



New Deal Programs in Jackson County, AL

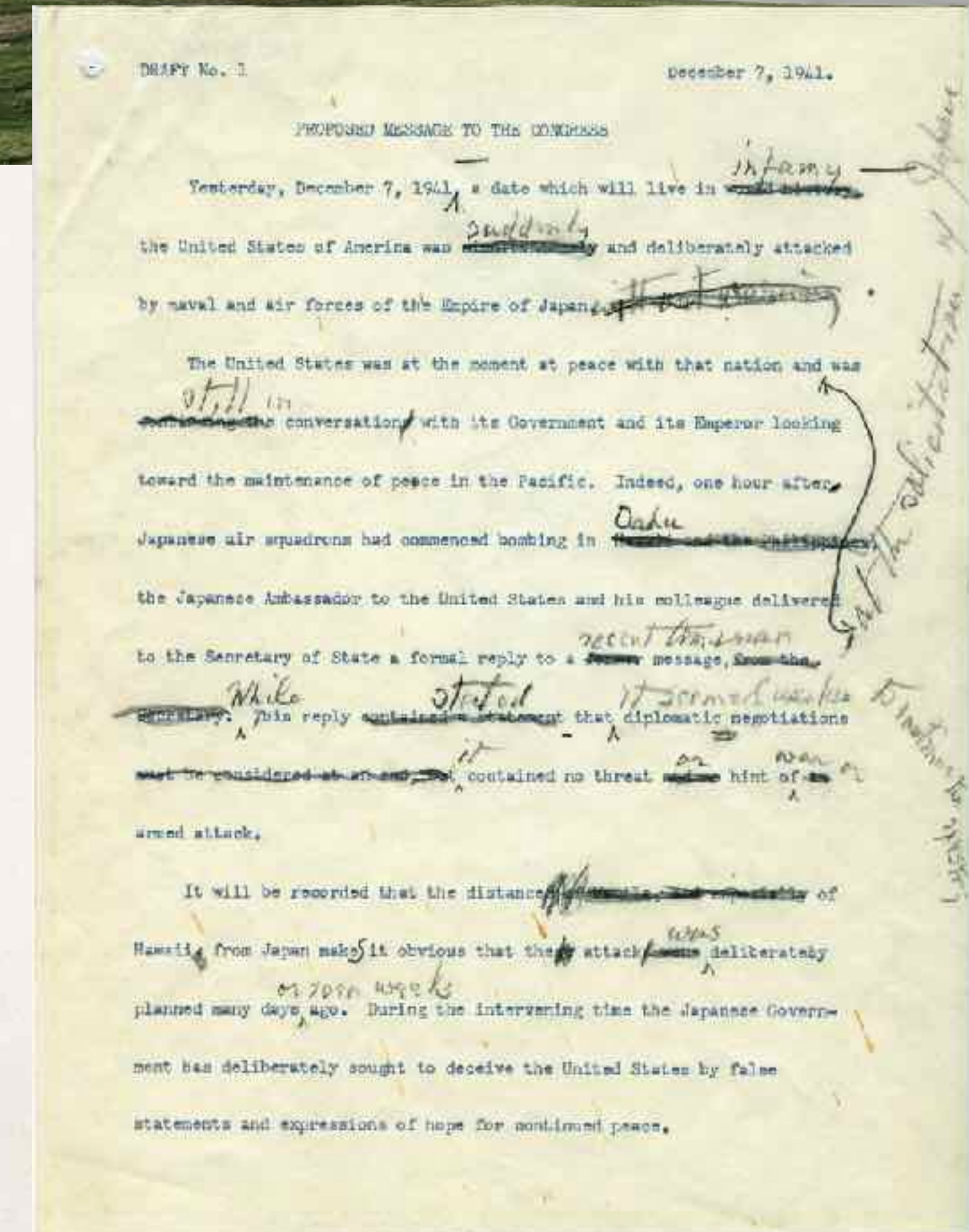
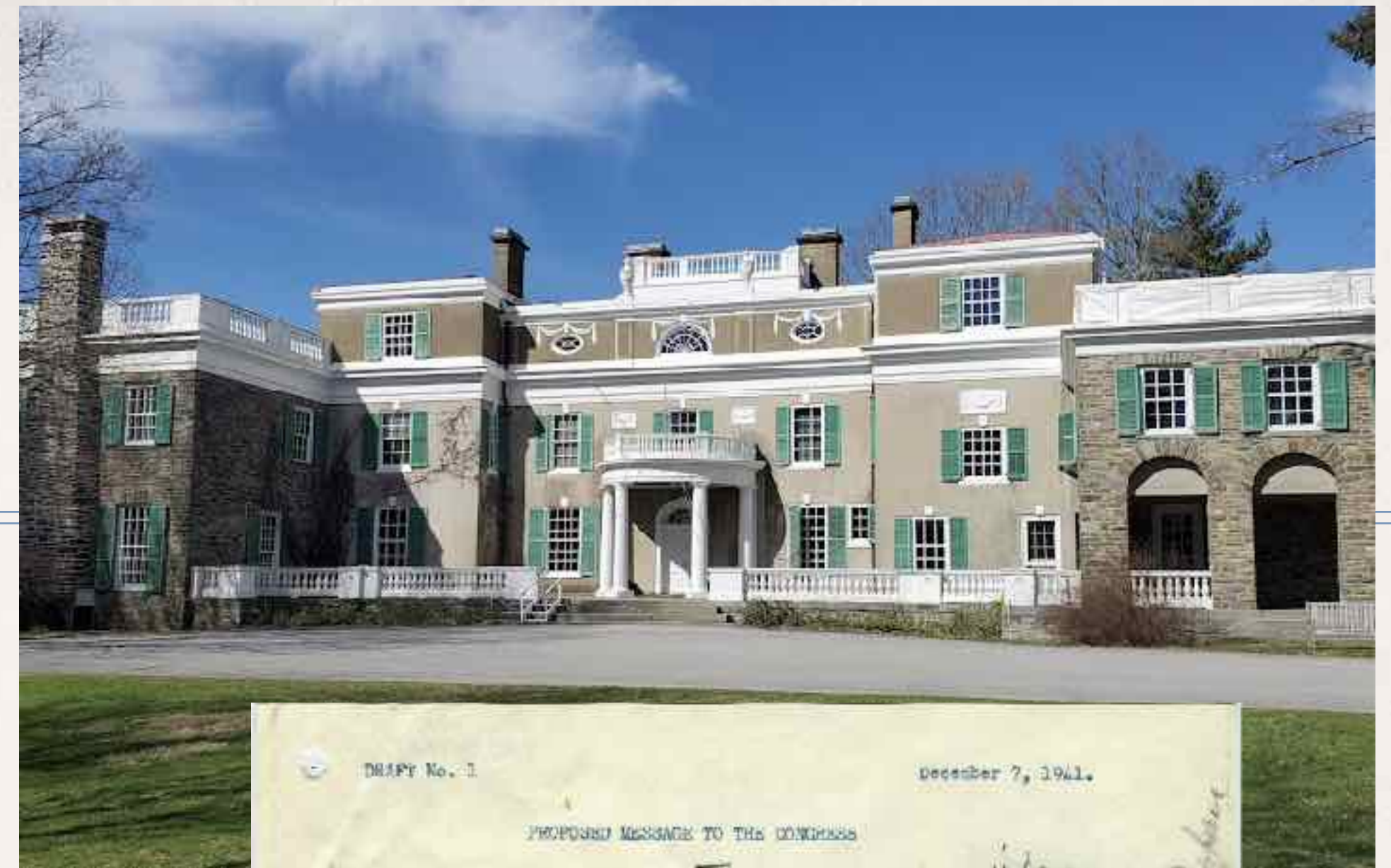
Annette Bradford

Jackson County Historical Association

June 21, 2022

The Aura Around FDR

- ❖ My mother came to visit me when I lived in Kingston, NY 1983-1989.
- ❖ She was a “Depression baby” born in 1927.
- ❖ I took her to Hyde Park to visit the FDR home and library and she regarded it as a holy shrine.
- ❖ When I taught English and talked about the importance of word choices, I used this speech.

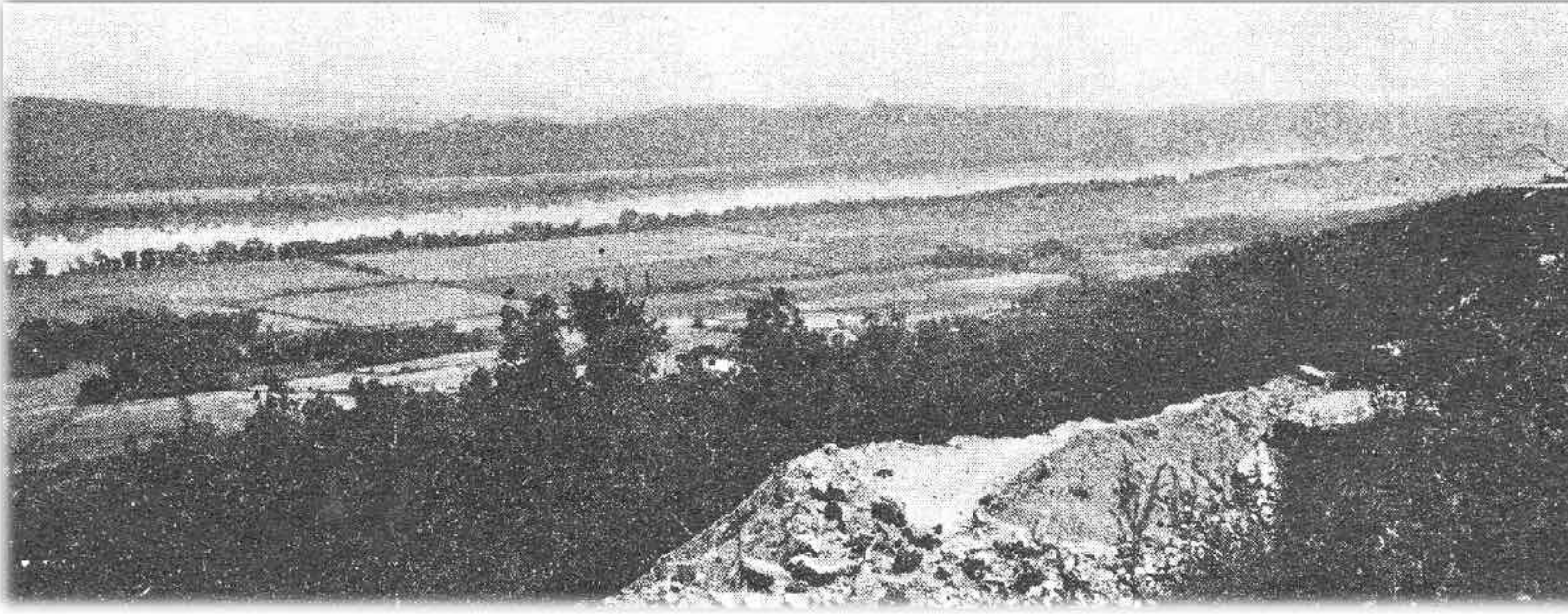


Before the Depression



- ❖ The “official” start of the Great Depression was October 28, 1929, but depression in rural farm communities in Alabama had started long before that.
- ❖ Cotton was in high demand during World War I, but bottomed out in the 20s when production proceeded at wartime levels. Cotton was going for 5 1/2 cents a pound in 1931. Jackson County agriculture was committed almost exclusively to cotton.
- ❖ At the left are Stevenson cotton mill workers. Child labor was not controlled until 1936.
- ❖ Jackson County was a predominantly agricultural county and raising too much cotton.

Farming the Bottomland



Before the Depression

- ❖ In 1929, the year of the nominal start of the Great Depression, Jackson County had a population of 26,900 and the per capita income was \$186.00.
- ❖ One of the best ways to understand the silent desperation of Jackson County farm families is to look at the U.S., Tennessee Valley, Family Removal and Population Readjustment Case Files, 1934-1953 recently added to Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/4903/>).
- ❖ Records include such data as proximity of schools, church, and trade areas, number of years in their home, number of rooms in their home, whether the house heated or painted, outbuildings, condition of home, water source, indoor or outdoor plumbing, value of furniture, debt, members of the household, husband's employment, how family land is used (crops, wooded, other), livestock, farm machinery, net cash income for the previous year, total cash income, food sources produced or managed, and attitude toward the move and TVA. Sometimes a note at the end assessed whether this family would be a good candidate for the Skyline Colony.
- ❖ The overwhelming feeling you get from reading these records is how little these rural farmers had and how hard they worked.

1928: Building the Cumberland Road



- ❖ Relief programs started with the Cumberland Road under the Hoover administration.
- ❖ Probate Judge James Money applied for money to build the road under the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.
- ❖ 5000 men showed up to fill 3500 jobs. Men worked 10 hours two days a week to spread the money around for a dollar a day.
- ❖ Men came to work barefooted and without food for the day. Judge Money bought them boots, and farmers along the road cooked sweet potatoes in fires for the men to eat.
- ❖ Road completed in 7 months for \$12,000.

The Roosevelt “Alphabet Agencies”



- ❖ Franklin Roosevelt took office in March 1932.
- ❖ He created a host of agencies, sanctioned by Congress, that were known by initials, and were loosely called “the alphabet agencies.”
- ❖ The Supreme Court declared some of FDR’s agencies unconstitutional. FDR threatened to add justices to the court if their partisan rulings did not stop—“A switch in time saves nine.”
- ❖ By 1936, spending in these agencies amounted to 9% of the U.S. economy.

New Deal Agencies Operating in Jackson County



- ❖ **May 1933-present, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)** became the first large federal regional planning agency. TVA built dams, produced and sold hydroelectric power and fertilizer, developed recreational lands and communities, and reforested this region.
- ❖ Archaeology project
- ❖ Grave and cemetery removal project
- ❖ Cheap power and rural electrification (REA)

New Deal Agencies Operating in Jackson County



- ❖ **March 1933-August 1941, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)**, putting young men to work on natural resource projects
- ❖ **1933-March, 1934, Civil Works Administration (CWA)**, a five-month program, employed 4 million people in the construction of roads, schools, playgrounds, airports, and sewers. The program spent over a billion dollars nationally.
- ❖ **April 1935-1943, Works Progress Association-Administration (WPA)**, name changed to Works Project Administration in 1939, employed more than 8.5 million persons in communities across the nation to work on 19 types of potentially fundable activities, including improving streets, roads, and schools and building highways, bridges, airports, water systems, and parks.

