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THE COMMUNITIES OF EAST TENNESSEE,  
1850-1940: AN INTERPRETIVE  
OVERVIEW

*By* William Bruce Wheeler and Michael J. McDonald

From the time of its earliest settlement by whites, the area now known as East Tennessee has been a region less of sturdy individuals than of communities, groups of men and women who gathered together voluntarily for protection, economic interest, or to fulfill social and cultural needs. Over the years, some of those once-modest communities flourished and became mighty centers of commerce and industry. Others, founded at roughly the same times, remained quiet enclaves of a few stores, enough churches to cater to the theological idiosyncrasies of all the residents, and from 50 to 100 families. Still others became—and remained—bustling villages and no more, modest towns with immodest dreams but without the resources, power, or will to turn those dreams into realities. Indeed, by 1900 even the most superficial observers could recognize an amazing diversity among the communities of East Tennessee, diversity which would produce both exciting variety and serious socio-economic problems.

The purpose of this study is to explain historically the great diversity among East Tennessee communities which, for the most part, all began as tiny clusters of settlers carving their individual and collective futures out of the wilderness. Why did some of these outposts evolve into dynamic commercial and industrial centers, while others seemed to be almost suspended in time? Why did some grow while others remained static? More important, does the history of East Tennessee display some underlying geographical or ethno-cultural determinism which predestined these communities either to dynamism or to tranquility? We have chosen to use the methods of the new social history to answer these questions, and others. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a greater understanding of the history of East Tennessee—in its simultaneous progress and poverty, its cosmopolitanism and provincialism, and, indeed, in its somewhat schizophrenic views of past, present, and future. Even less modestly, we hope that this analysis will be of help to those East Tennesseans who propose to meet the region's present problems, which are the products of its past.

## EARLY CHANNELS OF CHANGE TO 1900

The economic and social diversity of communities in East Tennessee can be traced almost to the time of settlement. The earliest settlers, who began to arrive in numbers in the 1780's and 1790's, claimed the best land on the river plains of the Valley floor. Here the soil principally was rich loam, large streams and rivers provided adequate water transportation for small craft, and roads ("pikes") were easy to build and (due to a good limestone base) not difficult to maintain. Most of the early settlers were farmers, although towns and villages did spring up along the major waterways. What non-farm employment there was (blacksmiths, merchants, inn and tavern owners, saddlers) mainly served local economies or the numerous travelers who passed through the region on their way west.

The Great Valley, which runs from northeast to southwest, initially had plenty of room for settlement, being approximately 200 miles long, 55 miles wide at the northern end, and narrowing to 34 miles wide at the southern end. Yet the best land was snapped up rapidly by speculators, by prosperous farmers increasing their holdings and securing land for their large families, and by new settlers who continued to trickle into the region. Moreover, farmers who settled on the Valley floor were in a good position to engage in commercial agriculture, principally by selling their surplus grain and livestock to travelers moving through the Valley to western lands. Indeed, this commerce was an important source of income for Valley floor farmers until the 1830's.<sup>1</sup>

It was only a matter of time before new settlers were unable to obtain land on the Valley floor and were forced eastward and westward off the floor, at first onto the ridges and rolling hills and ultimately into the high mountains of the Blue Ridge and Cumberland chains. There was less fertile land on the ridges and, although some mountain areas had rich loam, the slope was often too steep for cultivation. In the Cumberlands there was almost no water transportation linking the plateau to the Valley floor, and in both the Blue Ridge and Cumberland areas what few roads there were were in almost universally poor repair, in some cases little more than wagon tracks.

<sup>1</sup> On length and width of Valley, its soil and roadways see Earl C. Case, *The Valley of East Tennessee: The Adjustment of Industry to Natural Environment* (Nashville, 1925), 1, 6, 9. The entire Tennessee River is 652 miles long from Knoxville to Paducah, roughly one-third of it in East Tennessee. Wilmon Henry Droze, *High Dams and Slack Waters: TVA Rebuilds a River* (Baton Rouge, 1965), 3.

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Heavy snowfalls or spring thaws often isolated the small communities of the uplands, not only from the Valley floor towns but from each other as well.

Traveling alone could be dangerous, for the mountains contained bears, bobcats, and poisonous snakes. Few visitors broke the isolation. There were almost no physicians, very few ministers, and only an occasional peddler or "drummer," who wandered by to sell cloth and iron goods, mirrors, and other products. According to one historian, many peddlers were so unscrupulous that they increased the suspicion of Valley floor townspeople held by men and women in the more isolated mountain communities.<sup>2</sup>

On the Valley floor, for the most part, towns were modest in size. By 1860, the population of Knoxville had reached only about 3,700, and Chattanooga, with about 2,500 residents, was described by one reporter as "an overgrown country village." On the other hand, Memphis and Nashville, towns which benefited immensely from river traffic, boasted larger populations. The anemic growth rate of the Valley's nascent cities was largely because their webs of commerce did not extend very far from the towns themselves, and what manufacturing that did exist was modest and almost exclusively for local markets. Thus, while the populations of Middle and West Tennessee continued to increase rapidly after 1820, that of East Tennessee grew at a more modest rate, gains due less to influxes of newcomers than to a high rate of natural increase.<sup>3</sup>

The relative lack of commerce and industry was due to the area's paucity of modern transportation facilities. Although the Tennessee River could serve small craft and flatboats for short distances, essentially it was unnavigable for larger boats or over long distances, a fact recognized by early residents who sought federal support in 1819 to build a canal linking the river to Mobile. The French Broad River was more navigable and did see some steamboat activity, but that traffic was only between Knoxville and Dandridge. Roads along the Valley floor for the most part were good and certainly far superior to those in

<sup>2</sup>See Smoky Mountain Historical Society, *The Gentle Winds of Change: A History of Sevier County, Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Sevierville, 1986), 2-3, 59-60.

<sup>3</sup>On Knoxville see Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City* (Knoxville, 1983), 11-14. On Chattanooga see Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1962: From Tomahawks to TVA* (Chapel Hill, rev. ed., 1963), 313.

the Blue Ridge and Cumberland uplands. But road transportation was extremely slow (a wagon loaded with raw materials or goods could cover a distance of only around 16 miles per day) and therefore expensive. These poor transportation facilities undoubtedly acted to discourage urban functionality and with it urban growth, as did what was still essentially a barter economy in areas not near the towns. Hence, while transportation facilities on the Valley floor served to break down individual and community isolation and keep the citizens of the Valley floor in comparatively good touch with the "outside world," they were insufficient to stimulate much economic growth. One example will suffice: parts of Sevier County contained good deposits of iron ore, yet inadequate transportation facilities prevented shipping the ore to Knoxville for processing.<sup>4</sup>

This would lead one naturally to assume that it was the introduction of the railroad which both stimulated economic development on the Valley floor and vastly widened the economic, social, and cultural gap between the communities on the Valley floor and those in the Cumberland and Blue Ridge uplands. Yet it must be pointed out that the economic, social, cultural, and demographic chasm between floor and upland communities was already a wide one before the introduction of the railroad. In his analysis of this widening gulf, William H. Nicholls has demonstrated that by the 1850's the communities along the Valley floor which, aided significantly by the railroad, were to become important regional manufacturing centers already had relatively high manufacturing indices before the coming of the railroad. Perhaps more important, these Valley communities by 1850 had lower crude birth rates, smaller families, lower illiteracy rates, lower net migration rates, and a higher percentage of their male populations between the age of 18 and 44, as well as 45 and over. In contrast, the communities of the Blue Ridge were experiencing large population growth, crude birth rates among the highest in the nation, large families, and a significantly higher proportion of their respective populations below the age of 20.<sup>5</sup>

These socio-demographic differences between the floor and the uplands led Nicholls to argue for a kind of cultural readiness or preparedness for industrialization in certain communities on the

<sup>4</sup>*The Gentle Winds of Change*, 54-79.

<sup>5</sup> William H. Nicholls, "Some Foundations of Economic Development in the Upper East Tennessee Valley, 1850-1900, II," *Journal of Political Economy* LXIV (1956), 400-415.

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 28  
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Valley floor, a readiness which he explained by the number of Presbyterians and people of German descent on the Valley floor. For our part, we find Nicholls' explanations less than convincing. A better explanation, we think, is the fact that the Valley floor tended to have superior farmland, higher crop yields, easier access via turnpikes to the "outside world," the evolution of a cash economy, and hence more per capita prosperity. Moreover, if Knoxville's experience is a typical one, the town elites of merchants, professional men, and large real estate holders were growing progressively wealthier as secession approached and therefore had larger amounts of excess capital to invest in economic development once the railroad made those ventures feasible. Hence the railroad was to bring economic development to people on the Valley floor who were already prepared for it. Similar to the river traffic and turnpike building, the railroad served to deepen the channels of modernization along the Valley floor and leave the uplands relatively untouched. Topography, transportation facilities, and socio-cultural attitudes already were widening the gap between the people on the Valley floor and those in the uplands. One was economically and culturally prepared for modern economic development. The other was not.<sup>6</sup>

Another line of demarcation between the Valley and the uplands before the Civil War was that of slavery. Although slavery in East Tennessee never reached the levels of Middle and West Tennessee, it did exist, principally in the cities and towns and in the Valley counties. In those areas, slavery was a part of the economic and cultural life of the region. Traditionally, historians have minimized the impact of slavery in East Tennessee, explaining the supposed weakness of the "peculiar institution" either by topography, the economics of small farming, or the independence of the East Tennessean. Gradually, over time, all of these explanations have come under scrutiny and have been found wanting. Richard Wade and others have demonstrated slavery's remarkable flexibility and adaptability, suiting itself to all forms of agriculture as well as to urban life in the antebellum South's nascent industries. Further research will suggest

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 287, 302; Case, *The Valley of East Tennessee*, 6; Karen Thornton, "The Elite of Knoxville, Tennessee, in the Age of Jackson" (unpub. paper in possession of the authors). For early and brisk mercantile activity in Jefferson County see Mayme Parrott Wood, *Hitch Hiking Along the Holston River: A History of Strawberry Plains, Jefferson County, Tennessee, 1792-1962* (Nashville, 1986 reprint ed.).

