Lost to the Lake:

The promises of the TVA, the Percy Priest Dam project, and the displacement of the people of Jefferson, Tennessee

Darby Campbell

History 6020: Historical Research Methods

May 1, 2018

"They say the TVA is just a project;
It's the best dear thing the South has ever owned.
It's bringing in so much money,
Why can't they give us more for our homes?"
–excerpt from "The Song of Cove Creek Dam," a Tennessee folksong[1]

Introduction The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), under the leadership of David Lilienthal, promoted itself as the savior of the Tennessee River Valley, both through propaganda and through controlling the early history scholarship.[2] They promised to improve the region through flood control, electricity infrastructure, construction of navigable waterways, boosting industry, and the improvement of the natural resources such as soil, forests, and water.[3] However, some sources suggest that the individuals whose lives were directly affected by the work of the TVA had mixed feelings about losing their homes, being displaced, and being offered so little to

---

I would like to thank local historians John Lodl and Dr. Louis Kyriakoudes for taking an interest in Jefferson and collecting the pieces in the Rutherford County Archives and Albert Gore Research Center, respectively, and their help in accessing these materials. Additionally, thank you to Toby Francis for his vigilance in telling the story of Jefferson and being kind enough to be interviewed on his experiences. Thank you to all of the other individuals who conducted the many oral history interviews–including but not exclusively: Dr. Ron Kates and his students, Dollie Boyd, and Betty Rowland–without which this research would have been impossible. Lastly, thank you to Dr. Susan Meyers-Shirk, who patiently guided this research and offered valuable insights.

[1] Edwin Capers Kirkland, "TVA, Roosevelt, Scopes Trial in Mountain Songs," Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin Vol. 50, 1984.
[2] Any study of the TVA should begin with the work of political scientist Erwin C. Hargrove who has specialized in the Authority and provides an excellent overview of the scholarly work up to the 1990s. Erwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority 1933-1990*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994.; Erwin C. Hargrove and Paul K. Conklin, *TVA: Fifty Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy*, Urbana and Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1983.; The earliest works, which were produced by or in conjunction with the TVA include: Herman Finer, *The Administrative History of the Tennessee Valley Authority*, unpublished manuscript, 1938; Herman Pritchett, *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943.; TVA, *Lessons for International Application*, International Labor Office, Montreal, 1944.; The first definitive monograph, see: Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in Sociology of Formal Organization*, New York: Harper, 1966. Selznick's study focused on agricultural demonstration programs.; For economic histories, see: David E. Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*, Rev. ed., Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990.; Schulman, Bruce J. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.; O'Neill, K. M., "Why the TVA Remains Unique: Interest Groups and the Defeat of New Deal River Planning." *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 67, Issue 2: 163–182.
[3] *Tennessee Valley.* Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936.

vacate in the name of progress. Historians have kept an eye to the politics surrounding the agency, to study it in the larger context of New Deal legislation, or to the economic impact, namely the wealth of development and industry the project brought to the area.

I argue that the inclusion of oral histories is crucial to understanding the full impact of the TVA on the residents of Tennessee and how the initial claims of the TVA were met.[4] These accounts directly challenge the heroic narrative the TVA enjoyed from its genesis through the first several decades. This is significant because they confirm the 1980s shift in scholarship that likewise questions the TVA's narrative and add a fullness to the story of the Tennessee Valley. I will focus on the residents of the Jefferson, Tennessee area, a place which for the most part has been entirely left out of history books.[5] Their stories offer a unique window into the experience of displaced individuals in a rural setting and contribute to the existing scholarship of displacement caused by the TVA's Norris and Tims Ford reservoirs.

Specifically, I will examine through a linguistic and substantial analysis of the TVA public relations material to examine what they were promising and, further, how they were portraying

---

[4] For a comprehensive overview on oral history and its relevance for telling the stories of the underrepresented in historical scholarship, see: Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, New York: Routledge, 1998.; Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, New York: Routledge, 1991. For an argument about the value of oral history of studying displaced populations see: Tammi Sharpe and Elias Schneider, "Telling it like it is," *Forced Migration Review*, Vol. 52, May 2016. For oral history and folklore in Tennessee specific to displacement, see: Boyd, Dollie Kathleen. "Remaking the Landscape for Recreation and Economic Development: The Impact of Tims Ford Reservoir on Franklin County, Tennessee," M.A. Thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 2013.; Edwin Capers Kirkland, "TVA, Roosevelt, Scopes Trial in Mountain Songs," *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin,* Vol. 50, 1984.; Bob Fulcher, "The Songs of Norris Dam," *The Tennessee Conservationist*, July, 2000.

[5] For a primer on Jefferson and the Rutherford County area, see: Barry Lamb, *Images of 19th Century Rutherford County: Its Homes & People*. Nashville, Tenn.: Panacea Press, 2007.; Bill Shacklett and John Lodl, *Murfreesboro*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2012.; Terry Weeks, *Heart of Tennessee: The Story & Images Of Historic Rutherford County*. Rutherford County, Tenn.: Courier Printing Company, Inc., 1992.; Woody McMillin, *In the Presence of Soldiers: The 2nd Army Maneuvers & Other World War II Activity in Tennessee*. Nashville, Tenn.: Horton Heights Press, 2010.

their intervention. Primarily I will use *Tennessee Valley*, a public relations film created by the TVA and the Department of the Interior, and other evidence of their promises to delineate their claims, which I will then compare with oral histories of those who experienced displacement. For the scope of my investigation, I plan to focus my unique research on Rutherford County, Tennessee and those displaced by the creation of Percy Priest Lake. I will compare my findings with those from other projects in the Tennessee Valley, specifically Norris Reservoir and Tims Ford Lake. The TVA propaganda was primarily created in the 1930s and the historiography I am primarily consulting spans from the 1980s, when the conversation surrounding the TVA shifted and became more critical, to the 2010s, where recent scholarship contains mixed opinions. I will examine how the former residents of Jefferson and historians discuss the TVA's intervention in the area and how the TVA's claims measured up to the residents' experiences.

