PRIMARY SOURCES

Choosing the Secret City:
The Creation and Importance of
Oak Ridge, Tennessee
Robert Boggild

War: World War, 1939-1945
Branch: Army Air Forces/Corps
Unit: Corps of Engineers
Service Location: Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Manila (Philippines)
A preliminary agricultural map of Tennessee based on the distribution of geological formations.
General planning. A graphic map used in conjunction with the river transport development program of the Authority.
This map depicts the dams and river ways of the Tennessee Valley in relation to the war effort.
August 12, 1942.

Mr. Gordon R. Clapp,
General Manager,
Tennessee Valley Authority,
Nashville, Tenn.

My dear Mr. Clapp:

Your letter of July 22 and supplemental teletype message of July 28 concerning the availability of power in the Clinch River area have been received.

Since receipt of these communications, a representative of this office contacted Mr. Herbert S. Marks, Acting Chief, Power Branch, War Production Board. He stated the conclusions of the Power Branch concerning the Clinch River site as follows: "-- It will be practicable for the TVA System to supply to this site the entire amount of power required. During the late summer and fall of 1943, should 1943 be a dry year, it is probable that supply of your requirement would cause or would increase, curtailment of other uses of power, but the interconnected power network is so extensive that such curtailment would not be likely to result in interference with war production or to occasion serious civilian hardship. From the transmission standpoint, the site is feasible, although a site adjacent to Watts Bar or a site further down on the Tennessee River would be somewhat better. At your proposed site an additional transmission circuit (not over 40 miles) might be required if the load reaches 100,000 kw." This statement by Mr. Marks is in reply to an inquiry for information as to availability of power supply for a load approximately as follows:

1st half 1943 7,000 kw increasing to 12,000 kw
2nd half 1943 30,000 kw increasing to 60,000 kw
1st half 1944 100,000 kw possibly increasing to 150,000 kw

In selecting the Clinch River site this office considered sites in the vicinity of Watts Bar and also sites on the lower part of the Tennessee River. However, climate and other considerations rule out sites in Alabama, Mississippi, and Western Tennessee and no other suitable site was found north of Chattanooga.
The site selected will not displace the large number of people indicated in your letter since practically all the small towns located in the vicinity will be excluded in the taking.

In regard to water requirements, the larger portion of our requirements can be taken from the Watts Bar pool thereby resulting in no detrimental effects to your power service for the heavy war loads. However, in this regard information is requested as to what arrangements can be made for a minimum daily average flow of 150 c.f.s. of water in the Clinch River below Clinton. If this is too serious a drain on your power service requirements, it is requested that you state the minimum flow that could be maintained.

The selection of the site now being considered was made after considerable study was given to the TVA area and other areas. Colonel T. B. Parker and Mr. John P. Ferris of your organization gave us significant assistance and information upon which to base a decision. The site tentatively selected appears to comply most fully with the following requirements:

1. The land area of the project should preferably be all in one tract and yet should be in rugged enough terrain to provide isolation for certain portions of the project. A minimum of 100 square miles is required. The Clinch River site with its series of valleys and ridges provides almost ideal possibilities for isolation of the several portions of the project.

2. The site should be isolated from any large center of population and yet must be near enough to a source of labor supply to provide for operation and construction. The twenty or twenty-five miles distance separating the site from Knoxville meets this requirement.

3. A labor pool of from 2,000 to 5,000 men will be needed for construction and operation. Except for certain technicians the type of labor available in Knoxville and vicinity will be suitable.

4. The exact amount of water required has not been definitely determined, but large quantities as cool as possible should be available.

5. The transportation requirements for the project are small. The requirements for construction are greater than for operation. The site should be easily accessible from all parts of the country by rail and by air.
6. There is no particular waste disposal problem that cannot be solved by normal methods.

7. From the standpoint of research, the type of personnel involved, and certain phases of operation, a mild climate throughout the year is desirable. The Clinch River site does not have an ideal climate but is much more suitable than other sites considered.

Consideration has been given to the effect of the project upon the proposed Melton Hill Power and Navigation Dam. Except for a few small levees required the dam will not interfere with the project and data now available indicate that there is no hazard which will endanger the dam or its foundations.

I appreciate the assistance and cooperation on this project extended by you and others of your organization, particularly Col. F. B. Parker, Mr. John P. Ferris, and Mr. W. E. Chisholm who supplied valuable information and help when my representatives were in Tennessee for the purpose of inspecting available sites. Unless you advise to the contrary my representatives will continue to consult with these individuals as problems concerning the TVA and the project arise.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Thomas M. Robbins,
Major General,
Assistant Chief of Engineers.