that, while East Tennesseans were not as dependent on slavery as whites in other regions of the South, in East Tennessee slavery was a viable and growing institution. For example, in Bradley County from 1840 to 1860 the number of slaves was increasing at a faster rate than was the white population, until by 1860 slaves numbered roughly ten percent of the total population. For its part, Roane County's slave population in 1860 was nearly 20 percent of the county's total population. McMinn County in 1834 had an estimated slave population of 1,257 and Hamilton County had a large slave population as well. Furthermore, except in McMinn County, the institution seemed to be growing in the region, especially along the Valley floor. Moreover, throughout the area abolitionist sentiment was frowned upon after the 1830's. For example, when some alleged abolitionist tracts arrived at the post office in Athens the postmaster handed them over to a pro-slavery crowd, which quickly burned the offensive literature. Along with commercial ties to the south, slavery undoubtedly affected the extent of Unionist sentiment in East Tennessee.<sup>7</sup>

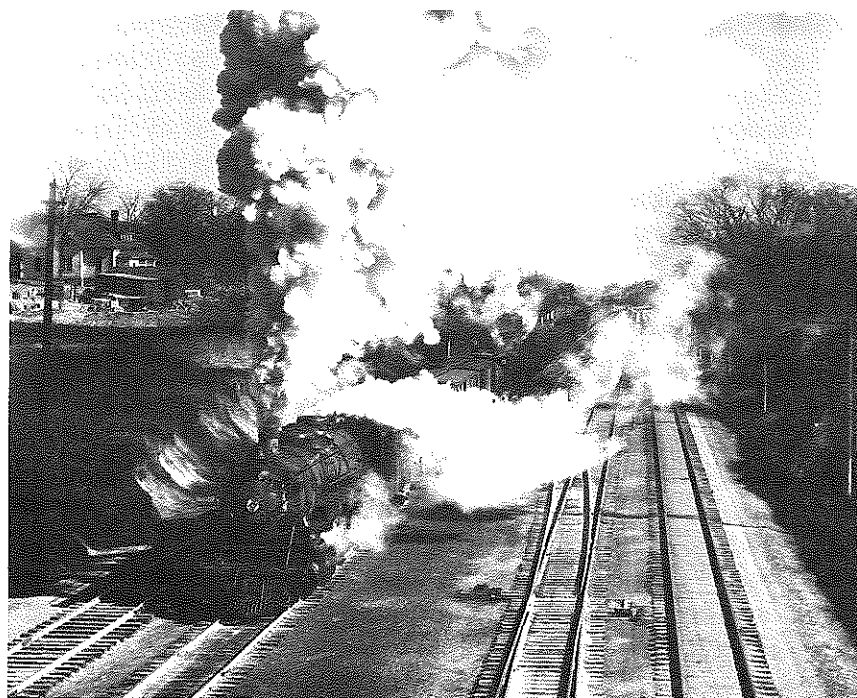
With the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860, the Tennessee legislature called for a statewide vote on whether or not the state should secede from the Union, as South Carolina already had done. From Athens northward along the Great Valley, Unionist feelings, with the exception of pro-secessionist Knoxville, were extremely strong and were even more pronounced along the ridges and mountains on either side of the Valley floor. From Athens to Chattanooga, however, Unionist sentiment was weaker and there was considerably more support for secession. For example, in the 1860 presidential canvass in McMinn County, the moderate John Bell received 986 votes to 978 for the more uncompromising John C. Breckinridge. In the first secession vote (on February 9, 1861), McMinn supported the Union by a three-to-one margin, but when a second statewide ballot was taken (on June 8, after Fort Sumter) the results in McMinn were 904 in favor of secession to 1,144 against. The town of Chattanooga supported secession, while the counties of

<sup>7</sup>Stephen C. Byrum, *McMinn County*, in *Tennessee County History Series* (Memphis, 1984), 23; Roy Lillard, *Bradley County*, in *Tennessee County History Series* (Memphis, 1983), 21; Jack Shelley and Jere Hall, eds., *Valley of Challenge and Change: The History of Roane County, Tennessee, 1860-1900* in *East Tennessee Historical Society's Community History Series* (Kingston, Tenn., 1986), 1; Ruth Webb O'Dell, *Over the Misty Blue Hills: The Story of Cocke County, Tennessee* (Easley, S.C., 2nd ed., 1982), 184. For the flexibility of slavery, see Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York, 1964).

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COURTESY TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

*Railroad construction along the Valley floor stimulated wholesale trade and industrialization.*

Hamilton and Bradley voted for the Union, although, as in McMinn, by considerably smaller margins than the counties of the upper Valley.<sup>8</sup>

#### THE RAILROAD AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Interest of East Tennesseans in railroads dates from the 1830's, when numerous towns along the Valley floor, especially Chattanooga and Knoxville, became excited at the prospect of connecting their would-be cities with the large commercial centers of the Northeast, South, and Midwest. Although several companies were formed and a good deal of money was collected, very little track was actually laid until the 1850's. In 1850, Chattanooga (renamed in 1838 from Ross's Landing) became the first town in the region to welcome the railroad. Within ten years Chattanooga had become a major rail junction and

<sup>8</sup>Byrum, *McMinn County*, 25-30; Lillard, *Bradley County*, 59. During the Civil War, McMinn County raised eight Confederate units and 12 Union companies. Byrum, *McMinn County*, 29-30. For its part, Bradley County raised eight Confederate units and seven for the Union Army. Lillard, *Bradley County*, 59.



its population had grown from next to nothing to 2,545. Throughout the 1850's, the East Tennessee & Georgia and the East Tennessee & Virginia railroads laid track up the Valley floor along the line of an old stagecoach route, until by 1860 passengers and freight could travel from Chattanooga or Knoxville to Washington, D.C. and New York or to Atlanta and Charleston.<sup>9</sup>

The Civil War temporarily suspended efforts both to build more railroads along the Valley floor (which would parallel the East Tennessee & Georgia Line) and to use railroad connections for economic development. Once the war was over, however, both activities were quickly taken up, and by the early twentieth century there were three parallel railroad lines along the Valley floor. Yet, except for a few small and costly lines into the isolated lumber, coal, and iron regions of the Cumberlands and Blue Ridge (like the Knoxville, Sevierville & Eastern, which opened rail linkages between Knoxville and Sevierville in 1909), railroad transportation was exclusively on the Valley floor.<sup>10</sup>

The advent of the railroad wrought an economic revolution in the Valley floor communities, one for which, as we have seen, the Valley floor's socio-cultural life was already prepared. In both Chattanooga and Knoxville the growth of wholesale trade was nothing short of astounding. Chattanooga's commercial hinterland to a large degree was south of the booming city, in the Georgia backcountry, whereas Knoxville had staked its claim to the middle and northern sections of the Valley floor and to the counties of the Blue Ridge. In 1869, the Knoxville Board of Trade was formed under the leadership of Massachusetts native Perez Dickinson to encourage the growth of Knoxville's commerce. By 1885, Knoxville was the fourth leading wholesaling center in the South, with an annual volume of business of between \$15 and \$20 million; by 1896 the booming city had

<sup>9</sup>Mary U. Rothrock, ed., *The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1946), 100-101, 108-112; Riley Oakley Biggs, "The Development of Railroad Transportation in East Tennessee During the Reconstruction Period" (MA thesis, University of Tennessee, 1934) 4-12; James Wendell Holland, "A History of Railroad Enterprise in East Tennessee, 1836-1860" (MA thesis, University of Tennessee, 1930), 360-63; Byrum, *McMinn County*, 43-45, 47; Lillard, *Bradley County*, 27; James W. Livingood, *Hamilton County*, in *Tennessee County History Series* (Memphis, 1981), 29, 35; Edwin Patton, "Transportation Development," in Lucile Deaderick, ed., *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1976), 195.

<sup>10</sup>Byrum, *McMinn County*, 48; Rothrock, ed., *French Broad-Holston Country*, 232; Patton, "Transportation Development," 196. On the Knoxville, Sevierville and Eastern (nicknamed the "Knoxville, Slow and Easy") see *The Gentle Winds of Change*, 64-68.

become the South's third leading wholesaler, with an annual dollar volume of approximately \$50 million.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the Civil War, the town of Chattanooga lay virtually in ruins, a victim of the wrath of conflicting armies. Yet few doubted that the town would be rebuilt and that it would become one of the important cities of the New South. Few could have imagined, however, how rapidly that rise would take place. After all, only thirty years had passed since the area had been known as Ross's Landing and was still Cherokee territory.

If there was little doubt as to *whether* Chattanooga eventually would become a great city, there was almost no doubt as to *how* this would be accomplished. An 1868 advertisement in the *Chattanooga Republican* bragged about the surrounding mineral resources and issued a "general invitation" to northern investors to come and settle in the ambitious town. In this, Chattanooga was similar to many towns of the postwar South which sought to lure northern capitalists to invest in industrialization in the former Confederacy. Later dubbed the "New South" movement by Atlanta editor and southern booster Henry Grady, this vision of an industrial South was taken up by literally dozens of towns and hamlets which dreamed of becoming southern Pittsburghs. Some, like Birmingham, Roanoke, and Atlanta, achieved this goal. Others remained wide places in the road.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time that Chattanooga and Knoxville were becoming major regional wholesaling centers (in 1874 Knoxville alone had over 50 wholesaling houses with 20 or more employees), both cities were becoming important manufacturing centers as well, had large deposits of iron and coal nearby, and initially concentrated their manufacturing in iron, iron products, and heavy machinery and equipment. Both also depended to an extent on outside capital and on northerners, who moved to Chattanooga or Knoxville because of the great opportunities these cities offered. In 1869, Knoxville, again under the leadership of Dickinson, formed an Industrial Association. More significant, two years earlier former Ohioan and Union veteran Hiram S. Chamberlain had founded the Knoxville Iron Company, which eventually employed over 800 workers. Each time a new manufacturing enterprise was founded in Knoxville, it was an encouragement to others until, between 1880 and 1887 alone, 97 new

<sup>11</sup>McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 16, 18.