Jefferson On a beautiful spring day at the Jefferson Springs recreation area and boat ramp, one can find families picnicking, children laughing as they play on the water's edge, joggers on the greenway trail nearby, and fishermen armed with a comfortable chair and a cooler for the day. Occasionally the quiet bird song and gentle lapping of where the Stones River meets Percy Priest Lake is interrupted by a passing speed boat.

To most people that have grown up in the area in the last few decades, Jefferson Springs is a boat ramp and Jefferson (Pike) is the road going from Smyrna out towards Lebanon. I lived adjacent to this lake for years without realizing it was one of the many artificially created bodies of water in Tennessee. Most Smyrna[6] residents don't realize the history of the area they live in, beyond knowledge that a Civil War battle was fought nearby. Most notably, even speaking with people who live in what was Jefferson, hardly anyone knows about the town that was lost to the construction of the dam and lake. For the most part, Jefferson is remembered as a footnote in the history of Rutherford County, Tennessee. Generally, Jefferson and Jefferson Springs take up a page or two in the local history books and say little more than, "Jefferson was the original county seat that was destroyed when Percy Priest Lake was created."

Jefferson, now referred to as "Old Jefferson," and Jefferson Springs[7], a resort-camp town about a mile and a half down stream are often used interchangeably, even by the former residents. For the purpose of this paper, I will include Jefferson Springs as a part of Jefferson since the communities were closely connected and are often not distinguished in documents except by road names that no longer exist.[8] Despite being lost in public memory, Jefferson had a fair deal of historical importance.

Robert Weakley and Thomas Bedford, who received land grants from their service in the Revolutionary War, founded Jefferson in 1803 and named it for the then president, Thomas Jefferson.[9] The region was part of land gained in the 1798 First Treaty of Tellico only five years prior to being "settled."[10] Weakley and Bedford petitioned that Jefferson serve as the seat

---

[6] Smyrna, Tennessee now encompasses what was once Jefferson and Jefferson Springs.
[7] Jefferson Springs was originally called Sulpher Springs or Sulphur Springs; both spellings are present in older photographs, letters, and material culture.
[8] This also holds true in the oral history interviews of residents from the area. More often than not, Jefferson Springs is folded into Jefferson, rather than the reverse. However, residents do define a division when speaking about an adjacent community, Hickory Grove, which was a predominantly African American community.
[9] Rutherford Country Archives Jefferson file
[10] Articles of a Treaty, Oct. 2, 1798. *Between the United States of America, and the Cherokee Indians*. "American Memory: A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and

initially of the 2nd district, a territory that originally included areas from what are now Davidson, Williamson, and Wilson counties as well. It extended to the southern boundary of Tennessee.[11] When Rutherford County was formed in 1804, Jefferson was the county seat.

Rather than growing up organically, the town was planned and divided into 150 residential lots and a public square, which included a courthouse, jail, stocks, and a whipping post. Within a few years, the settlers of Jefferson also built a school, church, and general store. The school is of note, built under provisions for public schools in the Act of 1806, which means it was the first school in Rutherford County, and possibly the state of Tennessee.[12] The small community was insular and eventually widened to include outlying farms.

Geographically, Jefferson was situated where the East and West Forks of the Stones River join. Prior to the spread of the railway system, the rivers and flatboats were the main means of transportation of goods and commerce, specifically in this area for lumber and agricultural goods. Jefferson's prosperity was directly tied to the river. William Nash established a store and trading post in 1803 that allowed Jefferson to become an important trading hub. Additionally the resort-camp town of Jefferson Springs that later followed drew tourists and those seeking recreation in the sulfur water that was then believed to have medicinal

---

Debates, 1774-1875," Library of Congress. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=007/llsl007.db&recNum=73 (accessed April 1, 2018). One thing absent from the local histories I've examined is the fact that they were settling occupied land. There is little to no mention that this region was part of land gained in the 1798 First Treaty of Tellico only five years prior to being "settled." Also absent is any mention of enslaved workers; even though they show up in the earliest censuses along with the occupational listing of overseer and fought in the Civil War for the South. These astounding gaps are not the specific purview of this inquiry, but suggest more scholarship is needed in this area in order to fully understand early Tennesseans' lives.

[11] Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Survey Notes, 1807, Microfilm roll AC-1511.

[12] Jo Roe Carpenter, "Tennessee's First Major Land Law: The Surveyors' Districts, 1806." http://www.tngenweb.org/law/tnland-1.htm (accessed April 13, 2018).

properties.[13] Jefferson Springs was also rumored to be a stop for Chicago mobsters during the Prohibition era.[14] Eventually the springs dried up and the popular dance hall (and likely speakeasy[15]) closed its doors, eventually burning down.[16] This growth and prosperity was short-lived when a railroad and train station was built in Murfreesboro,[17] which overthrew Jefferson as the new county seat and major commerce hub in the area. The town survived, but was mainly a community of farmers and eventually those that traveled for work.[18]

From the forced march of Native Americans, to the marching of soldiers, Jefferson had its share of groups passing through. An almost entirely overlooked portion of Jefferson's history is the small city's inclusion as a portion of the Northern Route of the Trail of Tears. According to Nancy De Gennaro, "During the winter of 1838, a detachment of 4,000 Cherokee passed by Liberty Hill."[19] They originally planned to go through Murfreesboro to the south, but a toll road made that path more costly so they traveled through Jefferson instead.[20] A few decades later the Civil War conflict known as "Wheeler's Raid" took place in Jefferson, as Pat Cummins, co-

---

[13] Rutherford Country Archives Jefferson file. Weeks, Terry. *Heart of Tennessee: The Story & Images Of Historic Rutherford County*. Rutherford County, Tenn.: Courier Printing Company, Inc., 1992.

