents by the summer of 1944, before peaking at a population of 75,000 by the summer of 1945. ...

Tensions between those who came to Oak Ridge and those who gave up the land for the facilities or who lived in close conjunction with the reservation became apparent during the war and continued to some extent after 1945. Those who had lived prior to 1942 in what was to become Oak Ridge had identified closely with the land where their families had lived and farmed, often for generations. Some who had been forced off their land harbored resentment for many years. The newcomers had no roots in Tennessee and viewed themselves as temporary residents. The majority of the new residents were young and filled with the camaraderie fostered by work on a project they felt certain would win the war. In addition to the young and enthusiastic outsiders who had little in common with traditional area residents, the project absorbed large numbers of local workers attracted by high wages, excitement, and patriotism. The competition for scarce labor did little to foster good relations with outside employers, especially as it extended beyond the demand for construction and laboratory personnel. In order to educate the children of Oak Ridge employees, the city demanded the best teachers available and paid significantly more than surrounding school districts to get them. The high standard of education produced in Oak Ridge became a source of pride for the city's residents, but the loss of teaching staff and the higher wages bred resentment in school districts outside the fence. Many viewed Oak Ridge as a highly secret, probably wasteful, and certainly enormous federal project. In an era of war-generated shortages, fears, and discontent, it was easy to blame the project and the people living and working there for broader problems.



Despite the tensions, the work proceeded swiftly and on schedule. ... The first bomb was dropped over Hiroshima at slightly after 9:00 a.m. local time on August 6, 1945. Three mornings later, the second bomb exploded over Nagasaki. On August 14, Japanese Emperor Hirohito surrendered his nation. ... Oak Ridgers greeted the news of the Hiroshima explosion with a mixture of enthusiasm for the expected end of the war, concern for the future, and unease growing out of the three-year period of absolute secrecy. But the overall mood was one of self-congratulation and relief.

... At war's end, some employees promptly packed up and returned to their former lives or made plans for new opportunities. ... the 1950 Census showed 30,205 residents, fewer than half its former number, though Oak Ridge was still the fifth largest city in the state. ... In 1949 the gates came down; by the 1950s houses were made available for sale, first to those who occupied them, and then to others. ... Today, Oak Ridge] continue[s] to function as a leader in high technology enterprises.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Why did President Roosevelt begin the Manhattan Project in secret?

2. List 3 reasons why General Groves chose East Tennessee to build Oak Ridge.

3. Besides the dispossession of their land, what caused tensions between displaced residents and newcomers in Oak Ridge?

4. Johnson notes that when World War II ended, Oak Ridgers (those working on the Manhattan Project) felt "self-congratulation and relief." Do you think displaced residents felt the same? Why or why not?

Primary Source B: Paralee Raby Letter

WAR DEPARTMENT
CORPS OF ENGINEERS
KINGSTON DEMOLITION RANGE
LAND ACQUISITION SECTION
HARRIMAN, TENNESSEE

Parlee Raby
Rt. 1
Oliver Springs, Tenn

November 11, 1942

The War Department intends to take possession of your farm December 1, 1942. It will be necessary for you to move, not later than that date.

In order to pay you quickly, the money for your property will be placed into the United States Court at Knoxville, Tennessee.

The Court will permit you to withdraw a substantial part of this money without waiting. This may be done without impairing your right to contest the value fixed on your property by the War Department.

It is expected that your money will be put in court within ten days, and as soon as you are notified, it is suggested you get in touch with the United States Attorney to find how much can be drawn.

Your fullest co-operation will be a material aid to the War Effort.

Very truly yours,

Fred Morgan
Fred Morgan,
Project Manager

[Letter from the War Department to Paralee Raby. \[November 11, 1942\]](#)

Primary Source C: Curt Hendrix Poem

This poem was written by Robertsville native Curtis Allen Hendrix following his 1942 displacement. Hendrix and his family relocated to a farm in Union County, Tennessee. Descendants of the Hendrix family still reside in East Tennessee today, in places like Kingston and Oak Ridge.

The Planned and Organized Society (sponsored by Elinoir)*

Come listen to me people,
And hear my tale of woe,
And if you find it tiring,
I'll shut my mouth and go.

I had a home in Robertsville,
They call it Oak Ridge now,
T'was home for all my younguns
and their chickens and the cow.

One day a bunch of men rode in
With papers in their hands
And great big shining badges,
They came and took our land.