<sup>12</sup>Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 281-311, 341; Livingood, *Hamilton County*, 97.

factories were built in the city. In addition to iron mills and machine shops, cloth mills, apparel factories, and furniture manufacturers sprang up and prospered. Between 1870 and 1890, capital investment in manufacturing in Knoxville had multiplied sixfold (to \$3,045,661) and the number of workers employed in manufacturing had reached 3,113.<sup>13</sup>

In Knoxville and Chattanooga, the mushrooming of commercial and industrial sectors stimulated what became a vigorous construction industry (over 5,000 new homes were built in Knoxville alone between 1895 and 1904, an average of over 500 per year). For its part, Chattanooga's geographical position was almost matchless. Railroad connections, once rebuilt, were excellent. Coal, iron, and timber were nearby. A labor force, white and black, was already pouring into the town in search of opportunities. Anti-northern sentiment was minimal. Perhaps as important as all of these was the fact that Abram Hewitt, a New York ironmaster, purchased in 1865 the rolling mill built by the federal government in Chattanooga near the end of the Civil War. Hewitt was careful to employ southerners in his organization, prompted (he said) by a desire "to assist the South in its economic recovery and to set an example for other northern men of capital." As the first northern captain of industry to invest in industry in Chattanooga, Hewitt must be considered an important figure in the city's history. Predictably, others followed, and Chattanooga's resources were tapped using northern capital.<sup>14</sup>

Widening his holdings and influence, Hewitt in 1870 joined with former Union veterans John T. Wilder and Hiram S. Chamberlain, both of whom had settled in Knoxville after the Civil War, to incorporate the Roane Iron Company. This gave Hewitt access to an iron furnace at Rockwood in Roane County, where iron ore was smelted by coke for the first time south of the Ohio River. By 1878, the Roane Iron Company was producing 60 tons of pig iron a day, much of it for the rolling mills at Chattanooga, where 600 men alone were employed making rails for the area's railroad network.<sup>15</sup>

The influx of northern capital caused the town to grow with incredible speed. Between 1866 and 1870, the population grew a

<sup>13</sup>McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 21-22.

<sup>14</sup>Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 296-97.

<sup>15</sup>McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 21. See also Govan and Livingood, *Chattanooga Country*, 296-97. Both Knoxville and Chattanooga claim Chamberlain, since he lived in both cities. On Roane County and Rockwood see Shelley and Hall, eds., *Valley of Challenge and Change*, 58-62.

phenomenal 220 percent, to around 6,000 people. The next decade saw an impressive 112 percent increase, to 12,879, and ambitious Chattanoogaans knew that was only the beginning. The construction trades boomed, as did retail and wholesale trade. But manufacturing was the jewel in the city's crown: in 1860, Chattanooga had 22 manufacturing establishments; by 1880, that number had risen to 58, some of them large. Little wonder that the city's July 4th parade of 1878 selected the theme "Vulcan and the Spirit of the New South." The first float in the parade bore the sign "Cotton was King." That float was followed by a second bearing the pronouncement "Iron Is King Now." A third float proclaimed "Coal Is Prime Minister." Along the rail lines lower Valley industries were springing up, many of them linked to iron ore deposits and coal.<sup>16</sup>

The rapid rise of industry in Chattanooga created an interesting symbiotic relationship between that city and Knoxville. Although Knoxville had been founded approximately 50 years before Chattanooga, by the Civil War both were small towns on the new railroad line. Both were the scenes of Civil War activity, although Chattanooga, as the more strategically important of the two sites, saw considerably more action and destruction. Both sought to become New South industrial centers after the war and both eagerly sought out northern capital. Both looked to iron and coal as their principal assets, and both fought for control of the wholesaling markets between them in the Great Valley of East Tennessee (Knoxville usually did better in wholesaling, being closer to northern and midwestern producers). Hence, while the character and tone of each city was decidedly different from those of the other (Chattanooga had a considerably stronger "southern" tone, while Knoxville's was far more "East Tennessee" in character), in many ways the two were similar. Inevitably, this led to a kind of rivalry which has continued to the present.

The growth of wholesaling and manufacturing caused both cities' populations to virtually explode. Chattanooga, 2,545 in 1850, was 6,903 by 1870 and 30,154 by 1900. Knoxville's population growth was similarly impressive: from 3,704 in 1860 to 9,693 in 1880, and 32,637 in 1900. The cities had high concentrations of blacks, rather unique in East Tennessee, as during and after the Civil War blacks abandoned farms and plantations to seek work in the soon-to-become commercial and industrial centers. Statistically more significant was

<sup>16</sup>Govan and Livingood, *Chattanooga Country*, 339-56.

the migration of rural whites into the two cities, most of whom came from the rural communities of the Cumberlands and Blue Ridge. Faced with large families and increasing pressure on the land, many rural whites had little choice but to abandon their farms and seek opportunities elsewhere. For example, the population of Putnam County increased almost 60 percent between 1860 and 1890, and then rose another 62.5 percent over the next three decades, even while the county's farms were about to reach their productive limits. Those who remained may have been what Scott County author Ester Sharp Sanderson called "courageous, self-reliant, freedom-loving ancestors . . . untainted by the evil influences of urban life." At the same time, however, they were facing a real demographic and economic crisis.<sup>17</sup>

Precisely who migrated from the Cumberlands and the Blue Ridge to the cities on the Valley floor is the subject of considerable debate. Some believe that the best portions of those populations left, the ones most closely attuned socially and culturally to the commercial-industrial world. Others maintain, with equal certitude, that the "worst-off" migrated in search of opportunities and that the "best-off" stayed put. While we cannot answer this question definitively, our own research has shown that the latter is more nearly true. In Sevier County (in the Blue Ridge), between 1890 and 1900 the population increased 17.4 percent. Yet that increase was not distributed evenly throughout the county. Population growth tended to be greatest on the river plains, whereas the mountainous districts appear to have been losing population. For example, the First and Third Districts (which border Cocke County and were among the most isolated and, we assume, least attuned to the modern commercial-industrial world), once natural increase is taken into account, actually lost population between 1890 and 1900. Other mountainous and isolated districts of Sevier County were losing population as well. Hence, we can say tentatively that, at least in the late nineteenth century, it appears that those most in need of economic opportunities were leaving the Cumberlands and Blue Ridge and moving to cities and towns on the Valley floor, as well as to richer lands in the South

<sup>17</sup>McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 18-24; Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 405. On Putnam County see Mary Jean DeLozier, *Putnam County, Tennessee, 1850-1970* (Cookeville, Tenn., 1979), 33, 56-59, 110, 113. For Sanderson's remark see Ester Sharp Sanderson, *Scott County Gem of the Cumberlands* (Huntsville, Tenn., 1974), iii, 1.

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and West. Moreover, between 1880 and 1900 Sevier County's black population declined in absolute numbers in spite of their higher crude birth rates. By 1900, the county contained only 438 blacks. The remainder had moved out, heading, we believe, for the large black communities in cities on the Valley floor.<sup>18</sup>

This is not to say, however, that Chattanooga and Knoxville were the only places on the Valley floor where socio-cultural attitudes and the coming of the railroad acted to produce economic development. Almost everywhere on the Valley floor there were signs of economic activity, although many areas (like Kingsport, which in 1900 had a population of 106) would see their greatest economic expansions in the twentieth century. Kingsport's success was due to careful city planning and its selection by the Eastman Kodak Company as the site of a major industrial facility. Sullivan County had shown signs of economic robustness as early as 1859 and had continued to build on that base. For its part, Bristol in Sullivan County entered a boom period at the turn of the century, due largely to the opening of coal fields in Virginia and to lumbering and building trades. The railroad had been a boon to Bradley County, with the Hardwick Stove Works (1879) and the Hardwick Woolen Mills (1880) being two of the county's largest employers. Coal Creek (now Lake City) in Anderson County shipped its first car of coal to the Knoxville Iron Company in October of 1867, and by 1888 Coal Creek (which in 1853 had consisted of one log house) had a population of 3,000. Yet, for the most part, it would not be until the twentieth century that economic development became more evenly spread across the Valley floor. Indeed, Knoxville and Chattanooga alone accounted for over two-thirds of the manufactured goods in the entire Tennessee Valley and were consistently drawing population from the Cumberlands, Blue Ridge, and other Valley floor counties to swell their burgeoning numbers. By 1900, fully one-third of the Tennessee Valley's population lived in cities of 10,000 or more.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>*The Gentle Winds of Change*, 3-4.

<sup>19</sup>On Bradley County see Lillard, *Bradley County*, 105-06. On Coal Creek see Katherine B. Hoskins, *Anderson County*, in *Tennessee County History Series* (Memphis, 1979), 44. In 1891-92 the area experienced a series of violent labor conflicts when mine owners attempted to use convict labor. *Ibid.*, 48. Coal mining also was going on in the Cumberland Plateau, along with labor violence due to the introduction of convict labor. See James L. Nicholson, *Grundy County*, in *Tennessee County History Series* (Memphis, 1982), 66-74, 94-96. On Sullivan County see C. R. Groseclose and Martha C. Marshall, *Entering a New Century: Sullivan County, Tennessee, 1895-1905*, in *ETHS Community History Series* (Blountville, 1986), 18-22.

In addition to Knoxville and Chattanooga, other towns on the Valley floor were showing signs of economic activity. In Bradley and McMinn counties, the railroads, established before the Civil War but rejuvenated and extended in the early twentieth century, held out the hope of commercial and industrial progress for those areas. Riceville, Sanford, Englewood, and Niota all "started as sites of railroad stations and soon attracted small businesses and homes and a small scattering of industries." More impressive was the growth of Etowah, a sleepy crossroad until the Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N) selected it as the site of its shops and railway yard. Founded just after the turn of the century and not chartered until 1909, by the late 1920's Etowah had a railroad shop force of 1,100 with a monthly payroll of \$110,000 and a total railroad employment force of approximately 2,000.