[14] Ruth Dunn, interview by Louis Kyriakoudes.

[15] Rutherford County newspapers from this time show that moonshining and bootlegging was very common in the area, as do the several of the oral history interviews.

[16] Fires were extremely common in the oral histories interviews and evidence suggest that buildings burned down frequently in the area.

[17] Then referred to as Murfree Springs or Murphreesborough. I've also seen it stated that the county seat was Cannonsburgh, now a historic site in Murfreesboro. I've seen various spellings of all of these earlier names.

[18] This is commonly stated in the Jefferson Springs Oral History Project interviews. The men would travel to Nashville or Murfreesboro for work, sometimes for weeks at a time, and the women and children would stay behind.

[19] Nancy De Gennaro, "Bill to save Smyrna's historic Johns-King home fails in Tennessee General Assembly," *Daily News Journal*, April 23, 2018. https://www.dnj.com/story/news/2018/04/23/bill-ketron-mike-sparks-liberty-hill-johns-king-home-cherokee-trail-tears-civil-war/528260002/ (accessed April 24, 2018). One of the few mentions was a recent article in the *Daily News Journal* arguing for the preservation of one of the few surviving historic homes in the area.

[20] In my interview with Toby Francis, he talks about race relations and how some of the Native Americans, mostly women or young girls, "left behind" were married to residents and had children that remained in the area. He uses his own family tree as an example.

founder of the Native History Association, stated, "In 1862, Confederate Gen. Joseph Wheeler launched a raid against the Union wagon train on Old Jefferson (Pike) and following a skirmish (that became known as Wheeler's Raid), the [Johns-King] house was used as a Confederate hospital."[21] During World War II, the U.S. Army practiced maneuvers in the Jefferson area.[22]

It just so happens that the once fortuitous placement on the river that led to Jefferson's early success is what eventually led to its destruction. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' records, Congress authorized Stewarts Ferry Reservoir in 1946 as part of the Flood Control Act. In 1958, the Tennessee legislature changed the name to J. Percy Priest Dam and Lake in honor of the late Congressman J. Percy Priest. The project was conducted under the purview of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which still maintains the dam, lake, and recreation area today. Construction began in 1963, and the dam was completed in 1967 creating Percy Priest Lake. Percy Priest Lake primarily functions as recreational space and flood control, but also includes a hydroelectric power plant. In line with the purpose of outdoor recreation, the lake includes three campgrounds, eleven picnic areas, twelve boat ramps, and six marinas. [23] All of this was gained by the construction of the dam and lake, but what was lost?

If you ask the former residents of Jefferson, everything that mattered to them was taken. The residents of Jefferson heard about the impending dam for decades, but it wasn't until they found high-water survey markers on their property and were eventually approached

---

[21] Nancy De Gennaro, "Bill to save Smyrna's historic Johns-King home fails in Tennessee General Assembly," *Daily News Journal*, April 23, 2018. https://www.dnj.com/story/news/2018/04/23/bill-ketron-mike-sparks-liberty-hill-johns-king-home-cherokee-trail-tears-civil-war/528260002/ (accessed April 24, 2018).
[22] Woody McMillin, *In the Presence of Soldiers: The 2nd Army Maneuvers & Other World War II Activity in Tennessee*. Nashville, Tenn.: Horton Heights Press, 2010.
[23] "Dates in History." U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District. http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/About/History/Dates-in-History/ (accessed March 3, 2018).

by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that the impending destruction of Jefferson become real to them.[24] According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 1962 high-water estimates, Jefferson would be underwater after the dam was completed. The residents of Jefferson were forced to sell their homes to the federal government under eminent domain laws. They had the option of selling their property and moving their homes, but this often proved difficult. Jefferson was surrounded with water on three sides so in order to move their homes, they generally needed to cross a bridge, which were then narrow and had weight restrictions too low to accommodate moving a house. Many of the residences were old historic homes, which were cost-prohibitive and impractical to disassemble and reassemble. The majority of homes were bulldozed down to the foundations, which can still be seen in some places on Old Jefferson walking tours.

In the end, the people of Jefferson packed up their homes, their lives, and moved away from their own "slice of paradise."[25] The once-close community was unceremoniously dissolved and scattered to the winds. For years after leaving, the residents believed that Jefferson had been covered up by the waters brought on by the TVA.

Tennessee Valley Authority Promises On April 10, 1933 President Franklin Roosevelt addressed Congress asking them to empower a joint government and private enterprise that "touches and gives life to all forms of human concerns." Roosevelt charged the Tennessee Valley Authority with building upon the work started in World War I to build up American infrastructure and create a massive, well-planned watershed system that would boost the social and economic

[24] Toby Francis, interview by author, (21:08, 25:43).
[25] Toby Francis, interview with author. This was how Francis's father described their property; later Toby said it was "like heaven to him."

welfare of the entire region. “This in a true sense is a return to the spirit and vision of the pioneer.”[26] Just a month later, the President signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act and an experiment in national planning was underway.