New Deal Agencies Operating in Jackson County

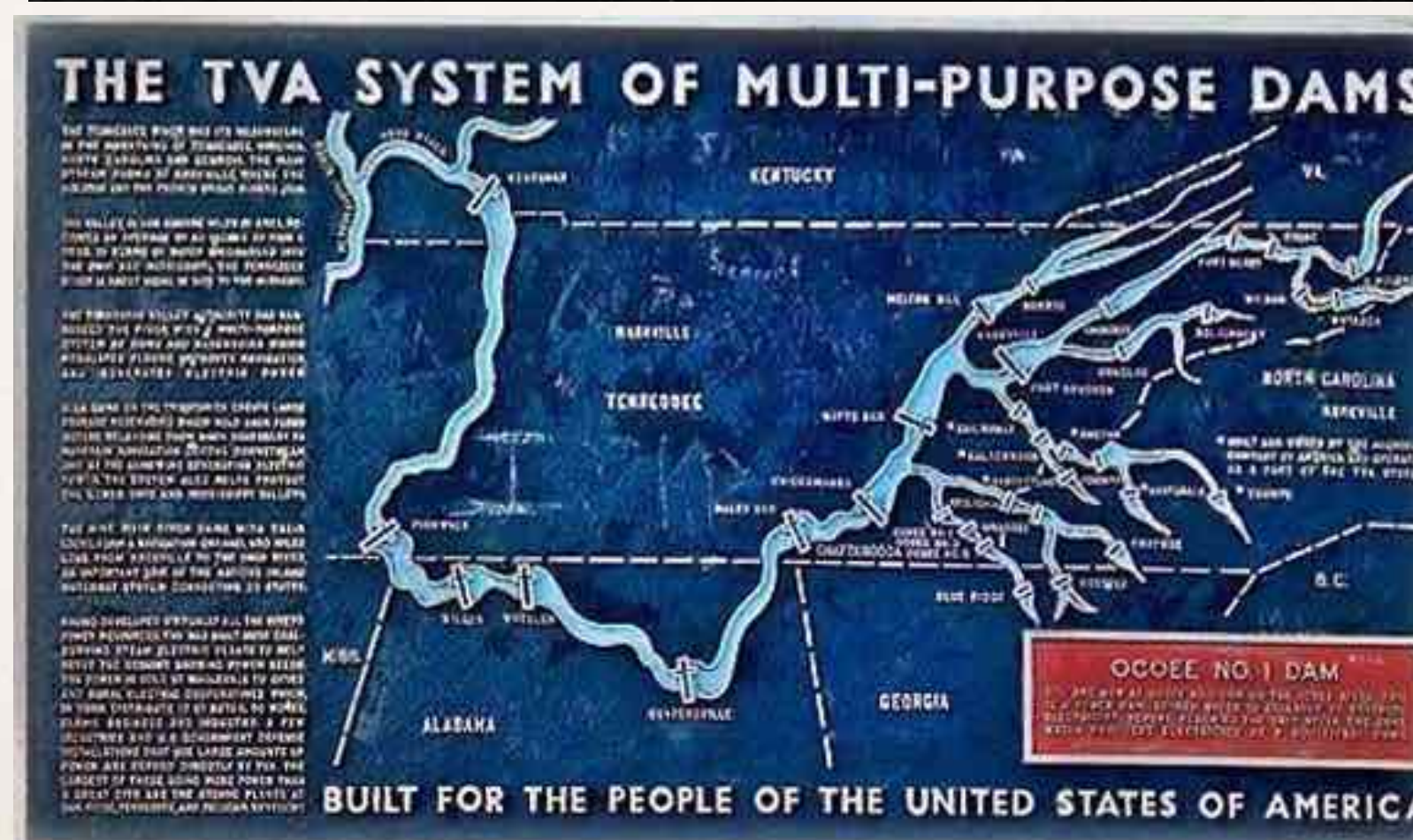
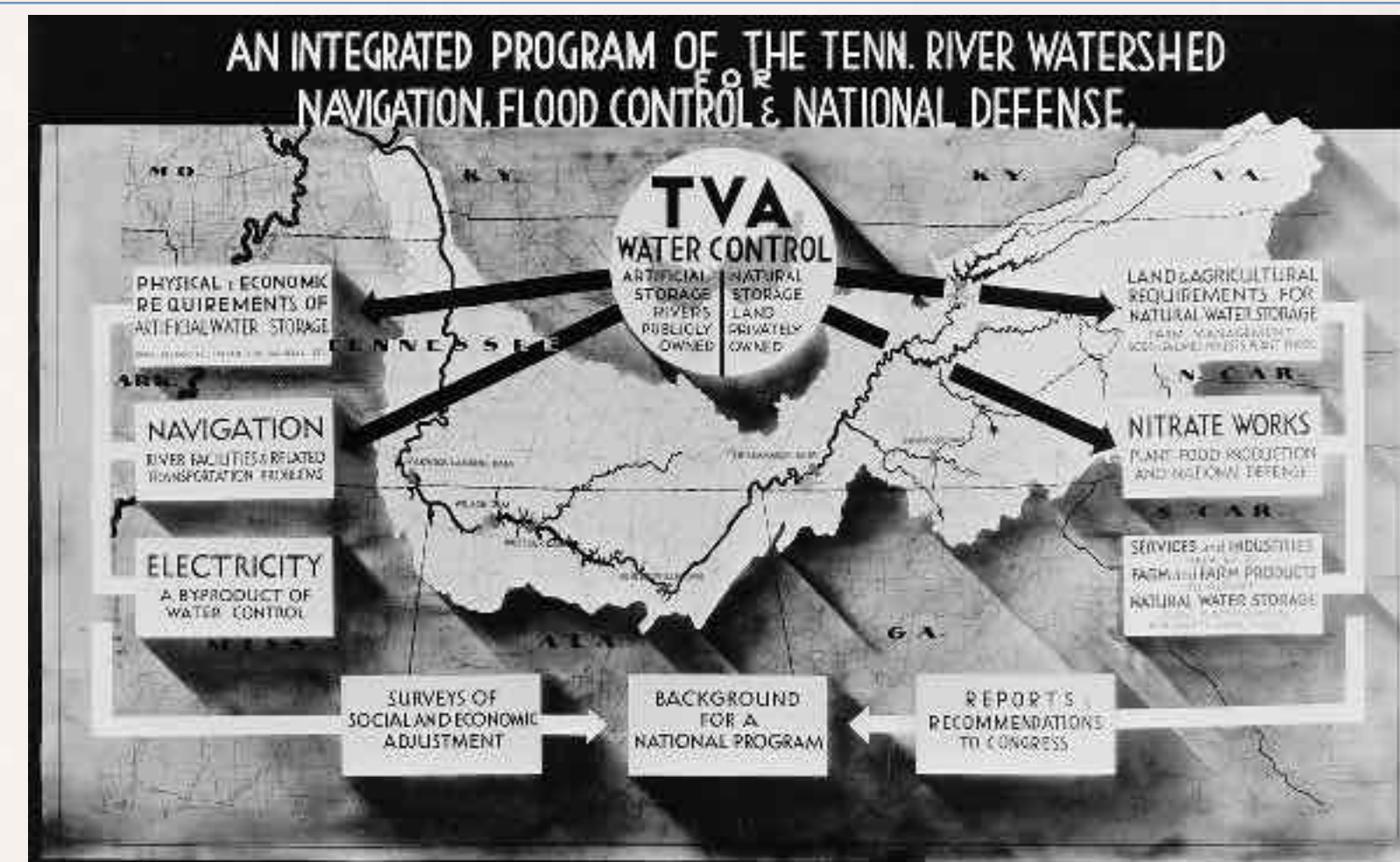


- ❖ **April 1935-present, Resettlement Administration (RA)**, later Farm Security Administration (FSA), now Farmers Home Administration, attempted to improve the lifestyle of sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and the rural poor by resettling them on large government-owned farms that used modern techniques and expert supervisors.
- ❖ **October 1933-March 1934, Public Works of Art Project (PWAP)** commissioned more than 15,000 works of art for public buildings. A Treasury Department program continued the work through 1943.
- ❖ **May 1935-1942, Federal Art Project (FAP)** was an "art for every man" program and sub-unit of the WPA that hired artists from the relief rolls to produce and exhibit more than 400,000 works of art, provide art education for children, and staff 100 community art centers.

Tennessee Valley Authority



- ❖ The advent of the railroads, the Civil War, and the Tennessee Valley Authority have produced the greatest impact of all the history-making processes in Jackson County, Alabama.
- ❖ So great is the change wrought by the Tennessee Valley Authority Act of 1933 that future historians most likely will reverse the order given above. Eighty-one years after the building of Lake Guntersville, the history of our county can be logically divided in terms of "before TVA" and "after TVA."



Tennessee Valley Authority

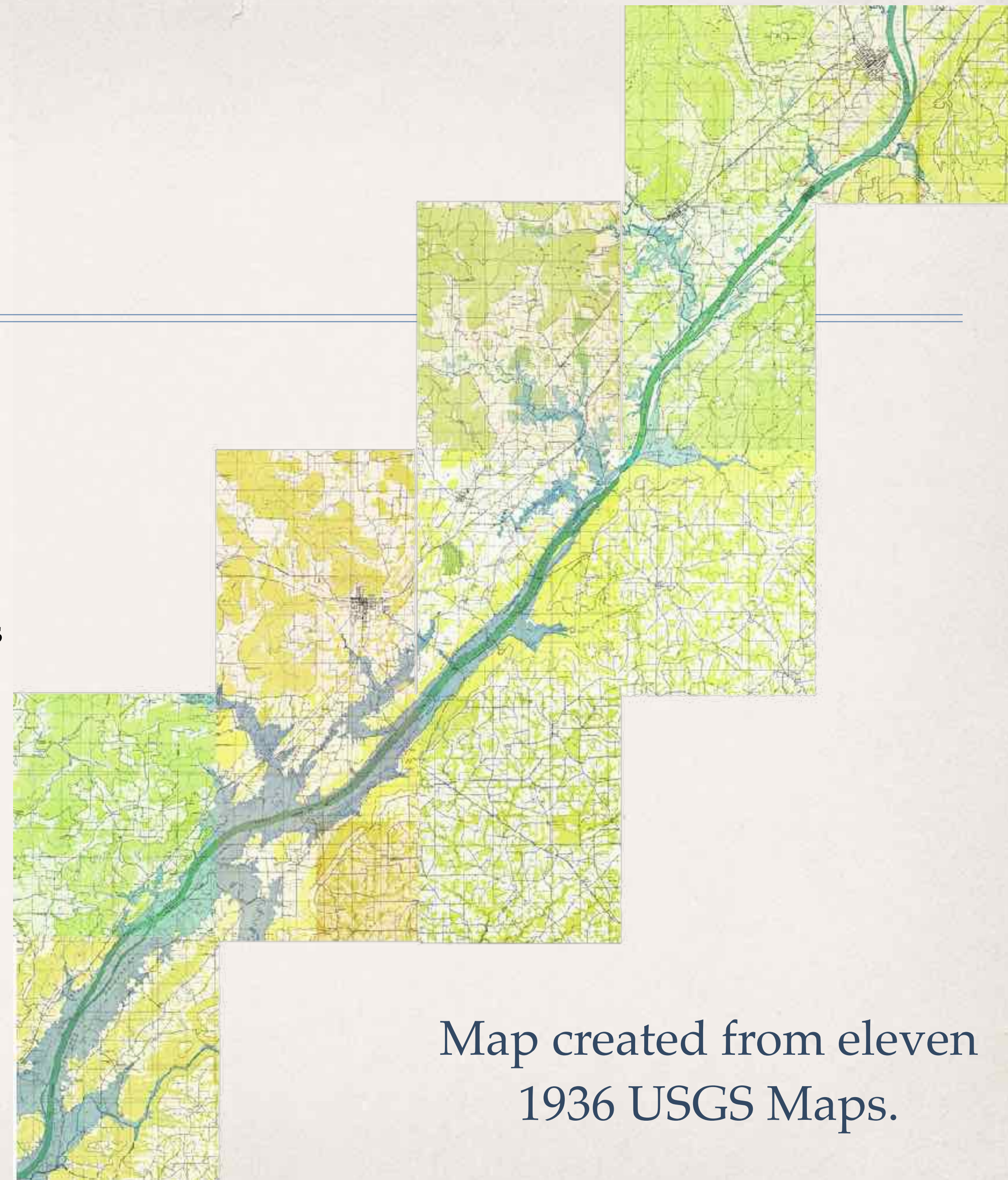


- ❖ We know the TVA as an engineering marvel that has brought tremendous benefits to this region. But Franklin Roosevelt's vision of the TVA was not primarily to create the unprecedented technological, environmental, and economic entity we know today.
- ❖ Roosevelt's primary goal was to accomplish what he termed "social engineering," an attempt to restore the people of this valley to social and spiritual health from what he and the country at large perceived as cultural deprivation that had been visited on us by economic hardship, isolation, defeatism, and ignorance.
- ❖ He and the board of the TVA wanted to create a social model that would render the region immune to the industrial and agribusiness failures that had resulted in the Great Depression. He and the TVA Board of Directors wanted to engineer a return to an idyllic, agrarian past. As such, they wanted us to serve as "a laboratory for the nation." His vision was radical.



TVA: Engineering Feat

- ❖ Construction began in 1935 and was completed in 1939. TVA built 29 dams, the first being Norris in 1935.
- ❖ Guntersville dam is 94 feet high and stretches 3,979 feet across the Tennessee River.
- ❖ Guntersville Dam is a hydroelectric facility. It has four generating units with a summer net dependable capacity of 123 megawatts. Net dependable capacity is the amount of power a dam can produce on an average day, minus the electricity used by the dam itself.
- ❖ Guntersville Reservoir has almost 890 miles of shoreline and 67,900 acres of water surface.
- ❖ The reservoir has a flood-storage capacity of 162,100 acre-feet.
- ❖ In order to maintain the depth required for navigation, the water level in the reservoir is maintained at a minimum winter elevation of 593 feet. The typical summer operating range is between 594 and 595 feet.



Map created from eleven
1936 USGS Maps.

Tennessee Valley Authority



- ❖ When the TVA began building its first series of dams, each construction site had a hospital, a commissary, recreation center (tennis courts and area for showing movies), two-bedroom cottages for families, and dormitories for male employees. Most had a cafeteria and a school.
- ❖ Hebron School in Marshall County, Alabama, was originally established to educate the children of the men who built Guntersville Dam.
- ❖ When construction began in 1935 at the Guntersville site, a medical service office was set up in the building formerly occupied by the Spivey Hosiery Mill in Scottsboro, Alabama, on present day Mary Hunter Avenue.

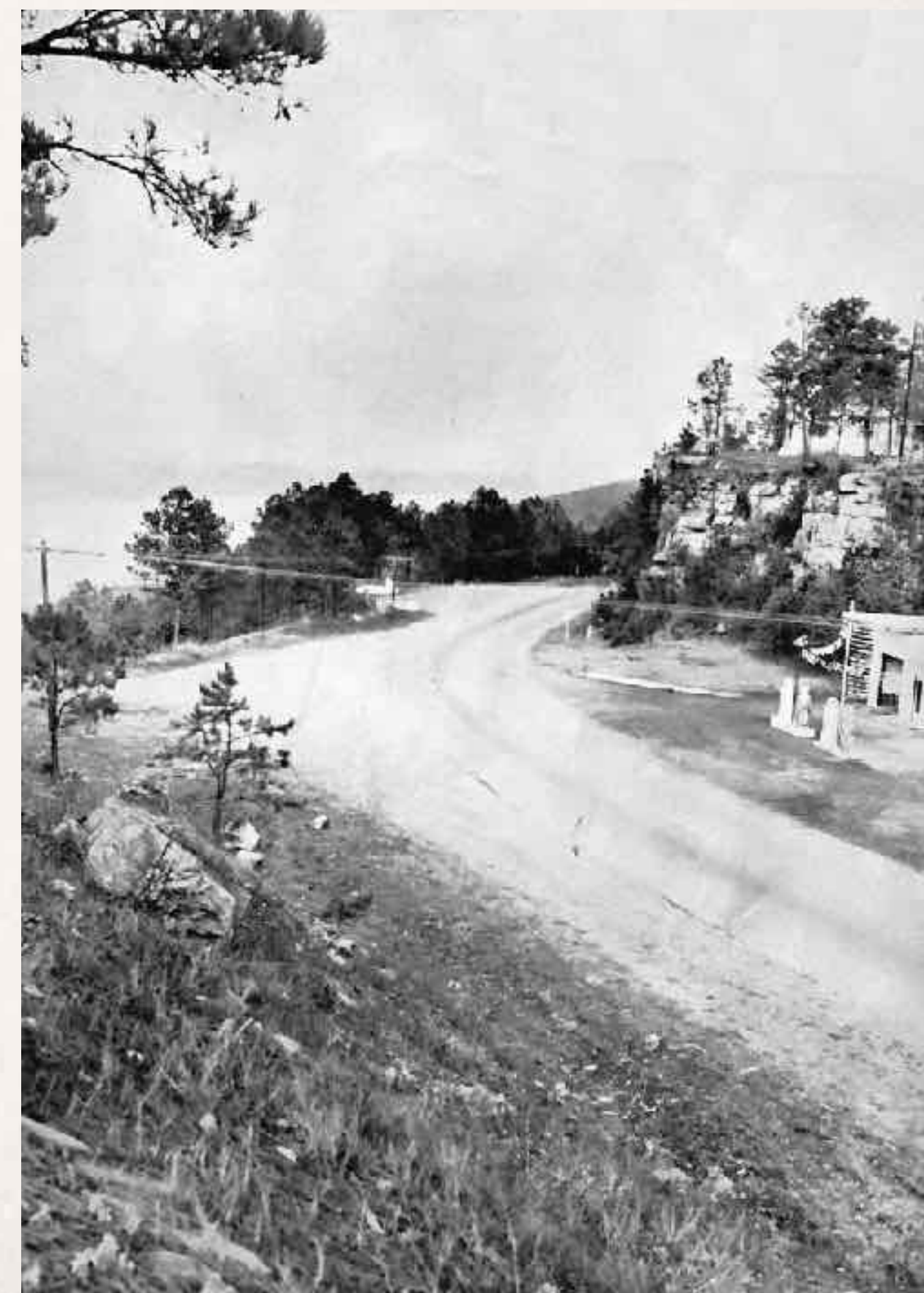


TVA: Building the Dam



- ❖ There were two teams of workers from Jackson County. The photo above shows TVA Unit 1. This unit started on September 8, 1936, two days after Labor Day, working at North Sauta Bridge on Sauta Creek.
- ❖ Under Alabama law, if as much as an acre was impounded, the debris was to be cleared. Clearing of the land for the reservoir was also begun in 1935. Most of the trees and undergrowth had been cleared by the winter of 1937. However, new growth by the spring of 1938 made it necessary to "rebrush" the entire area. By the spring of 1939, this same type growth had reappeared, and the reservoir lands had to be "rebrushed" and the debris swept up again.

It is Surprising How Much was Cleared.



TVA: Closing the Dam



- ❖ In January 1939, the locks were closed, the reservoir was filled, and the water was backed up. Then the water was dropped in an effort to help remove the debris.
- ❖ TVA was forced to back it up and drop it down and back it up and drop it down. This effort was called “surcharging.”
- ❖ The reason for the time lapse between the closing of the locks in January, 1939, debris could not be allowed through the locks and into the turbines. JCHA Facebook page members talked about the extreme care taken to burn everything. Fires burned the big trees and brush, and when these big fires burned themselves out, the men swept the fire and burned the remaining pieces. It was thought that even a small piece of wood might damage a lock or turbine.

Guntersville Dam

In 1939 this hydroelectric dam began providing power to the residents of Marshall County, Alabama and surrounding areas. It also created a continuous navigation channel on the river and brought flood control to the region.



Guntersville Dam Force Near Peak

Five Hundred More Workers Called To Report On TVA Project

With a call out for an additional 500 men to report for work within the next few days, employment at the Guntersville Dam being erected in the Tennessee River by the Tennessee Valley Authority will be near its peak, it was learned from a reliable source this week.