Equally impressive were the respective growths of Cleveland in Bradley County and Athens in McMinn, both being towns which used their railroad connections to maximum advantage. In Cleveland, John H. Craigmiles, a local banker, deserves much of the credit for infusing the town with an aggressive booster mentality. By the early 1890's the town was a bustling manufacturing and commercial center, with the Hardwick Stove Foundry and Hardwick Woolen Mills as principal employers. By 1893, Cleveland boasted of nine physicians, 12 attorneys, 11 general merchandise stores, two hotels, and two millinery shops. Like Cleveland, Athens also prospered because of its rail connections. In 1887, the utopian Athens Mining and Manufacturing Company, an interesting but ill-starred scheme to create a model industrial-residential community, was founded. The company lasted only two years, but for Athens it was the harbinger of things to come. By the 1890's Athens had a flour mill, a number of cotton mills and a woolen mill.<sup>20</sup>

In Rhea County, the town of Dayton did not even exist until the 1880's. On the northern edge of the quiet community of Smith's Crossroads, Dayton was the brainchild of William Columbus Gardenhire, who laid off his farm as a town site and began to interest industries in locating there. Between 1883 and 1893, the combination of railroad connections, water power, nearby coal fields and

<sup>20</sup>Lillard, *Bradley County*, 105-06; Byrum, *McMinn County*, 44-48, 51-53; Genevieve Wiggins and Bill Akins, eds., "Over Here" and After: *McMinn County, Tennessee, During World War I and the Twenties*, in *ETHS Community History Series* (Athens, 1986), 31-34, 87-92.

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limestone quarries attracted a number of industries. The Dayton Coal and Iron Company, an English syndicate-owned operation, was one of the first to locate there, followed eventually by the Dayton Veneer and Lumber Mills, the Dayton Hosiery Mill, Robinson Manufacturing Company (underwear), and Spivey Hosiery Mills. In 1890, Dayton became the county seat and by 1925, when the famous Scopes Trial was held there, Dayton was an ambitious and prosperous community.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, for the most part, the area north and west of Chattanooga did not feel the full force of the industrial age. In McMinn County, the dual pulls of Knoxville and Chattanooga lured industry away from McMinn, as it did from the other counties. For example, the Foundry and Machine Shop of George Wheland moved to Chattanooga soon after its founding in Athens in 1868. So, also, did a number of other firms. Much of the industrial activity—and population—was being sucked into the tube of the funnel, at Chattanooga. Farmers still came to Cleveland, Athens, Decatur, and other towns on Saturdays, but they were witnessing the passing of the old ways and the coming of the new.<sup>22</sup>

The advent of strong commercial-industrial economies in Chattanooga and Knoxville served to widen even further the gulf between the Valley floor and the uplands. Knoxville got their first streetlights in 1885, their first interior electric lighting in 1886, and by 1896 streetlighting was widespread. By way of contrast, the town of Sevierville did not get paved streets until 1924. Moreover, the pull of the city attracted professional men, thus virtually denuding the Cumberland and Blue Ridge counties of talent. For example, in 1900 Sevier County had 25 doctors. By 1928, the county had 12, six of whom were over 50 years old. In this case (as opposed to our earlier example using Sevier County), some of the most talented people of the Cumberlands and Blue Ridge were drawn, as if by magnets, to the burgeoning cities. What is worse, there were few natives or newcomers to take their places.<sup>23</sup>

The widening gulf in medical care is but one example of the

<sup>21</sup>Thomas Jefferson Campbell, *Records of Rhea County: A Condensed County History* (Dayton, Tenn., 1940), 69, 129.

<sup>22</sup>Byrum, *McMinn County*, 53-54; Lillard, *Bradley County*, 35.

<sup>23</sup>For Knoxville's improvements see Dudley Brewer, "The Marvels Come; Utilities" in Deaderick, ed., *Heart of the Valley*, 162-64. For Sevier County doctors see *The Gentle Winds of Change*, ch. 9.



increasing differentiation between cities on the Valley floor and communities in the uplands. For example, an examination of Sevier County death records for 1881-1882 discloses the fact that general health and medical care were vastly inferior to those of communities on the Valley floor and, especially, of cities on the floor. In Sevier County between 1881 and 1882, there were 61 recorded deaths, 17 of them (28 percent) children under one year of age and 34 of them (56 percent) of people under 21. More shocking, even after a Sevier Countian reached adulthood, he or she was not guaranteed a long life: in 1881-1882 there were 22 deaths of people older than ten years old. Their mean age at death was 41.5 years and the median age of death was between 36 and 37 years. Only three of the 22 over ten years old who died in Sevier County in 1881 and 1882 were over 60 years old. Clearly there were vast areas of East Tennessee which were being left behind, while other communities, almost exclusively on the Valley floor, were either joining or preparing to join the modern commercial-industrial age.<sup>24</sup>

By 1900, the socio-economic differences between the Valley floor communities and those of the uplands were so pronounced as to tempt one to borrow Charles Dickens's title "A Tale of Two Cities." Hamilton (Chattanooga) and Knox (Knoxville) counties had 6,228 and 5,479 wage earners in manufacturing, respectively. Only six of East Tennessee's 36 other counties had 500 or more manufacturing wage earners, all of them on the Valley floor or adjacent to railroad lines (Washington, Sullivan, Roane, Rhea, Marion, and Bradley). Indeed, only 13 of the remaining 36 counties had more than 200. In contrast, Hancock County claimed eight manufacturing wage earners, Van Buren 13, Union and Fentress 15 each, Bledsoe 16, Johnson and Meigs 19 each, and Sequatchie 22. Grainger had 31 and Sevier had 88. By 1900, the top eight counties of East Tennessee (Knox, Hamilton, Sullivan, Washington, Rhea, Roane, Marion, and Bradley) contained 80.85 percent of all manufacturing wage earners in the region's 38 counties (15,746 of 19,475).<sup>25</sup> In terms of wages earned, manufacturing employees' wages varied widely from county to county in 1900. Knox, Unicoi, Hamilton, and Polk paid the highest wages

<sup>24</sup>It should be noted, however, that the recording of deaths was strongly resisted by many residents. Smoky Mountain Historical Society, *In the Shadow of the Smokies* (Maryville, 1985), 733-36. See also *The Gentle Winds of Change*, 204.

<sup>25</sup>*Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Manufactures* (Washington, 1902), vol. 8, pp. 850-51.



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<sup>26</sup>*ibid.*

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COURTESY TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

*Residents of the Valley floor's cities and towns enjoyed the benefits of electric power long before power lines reached the more isolated upland communities.*

to adult males in 1900. In addition, Knox, Hamilton, and Sullivan employed a number of women and children in manufacturing. Their wages, as expected, were considerably lower: in Knox County in 1900, women in manufacturing received an average of \$161.74 (adult males received an average of \$375.91) and children received an average of \$92.98 per year.<sup>26</sup>

Agriculturally, little differentiation could be seen in 1900 between the Valley floor and uplands in terms of tenancy or crop yields. It seems that the better land on the river plains had slipped more into tenancy than the farms in the uplands. Rural communities on the Valley floor showed a slightly higher percentage of farms operated by tenants (Roane 44.2 percent, Loudon 40.0 percent, Meigs 46.2 percent, Rhea 35.0 percent, Hamilton 37.5 percent, Knox 28.1 percent), but rural communities in the uplands also knew tenancy, much of it on the better land (Polk 47.1 percent, Monroe 40.5

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

percent, Sevier 33.8 percent). Farm size tended to have diminished on the Valley floor. Crop yield, however, shows no distinct pattern in 1900 between floor and upland farms, as it had earlier. As noted above, upland communities in 1900 still contained larger families, and thus a considerably younger population.<sup>27</sup>

In short, life styles in East Tennessee between the floor and upland communities continued to widen and be more different each year. Economically, demographically, and culturally, East Tennessee was becoming a tale of two cities, one increasingly industrial, cosmopolitan, and interlinked with the "outside world," while the other was in every way falling increasingly behind. As in Sevier County, what talent, skills, and professions that did exist tended to be drawn out of the less prosperous areas into the larger towns. In terms of traditional family structure and life, several communities along the Valley floor showed a comparatively high percentage of women and children in the labor force. In the uplands, there were few opportunities of this nature. By 1900, the grooves of modernization had grown deep.

The period from 1900 to 1930 witnessed several additional changes in the economic and socio-cultural life of East Tennessee. Most crucial were the continued growth of manufacturing (especially textile, apparel, and iron); automobiles and paved roads; residential and commercial-industrial electrification; the adoption by farmers of tobacco growing; the widening use of the telephone; the introduction of radios; the improvement of public education through improved teacher training; increases in state and local financial support; and the statewide movement to establish public high schools. Yet in almost every single case, as one might expect, these agents of modernization were first and most profoundly adopted in the Valley floor communities and hence they were the chief beneficiaries of them. Therefore, by 1930 the grooves of modernization were cut even more deeply along the Valley floor and the gulf between that area and the uplands was even wider than it had been in 1900. Out migration from the troubled Cumberland and Blue Ridge areas (like, for example, Union and Sevier counties) had already begun. Thus when the national depression struck in the early 1930's, those communities could barely feel it, for their depression had begun years before. The principal result of the national depression was the return of earlier

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

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The growth of industry from 1900 to 1930 was impressive. As expected, Chattanooga built on their early bases (even though Chattanooga's rates were too high). By 1930, earnings in manufacturing had claimed 11,750 (up from Chattanooga's manufacturing jobs per year kept its earlier pace, averaging jobs per year. Equally, was spreading to other towns had 2,003 manufacturing and the following count

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<sup>28</sup>Comparison of U.S. Census 1900 (Knoxville, 1929), 39. For Chattanooga, Transportation Economics Division, *Interpretation of the Economic Influence of 1937*, 107.