In *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority 1933-1990*, Hargrove divides the TVA timeline into four distinct periods. “The first period was that of creation, from 1933 to 1945, in which TVA was organized, fought off legal challenges to its power program, and developed the missions of generating and selling hydroelectric power, flood control and navigation, farm demonstration programs and fertilizer development, and forestry and other strategies for developing natural resources, and improving the economy of the Tennessee valley.” [27]After reviewing the TVA’s promotional material stating their early aims, I agree with this assessment. While the period of removal in Rutherford County was the 1960s, this early rhetoric is important to that story as well. Overwhelmingly when asked about when they became of aware of the TVA’s actions in their area, every oral history interview that I have listened to or read recalls seeing high-water brass markers in their area or on their property dating back to the late 1930s, often before they had even been initially contacted by the TVA or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.[28]

Hargrove’s second period is the only other one that concerns this project. The time span, from 1945 to 1970, examines the TVA in the post-war years as it became a large power

[26] Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Message to Congress Suggesting the Tennessee Valley Authority," April 10, 1933. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
[27] Erwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority 1933-1990*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 4. *Tennessee Valley.* Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936.
[28] Toby Francis, interview by author, 2018, (15:02); Jefferson Springs Oral History Project, Albert Gore Research Center.

company. As the TVA accomplished much of what it set out to do, the focus shifted to atomic power and the development of new fertilizers. By 1970, the heroic narrative had become lost, along with the majority of the TVA's autonomy from the U.S. government.

In *Democracy on the March*, TVA Chairman David Lilienthal spoke of the work of the TVA in its first two decades,

> "It is a tale of a wandering and inconstant river now become a chain of broad and lovely lakes which people enjoy, and on which they can depend . . . for the movement of the barges of commerce that now nourish their business enterprises. It is a story of how waters once wasted and destructive have been controlled and now work . . . creating electric energy to lighten the burden of human drudgery. Here is a tale of fields grown old and barren with the years, which are now . . . lying green to the sun; of forests that were hacked and despoiled, now protected and refreshed with strong young trees."[29]

In 1936, the Department of the Interior produced a film, *Tennessee Valley*, explaining the extent of plans and work underway in the Tennessee Valley. Their message indicated they had indeed taken up the lofty mantle of what the president had asked of them. The TVA propagated a heroic narrative that claimed the TVA was an answer to the pervasive poverty in the Tennessee Valley and that it would be an example of how to handle poverty as a larger national issue. Imagery rolls of farms abandoned due to soil erosion. They showcased floods as a main source of misery as the TVA sets out their plans over music from the United States

---

[29] David E. Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*, Rev. ed., "All Forms of Human Concerns: The Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-75," Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990. Quoting David Lilienthal's *Democracy on the March.*

Marine Band Orchestra, a group of Marines that play at presidential inaugurations and Arlington Cemetery military funerals, and is synonymous with patriotism. The film includes a visit from President Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt touring a future dam site.[30] The film speaks as if Roosevelt planned each step of the TVA and is going to personally come to Tennessee and build the dams himself. The narrator proclaims, "He believes that these objectives, when realized, will not only bring about the economic and social well-being of the people living in the Valley, but also point the way to similar advances throughout the rest of the country."[31] This was likely done to borrow power, respect, and credibility that the office of president of the United States then held in the eyes of the American people.

The main TVA objectives that are stated are diversification of industry, new and better fertilizers, afforestation, prevention of soil erosion, navigation, a yardstick for power, elimination from agricultural use of marginal lands, and flood control.[32] Of these claims, I will be primarily examining electricity, flood control, navigable waterways, and boost to industry, while rolling the others into a broader claim of improving the natural resources.

Electricity The TVA promises salvation for an area going through difficult times, saying they will bring affordable electricity to rural parts of the state. The film claims, "Thousands of counties have never enjoyed the benefits of electricity . . . the medium that will lighten the drudgery of housework and permit wider use of man's greatest natural resource, the power that lies in the might of a river . . . the times are changing! New ways are replacing the old! The tireless energy

---

[30] *Tennessee Valley.* Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936.
[31] *Tennessee Valley.* Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936, Video Transcript for Archival Research Catalog Identifier 11704, 1.
[32] Ibid., 1.

of electric power is wiping out traditional drudgeries,”[33] at which point they employ a montage of old laborious techniques contrasted with contemporary modern technology.

Flood Control “And floods have taken their toll in human misery, besides destroying millions of dollars in property every year.”[34] The portion on flooding is more visual and makes few direct statements, but shows imagery of massive flooding. Most of the images are aerials and are not specified in location or time. There is an implication that this is a current problem and that the flooding is taking place in Tennessee, but there are no landmarks to identify the area. The flooded areas are mostly rural and completely flooded. This section is so short and small that one can infer that they didn’t feel the need to convince anyone that flooding was a major problem in dire need of being addressed.

Navigation *Tennessee Valley* painstakingly explains how dams are constructed and is presented in an entertaining way, giving intent to the inanimate machinery and rocks as they are excavated.[35] The locks and variable water levels are only mentioned in passing. They say, “U.S. Army engineers have built a navigation lock on the opposite bank of the river. The lock will have a lift of fifty-three feet.”[36] Even though the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers did a major portion of the TVA’s construction, management, and source of workforce, this is the only mention of the Corps in the entire film.

Boost to Industry This film showcases Norris Dam, which is one of the two other projects that there have been oral history interviews conducted about. Norris was created as a permanent

---

[33] *Tennessee Valley.* Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936. (Not included in the transcript but stated in the film.)
[34] *Tennessee Valley.* Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936, Video Transcript for Archival Research Catalog Identifier 11704, 1.
[35] Ibid., 2.
[36] Ibid., 5.

town because of Norris Dam, unlike previous projects where a temporary camp town might have sprung up, but it doesn't say what individuals were expected to do for work once the dam construction was complete, at least not in Norris. The film shows that the workers have educational classes and workshops so that they can acquire new skills for "when they return to their homes."[37] They laud Norris as a prime example of how the New Deal policies were tackling the home shortage.