It is estimated that there are 1,500 at work on the project at this time. A large force is employed in dredging the solid rock within the first coffer-dam to make the foundation for the enormous lock, while enormous concrete mixtures are being installed. These are expected to be ready for operation within the next four or five weeks.

The progress made on the big dam so far is according to schedule and the work is to be completed by January 1, 1939. The entire village in the north bank of the river is now occupied and more houses, are being built, while many of the workers are living in Guntersville and other points nearby.



Clearing the Way: Moving People Off Family Farms



- ❖ In rural Jackson County, farmers struggled with the coming of TVA, especially those who lived along the river whose farms were taken by eminent domain.
- ❖ They were paid for their family farms and forced to relocate.
- ❖ TVA seems to have gone about the relocation process with as much compassion as a large entity could muster, but there were--and in fact, still are—a lot of bad feelings from those relocated from farms that had been possessed by one family since the land was patented.
- ❖ Many of those moved were subsistence farmers or sharecropper families barely carving a living farming unpredictable bottom land that was both rich and flood prone.

Who Was Moved to Make Way for TVA?



- ❖ TVA tracked both land owners and share croppers. your family owned or sharecropped a farm, if they were moved to accommodate TVA, the profile of their lives before the move is available in this database.
- ❖ The Library of Congress includes many interesting documents such as “Rural Families of the Guntersville Reservoir Area” and “Information Concerning the Family Removal Program.” (<https://www.loc.gov/item/2005692371/>)

REMOVAL AND READJUSTMENT OF FAMILIES

Soon after the beginning of TVA, it was realized that the dams would be built in a region having a fairly dense rural population thereby displacing a great number of families and removing a large area of land from agricultural production. Rather than attempt to resettle planned rural communities, it seemed better to help the people adjust themselves into a new life similar to that to which they were accustomed. Almost 12,000 families have already moved from the area to be flooded.

JACKSON COUNTY SENTINEL_1938-01-11.p

TVA Purchases 106,500 Acres In Guntersville Area

Washington, D. C., Jan. 7—The Tennessee Valley Authority has already purchased approximately 400,000 acres of land in its development of the Tennessee River, printed committee hearings on the Independent Offices Appropriation bill revealed today.

This was pointed out by John B. Blanford, Jr., general manager of TVA, in answer to a question on the subject.

He estimated TVA had purchases will total 912,950 acres on all projects now completed or under construction. Combined, these purchases would form an area larger than the entire state of Rhode Island. TVA's land will total 1,426 square miles; Rhode Island, 1,248.

Estimated cost per acre is \$49.11 and the total estimated cost of land and improvements of \$44,834,572.

Blanford tabulated the anticipated acreage, either purchased or to be bought, as follows: Pickwick, 63,200; Wheeler, 103,100; Guntersville, 106,500; Chickamauga, 68,000; Norris, 148,650; Hiwassee, 23,500 and Gilbertville (tentative), 400,000.

JACKSON COUNTY SENTINEL_1937-01-28.pdf (pag

HEAD TVA LAND BUYER BADLY HURT IN CAR ACCIDENT

Frank Therrell, chief land buyer for the TVA Guntersville reservoir, who has been stationed at Scottsboro, suffered severe injuries and narrowly escaped death Monday afternoon of this week when his car was wrecked about one mile east of Scottsboro on the Lee Highway. He suffered terrible cuts and bruises on his face and head but doctors state he is doing nicely and will likely recover.

Mr. Therrell, is is said, was driving toward Scottsboro at a fairly fast rate of speed when the back door of his car came open and he was reaching over the back seat to close the door when he lost control of the car and it turned over several times throwing him out on the pavement. His home is in Atlanta, but he and his wife and two children have resided here several months.

Many friends and acquaintances wish for him a speedy recovery with minimum scars from his injuries.

CONFIDENTIAL
Social and Economic Research
Research Section
Guntersville, Tennessee
January, 1937

Rural Families of the Guntersville Reservoir Area
FILES

Case Study: Charles Rice Coffey



- ❖ Charles Rice Coffey was better off than most. He had more education and some family help, being a grandson of John Reid Coffey and a son of America Norwood. He had held a job in Arkansas as an insurance salesman that enabled him to own his home in Arkansas.
- ❖ When he moved back to a farm on Darwin (his wife's family) property on what is today Nagooches Point (the land you see from Mud Creek Barbeque) he was a sick older man moved home to Alabama.
- ❖ He owned 35 acres which he farmed out to sharecroppers but kept a large kitchen garden and was a good steward of his land. Rice and his wife Lena Darwin got by without the conveniences that his sister who lived in the town of Stevenson enjoyed.
- ❖ Without power, he had ice delivered to his home weekly, and when ice was available, he froze ice cream for the neighbor children. He struggled with his battery radio, but his neighbors depended on him for news of the outside world. A crowd always gathered on his porch to listen to important speeches and events like the Joe Lewis fight.
- ❖ His farm was bought by TVA, and at the end of his life, he was forced to move and rebuild closer to what is today Highway 72. He left his garden and beloved yard and fruit trees behind. The silver lining was that he would be eligible for TVA power. When his home reached the stage where it could be wired, he went to the courthouse to complete the paperwork to have his home electrified and planned only for drop cords in every room. But, he discovered, he was not eligible for electricity if he did not buy an appliance from TVA. So he threw away his trusty icebox and bought a new refrigerator with his strained funds—because this is what he had to do to have TVA power.



TVA Relocation Forms for Charles Rice Coffey

- ❖ One of the best ways to understand the silent desperation of these families is to look at the U.S., Tennessee Valley, Family Removal and Population Readjustment Case Files, 1934-1953 recently added to Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/4903/>).
- ❖ This collection includes case histories and surveys of those who were in the path of the projects. Records include such data as proximity of schools, church, and trade areas; number of years in their home; number of rooms in their home; whether the house was heated or painted; types of outbuildings; condition of home; water source; indoor or outdoor plumbing; value of furniture; debts; members of the household; husband's employment; how family land is used (crops, wooded, other); livestock; farm machinery; net cash income for the previous year; total cash income; food sources produced or managed; and attitude toward the move and TVA.

TVA 970 8-12-35
Tennessee Valley Authority (1587) SURVEY OF FAMILIES Social and Economic Division
Scheduled 6-4-35 Map 11 7 K-F Fieldman [Signature] Date 6/15/35
County [Signature]

1. Name C. R. Coffey

2. P. O. address Holliston Rd #1 Highway or road Coffey road

3. Elem. school attended Monticello dist. 1 1/2 direction SW

4. High school attended Monticello dist. 1 0 direction S

5. Church attended Methodist dist. 1 1/2 direction SW

6. Local store Monticello dist. 1 1/2 direction N

7. Trade center Monticello dist. 1 0 direction N

8. Years lived at present residence 3 In present community 3

9. Information concerning house:
Rented or owned Owned Material Frame Bath facilities Yes
No. of rooms 3 Heating facilities None Painted Yes
No. of sleeping rooms 2 Fuel used Wood Condition Good
Age 10 Lighting facilities None On building None
Type 1 1/2 Telephones None no. 0 limit 0

10. Describe any other structures None

11. Water: Well Cistern Spring Other On premises Yes Yds. from house 10

12. Toilet facilities: Inside Outside None

13. Number of cases of malaria (1935) None

14. Does family own a car? No Make None Age None Years owned None

15. Check ownership of following personal possessions: Piano Phonograph
Sewing machine Organ Radio Electrical appliances Other

16. State approximate value of furniture: \$ 150 Condition Good

17. Debts: Mortgage \$ 0 Unpaid taxes 0 Open accounts 0 Other 0 Total 0

18. Insurance: Life \$1000 Accident and health None Burial None Other None Total 1000

19. Marital status: M. S. D. Sep. W. Case W

20. Husband and wife:

	Age	Age When	No. Times	Birthplace	Highest	Condition of Health
	Sex	Wife Married	Married	County	School Grade	or Physical Defects
Husband	37	24	1	Mo.	8	Good
Wife	32	23	1	Mo.	8	Good

21. Occupation of head of household Farmer Church preference None

22. Husband's employment during past 10 years (Include farming):

Date	Kind of Work	Earnings Per Week	Where Employed	By Whom Employed
1925-1935	Farmer		Own farm	Self

Amount	Source	Amount
	Children away from home	
	Children at home	
	Industrial compensation	
	Net farm receipts	
	Other sources	
	Total net cash income, 1935	

23. (This section for non-farm families only)

Year	Amount carried over to 1935	Total
1935		

24. (This section for non-farm families only)

Year	Outside Income Line (Acres)	Total Acres
1935		

for all families) 1338

Product	Quantity	Value
Peaches, bushels		
Garden, mixed	75	2.25
Irish potatoes (other than in garden), bushels	10	15.00
Sweet potatoes (other than in garden), bushels	10	
Money, pounds		
Wool, cards	10	2.00
Other products		
Total		\$17.25

25. In 1935? None

26. No. who have died: Boys 0 Girls 0

27. members of household:

and by	School Grade 1935-36	Highest School Grade	Health	Present Employment

28. Ever on work relief projects? None

29. Location for TVA employment? None

Year	Amount	Source	Amount
1935		Children away from home	
		Industrial compensation	
		Net farm receipts	
		Other sources	
		Total cash income, 1935	\$17.25

30. How much amount to invest None

31. Part-time farm and industry or professional employment None

32. Interview? None

33. Attitude toward TVA: Interested Interested Gladly cooperated

34. Attitude toward TVA: Antagonistic Critical Neutral Interested Active Booster

Charles Rice Coffey TVA Timeline



- ❖ **May 18, 1933:** Roosevelt signed the TVA Act
- ❖ **August 1934:** “The strange light that had a lot of people scared a few nights ago was the government’s surveyors—some of them was sure it was a fore-running of some terrible disaster.”
- ❖ **Oct 25, 1934:** Rice hopes the TVA will revive river traffic. “I hear a steam boat blowing on the river. Very seldom one is ever heard on the river now but think boating will be revived on our river in the next few years when the TVA program is completed.”
- ❖ **1936:** Rice learns that he will have to move. His brother John operated the Coffey Ferry and challenged the amount given paid since he lost both his home and his livelihood.
- ❖ **June 5, 1936:** Rice completes the TVA family survey.
- ❖ **Apr 2, 1937:** *“TVA men were here today looking for old high water marks.”*
- ❖ **Dec 31, 1937:** Original date for all families to complete their move.

Charles Rice Coffey Timeline



- ❖ Jan 26, 1939: Flood gates closed and Lake Guntersville begins to fill.
- ❖ Aug 6, 1939: Lake has filled.
- ❖ Sep 21, 1937: *"Tis tough to have to give up land to the TVA that will make a bale of cotton per acre—but that is another one of Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal projects—tis H__L on old people to lose their homes."*

Scottsboro, Alabama, Thursday, January 26, 1939

Mighty Tennessee Spreads Over Valley

By Rufus Terra in The Chattanooga Times

GUNTERSVILLE, Ala., Jan. 24—The waters of Guntersville lake, sluicing up the Tennessee river since the closing of Guntersville dam a week ago, lapped tonight at the foot of the Hales bar dam, more than sixty miles upstream bringing nine-foot navigation to Chattanooga a few hours after the opening of the Guntersville lock today.

Hales bar dam of the Tennessee Electric Power company completes the navigation lift to Chattanooga.

With today's developments some prospects that the Gulf Refining company soon will announce plans to use Tennessee river navigation to lake gasoline to Chattanooga, and that at least one excursion steamer, the Gordon C. Green, of Cincinnati, will begin next summer to make Chattanooga the upstream terminus of the excursions which it began running last summer as far as Guntersville.

Gulf, pioneer in freight navigation on the river since the Tennessee Valley Authority's development, is understood to be planning to large-scale pipe gasoline to Chattanooga in the near future. The company has four terminals on the Tennessee, of which the farthest upstream is here. The Campbell Oil company, distributors of Shell products, and the Standard Oil company already announced plans to build terminals at Chattanooga and large gasoline there.

The likelihood that an excursion steamer will begin service to Chattanooga was disclosed today when Verne Gogwer project engineer at TVA's Guntersville dam, said the owners of the Gordon C. Green had planned last fall to bring the steamer to Chattanooga through the recently partly completed lock here, but

at today to the minimum pool elevation of 291 feet above sea-level, the project engineer said. The maximum elevation of the reservoir will be 335 feet above sea level. To accommodate the pool at maximum elevation TVA has acquired a reservoir area covering approximately 100,000 acres. The pool will be drawn down to 300 feet in advance of floods to accommodate flood storage.

Since the dam was closed last Tuesday, the river behind the dam has been going up at the rate of two feet a day. Mr. Gogwer said. Two creeks bounding the town of Guntersville, Big Spring creek to the east and Brown's creek to the west, which a week ago were tiny streams scarcely more than eight feet at the widest points, now are more than a mile wide at their widest points, and fully a half-mile wide at their narrowest points through the town. The Tennessee river between the new mouths of Big Spring and Brown's creeks is a sweeping expanse of silver water against a background of unusual beauty, softly rolling hills adorned with trees in the far-distant perspective. The faintly blue-tinted silver of the water melting into the darker blue of the hills and the median blue of the sky.

The first glimpse of Guntersville lake on the highway from Chattanooga is at Roseberry creek some one and one-half miles from Scottsboro and approximately twenty-three miles from Guntersville. From there in the dam about eleven miles beyond Guntersville and ten miles downstream from this town whose name it bears, the scene is a succession of Florida-like vistas of Guntersville lake, its waters today whipped by a cold wind into whizzets.

Guntersville Lake To Be Dedicated Sunday, Aug. 6th

GUNTERSVILLE, Ala.—The City of Guntersville will dedicate Guntersville Lake on Sunday afternoon, August 6th, with its First Annual Outdoor Motor Boat Regatta.

A leading feature of the regatta will be the Dixie Motor Boat Race, which the Guntersville Motor Boat Association is sponsoring in collaboration with the Dixie Motor Boat Association.

The races at Guntersville will be the fourth of a series of races held under the auspices of the Dixie Motor Boat Association. Other cities in which races have been held or are scheduled to be held are ATLANTA, Chattanooga, Nashville, Scotts and Cowarts, Tenn.

Approximately 40 boats will be entered, pooled by maintaining motor boat races from the Southern states. Among those who have offered to race are Claude Smith, Atlanta; Ralph Cutler, Atlanta; H. W. Brown, Atlanta; Guy Starnes, Gadsden; Dr. George Miller, Gwynn's Lake, Ga.; Ted Ferguson, Atlanta; Orville Goo, Guntersville; H. C. Harry Martin, Guntersville, Ga.; Chas. Leeth, Columbia, Ala.; Ross Pratt, Auburn, Ala.; O. R. Hodge, Knoxville; Jimmy Melton, Knoxville; John Bell, Knoxville; Eddie and Mary Dale, Newport, Tenn.; Carl Davis, Chattanooga; E. C. Lovelace, Nashville; G. Bruce Lamberson, Nashville; Commodore Dwight Wood of the Nashville Motor Boat Club, Nashville; Carlo Springsteen, Nashville.

There will be two races in each of the A, B and C classes of boats entered, one race for all, one race for stock boats and one for amateurs up to 125 horsepower. Approximately \$500 in prizes and trophies are offered. The races, which will be free to the public, will be held on a new race course in the Spring Creek section of the lake immediately east of the city. Preparations are being made to handle the large number of spectators expected at this event, with ample observation points along a long dike bordering on the race course.

The dedication services will begin at 12:30 P. M. with Congressman Barnes of Guntersville as the principal speaker. The races will start immediately after the completion of the dedication ceremonies.