8/19/42-400

CC: Mr. D. E. Lillienthal
    Dr. H. A. Morgan
    Mr. J. P. Pope
    Mr. J. P. Ferris—to prep. rep. for GN's sign., coord. with Messrs. Parker and Wassenaar
    Col. T. B. Parker
    Mr. C. O. Wassenaar
    Miss Marguerite Owen

Selection of The Oak Ridge Site
Reconnaissance erosion survey of the State of Tennessee. [1934]
IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

CIVIL ACTION NO. 429

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

56,000 Acres of land, more or less, situate in Roane and Anderson Counties, Tennessee, and B. C. Brower, et al.

NOTICE AS TO DECLARATION OF TAKING

TO THE UNITED STATES MARSHAL FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE — GREETING:

You are hereby commanded to notify Fred Walls and wife of Cheree

Surprise, Tennessee (Route 6)

or his tenants and/or agents that hereinafore on the 70th day of November 1948, a judgment on the Declaration of Taking No. 4, filed in the above entitled proceeding, gave the United States of America possession of Tract No. 29, containing 32.8 acres in Anderson County, Tennessee, in connection with the establishment of the Kingston Dam and Mill Range, as of 1st day of December 1948 (which tract of land is fully described in the Declaration of Taking No. 4 on file in my office), and to forthwith vacate said premises IMMEDIATELY.

You are further commanded that if none of the parties are found in actual possession of said premises to post a copy of this notice at a conspicuous place upon the premises and forthwith make due return of said service to this Court.

Witness my hand and the seal of this Court on the 31st day of November 1948.

LEE A. BEECHER, Clerk
United States District Court

(Seal)

Deputy Clerk
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<tr>
<th>Objective Observation</th>
<th>Subjective Observation</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Deduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Describe what you see in the photograph – the forms and structures, the arrangement of the various elements. Avoid personal feelings or interpretations. Your descriptions should help someone who has not seen the image to visualize it.</td>
<td>Describe your personal feelings, associations, and judgments about the image. Always anchor your subjective response in something that is seen. For example, “I see… and it makes me think of…”</td>
<td>Record prior knowledge based on experience, study, assumptions, and intuitions.</td>
<td>Make conclusions based on your observation and knowledge.</td>
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Questions: What questions does this photograph raise? What else would you need to know?
Ed Westcott’s Camera Pass 1940s Oak Ridge

Portrait of Ed Westcott Manhattan Project Photographer in Oak Ridge
Air View of X-10 ORNL Oak Ridge, Air View of X-10 ORNL Oak Ridge Tennessee 7/22/1948
Aerial View of K-25: This aerial photograph depicts K-25 and the surrounding area. K-25 was one of the uranium enrichment facilities at Oak Ridge that produced uranium for the Manhattan Project. K-25 was horseshoe shaped and covered an area of 44 acres. In the upper part of the photograph can be seen "Happy Valley," which was the residential area where construction workers and plant laborers lived.
An aerial view of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory campus.

Originally known as Clinton Laboratories, ORNL was established in 1943 to carry out a single, well-defined mission: the pilot-scale production and separation of plutonium for the World War II Manhattan Project. The laboratory was also highly involved in isotope research and production.
Before

Wheat Community 1939
Before

McKinney Cross-roads Store Wheat 1938
World War II created numerous “boomtowns” associated with the expanding shipbuilding, armaments, and aircraft industries. There were also “secret cities” built for workers involved in the development of the atomic bomb. These grocery clerks worked in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, site of several uranium-235 extraction facilities.
Before
Before
Before
After

Model House Oak Ridge
After

E Apartment Oak Ridge
Who Me?
Yes You..
Keep MUM
ABOUT
This JOB
"BATTLES ARE NOT WON
By ABSENTEES
SO STAY ON THE JOB
For VICTORY"
Billboard posted in Oak Ridge

WHAT YOU SEE HERE
WHAT YOU DO HERE
WHAT YOU HEAR HERE
WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE
LET IT STAY HERE
Writing Assignment

• Consider how and why Oak Ridge was chosen as a Manhattan Project site.

1. Was east Tennessee a good choice? Give reasons to support your answer.

2. Was the federal government justified in taking land from citizens in order to construct the city of Oak Ridge?
   • If you agree that it was justified, defend your claim.
   • If you think this plan was unjust, describe how the government could’ve handled things differently while trying to achieve their nuclear goals.