As Tennessee was primarily an agricultural state, it was fitting that much of the development of industry focused on agriculture, such as the creation of new fertilizers. *Tennessee Valley* claims "poverty as this is not universal in the Valley, but it exists, and all too frequently, not only in the Tennessee Valley, but throughout the length and breadth of our land. Here is regimentation with a vengeance, the regimentation of poverty. Sometimes the outlook becomes so hopeless that men actually abandon their farms,"[38] voiced over imagery of dilapidated barns and derelict fields that would be at home in a collection of dustbowl footage.

The production of new fertilizers to improve farming was one of the primary goals laid out. "One of the major objectives of the Tennessee Valley Authority Act is the readjustment and use of Nitrate Plant #2 at Muscle Shoals to promote the more economical production of plant food or fertilizer." The film goes on to explain the problem of securing phosphate and how they plan to responsibly mine for phosphate in central Tennessee rock beds. The TVA claims to decry strip mining, "phosphate strip mining produces desolation." Moments later the narrator states, "Such badlands will no longer mar the landscape, for the TVA is thinking of the future." They

[37] Ibid., 4.
[38] Ibid., 1.

also make a point that it is the Tennessee farmers (the ones who have abandoned their farms) who are doing the mining.[39]

Improvement of Natural Resources The film claims to solve the malaria epidemic. "Marsh grass and driftwood make ideal breeding grounds for malaria carrying mosquitoes . . . TVA patrols cruise along the shoreline spraying a film of oil upon the water. When the water is too shallow, a hand pump is resorted to. Where growth is too thick, Paris Green combined with an inactive dust is used. This mixture, entirely harmless to man and beast and fish, is deadly to the mosquito."[40] There is no mention of what creates the malaria epidemic in the film or that it started exploding around the same time that flowing rivers were dammed up and became stagnant water, which is breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Over footage of massive logging and scenery of destroyed forests, the film explains the clear-cutting of forests by saying, "Reservoir areas must be cleared of timber to prevent possible clogging of penstocks, remove hidden dangers to navigation, and safeguard public health,"[41] even though this directly conflicts with the claim of "afforestation."[42]

TVA Historiography Serious historical scholarship concerning the TVA first developed in the 1960s. Sociologist Philip Selznick's seminal work *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in Sociology of Formal Organization* pioneered the theory of "cooptation," or how an organization must pander to the needs of its constituency if it wishes to survive. Hargrove's 1994 book, *Prisoners*

---

[39] Ibid., 6.
[40] Ibid., 5.
[41] The prevention of boating hazards is likely the reason that Jefferson was bulldozed rather than simply flooded.
[42] Ari Reid, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Afforestation," *Sciencing,* Updated April 25, 2018. While planting trees is useful for soil erosion and flooding problems, this also presents problems of stripping an area of natural biodiversity when done artificially.

of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority 1933-1990 examines the TVA's administration and the organization's culture through this lens of cooptation. As the title suggests, *Prisoners of Myth* makes the argument that the TVA started out as a "heroic" organization as was needed during its creation. But as the political climate changed, the authority too went through changes.

Paul K. Conklin's essay, "Intellectual and Political Roots," published as a part of a Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies symposium, "The Tennessee Valley Authority: An Experiment in American Government," approaches the TVA's history from a similar approach to Hargrove's *Prisoners of Myth*. Both political scientists focus David Lilienthal's early administrative control as a major part of the TVA's initial success, influence, and self-promotion of a heroic narrative in their public relations. [43]

Hargrove also drew on the work of economists Herman Finer and his assistant Herman Pritchett, who made a study of the TVA from the inside. Finer and Pritchett were literally housed in the TVA offices and worked in conjunction with the TVA conducting interviews with TVA employees in Knoxville. In 1936, Finer wrote but never published a controversial manuscript entitled *The Administrative History of the Tennessee Valley Authority.* According to an oral history interview done by Memphis State University, George Gant, who worked as a general manager for the TVA in the 1950s, said that the TVA suppressed the publication. Six years later Finer published a TVA-approved version, *The TVA, Lessons for International Application*. This publication was likely closely restricted in direct response to the TVA's desire

[43] Erwin C. Hargrove and Paul K. Conklin, *TVA: Fifty Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy*, Urbana and Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

to be a successful example on the international stage. In fact, in the early years of construction the TVA hosted international groups from developing countries as a model for resource and land management. Pritchett published his research as part of his dissertation, *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration*.[44]

This narrative continued to be perpetuated by historians and the government without giving voice to the residents it impacted until the 1980s, a defining historiographical period in TVA scholarship where there was a sudden shift from the glowing narrative of the heroic TVA[45] to a critical view about its many failings, shortcomings, and promises that had not been delivered on.[46] In 1990, David E. Whisnant published the revised edition of *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*. Here he makes a distinction about TVA scholarship as he reflects on the work of writing history about the TVA in the 1970s for the inaugural 1980 publication, when the revisionist history was in its infancy, and then later in the 1980s for the 1990 revision. Whisnant situates this change as part of the larger movement in historical research on Appalachia and the South in general.

---

[44] Erwin C. Hargrove, *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority 1933-1990*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994; Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in Sociology of Formal Organization*, New York: Harper, 1966. Selznick's study focused on agricultural demonstration programs.; Herman Finer, The Administrative History of the Tennessee Valley Authority, unpublished manuscript, 1938, The TVA, *Lessons for International Application*, International Labor Office, Montreal, 1944; Gant, George F. and Charles Crawford. Oral history of the Tennessee Valley Authority: interviews with Dr. George F. Gant, December 28-29, 1971. Oral History Research Office, Memphis State University, December 28, 1971, (2:14). https://archive.org/details/oralhistoryoften00gant (accessed March 1, 2018).; Herman Pritchett, The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943.