An extended list of distinguished guests has been invited including Governor Frank Dixon and other officials of the state of Alabama, the entire Alabama Congressional delegation, representatives of cities and counties of northern Alabama and officials of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Guntersville Lake, on which the

Clearing the Way: Archaeology



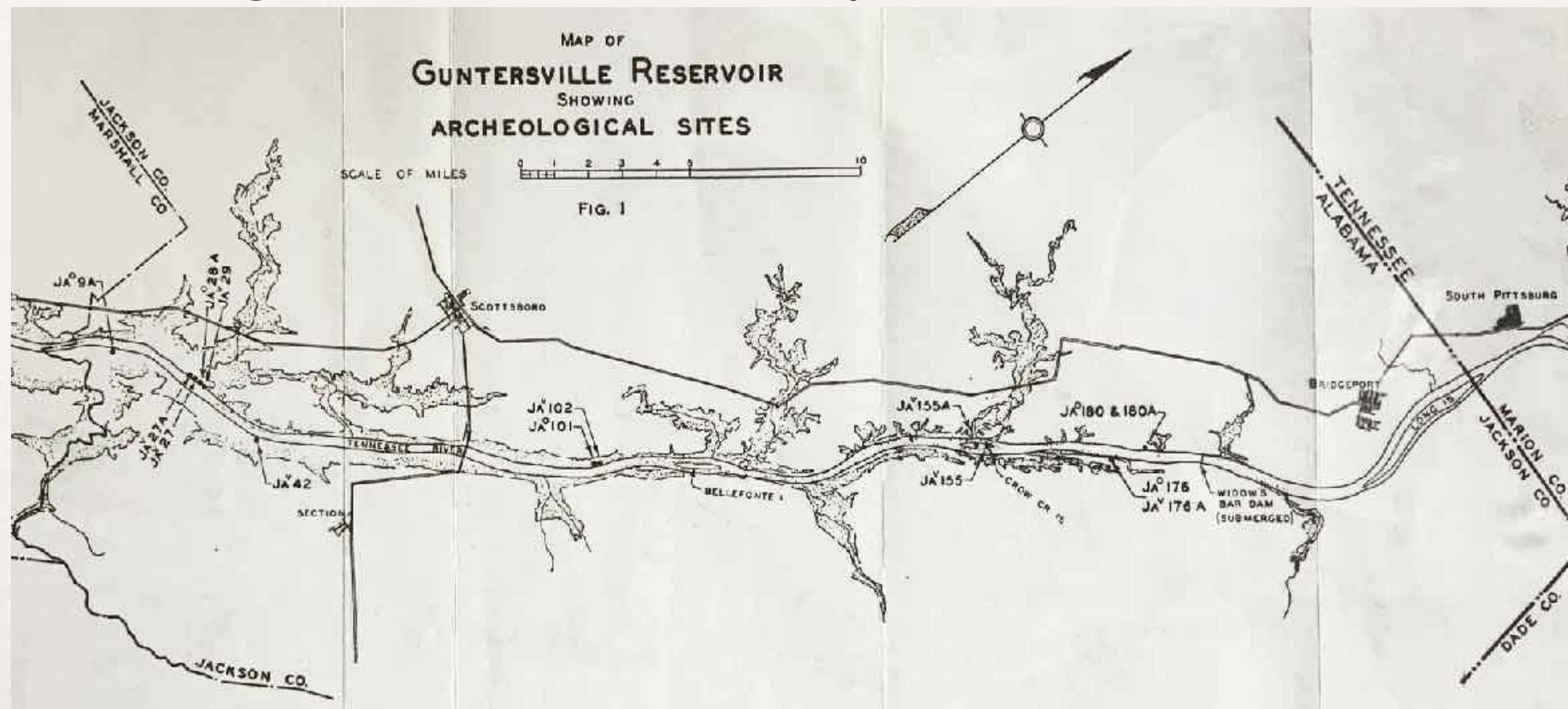
- ❖ Furious archeological digging and preserving went on in Jackson County in 1938-1939, where a trained army of supervisors and a great number of paid diggers tried desperately to do a rigorous job of excavating and recording data about Indian mounds with burials and villages on land about to be covered by the creation of Lake Guntersville.
- ❖ The digs were jointly sponsored by the Social and Economic Research Division of TVA in cooperation with the University of Alabama through the Museum of Natural History.
- ❖ The labor in the field and laboratory was provided by the Works Progress Administration at a cost of more than \$600,000, exclusive of the salaries of the supervisors, which was paid by the Tennessee Valley Authority, and of expenditures by the Alabama Museum of Natural History.”



Clearing the Way: Archaeology



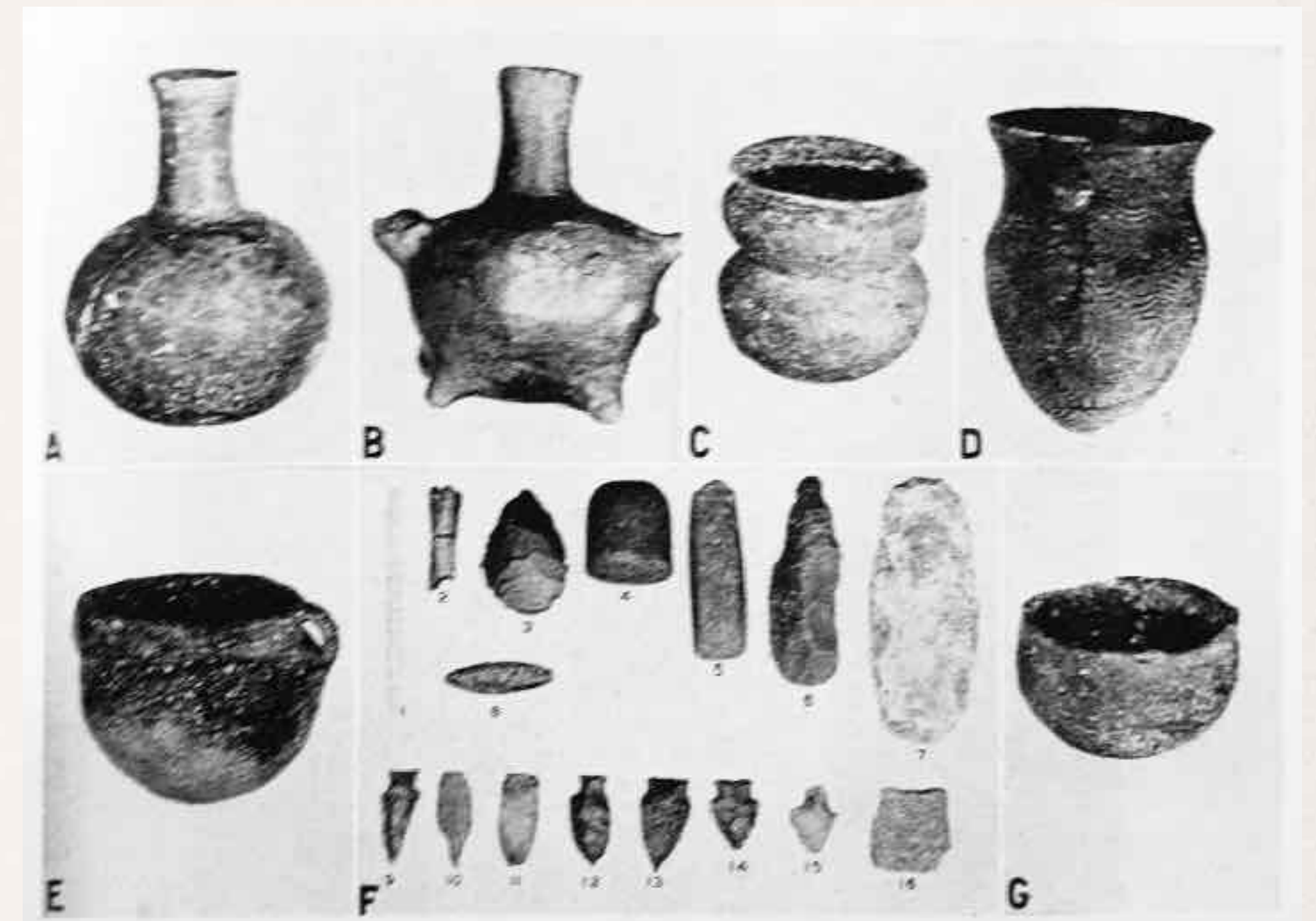
In all, 441 sites were identified in Marshall County, and 202 sites in Jackson County. The teams worked only on the sites about to be inundated by Lake Guntersville—27 in Marshall County and 12 in Jackson. Artifacts taken to a warehouse in Birmingham for sorting and categorization. Most today are at Moundville or the state museum.



What Did They Find?



- ❖ The final report of this work was completed in 1941 and submitted to the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1941, which published it along with other TVA excavation data in their Bulletins Numbers 119, 122, and 128. The TVA also provided funds to do a more detailed publication, but before that publication could be produced, World War II started and TVA funding dried up, and the manuscript was returned to the authors and not published until 1951: *Archaeological Survey of Gunter'sville Basin* by William S. Webb and Charles G. Wilder. (University of Kentucky Press, 1951).
- ❖ The manner of the burials were also detailed since many of the artifacts were found within graves. The amount of extension of the body was detailed (fully extended versus fully flexed with several degrees between) as was the condition of the bones (intact, badly deteriorated, only a few remaining, etc.) and the depth of the burial (pit versus shallow). Very often, perhaps to keep the size of the pit small, the skull was removed and placed within the curve of the body
- ❖ Elaborate bead and shell jewelry was often found along with ear spools, jars, or bowls. Some burial pits were filled with shells.



Typical Artifacts Recovered from Site JAV27. A. Polychrome Water Bottle B. Effigy Water Bottle C. Pot D. Conical Base Jar E. Pot F. Arrowhead and Scraper Artifacts. G. Bowl body.

Moving Cemeteries



- ❖ It is fair to say that TVA did the same kind of hasty but rigorous job assessing which cemeteries would be covered by the creation of Guntersville Reservoir that was done with the archaeological digs.
- ❖ Guntersville was not TVA's first dam project, and by the time preparations were being made for the Guntersville Reservoir, TVA knew how to determine how far the water would rise and what cemeteries would need to be moved.
- ❖ TVA did the county a real service by recording these graves in great detail in 1937, when more headstones existed and more family members were living who knew the locations of rock-marked graves. I was concerned that the lives of the people who were buried in these TVA cemeteries were lost in old paperwork and never made it into Findagrave, but I have spot checked these names and cemeteries and have found all of them recorded.
- ❖ Families were asked if graves should be moved and walked with TVA people to identify the locations. Rock-marked graves were not moved. Graves moved in Jackson County were relocated in the Vaught Cemetery.

Moving Cemeteries: Myths and Truths



- ❖ The pervasive tales in popular fiction of coffins and vaults popping out of the ground when the flood gates for Guntersville Reservoir were closed appear to be just that: tales. I can find no reports of such events either in the TVA records or the newspapers. I believe this happened at other dams, but TVA's preparation process was well defined by the time the Guntersville Reservoir was created.
- ❖ It is also illogical to place a family cemetery in an area that flooded frequently. People would not have buried their family members on the rich bottomland that they needed for farming, land that flooded frequently. Cemeteries are usually on a hill.
- ❖ Conversations with John Cook Rudder and Benny Bell, whose families have been involved with the funeral business for generations, indicate that no such events occurred. Embalming was not common practice in the rural parts of Jackson County when the river was flooded in 1939. Most coffins in the 1930s were wooden and not airtight. Many were homemade. John Cook recalls that the Rudder family's mercantile business sold hinges, handles, and liners for people who built their coffins for family burials.
- ❖ Burial vaults were not in widespread use. Funeral directors would have had to place a vault, and they would have known to tell TVA where graves with vaults were located.

Moving Cemeteries: Procedure



- ❖ TVA provided strict instructions for disinterment of a grave.
- ❖ Relatives were usually present, and the TVA sent a car to pick up and return the supervising family member.
- ❖ Laborers dug until they reached a casket or box. At that point, a licensed undertaker took over and moved the remains to a sturdy, clean box lined with white wrappings and nailed it shut.
- ❖ The new coffin was placed in the back of a truck and covered with “a clean tarpaulin” and the box was lowered into the new grave. TVA also moved the marker, if one was present; otherwise, they marked the new grave location with a metal marker.

Finding TVA Cemetery Records

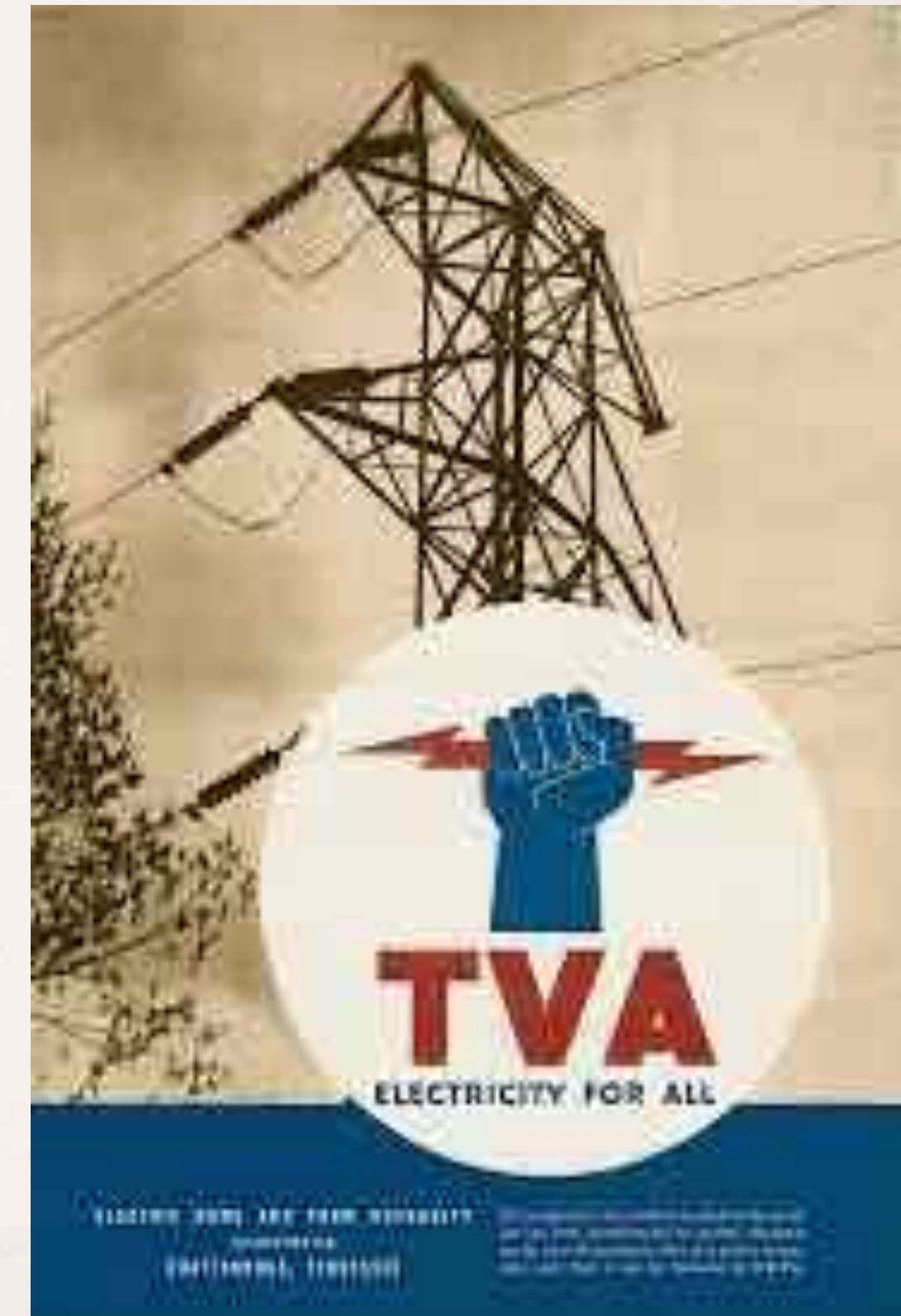


- ❖ TVA cemetery records are stored in multiple locations.
- ❖ TVA has created a database of all the graves moved or studied for removal over the course of their projects. This database is available either as a PDF or an Excel file. The PDF file is 879 pages with 35 entries per page and includes all the projects TVA has been involved in, not just the dams. Searching this file for Jackson County, Alabama turns up graves relocated for the TVA Bellefonte Nuclear Power Plant and the Widow's Creek facility, in addition to those moved to create Lake Guntersville. The consolidated records are found here:
- ❖ All original records relating to TVA's Cemetery Relocation Program, including permits, removal orders, grave inventory sheets, maps, disinterment records, and field notes are now housed at the National Archives, Southeast Region. I contacted Maureen Hill at the National Archives (which is currently closed because of the Covid pandemic). She tells me that "All of the Cemetery Relocation records have been digitized and are available in our catalog: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/656399>.
- ❖ These records are also available on Ancestry.com. To be honest, if you have a subscription to Ancestry, it will be easier to locate the records by name or location." To find these records in Ancestry, it is easiest to google "TVA cemetery relocation records." It is difficult to navigate to this location. Here is the direct link: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60427/>. More important than these records are the TVA family relocation records. For every family moved by TVA, whether the family was the property owner or a tenant farmer, there are records in Ancestry for each person moved under Wills, Probate, Land, Tax, & Criminal, "U. S., Tennessee Valley, Family Removal and Population Readjustment Case Files, 1934-1953.