<sup>29</sup>UT Extension Series, *Tennessee*

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The growth of industrial manufacturing on the Valley floor from 1900 to 1930 was impressive enough to swell the heart of any local booster. As expected, Chattanooga and Knoxville led the way, building on their early bases and continuing to make use of the railroad (even though Chattanooga manufacturers complained that railroad rates were too high). By 1920, Hamilton County had 15,394 wage earners in manufacturing (up from 6,228 in 1900) and Knox County claimed 11,750 (up from 5,479 in 1900). From 1920 to 1929, Chattanooga's manufacturing growth slowed to only around 200 new manufacturing jobs per year, whereas Knoxville's industrial growth kept its earlier pace, averaging approximately 444 new manufacturing jobs per year. Equally significant was the fact that manufacturing was spreading to other towns along the Valley floor. McMinn County had 2,003 manufacturing wage earners in 1920, up from 231 in 1900, and the following counties were also impressive:<sup>28</sup>

TABLE I  
 Manufacturing Wage Earners, 1900-1920

County	Manufacturing Wage Earners 1900	Manufacturing Wage Earners 1920
Loudon .....	311	1,862
Roane .....	600	1,843
Sullivan .....	580	1,765
Blount .....	242	1,671
Bradley .....	580	1,287
Marion .....	796	1,281

By 1920, of the twelve top manufacturing counties in Tennessee, eight were on the floor of East Tennessee's Great Valley. Principal industries (in terms of value added) were lumber and timber products, railroad shops, knit goods, foundry and machine shop products, and cotton goods. These five industries composed 34 percent of all value added by manufacturing.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Comparison of U.S. Census 1900 with UT Extension Series, *Tennessee, Economic and Social* (Knoxville, 1929), 39. For Chattanooga merchants' belief in railroad rate discrimination see TVA Transportation Economics Division, *A History of Navigation on the Tennessee River System: An Interpretation of the Economic Influence of this River System on the Tennessee Valley* (Washington, 1937), 107.

<sup>29</sup>UT Extension Series, *Tennessee, Economic and Social*, 43.

The spread of manufacturing to smaller Valley towns during the early twentieth century is best represented by the economic development of McMinn County. The railroad had come early to McMinn County, stimulating economic activity in the bustling town of Athens (1,849 in 1900). In 1905, the L&N built a parallel line east of the Southern, and the town of Etowah developed from a sleepy crossroad into a prosperous railroad center with as many as 2,000 people employed in the L&N shops and yards. Earlier a stove factory and a plow factory had located in Athens, and manufacturing continued to increase in the county. By 1920, McMinn had 2,003 wage earners in manufacturing, \$2.6 million value added by manufacturing (twelfth in the state), and, from 1910 to 1920, had experienced a 19.4 percent growth in population (ninth in the state).<sup>30</sup>

Aside from Hamilton and Knox, other Valley floor counties where increased manufacturing activity stimulated population growth included Sullivan, Blount, Loudon, and Bradley, all of which had population increases between 1910 and 1920 in excess of 14 percent. In contrast, most counties in the Cumberland and Blue Ridge, where manufacturing activity was negligible, showed anemic population growth. For example, Van Buren, Hancock, Grainger, Union, Johnson, Sequatchie, Sevier, and Rhea counties could boast of almost no manufacturing. Between 1910 and 1920, all but two of these counties (Union and Sevier) experienced sharp population declines, and Union only grew by 1.8 percent, while Sevier's population increased a meager 0.4 percent. As can be seen, manufacturing in communities along the Valley floor was drawing people out of the Cumberland and Blue Ridge, lured by dreams of jobs, prosperity, and opportunity.<sup>31</sup>

This is not to say, of course, that all the new arrivals to cities and towns on the Valley floor prospered or made rapid and successful adjustments to industrial life. Wages were low in many of the types of industries which had located on the Valley floor (especially textiles and apparel), living conditions in the clusters of "shotgun houses" which were thrown up around mills and factories often were poor, and proximity to blacks held out the constant threat of racial violence, as

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 39; Patricia Dunigan Postma, "Entrepreneurship, The Spatial Network, and Local Choice: A Case Study of Differential Economic Development" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1981), 108-09. See also Wiggins and Akins eds., "Over Here" and After, 87-92.

<sup>31</sup>UT Extension Series, *Tennessee, Economic and Social*, 39.

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<sup>32</sup>McDonald and W  
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the 1919 race riot in Knoxville demonstrated. Frustration often led to violent outbursts. For example, homicide became one of the leading causes of death in Knoxville. Moreover, as Knoxville and Chattanooga became large, dirty, heavily-industrialized cities, the "better sort" of each city began to abandon the central business districts for the new streetcar suburbs.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, for all their problems, the cities and large towns on the Valley floor must have seemed to have been great improvements over the lifestyles of the Cumberland and Blue Ridge. Automobiles, electrification, the telephone, and the radio were having major economic and social impacts on the Valley floor and comparatively less influence on life in the uplands. In later decades, the ownership of an automobile meant that people could travel long distances to their jobs, in many cases retaining their residences in the Cumberland and Blue Ridge counties and working on the Valley floor. Such was not the case in the 1920's. Automobile ownership was not significant in the uplands until after World War II. Moreover, upland roads were in such poor shape that driving long distances was not possible. Table II illustrates the extent to which the communities along the Valley floor benefited more from the automobile and paved roads than did those in the uplands:<sup>33</sup>

TABLE II  
Automobiles and Highway Expenditures, 1918-1929  
Selected Valley Floor Counties

County	Number of Autos 1929	Persons per Auto 1920	Trucks 1929	State and Federal Highway Expenditure 1918-1928
Hamilton .....	23,443	5.6	2,734	\$1.12 million
Knox .....	21,947	5.7	2,559	1.35
Sullivan .....	6,176	6.8	643	1.49
Bradley .....	2,856	7.1	262	.76
Hamblen .....	2,120	7.5	217	.64
Loudon .....	2,155	8.4	168	.52
McMinn .....	2,792	10.0	244	.99
<b>Selected Upland Counties</b>				
Hancock .....	211	49.5	37	.09
Claiborne .....	714	32.6	97	.42
Union .....	382	30.9	60	.15

<sup>32</sup>McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 38.

<sup>33</sup>UT Extension Series, *Tennessee, Economic and Social*, 143-47.

Fentress .....	585	21.2	85	.59
Bledsoe .....	376	20.7	51	.95
Johnson .....	600	20.4	37	.20
Grainger .....	683	19.6	67	.26
Sevier .....	1,352	16.6	156	.16

Moreover, as can be seen, the use of commercial trucks to supplement railroads was considerably more widespread on the Valley floor.

Residential and commercial-industrial electrification also was more prevalent along the Valley floor. Indeed, of the eight upland counties in the above chart, four of them (Fentress, Grainger, Hancock, and Union) had no electric facilities whatsoever in 1926 and the remaining four had few domestic or commercial-industrial customers. By contrast, the seven selected Valley floor counties in the above table had the following:

TABLE III  
Electric Customers 1926

County	Commercial	Industrial	Residential
Hamilton .....	5,530	2,010	34,050
Knox .....	3,090	650	19,520
Sullivan .....	550	43	2,940
Bradley .....	370	80	1,630
Hamblen .....	190	84	1,360
Loudon .....	210	20	1,190
McMinn .....	195	43	1,150

Moreover, the rate of increase of residential electrification on the Valley floor, and especially in the cities, was little short of phenomenal. Between January 1925 and January 1926, Hamilton County added 5,450 residential electric users and Knox County added 3,320. Fentress, Grainger, Hancock, and Union counties had no electricity users, while in 1926 Claiborne had 190, Sevier 250, Johnson 270, and Bledsoe 120.<sup>34</sup>

Another way of illustrating the Valley floor's advantages in this regard is to begin at the center of Chattanooga in 1930 and travel outward a radius of 75 miles. Within a 25-mile radius of center city Chattanooga lived 264,544 people. Within this radius were 31,729 domestic electric consumers, 6,448 industrial electric customers,

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 48-49.



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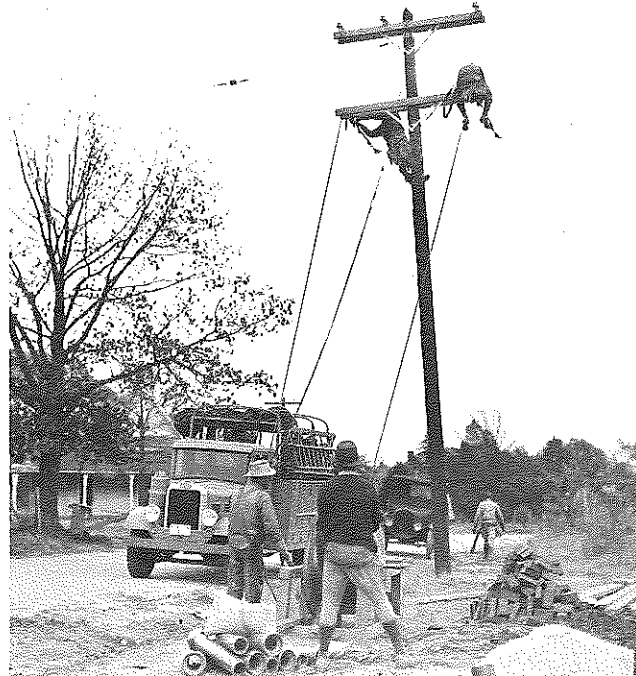
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By 1940, twenty municipal and rural cooperative organizations were distributing TVA electricity.

and an industrial income of \$112.5 million. Following that same radius line from mile 25 to mile 50, within that geographical doughnut were approximately the same number of people as in the center city to mile 25 core. This area, however, contained fewer than a third of the core's domestic electric consumers and only approximately one-tenth of the core's industrial income. The farther out one went from Chattanooga in 1930, the fewer electric hookups and industrial jobs were to be found.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, not only were upland communities seriously handicapped in attempts to undertake industrialization, but they were also increasingly deficient in securing modern facilities like paved roads and electrification which might be used to lure industries in the future. In terms of an even wider chasm between the economic and socio-cultural life on the Valley floor as opposed to that of the uplands, the prospects were anything but promising. Two other

<sup>35</sup>Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, *Chattanooga—The Crossroads of the South* (np, nd).