[45] Another possible explanation for this could be most of the early scholarship was directly funded by the TVA or in cooperation with the TVA. Much like the confirmation bias of many of the great painters making religious work, rather than assuming they were religious, one would do well to see who was funding their work (in most cases the church).

[46] Thomas K. McCraw, "*TVA: Fifty Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy*, by Erwin C. Hargrove; *The Myth of TVA: Conservation and Development in the Tennessee Valley*: *1933-1983*, by William U. Chandler," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 311-315, Southern Historical Association, (May, 1985).

He draws an astute argument about the religious, cultural, and social norms that surrounded the approach to "saving" the South. He connects the savoir mentality and rhetoric the TVA espoused and draws it out further, as part of a wider narrative about how the federal government approached this region. He explains the TVA interaction as a part of a larger "missionary" approach to the South that the federal government imposed as an attempt to maintain social order and means of control in the region. He refers to "what Robert F. Munn called the 'second discovery' of Appalachia in the 1930s" in which there was a renewed interest in the South and calls for social "uplift" and missionary work.[47] I agree with his analysis, as it aligns with the TVA's early rhetoric.

Oral History as a Practice In "Telling it like it is," an article by Tammi Sharpe and Elias Schneider, they posit, "Oral histories provide a means to productively include forcibly displaced people, through their voices, in the work and practices of those looking for solutions for displacement crises." While they are speaking specifically about refugees and forced migration, the authors do make an excellent point of the appropriateness of using oral history interviews to study displaced individuals and their experiences.[48]

In *Modernizing the Mountaineer*, Whisnant notes the exclusion of the stories of African Americans, Native Americans, women, and immigrant groups in the region. I have found this to be true in my readings as well; the majority of the scholarship on the region and particularly the interaction of the TVA with the public is littered with the names and experiences of white men,

---

[47] David E. Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*, Rev. ed. Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990.
[48] Tammi Sharpe and Elias Schneider, "Telling it like it is," *Forced Migration Review*, Vol. 52, May 2016.

and the ones actively given voice for the most part are affluent. What is the solution to this glaring problem? Given how relatively recent this historical period is, oral history practices may be ideal for filling in the gaps of experience.

History from the bottom is a rather new approach, but a handful of historians have used folksongs and oral histories to supplement the conversation that for decades was a one-sided monologue of TVA heroic rhetoric.

The precursor to using oral history was the study of oral traditions, including folksongs. Edwin Capers Kirkland made several hundred recordings of folksongs during his life. He qualified the inclusion of folk songs as tied up with the concept of exploring the narrative through oral history, since both allow the common person to have their voice heard in the larger narrative. As Kirkland points out, parody songs of news have been around since medieval times and can be reflective of the common feelings of the time. [49]

Kirkland uses the example of a song originally sung by Buck Fulton in 1937 that is a parody of “Casey Jones,” a traditional American folksong about a man recklessly driving a train to meet his goals. This parody features President Roosevelt as the overly-determined engineer. Kirkland observes that the TVA was a source of both adulation and criticism in these early folklore songs. “The Song of Cove Creek Dam” is where the criticism that we see throughout the oral histories is repeated in song, “They say the TVA is just a project; It’s the best dear thing the

[49] By definition folksongs have to be obscure in origin and passed through oral tradition. Many of these were written down or transposed to sheet music at some point, so even though Kirkland calls these folksongs, they aren’t true to that definition. This definition might need revision, or else through increased literacy and now digital media, oral tradition would be obsolete.

South has ever owned. It's bringing in so much money, Why can't they give us more for our homes."[50]

Recently, Bob Fulcher, then-regional interpretative specialist for Tennessee State Parks, wrote an article on Kirkland's work utilizing folksongs. Fulcher makes a insightful argument for the inclusion of the oral tradition of songs in historical work, "There is more authentic emotion, more wit and honest opinion in these verses than in hundreds of journalistic accounts and many documentary studies. With vivid enthusiasm or with gentle anguish, these words strike us with the power of a first-hand account." [51]

Oral Histories Fill Out the Narrative The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted oral history interviews with employees,[52] likewise the TVA employees were interviewed, but the agencies never conducted interviews with the actual displaced residents. A few historians have stepped in and done that at various sites now. Scholarship exists that has utilized oral history interviews from residents displaced by Norris Dam and Tims Ford Dam. While a handful of interviews have been conducted with residents displaced by J. Percy Priest Dam, nothing has been written about their experiences. I aim to add to the scholarship on Tennesseans displaced by the TVA, along with the general history of communities in the South, and give voice to the residents of Rutherford County who lost their homes and compare their experiences with the others.

---

[50] Edwin Capers Kirkland, "TVA, Roosevelt, Scopes Trial in Mountain Songs," *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* Vol. 50, no. 3 (1984): 102-109. Cove Creek is close to Norris, Tennessee. The dam to which the song refers is Norris Dam.
[51] Bob Fulcher, "The Songs of Norris Dam," *The Tennessee Conservationist*, July, 2000.
[52] "Oral Histories: The Old Locks Era," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District, http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/About/History/Oral-Histories/ (accessed March 3, 2018).