Rural Electrification Administration



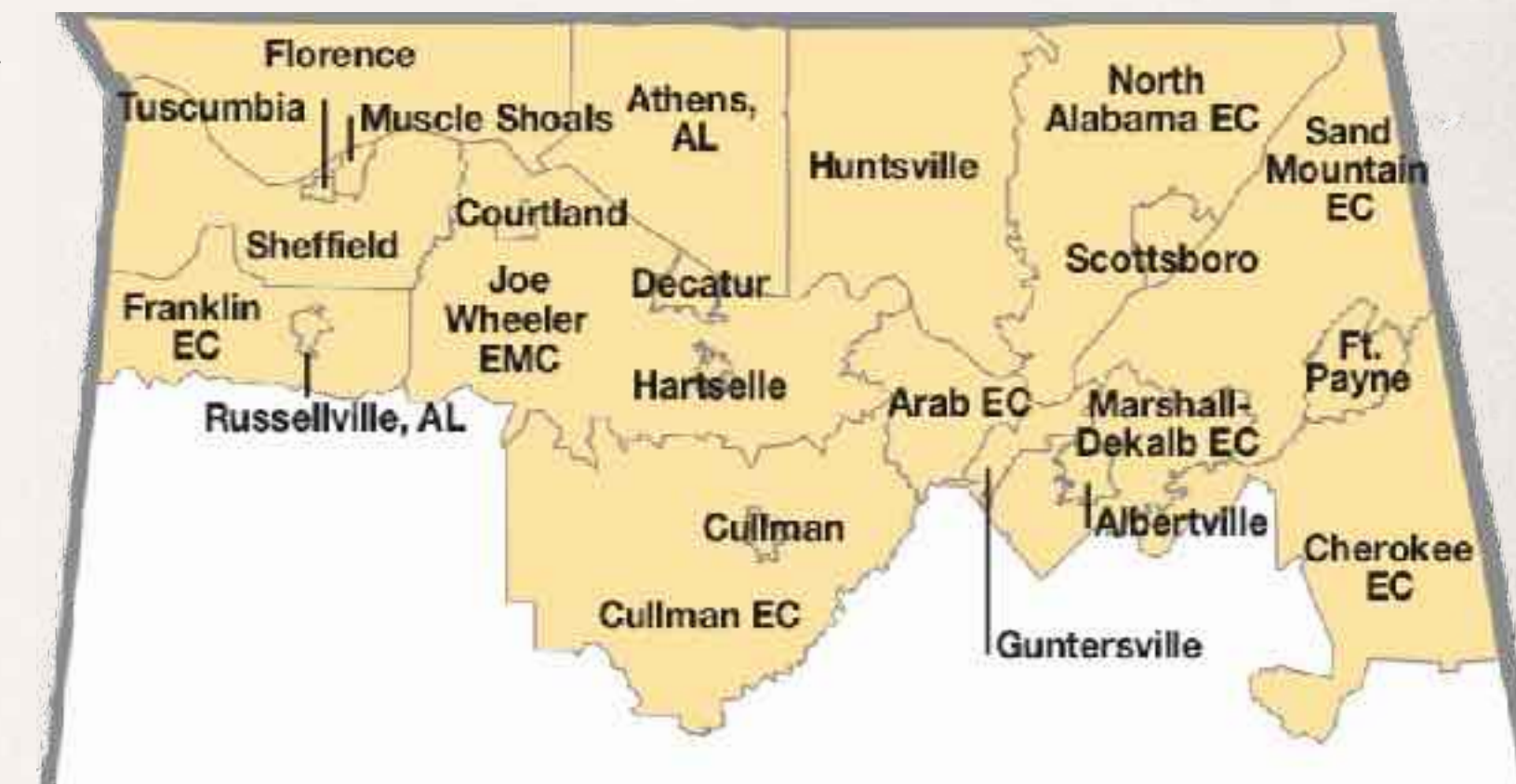
- ❖ On May 11, 1935, FDR issued Executive Order 7037, which created the Rural Electrification Administration.
- ❖ In 1936, the Congress endorsed Roosevelt's action by passing the Rural Electrification Act.
- ❖ At the time the Rural Electrification Act was passed, electricity was commonplace in cities but largely unavailable in farms, ranches, and other rural places.
- ❖ The bill was signed into law by Roosevelt on May 20, 1936. That same year, the Alabama Rural Electric Association Cooperative was founded, an organization still very active today, made up of the 22 electric distribution cooperatives across the state.



TVA vs. Alabama Power



- ❖ The towns of Scottsboro and Stevenson were already receiving electrical power when the REA was established. North Alabama was electrified later than Chattanooga and South Alabama.
- ❖ Stevenson residents had electricity before Scottsboro because their power came from Chattanooga. The county seat saw “current” arrive on January 21, 1916, and its first use was for street lighting.
- ❖ Power did not reach the distant rural areas until electricity became plentiful and providers were motivated to string lines into the coves and hills and remote rural areas that make up Jackson County. A family in Boxes Cove and folks off the side roads of Tupelo Pike remember being without electricity until the 1960s.
- ❖ Alabama Power had to end its on-going battle with TVA before one of them committed to lighting rural Jackson County. Over time, TVA-supplied power has totally replaced whatever inroads Alabama Power had made into north Alabama. Today, the map of power producers for north Alabama and our county looks like this:



TVA vs. Alabama Power



- ❖ Alabama Power had been supplying some electricity to the Tennessee Valley region of Alabama as early as 1912.
- ❖ When the federally owned TVA began generating power in 1933, Alabama Power could not compete financially and sold its Tennessee Valley assets either to TVA or to newly created municipal power systems.
- ❖ TVA became the power supplier for North Alabama, and isolated coves and rural areas looked forward to the miracle of electricity arriving at their homes and businesses.

TVA vs. Alabama Power



- ❖ Alabama Power Company was born in Gadsden in 1906 and had established quite a foothold by the time the upstart, New Deal, government-backed TVA came onto the scene.
- ❖ Before Alabama Power, production of electricity around the state was spotty at best. Some municipalities “generated a small amount of electricity from isolated mostly coal-fired dynamos that operated street lights, occasional streetcars, and some residential lighting. A few industries had generators for lights or motors.”
- ❖ Before Alabama Power, there was no central agency and only local funding.
- ❖ William Patrick Lay and Alabama Power secured congressional approval in 1907 to begin construction on dams on the Coosa River. Lay sold his company to James Mitchell who completed Lay’s vision for a dam on the Coosa River, with substantial funding from British backers. Alabama Traction, Power, and Light, as Mitchell renamed the company, purchased the assets of several small companies that had acquired the rights to dam sites. His first major project was the construction of Lock 12 on the Coosa River, known today as Lay Dam. Completed in December 1913, the dam began supplying hydroelectric power to the Birmingham industrial district by 1914.
- ❖ When World War I started, the Democrats in Congress railed against the foreign investments that were at the heart of Alabama Power. In 1917, when the U.S. entered the war, the U.S. War Department pressured James Mitchell to donate his company's dam site on the Tennessee River at Muscle Shoals to the federal government so it could produce chemicals for explosives with an ample supply of hydroelectricity. Mitchell chose to donate the site to the government because the federal government threatened to appraise the land at northern Alabama farm rates and confiscate it under war powers. Alabama Power received a \$1 check for property that Mitchell and the company had purchased for \$500,000.
- ❖ Alabama Power ran transmission lines from its Gorgas Steam Plant on the Warrior River to Muscle Shoals to supply electricity for construction of Wilson Dam, which was not completed until 1925, long after the war was over.

Little Progress in Rural Areas



- ❖ Alabama Power did not give up their foothold in North Alabama without a fight. Anticipating that TVA power would supplant Alabama Power, Alabama Power took out ads and wrote stories celebrating their accomplishments in delivering power to North Alabama customers.
- ❖ In a January 31, 1935 article in *The Progressive Age*, Alabama Power celebrated “Eleven Years of Rural Service,” and claimed that 36,750 customers were now “on company lines....Electric service has been extended to more than 24,000 customers in small rural communities and along more than 2,000 miles of state highways. These customers were entirely without electric service prior to the extension of our lines. They would still be lacking in electrical conveniences except for the company’s activities on behalf of rural electrification. Today your company is servicing rural customers in 64 of Alabama’s 67 counties. There is no community of 500 or more in this area which does not enjoy the conveniences of electricity.” Alabama Power was quick to point out that they had “borne the entire investment of the lines.”
- ❖ But Alabama Power had not made much progress in reaching rural customers in Jackson County. The Alabama Rural Electric Association (AREA) web site explains that “In the 1930s, 90 percent of Americans living in cities had access to central station electricity service, but only 10 percent of rural Americans could claim the same. Since rural electric service generated little ‘profit’ and required capital expenditures to reach the consumer, investor-owned utilities demanded farmers and their neighbors pay up to \$3,000 per mile to build lines to their homesteads, then charged monthly rates as high as \$30 – far above what city dwellers paid. This was during a time when per capita income averaged around \$1,800 a year.”
- ❖ But it was not just high cost; it was total lack of availability. “Before co-ops, in many rural areas, power was not available at any cost. To get around the utilities, enterprising folks deployed “light plants” powered by steam engines and windmills or complicated battery systems to provide themselves with electricity. However, these household generators were not only bulky, noisy, expensive and costly to maintain, but they produced very little electricity – just enough to ‘light the lights (dimly)’ or run a few appliances – and posed a safety risk.’
- ❖ This is why Roosevelt’s Rural Electrification Administration in 1935 was so welcomed. The goal of this organization was to provide low-cost loans and engineering support to help electrify the countryside.

TVA Power Was Not Perfect



The confusion that was TVA power in its early years is lampooned in this political cartoon that appeared in the *Hartford Current* on March 24, 1938. The arrival of TVA did not mean that magically, all of Jackson County had electricity.



North Alabama's Three Co-Ops



- ❖ 1937 Scottsboro Electric Department
- ❖ 1940 North Alabama Electric Cooperative
- ❖ 1942 Sand Mountain Electric Cooperative

A
Big
Job



The problem of bringing low cost electricity to you twenty-four hours a day is a complicated one. It takes skill of a high order to operate and maintain the hundreds of miles of electric lines which serve you and thousands of others. It takes bookkeepers, clerks, and truckdrivers . . . it takes warehouse and office space and rights-of-way . . . it takes a whole forest of poles . . . thousands of insulators and meters . . . hundreds of transformers, and many other items of equipment. Proper use of this equipment and manpower enables us to keep electricity flowing into your homes, farms, and businesses.

Sand Mountain Electric Co-op.
Fort Payne, Alabama

North Alabama Electric Co-op.
Stevenson, Alabama

Scottsboro Electric Department
Scottsboro, Alabama

Scottsboro Electric Department



- ❖ July 27, 1937, Scottsboro held an election to decide if the city of Scottsboro would pursue a consumer-owned public power system. By an overwhelming majority vote of 301 to 42, the citizens of Scottsboro voted to authorize the City Council to sell necessary bonds to build a local electric distribution system.
- ❖ The electric system would use current obtained wholesale from the Tennessee Valley Authority. A \$25,000 Public Works Administration grant enabled TVA to speed construction of a transmission line from the Guntersville Dam. Public power became a reality in the fall of 1939.
- ❖ The city of Scottsboro purchased distribution equipment from the Alabama Power Company, and on October 12, 1939, began receiving TVA current. In that first year, 1,005 homes and businesses received electricity, using a total of 3,545,208 kilowatt hours. The electric system realized a value of \$150,000.
- ❖ In 1954, under the authority of an Alabama Legislature act, the city of Scottsboro passed an ordinance to create the Scottsboro Electric Power Board (SEPB). SEPB replaced the city's Electric Department and relieved the city from the burden of financing any future expansions of the electric system.
- ❖ In 1964, the SEPB was serving 2,830 customers. Total kilowatt-hour usage had reached 64, 922,701 and electric system value had increased to \$967,454. During the first 25 years, the electric system became the largest payer of taxes to the city's general fund.
- ❖ 2019, the SEPB celebrated its 80th birthday. SEPB remains a consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric system serving 8,400 customers within the city limits. SEPB has a TVA delivery point and seven substations in operation. As needs changed, the company expanded its services to include not just electricity but cable, internet, and phone services.

North Alabama Electric Cooperative



- ❖ Prior to 1940, only a few areas in Jackson and Marshall Counties – mostly in cities and towns – had electricity. Rural customers were still cooking on wood stoves, heating with fireplaces and reading with coal-oil lamps.
- ❖ When President Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act, creating REA, on May 11, 1935, doors began to creep open to a brighter world. Large power companies said providing power to rural areas was too costly and too dangerous, that the farmers would not be able to pay their electric bills and the cost of extending electrical lines into rural areas would be prohibitive.
- ❖ Because no one else was willing to serve the rural areas, leaders from across Jackson and Marshall Counties organized a member owned cooperative and thus North Alabama Electric Cooperative (NAEC) was born.
- ❖ On March 11, 1940, the first office of NAEC was opened. Located on Main Street in Stevenson, it was upstairs over the fire department, next to what today is the Ideal Beauty Shop. The office moved once more before locating to its present site, at 41103 US Highway 72 in Stevenson, in 1942.
- ❖ During the first year of service the Cooperative grew to 1,026 members and 126 miles of line. The next 10 years saw the largest percentage of growth to date – 5,229 customers and 802 miles of line. Today there are more than 17,700 members and 2,000 miles of line. (NAEC web site <https://www.naecoop.com>)
- ❖ Discussions with NAEC historians indicate that power made its way into remote areas very slowly. Potential customers could approach the co-op and pay a fee to have lines strung to their homes, but this process was interrupted by World War II and the scarcity of copper and steel. Plans on the table had to be shelved and subscriber money returned because the needs of the war caused the materials required for stringing power lines to be rationed, and the needs of the country outweighed the needs of citizens wanting electricity.



Sand Mountain Electric Cooperative



- ❖ When the co-op started, their first action was to buy 1800 customers and the lines and equipment they used from Alabama Power. Like Stevenson, the organization faced the daunting task of providing the infrastructure to string electrical lines to remote and widely separated rural customers. Just as with the Stevenson co-op, the SMEC suffered from wartime materials shortages. A letter in the April 21, 1942 *Sentinel* assured customers that “all REA projects which were at least 40 percent completed on December 5, 1942” would “be permitted to complete construction,” in spite of wartime materials shortages
- ❖ Today, Sand Mountain Electric Cooperative is an electric distribution utility serving over 31,538 members in portions of DeKalb, Jackson, Marshall and Cherokee counties. The cooperative is located in northeast Alabama and it purchases power from the Tennessee Valley Authority, which is currently the nation’s largest generator of electricity.
- ❖ The cooperative was organized on March 25, 1940 for the benefit of providing electric service to the people in rural areas at the lowest cost possible, consistent with sound business practices. In addition, this cooperative is a working partner for economic and environmental growth in the communities it serves. The service area covers over 996 square miles of territory in the northeast corner of Alabama, including 19 incorporated towns.
- ❖ A nine-member board of directors is the governing body of the cooperative. Directors are elected each year at annual meeting to a three-year term. Directors must be cooperative members and must reside in the districts they serve. The board of directors hires the general manager to oversee the day-to-day business of the cooperative. A total of 76 employees including the general manager and staff are responsible for the daily operation of this organization. (SMEC web site: <http://www.smec.coop>)

TVA Sources of Information



- ❖ TVA History: <https://www.tva.com/about-tva/our-history>
- ❖ The AL Dept of Archives and History and the National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/tennessee-valley-authority-act>
- ❖ Tennessee Valley, Family Removal and Population Readjustment Case Files, 1934-1953 recently added to Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/4903/>).
- ❖ Guntersville Reservoir TVA Archives
- ❖ JCHA TVA Cemetery Records: <http://www.jchaweb.org/downloads/tvacemetery.pdf>
- ❖ TVA database of graves moved: <https://www.tva.com/environment/environmental-stewardship/land-management/cultural-resource-management/relocated-cemeteries>

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)



You have seen the work of the CCC if you have...

- ❖ Appreciated the rock overlooks on the way up to Mentone
- ❖ Climbed to the top of the rock observation tower at Cheaha
- ❖ Stayed in a cabin at Chewacla Park in Auburn
- ❖ Hated the kudzu that clings to the roadside as you climb the mountain toward Section
- ❖ Observed that all the big pine trees near the rivers and creeks are planted in a straight line



Civilian Conservation Corps



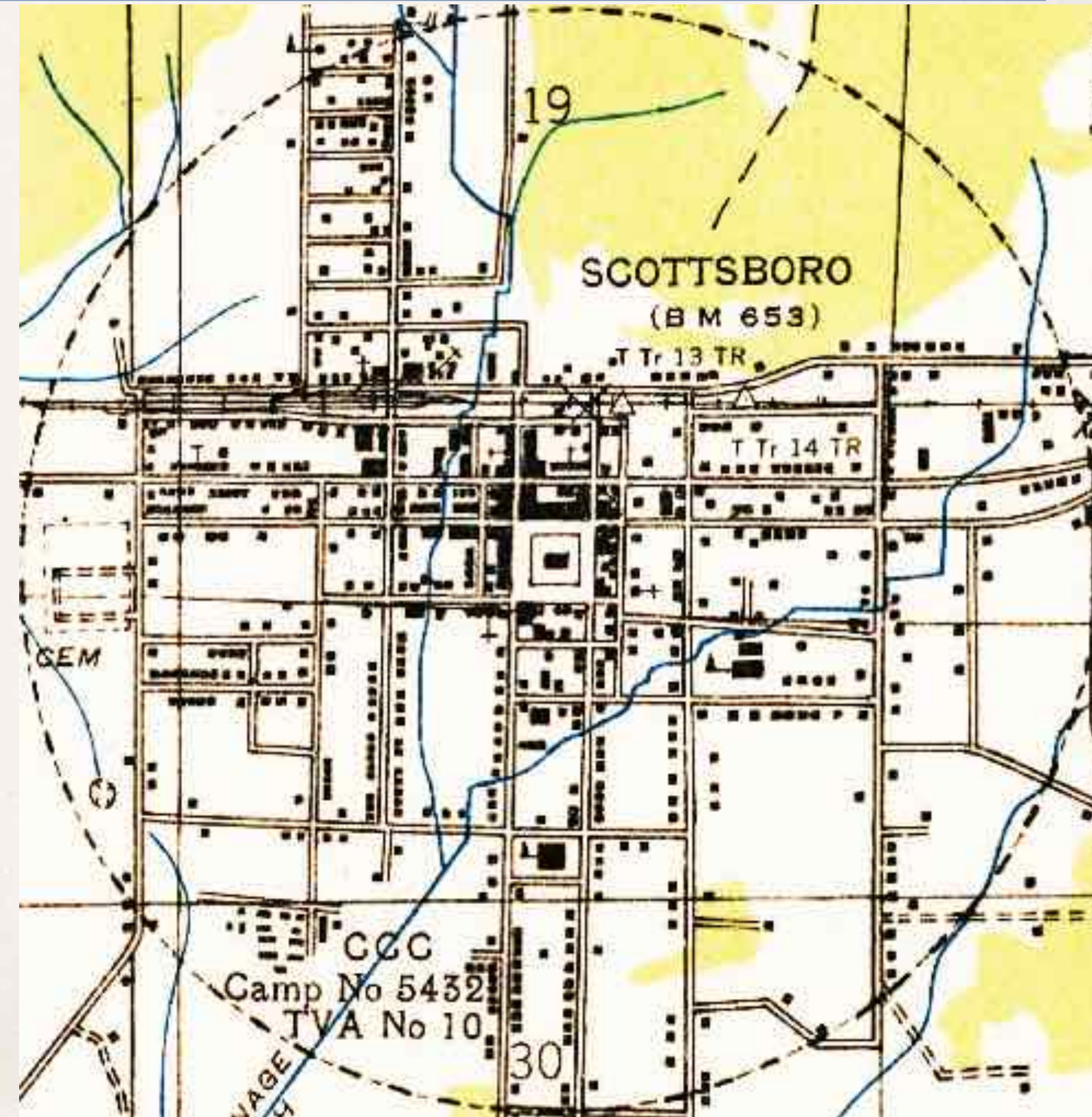
- ❖ In March 1933, Franklin Roosevelt created the CCC to work on natural resource projects, and Alabama took immediate advantage of this useful program.
- ❖ After Roosevelt took office in March 1932, he enacted his plan “to recruit thousands of young men, enroll them in a peacetime army, and send them into battle against destruction and erosion of our natural resources.” (1938 CCC Yearbook, p. i)
- ❖ Congress got behind President Roosevelt and in March 1933 enacted the Emergency Conservation Work Act, whose purpose was to relieve the poverty of many families and also replenish and protect the nation’s natural resources.
- ❖ Roosevelt was so proud of these young men that he had them march in his 2nd inaugural parade.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