indications of the ever-deepening channel of modernization on the floor and its lack in the uplands can be seen in the acceptance of the telephone and the radio. Although the telephone was publicly demonstrated first in 1876, its appearance in any numbers in East Tennessee, despite its introduction to Knoxville in 1880, was a somewhat later phenomenon. As to the radio, that invention, along with the motion picture, was the "darling" of the 1920's. By 1928, Hamilton and Knox counties had 22,520 and 25,753 telephones, respectively, whereas Fentress, Grainger, Johnson, Cocke, Hancock, and Sevier counties *together* could boast of but 2,399 telephones. The same disproportion between Valley floor and upland counties can be seen in radio ownership by farmers.<sup>36</sup>

The potential for future differentiation can also be seen in the unevenness of educational facilities between the floor and the uplands. Cities had the advantages of greater resources, the ability to have more school days per year, and the ability to attract the best-trained teachers. For example, in 1928 in Tennessee it was still possible to teach elementary school with only an elementary school education. Most communities on the Valley floor, however, had abandoned that practice, whereas the upland counties were forced to continue it merely to fill their classrooms with teachers. Worst off in this respect was Cumberland County, where 35.9 percent of the elementary school teachers had only completed elementary school themselves.<sup>37</sup>

Another indication of the attention paid to public education between floor and upland counties is the percentage of a county's taxes which were allotted to public education. In 1927, for example, Valley floor counties appropriated a significantly larger proportion of their respective budgets to education, with Bradley County leading the way at 52 percent and upland Johnson County trailing with but 23 percent.<sup>38</sup> A similar disproportion existed between these two county groups in the amount of money earmarked for rural elementary schools.<sup>39</sup>

In all, by the 1920's the standards of living between the Valley floor communities and those of the uplands were disturbingly different:

<sup>36</sup>UT Extension Series, *Tennessee, Economic and Social*, 51, 100.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 154.

Valley Floor	Inc
Hamilton . . . . .	9
Knox . . . . .	9
Sullivan . . . . .	5
Hamblen . . . . .	5
Bradley . . . . .	4
McMinn . . . . .	4

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<sup>41</sup>TVA Department of  
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TABLE IV  
Standard of Living Index, 1925<sup>40</sup>  
(US Average = 100)

Valley Floor	Index	Rank in Tennessee	Upland	Index	Rank in Tennessee
Hamilton . . . . .	98	3	Sevier . . . . .	13	84
Knox . . . . .	91	4	Grainger . . . . .	12	85
Sullivan . . . . .	55	8	Johnson . . . . .	12	87
Hamblen . . . . .	52	10	Union . . . . .	8	91
Bradley . . . . .	44	11	Hancock . . . . .	6	93
McMinn . . . . .	41	13	Van Buren . . . . .	2	94

In sum, by 1930 a kind of determinancy appears to have taken hold of East Tennessee. Almost every statistical indicator seemed to hold the region in an ever-tightening grip. Clearly the Valley floor to a large extent had been included in the national economic development, while social and demographic problems increasingly hampered the already crisis-ridden uplands. Upland fertility rates remained considerably higher than those of the Valley floor counties, in some cases nearly doubling them. As a result, there were similar disproportions in family size and in the respective counties' dependency ratios (the ratio of people aged 0-18 and 65 and over to those between the ages of 19 and 64). These demographic indicators boded ill for the future of the upland communities.<sup>41</sup>

Simultaneously, it appears that East Tennesseans were "voting with their feet," principally by abandoning the less prosperous areas in large numbers. From 1900 to 1930, the rural population of the Tennessee Valley increased a meager 14.7 percent, meaning that, given the area's rate of natural increase, people were leaving the rural areas in large numbers. Conversely, between 1900 and 1930, the Tennessee Valley's urban population increased by 243.6 percent. In 1900, 33.5 percent of the Valley's residents lived in towns with a population of 10,000 or greater. By 1930, that figure had risen to 48.4 percent.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 141. The 1925 standard of living index was computed by averaging a county's farm and non-farm cash income and purchasing power.

<sup>41</sup>TVA Department of Regional Planning Studies, *The Population of the Tennessee Valley* (Knoxville, 1937), 27, 31, 32. See also TVA Land Classification Section, *The Three Major Physical Divisions of the Upper Tennessee Basin*, Land Planning and Housing Bulletin No. 10 (Knoxville, 1936); George B. L. Arner and Vincent B. Phelan, *Social Statistics of the Tennessee River Basin*, TVA Report (Knoxville, 1933).

<sup>42</sup>*Population of the Tennessee Valley*, 40, 43.

Given the extremely high outmigration figures from the Blue Ridge and Cumberland regions and the comparatively modest growth of the cities, it seems as if a number of outmigrants were slipping through these cities' fingers to find—or seek—opportunities elsewhere. By 1930, the ratio of people born in the TVA states but living elsewhere to those born elsewhere but living in the seven TVA states was a disturbing 4.4 to 1.0. Clearly outmigration was sapping the region. Yet, if the communities on the Valley floor could not provide sufficient opportunities, one could not blame these people for going elsewhere. The crisis so long in coming at last had arrived. Worse, this crisis was prior to the national depression which struck in the early 1930's.<sup>43</sup>

#### EAST TENNESSEE: DEPRESSION, WAR, AND TVA

Even before the onslaught of the depression, therefore, East Tennessee was approaching an economic and demographic crisis, a crisis that was but a microcosm of one facing the entire Tennessee Valley. What industrial activity that did exist was located almost exclusively on the Valley floor. Moreover, the industries that had arisen in the area largely had been low-wage, labor-intensive ones, especially textile, apparel, wood products, and iron. Hence, by 1929 Tennessee's per capita income was but 53.7 percent of the national average. Concomitantly, purchasing power in the region was so low that the area was not attractive to manufacturers who might want to produce for a regional market. By 1930, the entire South had 20 percent of the nation's population but only eleven percent of its purchasing power. It is likely that East Tennessee's ratio of population to purchasing power was not much better, if at all.<sup>44</sup>

That economic crisis, as has been seen, was reflected in a demographic and social crisis as well. Outmigration from the Cumberland and Blue Ridge areas onto the floor of the Great Valley had been heavy. Since 1900, the Valley floor population had increased 29.2 persons per square mile (the Blue Ridge rose by 12.3 persons per square mile and the Cumberland area by 4.3 persons per square mile)

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>44</sup>TVA Department of Regional Planning Studies, *Income in the Southeast and in the Tennessee Valley States, 1929-1935* (Knoxville, 1938), 12; TVA Agricultural Industries Division, *Industries in which the South is Deficient* (Knoxville, 1935), 1; TVA Department of Regional Planning Studies, *Income Analysis of Thirty-Two Counties* (Knoxville, 1929). On the cotton goods industry in the South, which represented 22-27% of all southern wage earners, see TVA Social and Economic Division, *The Cotton Goods Industry* (Knoxville, 1936).

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until by 1930 the Valley floor had a density of 82.1 persons per square mile, as compared to 44.3 persons per square mile in the Blue Ridge and 24.8 in the Cumberlands.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, as seen earlier, the cities and towns of the Valley floor had not been able to provide enough jobs to hold these migrants from the Cumberland and Blue Ridge regions. In Knoxville, a considerable amount of the responsibility for the anemic growth of jobs can be laid at the feet of the city's business elite of the 1910's and 1920's. Afraid of change, this elite tended to discourage the entrance into the city of new industries, fearing that new ventures might pay higher wages and skim off the cream of the labor pool. More progressive businessmen, like William J. Oliver, an Indiana native who had moved to Knoxville, where he became involved in several ventures (including the Clinch Avenue viaduct, the Knoxville, Sevierville and Eastern Railroad, and the regional expositions of 1910, 1911, and 1913), could not reverse the conservative tide among the business elite. His open attacks on them for discouraging growth and new businesses went largely unheeded. After all, conservative businessmen reasoned, wasn't everything going smoothly?<sup>46</sup>

In point of fact, all was not well. True, Knoxville's population had swelled from 77,818 in 1920 to 105,802 a decade later, an increase of 36 percent, but employment had not grown proportionately, and many people drifted out of the city to look for jobs in other states. More serious, those immigrants who remained were to a great extent a frustrated lot, living in terrible conditions which themselves were breeding grounds for trouble. Little wonder that the revived Ku Klux Klan enrolled over 2,000 Knoxvilleans in its number by 1923, a sure sign that the city's economic and social problems were serious.<sup>47</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan's rapid growth in Knoxville reveals an important point about the large cities of the Great Valley. By the 1920's, those cities no longer were *one* community but several, as racial and socio-economic segregation became considerably more pronounced. Indeed, by 1930 these cities, especially Chattanooga and Knoxville, but also other towns in the Great Valley, contained racial and socio-economic fissures which divided these urban places into several communities, often at odds with each other.

<sup>45</sup>*Population of the Tennessee Valley*, 37. The United States average population density was 41.3 persons per square mile in 1930.

<sup>46</sup>McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 35.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 50-58.

Knoxville appears to have been unable to adjust itself to the vast number of people who flowed into the city from the uplands. In politics, city manager Louis Brownlow tried to bring order out of virtual chaos. Brownlow needed money through increased taxes, but the conservative businessmen combined with the immigrants from the uplands dampened those brushfires of progressivism. City councilman Lee Monday, who represented a number of the immigrants, thwarted the city manager on tax increases, finally driving the official to a nervous breakdown and resignation. Thus, government in Knoxville would be conducted in much the same way as it would be conducted in a rural county: no tax increases and, therefore, no improvements in services for the burgeoning population. In many cases, people were voting against their own best interests, intent on keeping taxes low in a community of impoverished, recently-arrived workers. The politics of the rural communities of the uplands had invaded and conquered the Valley floor cities.<sup>48</sup>

The implications of that kind of conservatism are all too clear. In Knoxville and East Tennessee, city councils and county commissions consistently voted down proposals for improvements in education. By 1930, the Tennessee Valley had an average per pupil expenditure which was 36 percent of the national average. Illiteracy in upland counties was disturbingly high, over ten percent in Cocke, Grainger, and Hancock counties, and nearly ten percent in Monroe, Sevier, and Union.<sup>49</sup> As for radios, 54.8 percent of the radios in the Tennessee Valley in 1930 were in the cities.<sup>50</sup>

When it comes to explaining the causes of the depression of the 1930's, East Tennessee can be seen as a microcosm of the United States. Prosperity was very uneven, with large segments of the uplands and some population on the Valley floor unable to consume the rising number of consumer goods. Production of durable goods, therefore, outstripped the residents' ability to consume. Large sectors of the population of East Tennessee (especially farmers and miners in the uplands and blacks and immigrating whites who worked at low-paying jobs on the Valley floor) were already in their own economic

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 41-48.