For years after the residents were displaced, it was believed that Jefferson was underwater. However, this wasn't the case. One former resident of Jefferson and history enthusiast, Toby Francis, took a hike out to where Jefferson had once been and realized that very little of the town had required removal. "I went and hiked where Old Jefferson was and I never got my feet wet." He later started collecting information on Jefferson and now leads walking tours in the wilderness area showing where Jefferson once stood. [53]

I interviewed Francis about his family's experience with displacement and the TVA. What he said was echoed in the other interviews about Jefferson and the others removed from their homes in Tennessee.[54] While I am using Francis's interview as a primary focus, his feelings are highly representative of the feelings and experiences expressed by the larger pool of narrators. Some of the recurring themes in the oral history interviews were: what a long process it was from learning about the project to the time of removal, how keenly the loss of a close-knit community affected individuals, how it impacted the wildlife, the mental and physical health repercussions of displacement, and the feeling that they were not fairly compensated.

Electricity Francis described growing up knowing the dam was coming. The idea was vague though. There would be talk and the occasional newspaper mention, but the Francis family didn't have television and the community was relatively insular, so it "seemed so far removed." He explained a positive impression of the TVA beforehand; residents liked the idea of flood control and that the TVA had brought electricity to the region in the 1940s. But there were

[53] Barry Lamb, *Images of 19th Century Rutherford County: Its Homes & People*. Nashville, Tenn.: Panacea Press, 2007. Bill Shacklett and John Lodl, *Murfreesboro*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2012. Terry Weeks, *Heart of Tennessee: The Story & Images Of Historic Rutherford County*. Rutherford County, Tenn.: Courier Printing Company, Inc., 1992.
Toby Francis, interview with author, 2018, (1:07:21).
[54] Jefferson Springs Oral History Project, Albert Gore Research Center.

people very seriously opposed to moving after the lake idea became real to them. He also points out that not everyone was in favor of progress, recalling a neighbor that protested electrical poles and lines being installed on his property, but equivocates that some people are Luddites.[55] Here the TVA lived up to the claim, but it was generally unconnected to Percy Priest Dam since by the 1960s the additional hydroelectricity only contributed a portion of the electric production in the area.

Flood Control The TVA cited soil erosion from flooding and poor farming techniques as a main reason for construction of these dam and lock systems,[56] but the residents of Jefferson said floods really weren't that much of a problem for them. According to Francis, even though Jefferson was surrounded by water on three sides, flooding was rarely more than a minor inconvenience. Even families living in the river bend, like the Francis family, treated it like we would treat snow days in the southeastern United States.[57] Occasionally during the rainy season, the road leading to their farm would become impassable for a few days, but they would drive back through the woods to a neighbor's house and access the roads there. The only times that the area flooded to the point of it reaching where their house stood was a massive flood in 1902 and again where the house would have stood was underwater in 2010 when flooding in Middle Tennessee reached historical and catastrophic proportions all over.

According to various news sources, the TVA's management of the Cumberland Valley River system might have staved off disaster in the 2010 Middle Tennessee flood that claimed 26

---

[55] At the same time they installed electricity infrastructure, the phone lines were changed from the "party line" style to private lines. Prior to 1948, the Francis family shared a party line with 7-8 other area families.
[56] *Tennessee Valley.* Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936.
[57] In central Tennessee, there are rarely more than half a dozen days out of the year with any substantial snow and icy roads. Schools and some businesses close for a few days, but it isn't enough for even reasonably large cities to invest in salt trucks or for anyone to go out and buy snow chains.

lives and caused over $2 billion in damage. “The dams around Nashville are mostly used for river navigation and have limited space to store floodwaters,” said Bob Sneed, chief of water management for the Nashville District. Even if the current claim doesn’t match what the TVA claimed when constructing the dams, it can be certain that federal employees were held accountable for the water levels during the flooding. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was sued for negligence three times and was subject to congressional hearings, but all charges were dismissed. Both Percy Priest and Old Hickory dams were filled to the brim and the Corps managed the flooding through controlled releases. The dams worked overtime: “A couple of days before the storm, the amount of water discharged from the dam was about 24,000 cubic feet per second. Over the course of the weekend, the water released from the dam peaked at over 212,260 cubic feet per second.” Without these stop gaps, Nashville would have been a free flowing river with much greater destruction and loss of life.[58]

Navigation As stated above, Percy Priest Lake was not constructed for navigation purposes. Unlike Old Hickory which was constructed a decade before to the north in the Nashville area with its locks and barge traffic, Percy Priest was primarily built for recreation and a secondary mission of flood control. Francis made the assertion that he believes Old Hickory Lake was the reason the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers overbought land in Rutherford County. When you compare the two projects, it becomes apparent that this was likely the case. In President Roosevelt’s address to Congress, he said, “Many hard lessons have taught us the human waste

[58] Karen Grigsby, “20 Things to Know About the 2010 Flood,” *Tennessean*, April 25, 2015, updated May 3, 2016. https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/2015/04/30/nashville-flood-20-things-to-know/26653901/ (accessed March 15, 2018). Associated Press, “Corps of Engineers says releasing water from Tenn. dam prevented more damage to Nashville,” Fox News U.S. http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/05/11/corps-engineers-says-releasing-water-tenn-dam-prevented-damage-nashville.html (accessed March 15, 2018).