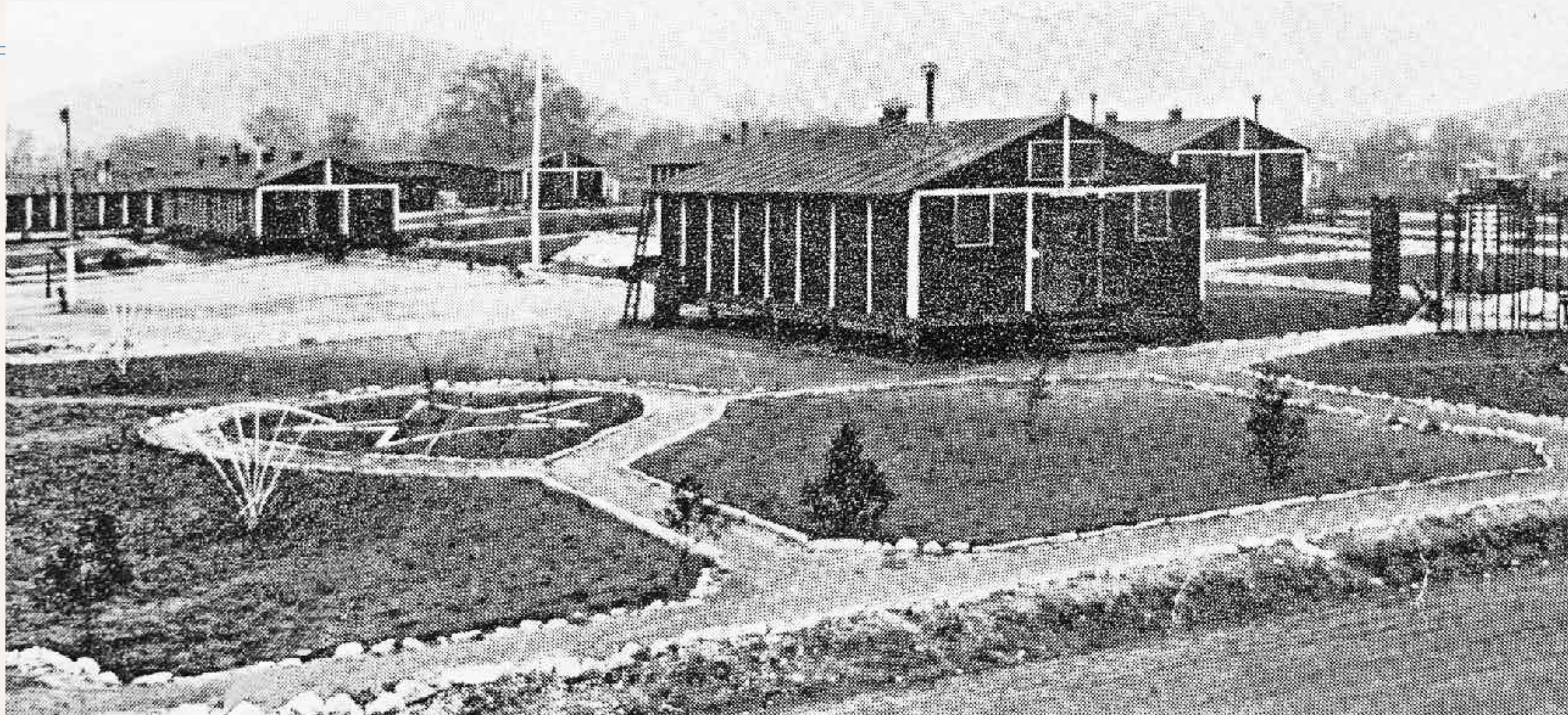


Judy Hubbard Arnold's father was in the CCC:

- ❖ An enrollee into the CCC was paid thirty dollars per month, twenty-five of which would be sent back to his family.
- ❖ He had to be single, unemployed, and between the ages of 18 and 25.
- ❖ The War Department, in cooperation with the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Labor, administered the program and provided the needs of the men.
- ❖ Immediate needs included food, clothing, education, shelter, transportation, and religious services. The earliest enrollees wore surplus uniforms from World War 1.
- ❖ The CCC boys worked 40 hours a week and had their evenings and weekends free. Each camp had a recreation building, education building, and infirmary.
- ❖ The men lived in barracks (40 men) and ate in a mess hall.



CCC Camp 5432, or TVA Camp 10 in Scottsboro



Located on Parks Avenue near the location of Dr. Durwood Hodges' and Dr. Bolton's clinics., as the 1936 USGS map shows. Nearly the same photo can be taken today from the Owens parking lot. With all the trees and buildings on Parks Avenue today, we had to stand in an open space in Cedar Hill Cemetery to shoot the same perspective on Poorhouse Mountain (left) and July Mountain (right).

Scottsboro CCC Camp

- ❖ The CCC boys were high school age. The Scottsboro camp had a winning basketball team and a champion boxer.
- ❖ Many from poor families received their first professional medical exam and inoculations at the camp infirmary.
- ❖ In the 1948 annual, the write-up stated that 26 boys had learned to read and write in CCC camp.
- ❖ Many learned skills they used the rest of their lives.
- ❖ CCC 1938 Yearbook: <http://www.jchaweb.org/downloads/cccc1938.pdf>





CCC Alabama Accomplishments

- ❖ Between 1933 and 1942, an average of 30 CCC camps operated in Alabama. Their work was recognized in 2015 with a statue in front of the Cheaha Observation Tower that they built. The state's total participation in the CCC program was \$55 million.
- ❖ The *Moulton Advertiser* of July 16, 1942, provides a statistical summary of the work of Alabama's CCC boys:

1,800 miles of roads built

490 bridges constructed

188 buildings erected for the protection and administration of forest lands and for public recreational areas 1,430 miles of telephone lines strung

61 lookout towers built

More than 2,200 miles of firebreaks constructed

More than 285,000 bushels of pine cones gathered

20,000 denuded areas replanted to provide future forests

114,000 acres of timber improved

Numerous recreational areas developed with improved hunting and fishing



CCC Statue in Cheaha Park, Photo from the Anniston Star, May 30, 2015

Civil Works Administration



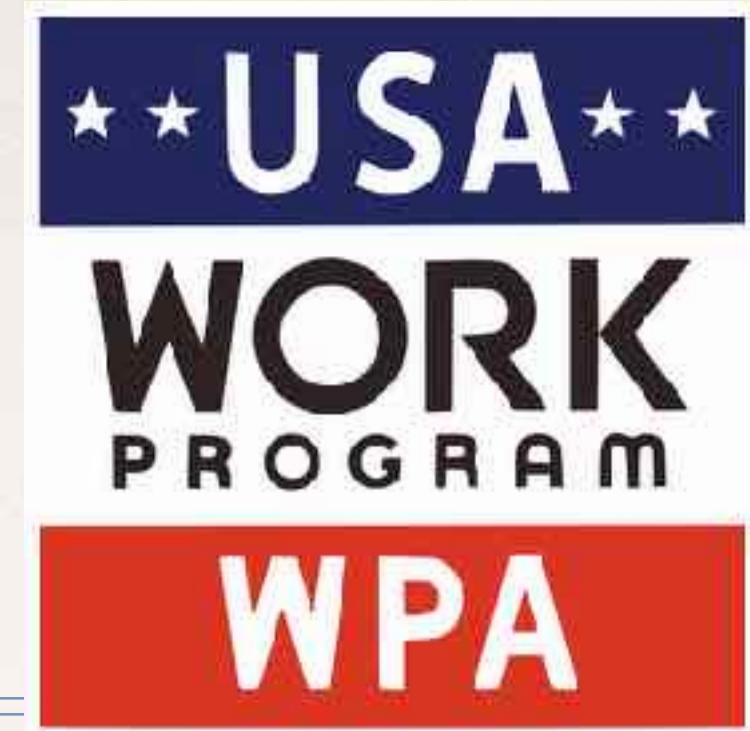
- ❖ The Civil Works Administration (CWA) was a very early program, and short-lived, but it funneled money to the places where it was needed during its short life. It was started November 8, 1933, and ended March 31, 1934.
- ❖ The program spent \$200 million a month and put 4 million people to work. Its goal was to create manual labor jobs for the unemployed.
- ❖ The February 1, 1934 *The Progressive Age* reported on the results of malaria control project funded by the Federal and State CWA. “This program is carried on under general supervision of the State Health Department, with two assistant state directors, and 14 supervisors who are experienced in sanitary engineers. A county supervisor, Mr. Charles Hartman, has charge of the work locally, and 15 skilled and unskilled men have been employed on the projects. They have dug 1,800 feet of ditches to drain 125 acres of land,” benefitting about 300 people.
- ❖ Much of the work started by the CWA was completed by the Work Progress Administration (WPA).⁴⁹

Works Progress Administration (WPA)



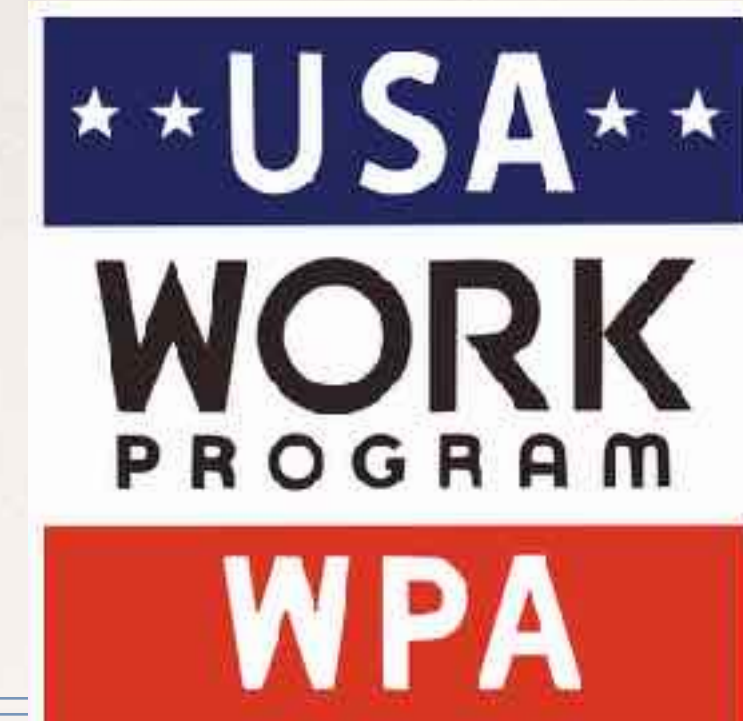
- ❖ The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was the largest and most diverse of the New Deal public works programs.
- ❖ It was created to alleviate the mass unemployment of the Great Depression and by the time it ended in 1943, the WPA had put 8.5 million Americans back to work.
- ❖ Roosevelt created the WPA on May 6, 1935 with Executive Order No. 7034, under authority of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935.
- ❖ Harry Hopkins was the first administrator of the WPA, serving from July 1935 through December 1938. This summary of this agency is from *The Living New Deal* web site: <https://livingnewdeal.org/glossary/works-progress-administration-wpa-1935/>

Works Progress Administration (WPA)



- ❖ The majority of WPA projects built infrastructure, such as bridges, airports, schools, parks, and water lines.
- ❖ In addition, the Federal Project Number One programs undertook theater, music, and visual arts projects, while other service programs supported historic preservation, library collections, and social science research.
- ❖ The WPA also employed women in sewing rooms and school classrooms and cafeterias, and in the later run-up to war it improved many military facilities.
- ❖ The volume and diversity of work was so large that one researcher wrote at the time: “An enumeration of all the projects undertaken and completed by the WPA during its lifetime would include almost every type of work imaginable...from the construction of highways to the extermination of rats; from the building of stadiums to the stuffing of birds; from the improvement of airplane landing fields to the making of Braille books; from the building of over a million of the now famous privies to the playing of the world’s greatest symphonies.”
- ❖ An inventory of WPA accomplishments in the Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43 includes 8,000 new or improved parks, 16,000 miles of new water lines, 650,000 miles of new or improved roads, the production of 382 million articles of clothing, and the serving of 1.2 billion school lunches

How the WPA Was Implemented



- ❖ The WPA employed people directly. A typical project began at the local level, with city and county governments assessing their needs and unemployment numbers.
- ❖ Proposals were then sent to a WPA state office for vetting before being forwarded to headquarters in Washington, D.C. and, finally, to the president for final approval. Projects could be rejected anywhere along this three-step process, and were not imposed on local communities by the Federal government.
- ❖ Normally, localities had to provide about 12-25% to trigger federal funding of WPA projects
- ❖ In 1939, after a federal government reorganization, the Works Progress Administration was renamed the “Work Projects Administration” and was placed under the newly created Federal Works Agency.
- ❖ With the advent of World War II and absorption of the ranks of the unemployed into war production and the military, the WPA was gradually shut down. Official termination came on June 30, 1943, per a December 4, 1942 presidential letter to the Federal Works Administrator, while the Second Deficiency Appropriation Act of July 13, 1943 established liquidation procedures.

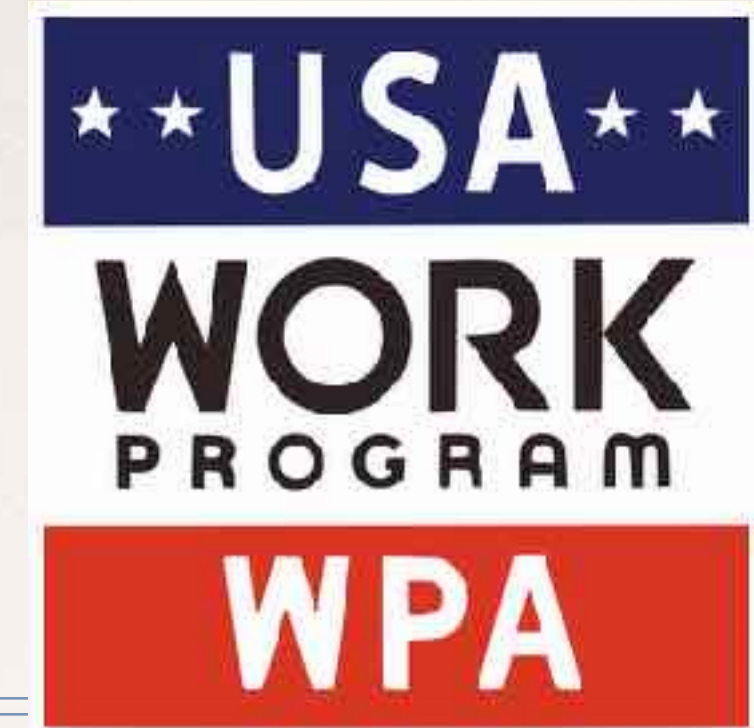
Jackson County WPA Projects



Project Description	Date	Federal Amount Allocated	Details
1. Surface the Lee Highway from Scottsboro to Hollywood 2. Surface the Lee Highway from Bridgeport to the Tennessee Line	7/11/35 Announced 11/20/35	One third of amount "the way plan" (county, state, federal. Cost \$49,000. WPA provides \$13,163	150 men for 6 months
Building an airport in Scottsboro and the "engineering necessary hereto."	10/17/35	\$42,000	Rejected. Tentative Allocation. "No agitation for an airport around here at the present time."
Improving the road between Scottsboro and the Marshall County line.	10/31/35	\$30,749	
Improving road from Scottsboro to DeKalb County for four miles.	10/31/35	\$39,077	
School repair	10/31/35	\$912	

WPA Projects

Project Description	Date	Federal Amount Allocated	Details
Community service programs	10/31/35	\$560	
Construct school buildings at Cumberland Mountain Farm	10/31/35	\$21,277	
Repairs at school	10/31/35	\$2,135	
Nursery school in Scottsboro	11/20/35	\$2,270	
Road headquarters in Scottsboro	11/20/35	\$6,132	
Island Creek Bridge	2/27/35		Amounts for supplies and labor called out in the county budget
Princeton School, completion one wing and auditorium	2/27/36	\$7,377	
First aid, home planning and sewing training for girls under Mrs. Clarence Kirby	7/16/36	Unknown	Classes offered at a number of locations around the county.
Summary county budget, funds debursed for WPA programs. Might include labor for the new post office and the TB hospital.	1/14/37	\$2114.15	Mostly payments for labor. Largest charge was 631.00 for supplies for wire bridge.
Athletic field complex at corner of Parks and Broad. Football field and playground.	3/17/37	\$10,000	
New JCHS building, new Bridgeport High School, and new Stevenson grammar school	Start date unknown	Amount unknown	Dedicated on March 21, 1940 with WPA representative as speaker
Scottsboro Colored Library	Start date unknown	Amount unknown	Dedicated February 7, 1941, Located on Lee Highway near Darnell and Hollis Store. WPA representative was speaker.