<sup>49</sup>Arner and Phelan, *Social Statistics of the Tennessee River Basin*, 77-78. For per pupil expenditure see TVA Regional Planning Council, *Regional Development in the Tennessee Valley* (Knoxville, 1940), 57. The illiteracy rate in the uplands was considerably greater than for the Tennessee River basin or for the Valley floor counties. See Arner and Phelan, *Social Statistics*, 26, 75-78. By comparison, Hamilton and Knox counties had illiteracy rates of 2.6 and 3.9, respectively.

<sup>50</sup>Arner and Phelan, *Social Statistics*, 57.

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depression long before 1930. Banking houses, like that of Caldwell and Company in Nashville, which controlled a significant portion of East Tennessee's lending institutions, were playing fast and loose in ambitious speculative ventures and would collapse soon after the stock market panic of 1929. In short, East Tennessee was as vulnerable as any area of the country to volatile fluctuations on the national and international scenes. In some ways it was particularly vulnerable.<sup>51</sup>

The cities on the Valley floor felt the full weight of the depression. Of the six national banks in Knoxville in 1920, all had been wiped out by 1932. Construction work in the city virtually stopped, telephones were disconnected, bread lines and soup kitchens appeared on the once-bustling streets. For those who found work, wages were exceedingly low (35 cents per hour for textile workers), and unemployment was high (from 2,284 in 1930 to 7,534 in 1937). City tax collections dried up, and Knoxville was able to keep going only by issuing scrip. Blacks were hit especially hard, as whites went to employers and demanded that blacks be fired to make room for unemployed whites. In all, the scene was appalling.<sup>52</sup>

In the upland communities, however, the situation was considerably worse. Union County, one of the poorest counties in the state, had witnessed steady outmigration both to the Valley floor and to the industrial cities of the Midwest. During the depression these people were forced to return to Union County, thrust back upon poor land that was already overcrowded. In Grundy County, on the Cumberland Plateau, 60 percent of the total population was on relief in 1935, and between November 1933 and February 1935 a full 72 percent of the county's population received relief at some time. By 1932, income from industrial production in the Tennessee Valley states was 55.8 percent of what it had been in 1929, agriculture was 41.4 percent, and construction was 25.9 percent. Already in an economic and demographic crisis by 1930, the national depression threw almost the entire region into both an economic and demographic disaster.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Don H. Doyle, *Nashville in the New South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville, 1985), 223-32.

<sup>52</sup>McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, 61-66.

<sup>53</sup>For Union County see Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny, *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area* (Knoxville, 1982), 75-88. For Grundy County see Nicholson, *Grundy County*, 105. For income see TVA Department of Regional Planning Studies, *Income in the Southeast and in the Tennessee Valley States, 1929-1935* (Knoxville, 1938), 43; William G. Tharpe and Norman L. Collins, eds., *From Hearth and Hoe: Union County, Tennessee, 1910-1940* in *ETHS Community History Series* (Maynardville, Tenn., 1985).

A few areas of East Tennessee did not witness such an economic rout. Sullivan County, for example, with a diversified balance of industrial employment and agriculture, was able to keep its 1935 private income within seven percent of the 1929 figure. Greene County, with a strong agricultural component and some industries, had a well-balanced economic structure in 1929 and was able to use that to its advantage in the 1930's. This is not to say that communities in these counties did not feel hard times, but they were not as seriously hit as were other communities in the region.<sup>54</sup>

The depression forced each community in East Tennessee to find a way out of the crisis as best it could. A number of towns on the Valley floor aggressively courted new industries to create jobs for their unemployed and immigrants. Offering tax favors or outright tax exemptions, some of these towns were able to lure new industries to the Valley floor during the 1930's. This was, however, an exceedingly short-sighted tactic, as the industries which were lured to the area were mostly those of the low-wage category. And towns and cities had forfeited their tax receipts in order to lure them there. For example, the town of Elizabethton was able to attract two rayon plants, which collectively had a tax exemption of over \$70,000 in 1935 alone. That figure represented 30 percent of the county's total tax receipts. Moreover, it became clear that most of these new plants would pull out and go elsewhere if their advantages were not sustained. In an angry report, Tennessee Valley Authority's Department of Regional Planning Studies said that such efforts were undermining regional planning in the Tennessee Valley. Yet, faced with an industrial crisis and with people returning to the area, these communities had little choice but to "go it on their own."<sup>55</sup>

As noted above, aggressive courting and the advantages the area enjoyed in terms of low wages and low construction costs did lure some new industries during the depression. Between 1934 and 1937, 63 new industries located in the Tennessee Valley. Of that 63, thirty were textile and apparel industries, which comprised 64 percent of the new jobs (5,125 of 8,004). A full 47 of these 63 located in towns and cities on the Valley floor. In Tennessee alone, between June 1934

<sup>54</sup>*Income Analysis of Thirty-Two Counties*, 25-26. On Sullivan County see Groseclose and Marshall, eds., *Entering a New Century*, 13, 18-20, 22.

<sup>55</sup>TVA Department of Regional Planning Studies, *Local Subsidies to Industry in Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1938), esp. 3, 6-7, 25-26, 35, 64.

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and February 1935, thirty-six new industries were established, 13 of them textile and apparel and 11 food and kindred products. Clearly not enough jobs were created to help the numerous unemployed or take care of the thousands who entered the job market each year. Moreover, as some predicted at the time, these industries were highly fickle, and would leave the area if the advantages of low wages and low construction costs were eradicated. Worse, almost all profits left the region, flowing mostly to the Northeast.<sup>56</sup>

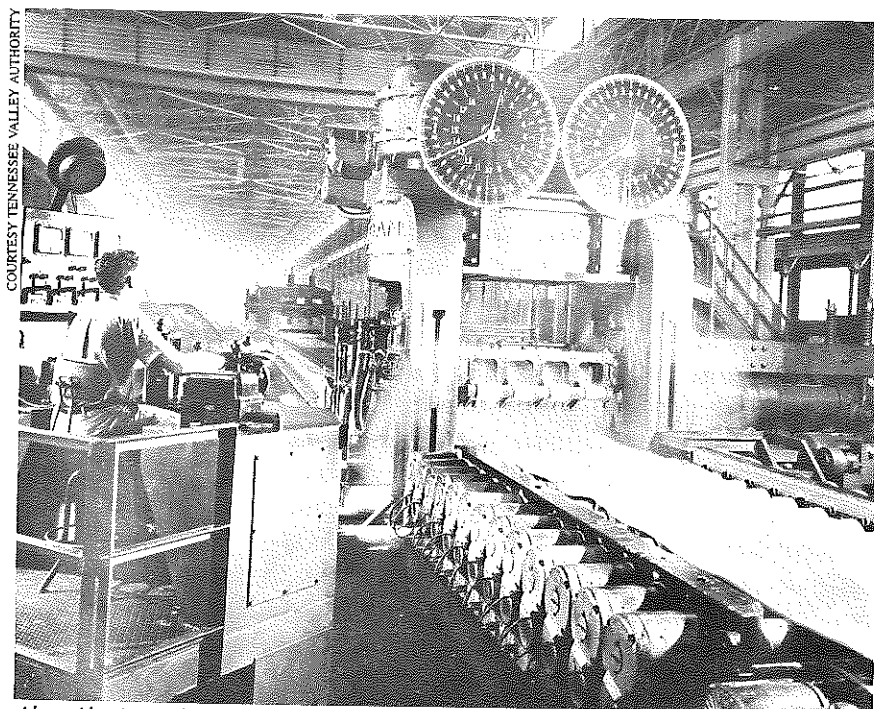
It was in this desperate atmosphere that TVA was born. The stories of the agency's founding, of President Franklin Roosevelt's charge to its first director Arthur E. Morgan, and of the early struggles within TVA to define the agency's mission have often been told and need not be repeated here, except to say that the upper hand gained by directors David Lilienthal and Harcourt Morgan meant that TVA's mission would be narrowed to that of providing cheap electrical power, a nine-foot navigation channel on the Tennessee River, and assistance to agriculture through production of cheap fertilizer and test demonstration farms. Those who favored a considerably broader mission, primarily disciples of Arthur Morgan, for the most part were effectively shackled.<sup>57</sup>

More to the point of this study, TVA's mission as it ultimately came to be defined served to carve even deeper the channel of modernization along East Tennessee's Valley floor and to a large extent left the uplands comparatively untouched. In other words, TVA's most significant contributions came in the precise area of East Tennessee which was least in need of massive federal assistance. Almost by definition, navigation and flood control functions benefited almost exclusively Valley floor residents. Moreover, Harcourt Morgan's favoritism toward sizable commercial farms meant that agricultural benefits tended likewise to be concentrated in the rural communities

<sup>56</sup>TVA Department of Agricultural Industries, *New Industry Trends in the Tennessee Valley* (Knoxville, 1937), 2-5; TVA Industry Division, *New Industrial Establishments in the Southeast* (Knoxville, 1935), Table 1; TVA Commerce Department, *Industrial Production in Southeast Showing Deficient and Surplus Production by Industries* (Knoxville, 1940), 5-13; *The Cotton Goods Industry*, 3-4, 9. For the prediction that many of these industries would leave when the labor differential was reduced, see *Local Subsidies to Industry in Tennessee*, 64.

<sup>57</sup>The following is but a small sample of the work done on these topics: Clarence L. Hodge, *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Natural Experiment in Regionalism* (Washington, 1938); Preston J. Hubbard, *Origins of the TVA: The Muscle Shoals Controversy, 1920-1932* (Nashville, 1961); Thomas K. McCraw, *Morgan versus Lilienthal: A Feud within the TVA* (Buffalo, 1974); Marguerite Owen, *The Tennessee Valley Authority* (New York, 1974); Norman I. Wengert, *Valley of Tomorrow: The TVA and Agriculture* (Knoxville, 1952).