They read a lot of great big words
I couldn't understand
But when it was all over
I didn't own the land

I had seen the revenooers
Come search and take the stills,
But I didn't think the government
Would ever seize our hills.

Of course, we had to get right out
And start to paying rent
But now, what can poor folks do
Against the government?
Just sixty acres t'was all I had
Some rich land and some poor.
But the check they sent me
Wouldn't buy a pure bred bore.

Now see I ain't complaining,

It's just my blamed bad luck,
On any deal I ever make
I'm always getting stuck.

Of course, the government was
right,
They always are, you see.
T'was just the land looked worse to
them
Than it ever did to me.

I moved to Union County,
Once famous for its stills,
And bought another cabin
And a bunch of slaty hills.

For I couldn't keep my younguns
And their chickens and the cow
Without a little pasture
And a piece of land to plow.

But I've done seen me a vision,
And it's one I understand.
In the none to distant future,
Working folks will own no land.

There will be a bunch of planners.
Everyone will live by plan.
Plan our work, plan our religion,
Plan our schooling and our play,
Won't even have to study,
"Now what must I do today."

The thing to do is win the war
And when we end that strife,
Stop electing Presidents
For longer terms than life.

Well I guess I'd better hush,
I could have said some more,
But here just let me whisper!
I'm skeered of Elinoir.



Curt Allen Hendrix, 1909-1944

* This may be a reference to Eleanor Roosevelt, who had served as First Lady for over a decade at the time of this poem's creation. Roosevelt visited Cumberland Homesteads, a planned community in nearby Cumberland County, in 1934.

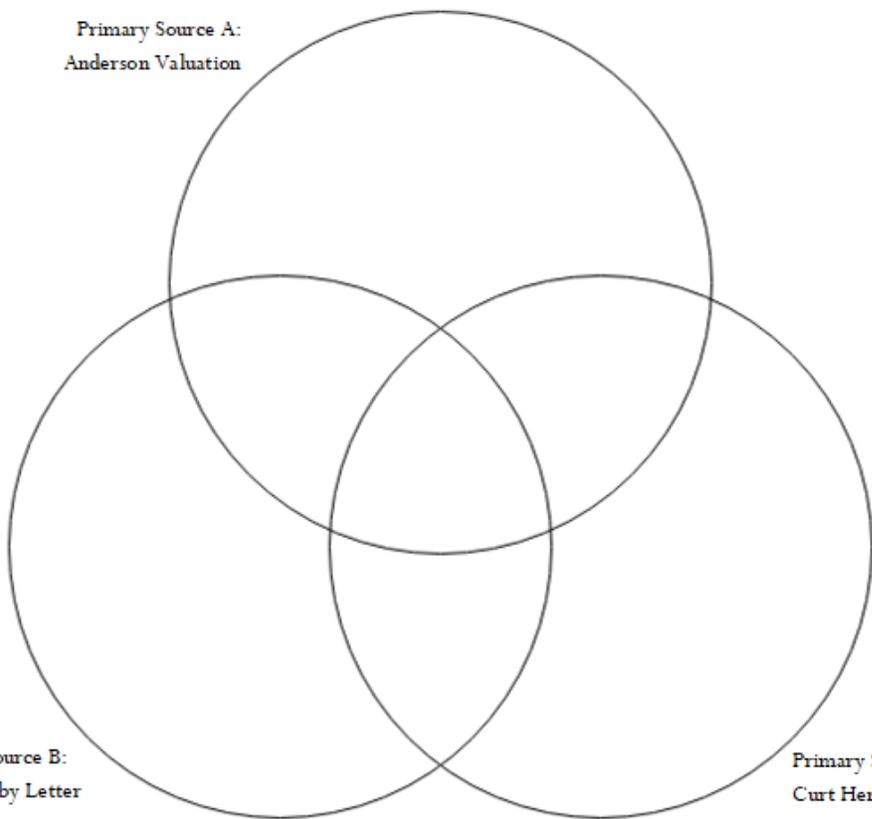
Name: _____

Date: _____

Displacement in Oak Ridge, TN: Primary Source Analysis

Use the Venn Diagram to record important details and similarities between three primary sources. Use your recordings to answer the follow-up question below.

Primary Source A:
Anderson Valuation



Primary Source B:
Paralee Raby Letter

Primary Source C:
Curt Hendrix Poem

Based on these primary sources, what conclusions can you draw about displaced residents in communities that became Oak Ridge? _____