WPA Detractors

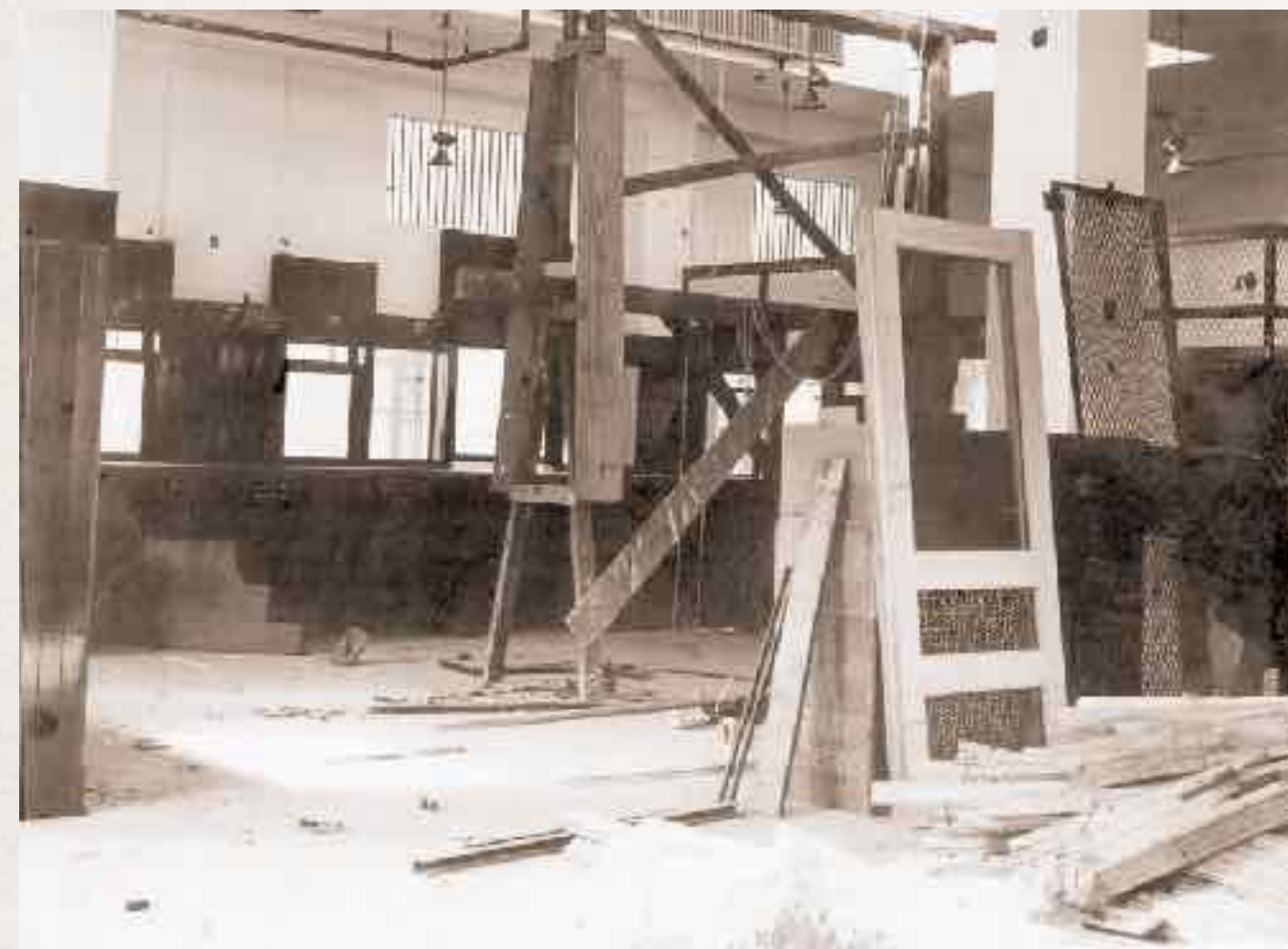
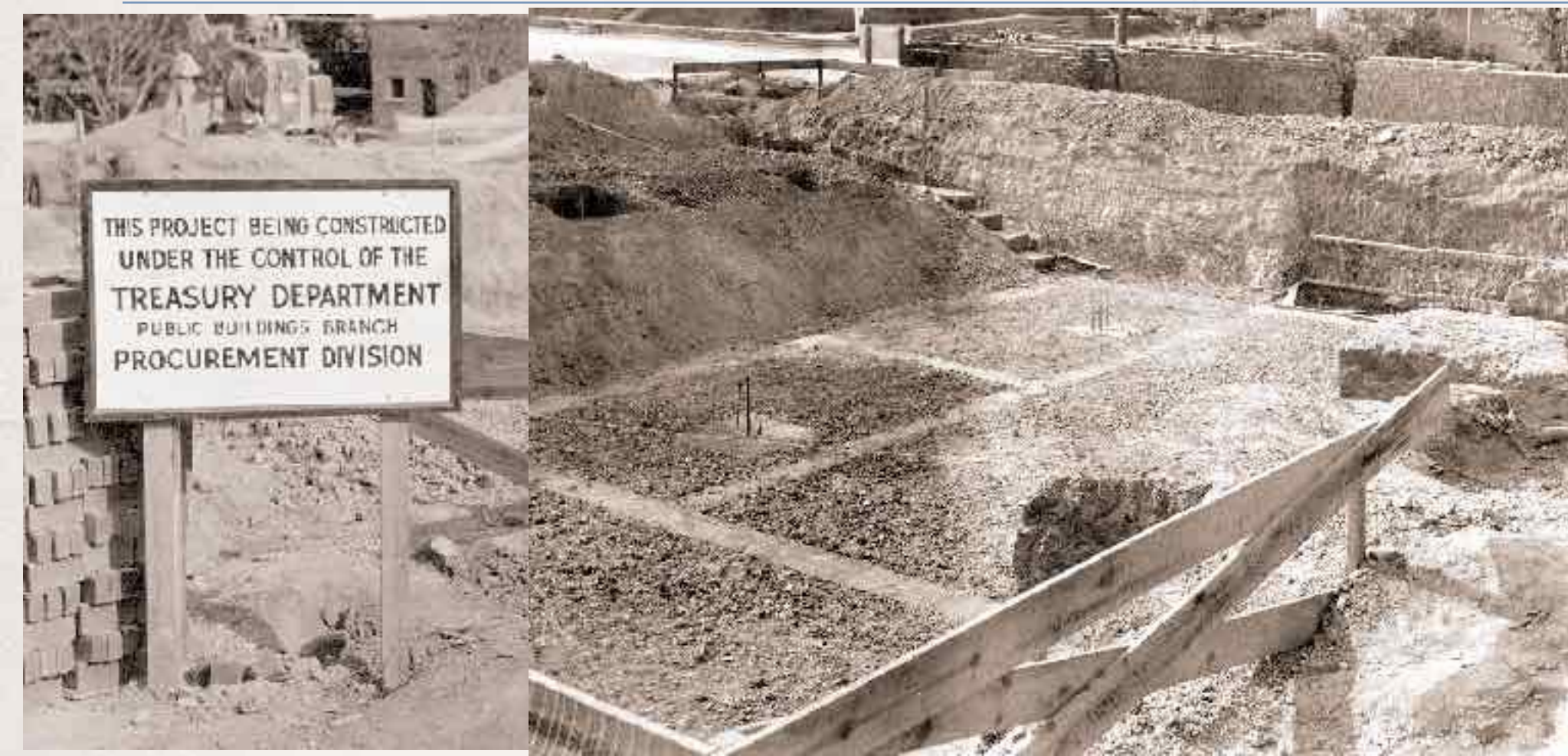


JACKSON COUNTY SENTINEL_1937-05-06.pdf (page 4 of 5)

—:—
WPA Foreman—What kind of work can you do, young man?
Applicant—Nothing.
Foreman—Good! Now I won't have to lose any time breaking you in—
Chilsea Record.

- ❖ The WPA programs were not without controversy. Conservatives worried about the amount of money being spent and the effectiveness of WPA workers.
- ❖ *The Jackson County Sentinel* ran this joke in May 1937. *WPA Foreman*—What kind of work can you do, young man? *Applicant*—Nothing. *Foreman*—Good! Now I won't have to lose any time breaking you in. Others joked that WPA stood for “we piddle around.”

WPA Project: Scottsboro Post Office



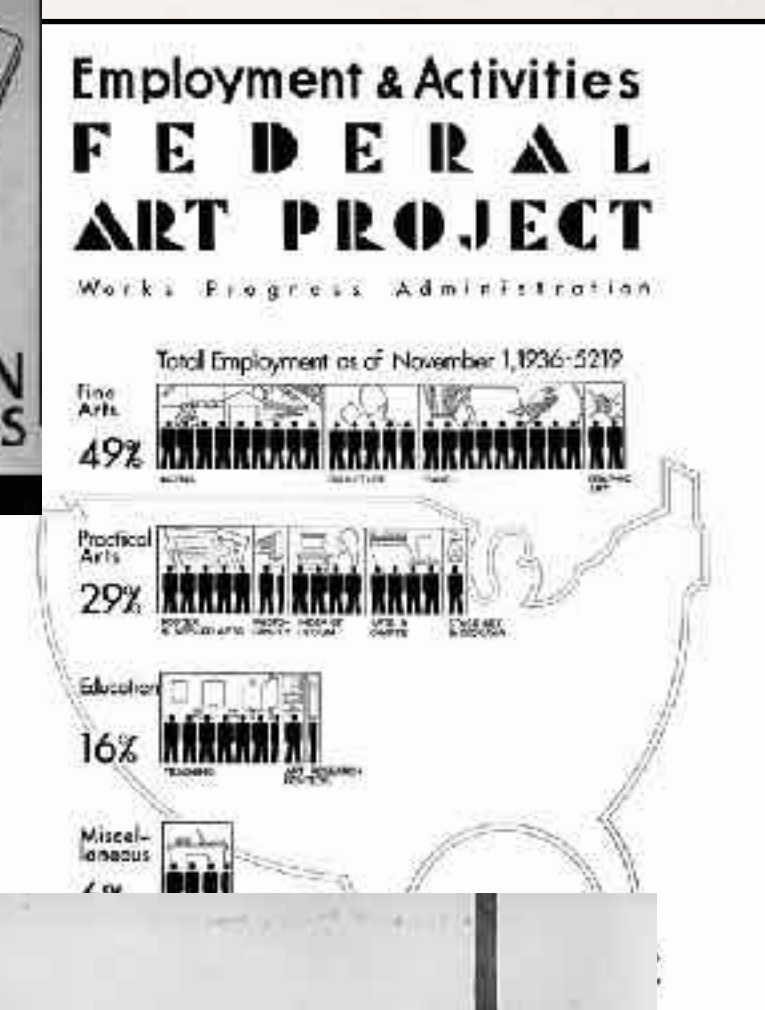
WPA Project: New Jackson County Jail



Federal Arts Project



- ❖ One of the most insightful aspects of Roosevelt's vision for putting America back to work was that FDR addressed the broad spectrum of citizens who needed help.
- ❖ The Federal Art project hired unemployed writers, photographers, and artists to create art for public buildings.
- ❖ The two most common structures built under the New Deal were post offices and courthouses. Not all the buildings constructed during this period received decoration, but twenty-four works were created in Alabama (a typical number for a state of its size), twenty-three in post offices and one in a courthouse (the Madison County United States District Court building in Huntsville). Several other murals were proposed for Alabama but never completed.
- ❖ The standard New Deal post office carried a decorative allotment of \$650-750, covering a space about twelve by five feet above the postmaster's door. The courthouses, larger and more costly, could pay a commission of \$3,000 and covered much more extensive surfaces. From the allotted funds the artist was required to purchase all the necessary supplies and pay the costs of installation and photographs. Payment to the artist came in three installments: when the initial sketch was approved, when a scale drawing was approved, and when the final panel was verified as in-place by the local postmaster.
- ❖ To see all the WPA murals remaining in the state, go to: <http://wpamurals.org/alabama.htm>



Constance Ortmyer and “Alabama Agriculture”



- ❖ Is a plaster bas-relief sculpture in the Scottsboro post office just to the left of the front door.
- ❖ The sculpture was completed in 1940, four years after the completion of the post office, and is the work of Constance Ortmyer (1902–1988).
- ❖ Ortmyer was an American artist, the daughter of Austrian-born Rudolph Ortmyer, who worked as a lithographer. She studied in Vienna and London and returned to the US in 1932.
- ❖ Was sculpture instructor at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. She entered a national design competition and was awarded commissions to design and create two bas reliefs for post offices in Arcadia, FL and in Scottsboro.
- ❖ Retired in 1968 and died in 1988.



Constance Ortmayer and “Alabama Agriculture”



- ❖ “Alabama Agriculture” is a set of three plaster panels based on the growing of cotton and corn in the state.
- ❖ Ortmayer described the work thus:

“Three phases of cotton growing form the theme of the central panel. On the right the cultivation of the crop is symbolized by the young man working with a hoe among the new plants. Opposite a young woman is depicted picking ripened bolls, and for the background, the processing and shipping of cotton is represented by the bales and the strong figure of a second young worker standing between them. Both of the flanking panels interpret the growing of corn. The young man and woman shown on the right are examining the fruit on the ripened stalks and the couple on the left are represented as workers who have harvested the new crop.”



Xavier Gonzalez and “Tennessee Valley Authority”



- ❖ Painter and sculptor born in Almeria, Spain. When he was 8, his family moved to Mexico, where he studied art and mechanical engineering.
- ❖ More famous of our two local FAP artists. His works are exhibited in several prestigious museums, and the *New York Times* ran his obituary when he died of leukemia in 1993. At various times in his career, he worked with Picasso.
- ❖ His mural was hanging in the Federal Courthouse in Huntsville. A new courthouse is being built. It is assumed the mural is still in the old building.
- ❖ Painted his mural on canvas and can be moved.

Xavier Gonzalez and “Tennessee Valley Authority”

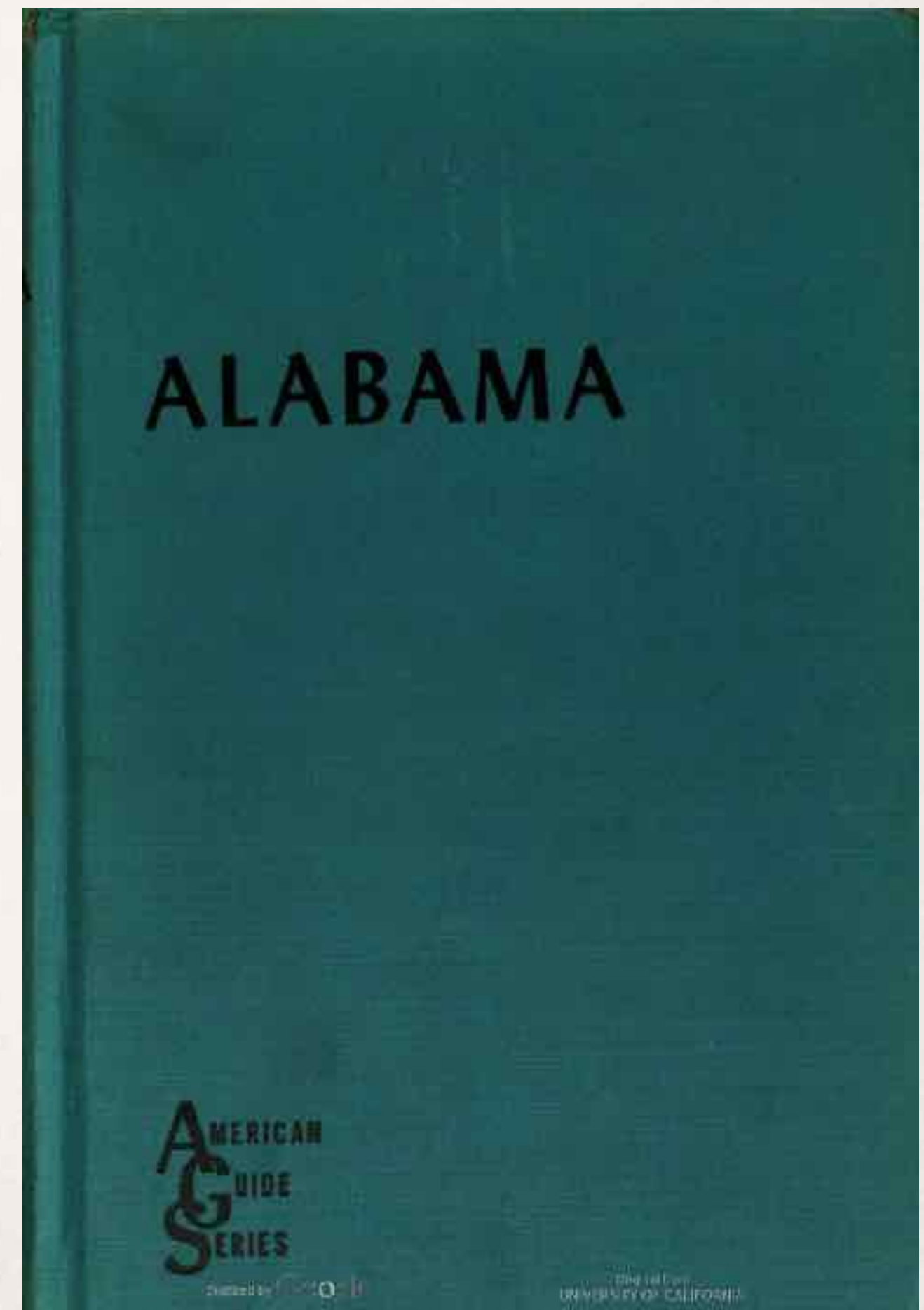


- ❖ TVA's Norris and Wilson dams and the mountains, valley, and the river
- ❖ The land (plowed, planted in furrows, and surrounded by rock walls) calling attention to TVA's work in the areas of erosion-control, soil conservation, and reforestation and scientific agriculture.
- ❖ Business services, banking, and industrial development
- ❖ Five figures in the foreground of the mural symbolizes different facets of an organized society.
 - ❖ Woman with a basket of fruit representing youth and fertility.
 - ❖ Young man holding the leaves of a corn stalk represents scientific agriculture, and the transition of learning from the natural environment to formal education through written resources.
 - ❖ Woman cradling a baby representing the traditional American ideals of motherhood and a happy home life.
 - ❖ Woman decorating a ceramic bowl on a Potter's Wheel, expresses the artistic endeavors that develop in a prosperous community. The patchwork quilt on her lap represents domestic crafts.
 - ❖ Brown-skinned man toiling with an iron anvil and hammer acknowledges the African-American residents of the valley, reminding us of hard work in some industries and persons relegated to the edges of society.