*Alcoa Aluminum plant, 1943. Most industrial users of electricity were located on the Valley floor.*

of the river plains. Finally, a good portion of the Valley floor—and especially its towns and cities—already had been electrified, and the uplands were most in need of this service. Of course that would come, but in many cases not until after World War II.

TVA's method of electrifying the Valley was to produce the power at a number of hydroelectric dams and distribute it either through already-existing municipal distributors (which TVA would help purchase from private power companies) or through rural cooperatives which the agency would help establish. But electrification could not come immediately. Bitter court battles and the enormous costs and time of constructing the dams meant that it was some time before the residents of East Tennessee could enjoy TVA-produced electricity.<sup>58</sup> Although TVA was founded in 1933, it took some time to build hydroelectric dams and facilities, set up municipal and rural power distributors, and run power lines. In East Tennessee, only one muni-

<sup>58</sup>Debra D. Mills and Avis L. Jones, eds., *TVA Handbook* (Knoxville, 1985), 137-43.

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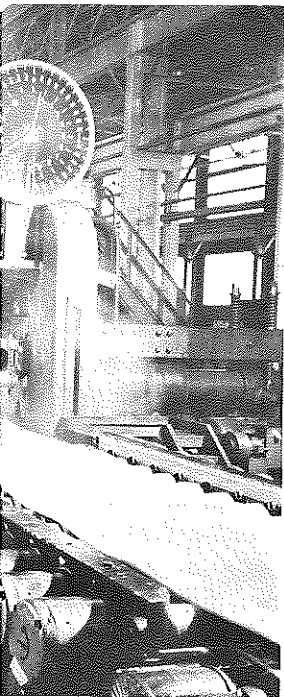
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cipal or county utility was distributing TVA-generated electricity by the beginning of 1938. In that year, TVA power distribution “took off,” and by 1940, twenty municipal, county, and rural cooperative organizations were distributing TVA power.

In terms of navigation, David Lilienthal told the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce that navigation was “not an immediate thing” in TVA’s priorities. Moreover, initial appropriations for navigation virtually ignored the Tennessee River from Knoxville to Chattanooga. By 1943, however, the closure of the Fort Loudon Dam had created a nine-foot navigation channel to Knoxville, and that city officially opened its port one year later. Theoretically, Knoxville was now connected to Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, Houston, Mobile, and Minneapolis.<sup>59</sup>

As to flood control, in 1946 East Tennessee experienced significant flooding, with Chattanooga, as usual, getting the brunt of the disaster. The flood crest at Chattanooga was 35.7 feet, enough to cause a good deal of destruction. Without TVA dams, however, it was estimated that the flood crest would have been 45.8 feet, roughly 12 feet short of the crest of the 1867 flood, which was used as the “500 year flood benchmark.” If destruction had not been eradicated, clearly it had been lessened by the TVA dams.<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps the most successful of TVA programs was its test demonstration farm efforts. By 1946, almost 7,000 farmers had agreed to participate in the program, and the agricultural innovations initiated on these farms rapidly spread throughout the Valley floor. Fertilization, crop rotation, and experimentation with new crops and methods all benefited the Valley floor farmers.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, the amount of money TVA spent in the region could not have failed to have had a positive effect. Between 1933 and 1958, the agency spent approximately \$2.1 billion in the Tennessee Valley. In East Tennessee, the vast majority of this money was spent on projects which benefited the Valley floor. Also, by 1946 TVA had acquired roughly 1.1 million acres of land (one twenty-third of the entire Tennessee Valley) and had removed 13,449 families (an estimated 72,000 people) from 16 reservoir areas. By 1947, the agency had

<sup>59</sup>Droze, *High Dams and Slack Waters*, 21, 23, 25, 32, 61-63.

<sup>60</sup>Donald Davidson, *The Tennessee*, Vol. 2, *The New River: Civil War to TVA* in Harvey Fillen and Carl Carmer, eds., *Rivers of America* (New York, 1948), 264.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 294-99.

inundated approximately 298,000 acres, much of it the region's best crop and pasture land.<sup>62</sup>

The major concern here is that of whether TVA's ambitious projects and vast expenditures significantly aided in the economic development of East Tennessee. Recently it has been fashionable for critics of TVA to charge that the Tennessee Valley would have been better off economically without the intrusion of TVA. It is not our purpose here to engage in that debate, except as it touches our major concern. Moreover, we find the arguments on both sides of that debate, up until now, to be largely unproven and the evidence of the combatants, so far, highly suspect. Worse, it was not until the advent of World War II that many of TVA's projects began to have some impact, and thus an assessment of the agency's role in regional rejuvenation inevitably becomes entangled with the economic stimuli which the war provided to the region.<sup>63</sup>

Tentative conclusions, however, can be offered. By now it is fairly clear, thanks to the careful work of TVA historian Wilmon Droze, that TVA's nine-foot navigation channel was not a significant stimulus of economic development in East Tennessee. From 1946 to 1957 tonnage on the river rose 430 percent. Yet the vast majority of that tonnage consisted of coal being shipped to the agency's coal-fired steam plants. Knoxville, in spite of the boosterism of 1944, when it declared itself a "port," never gained in any important way from the TVA channel. Moreover, of all industries which located along the river from 1933 to 1953, the vast majority made no use of the river, either for transportation or cooling or processing water. In the cotton goods industry, which made up a significant portion of East Tennessee's industrialization, the railroad was considered more important than the river channel.<sup>64</sup>

Nor can one say that the agency's massive flood control efforts had significantly enhanced industrial development. Indeed, due to exceedingly heavy rainfall in East Tennessee (the average is above 80 inches per year), rapid thaws, and the comparatively quick drop of the Tennessee River (which falls roughly .77 feet per mile between

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 254-55; Droze, *High Dams and Slack Waters*, 25.

<sup>63</sup>The most sensational attack on TVA in this vein is William U. Chandler, *The Myth of TVA: Conservation and Development in the Tennessee Valley, 1933-1983* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984).

<sup>64</sup>Droze, *High Dams and Slack Waters*, 100-01, 116, 119; *The Cotton Goods Industry*, 28. According to Donald Davidson, veterans of the river maintain that the locks TVA installed were too narrow from Knoxville to Muscle Shoals. See Davidson, *The Tennessee*, 11, 277.

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Knoxville and Chattanooga), it is possible that the river to some extent is virtually uncontrollable. For example, if the "500 year of flood" of 1867 had occurred in 1946 *with all the TVA dams in place*, the flood crest at Chattanooga would have been 47.8 feet, exactly two feet above what the actual 1946 flood crest would have been with *no dams in place*.

Finally, it is highly debatable whether cheap electric power significantly increased industrialization in East Tennessee. Textile and apparel enterprises, a significant portion of industrial activity on the Valley floor, do not consider power rates a large cost item in their production. Far more important are low wages, low taxes, and low construction costs. Moreover, the region's central urban areas, which accounted for 56.1 percent of the increase in manufacturing workers from 1929 to 1950, already had been electrified long before the advent of TVA. Finally, East Tennessee did not see a surge in industrialization after TVA took over power production: from 1929 to 1950 manufacturing income rose only from 15 percent to 20 percent of the area's total income. Thus, while electrification undoubtedly raised the quality of life for many East Tennesseans, it is not at all clear that it was a significant factor in the region's economic development.<sup>65</sup>

Like the railroad before it, the Tennessee Valley Authority further contributed to the economic disparity between East Tennessee's Valley floor and the uplands. If the agency's short-range impact had not been as profound as its most ardent defenders claimed, what benefits it did provide tended to be concentrated on the Valley floor. Outmigration, primarily from the upland counties, had not been arrested and, indeed, even increased significantly during the 1950's. Nor could the cities and towns of the Valley floor absorb these people, and they continued to drift out of the region.

### CONCLUSION

By the Great Depression, East Tennesseans lived and worked in communities as diverse as almost anywhere in the country. The large cities on the Valley floor were no longer compact enough to be considered one community, but had subdivided into several communities along class, racial, ethnic, and religious lines. Working class

<sup>65</sup>*The Cotton Goods Industry*, 27, 29, 31-32; John R. P. Friedman, *The Spatial Structure of Economic Development in the Tennessee Valley* (Chicago, 1955), 11, 23, 44-45.

communities composed of rural immigrants—Long Island near Kingsport, Red Bank near Chattanooga, and Brookside Village in Knoxville, for instance—had little in common with the enclaves of the elite and perceived few commonalities with the shrinking black communities, although those commonalities surely existed. In the uplands, small rural communities were facing economic and demographic crises and seemed unable to stop the human hemorrhaging from the coves and ridges. By 1930, East Tennessee was what nineteenth century reformer Henry George might have called a land of progress and poverty. Indeed, the forces which had caused this great diversity had been at work for over a century.

In the years after World War II, the chasm between the Valley floor and upland communities began to narrow. Electrification (Wear's Valley in Sevier County was not fully electrified until after the Korean War), better roads, tourism, and the purchasing of mountain property by well-to-do retirees wrought profound economic changes in numerous upland communities. At the same time, cities on the Valley floor were stagnating with the declines of the industries upon which they depended. Yet, with some exceptions, communities on the Valley floor continued their historic ability to adjust to new historical forces, while communities in the uplands seem to have been more acted upon than actors.

Does the above study point to a kind of geographical determinism in East Tennessee, a force which gave birth to an accompanying ethno-cultural determinism? Allowing for some exceptions, the answer is that surely it does. Almost from the time of their respective foundings, the communities of East Tennessee have been the collective products of their locations, which in turn have determined their access to transportation facilities, industry, electrification, and the "outside world." On the Valley floor, most communities, accustomed to innovations, were receptive to new ideas. In the upland communities there evolved a suspicion of the new and unfamiliar. What had once been geographical and economic differences gradually became attitudinal differences as well, separate collective mentalities that even today can be seen and heard in the communities of East Tennessee.

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