Federal Writers' Project



- ❖ Established July 27, 1935, funded by the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935.
- ❖ Employed more than 10,000 people and produced hundreds of publications including state guides, city guides, local histories, oral histories, ethnographies, and children's books.
- ❖ Provided employment for out-of-work writers, librarians, clerks, researchers, and historians.
- ❖ Some of the most notable writers who were part of this project included: Conrad Aiken, Saul Bellow, Max Bodenheim, John Cheever, Ralph Ellison, Studs Terkel, Richard Wright, and Frank Yerby.



Federal Writers' Project



These materials produced by the FWP are available online.

1. The Alabama Department of Archives and History WPA Alabama Writers' Project collection. Digitized by the Genealogical Society of Utah in 2007, this collection was published by the Archives in February 2014 and includes 145 folders (approximately 6,000 pages) FWP materials, primarily ex-slave tales, life histories, short stories, and folklore. Two folders in this collection contain Jackson County information
 - ❖ **Short Stories and Essays** compiled and edited by William P. Burke. These 22 pages were compiled between 1937 and 1939 and cover: The Escaped Convict (7 pages) Cottonseed (5 pages) State Laws, Two pages documenting unusual laws History of Jackson County, AL emphasizing Cherokee history and including a list of 1933 towns (3 pages) First Monday history (1 page printed in *Alabama Magazine*, Nov 22, 1937) Rabbit Raising (1 page printed in *Alabama Magazine*, Nov 22, 1937, Skyline Project (1 page printed in *Alabama Magazine*, Nov 22, 1937)



Federal Writers' Project



Short Stories and Sketches compiled and edited by Jennie Sue Williams. These 122 pages were compiled between 1937 and 1939 and cover the following topics:

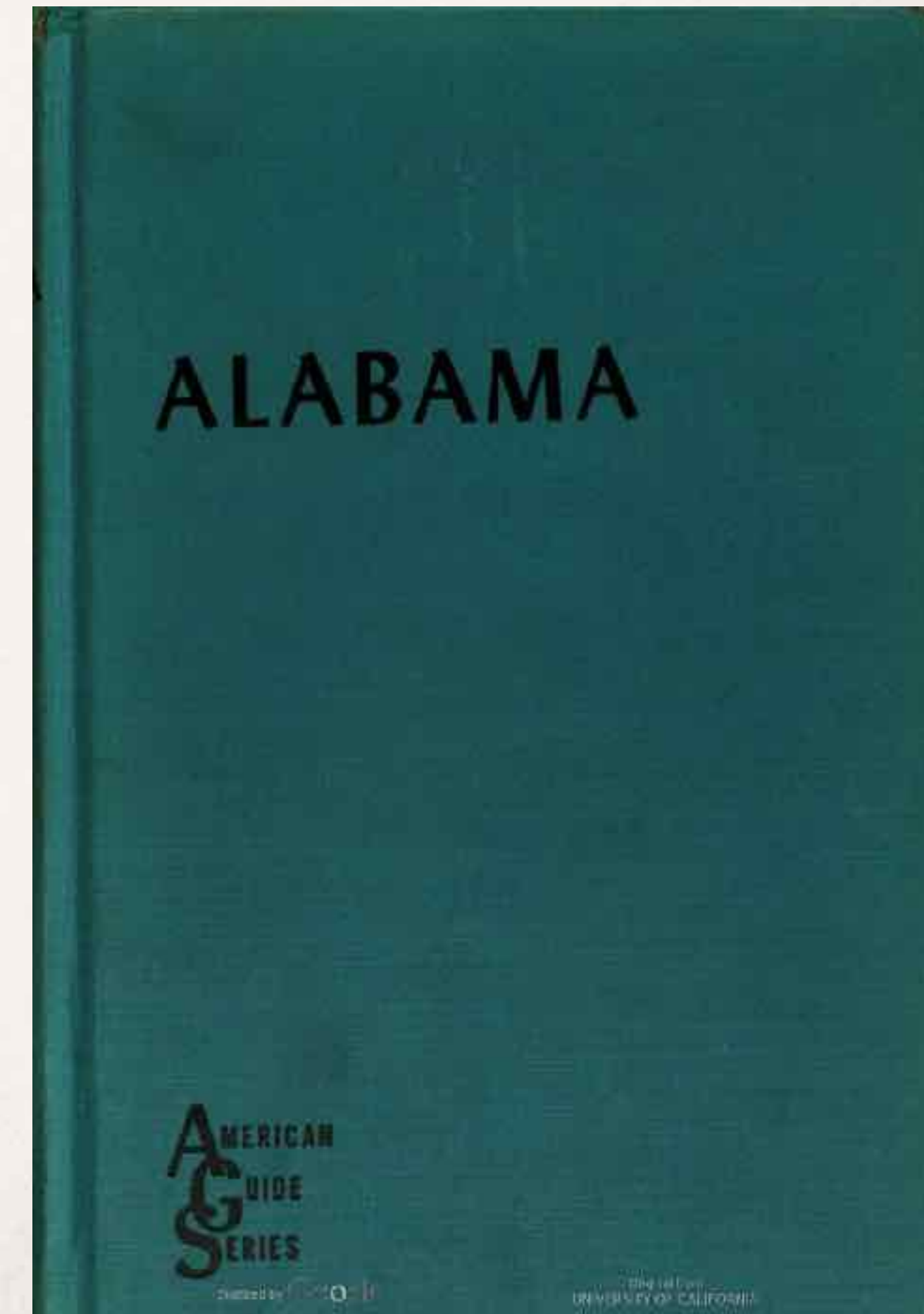
- ❖ The Walkers by Edgar Walker, landowner in Doran's Cove (5 pages); Mamie Turner, character sketch of Bridgeport resident (3 pages) ; Isaac Slaughter, slave narrative transcribed by Williams (7 pages); The Snodgrass Family, life story of the King David Snodgrass from Hollywood (6 pages); The Kelly Family of Bridgeport, teacher and car inspector, with character sketches of household members Juanita Chism Kelly, Harry A. Kelly, Harry Lynn Kelly, and Joyce Walker (colored maid) (10 pages); Interview with Dock Grant Hill (colored) from Bridgeport (6 pages); Interview with Mary Rodgers Paris of Bridgeport (6 pages) Oscar and Mary Ridley of Doran's Cove (4 pages); Emmel D. "Daddy" Morris of Bridgeport (5 pages) ; Frank and Paralee Coffee (Negro) of Bridgeport (1 page) The slave narratives are written in an embarrassing though period dialect. Apologies.

Download from: <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/wpa/id/772/rec/2>

Federal Writers' Project



- ❖ **Alabama Guide Series: The WPA Federal Writers' Project: The Guides:** Created through a cooperative effort of the federal and state organizations, the American Guide Series book were part travel guide, part almanac. They presented snapshots of the 48 states in the early 1940s. The Campbell Library at Rowan University has the full text of *Alabama: A Guide to the Depot South* online. First published in 1941, it was subsequently reprinted in 1941 and 1949. Various editions can be found online and can be bought as an eBook through Google. Rowan University reproduces the 1941 version. The best information on Jackson County in the book is part of a tour and includes sketches of Bridgeport, Stevenson, and Scottsboro.
- ❖ Download from: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b4469723&view=1up&seq=7>



Resettlement Administration



- ❖ The project was begun in 1934 by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), then operated by the Resettlement Administration (RA), and later by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) (Campbell and Coombs 1985: 244-255).
- ❖ The project, carved out of the Cumberland mountain wilderness, was intended to provide a new life for destitute families, most of whom were chosen based on their good name and character and work history (Campbell 1991).
- ❖ Families selected for the project were provided with 40-60 acre farms, a house, barn, farm equipment, livestock, and they were given loans to finance their farming. The overall plan was that the participants would make money from their farming and then repay the federal government for their farm, house, and loans.
- ❖ The project, however, was geared toward more than economic rehabilitation. Officials in the Franklin Roosevelt Administration saw this and similar projects as a way to improve the quality of rural life in America, and not just economically.

A Utopian Community





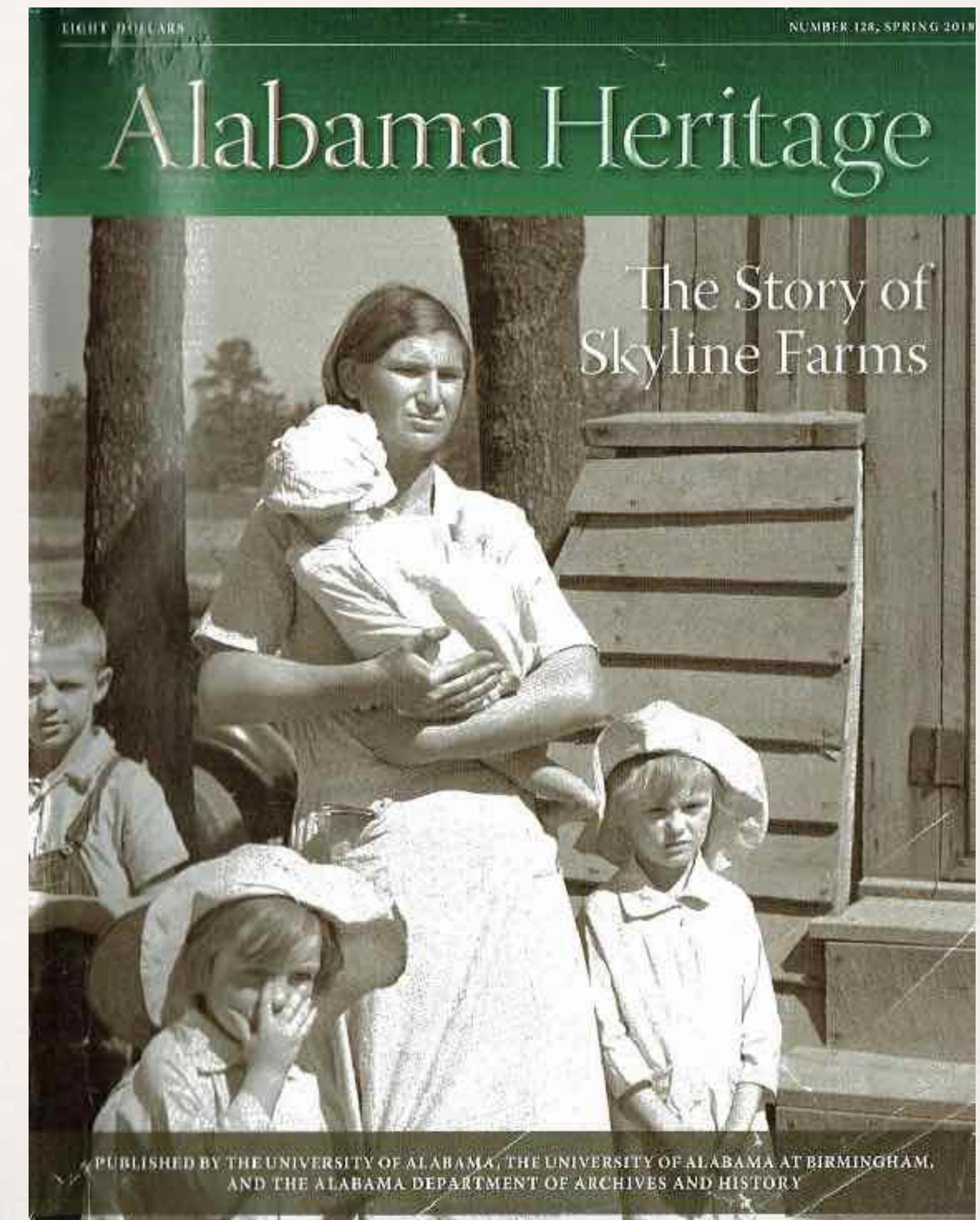
End of the Skyline Project

- ❖ The Skyline Farms Project itself turned few of the farm families into landowners.
- ❖ Agricultural problems plagued the project, and soon families were falling into debt, this time owing the government instead of banks or landowners.
- ❖ Efforts to stimulate the project, such as building a factory, were to no avail, and in 1944 the government decided to end the project.
- ❖ Many of the Skyline Farms families had left by then, taking other jobs as the economy improved, or moving north to work in industry. Only two families of the approximately two hundred at Skyline Farms obtained their farms.
- ❖ Still, there were many positives to the project. It had gotten families in need through the hard times of the Depression. Many, too, had learned job skills that they would use later in life. Furthermore, Skyline Farms children were educated at the picturesque sandstone school that had become the heart of the project. There was also a genuine effort to create among the participants a sense of pride in their cultural heritage.

Skyline Project Resources



- ❖ Dr. David Campbell's unpublished book
http://www.jchaweb.org/downloads/SkylineFarmsBook_DavidCampbell.pdf
- ❖ David Campbell and David Coombs 1983
http://www.jchaweb.org/downloads/DavidCampbellArticle_AppalachianJournal1983.pdf
- ❖ Joyce Kennamer's history of Skyline
<http://www.jchaweb.org/downloads/JoyceKennamerSkylinePaper1978.pdf>
- ❖ Alabama Heritage article by Cynthia Rice
http://www.jchaweb.org/downloads/SkylineFarms_ALHeritageSpring2018.pdf
- ❖ Skyline Farms Heritage Association FaceBook page



WPA Photographers at Skyline



- ❖ **Carl Mydans** (1906-2004) was born and raised in Boston. He worked for the FSA only a short time, but it was long enough to bring him to Alabama in June 1936 to photograph the Skyline Project. Later in 1936 he was hired as one of the four photographers to help launch *Life* magazine; he remained an active staff photographer until the magazine closed in 1972. Those 36 years, during which he covered major news events in the United States, Europe, and Asia, were the most important years in his career.



WPA Photographers at Skyline



- ❖ **Arthur Rothstein** (1915-1985) Born to immigrant parents in New York City. Rothstein spent a great deal of time in Alabama. He visited the Skyline Colony in September 1935 and again in February 1937. When he visited Skyline in September 1935, he photographed clearing and building in the new colony and the infrastructure that needed to be created—quarries, sawmills, and shingle making. He photographed raw temporary homes and the newly resettled families. The Library of Congress has 36 photographs from this 1935 visit. He visited Skyline again in February 1937 and photographed new structures like the rock store and the school. The Library of Congress has 7 photographs from the 1937 visit.



WPA Photographers at Skyline



- ❖ Ben Shahn (1898-1969) is unique among these three photographers in that he is better known as a painter and a lithographer than as a photographer. He visited the Skyline Colony in 1937 and took some of the most memorable photos of musicians and craftsmen and of the Skyline Band and Dancers. His photos seem to have been taken at Skyline, not on the trip to Washington. There are 65 Skyline photos found in the Library of Congress.



Important Resources

- ❖ *Digging Out of the Great Depression* from the Birmingham Historical Society. For sale on Amazon or can be downloaded for free from the Alabama Archives.
- ❖ The Living New Deal website: <https://livingnewdeal.org>
- ❖ JCHA Web site downloads: <http://www.jchaweb.org/downloads.html>