that results from lack of planning"–the idea being that the TVA involving large scale planning on the front end could prevent waste, but in light of what happened in Jefferson is ironic after the fact. *Tennessee Valley* even says, "Here is the Tennessee Valley where President Roosevelt asked Congress to stage a demonstration of national planning." The poor planning that resulted from overly cautious zoning after the problems experienced before with Old Hickory Lake was the demise of Jefferson.[59] Old Hickory Lake was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1954, almost a decade before construction began on Percy Priest Dam. Much like what happened with Percy Priest, there was a miscalculation and instead of completely missing the town, once completed Old Hickory lake reached out further than the estimates of where the final water level would be. Rock Castle, a historic home once belonging to one of the original Tennessee territory settlers, Daniel Smith, lost several buildings including all of the original enslaved workers' cabins, a large portion of the enslaved workers' cemetery, a carriage house, and a spring house.[60] Here a glaring difference between the finished lakes becomes obvious. Old Hickory Lake's shore is lined with homes and structures, while most of Percy Priest Lake is public land. The misjudgment of where the lake would end might have led the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to be far more liberal in their estimations of high-water marks to account for a potential margin of error. Francis recalls people being upset that they couldn't retain a portion of their land. The TVA bought the entire property even though the high-water mark only denoted a portion of the property and the rest occupied high ground that would have been

[59] Toby Francis, interview with author, 21:08, 35:02.
[60] Rock Castle Archive papers. Notably, the enslaved workers' cemetery is the only cemetery affected by the lake that I have found in my research that was flooded and the remains were not removed. Some of the remains simply continue to be submerged beneath the lake.

unaffected. If there wasn't an existing roadway, they claimed the entire property. The high-water mark plaques were installed decades before the dam.[61]

Boost to Industry By the 1960s, this goal had primarily fallen to the wayside. The TVA wasn't as interested in creating jobs as they had been in post-depression years. However, the oral history interviews comment extensively on the economic impact of these communities and individual families.

When the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers came knocking, Francis's father had been in bad health, so "he felt the best choice was to make a quick deal." He took the first offer. The range of what people received for their property varied widely depending on the location. While those that were near Jefferson Pike got $500 an acre, the Francis family got $218 an acre (including the house, the barn, smoke house, an old barn, and chicken house). The neighbors that held out a bit longer got "considerably more per acre." Some of the neighbors "felt forced" and held out as long as they could, even until the lake was forming.[62]

Here is one place where the experience in Jefferson pales to the injustice of those displaced by Tims Fords Reservoir. Christine Hopkins recounts her family's experience in a 2008 interview. The Hopkins' children were the fifth generation to inhabit a farm when the TVA and TERDA (Tennessee Elk River Development Agency) notified them that they would be seeking their land. Her mother-in-law did not want to leave. Hopkins traveled to Knoxville to meet with the chairman of the TVA and beg him to let them keep some of the land. To which she states he responded, "Your land is too valuable to us to let you keep it." She recalls the farmers being

[61] Toby Francis, interview by author, 2018, 42:15, 40:15, 37:02 Francis also describes neighbors expressing negative feelings toward progress and things like electricity.
[62] Ibid. (29:43)

very upset that they were taking farm land, but leaving the property of officials and people in power alone. She quotes her father-in-law as having said, "I would have given them the land that the water covered if they would have left us alone." She said the worst part was twenty years later when they resold the land to developers at auction. Her daughter bought back the land that they had had their homestead on–which had originally sold for $25-$250 an acre–for thousands per acre. The government had bought the entire 275 acres for $54,750, and sold a single plot for between $400,000 and $500,000. Even though Hopkins was able to buy a plot back, she could not afford to build on it.[63] $54,750 in 1967 has the same purchasing power as $185,024 in 1987, which means that the original family only received a fraction of what the land was worth.

Apart from the financial loss, many claimed the quality of the farmland along the river was superior, and many displaced farmers changed crops or vocation as a result of the removal. Francis's father ran a dairy farm in Jefferson, but changed to beef cows when they moved. The Francis family relocated in 1965, his father died a year later. Francis believes that the stress of moving away from his home adversely effected his father's health. As he put it, "[Moving] brought on a lot of trials, probably my father once he moved down there to that farm it was really home to him. He liked it down there, he liked the river and he had coon dogs . . . I just feel like, he had been sick sure, but it was heartbreaking. The adjustment he had to make . . . Where they moved was close enough to a main road that it really affected him."[64] His mother was able to adjust and lived another 30 years. Francis is not alone in this belief. Several of the

[63] Hopkins, Christine and Susie Powers. Interview by Dollie Boyd. Winchester, TN. June 13, 2008.
[64] Toby Francis, interview by author, 2018, 53:55.

oral history interviews describe similar experiences. The loss of community and home may have had a higher cost than loss of income or land being undervalued.

Improvement of the Natural Resources The most surprising thread in the interviews was the frank discussion of how the natural environment changed from the residents' childhood to adulthood. These people grew up fishing and hunting on the river, wading in the springs, and spending the majority of their time outdoors. Their testimonies brought to light a stark change in the wildlife and quality of the water. In Richard Lowitt's essay, "The TVA 1933-1945," he casts the TVA juggernaut as environmentally friendly. He praises the encouragement of state parks and the management of the malaria outbreak as examples of their environmental stewardship.[65] This is a narrow view, which only rings true if you look at nothing but the TVA's perspective. Yes, the TVA's stewardship was behind creating recreational areas and some wildlife management areas, but was also responsible for killing species through the destruction of the free flowing river system. Specifically, the creation of Percy Priest Dam on the Stones River destroyed the habitat of the mussel commonly known as the Narrow Catspaw or Stone's Pearly Mussel and as a result the species is now extinct. The Red List, a conservation organization and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service both list the damming of free moving rivers as the direct cause of this extinction. The snail darter became endangered when the Tellico Dam was completed, but the species didn't go extinct due to the conservation efforts of the

[65] Richard Lowitt, "The TVA 1933-1945," ****

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in transplanting a portion of the population to another Tennessee river.[66]

As for the notion that TVA brilliantly managed the malaria outbreak (created by damming up the river and having still, stagnant water where there was previously a moving-water ecosystem), that acclaim would be similar to praising someone putting out a fire they started. According to the TVA's own promotional materials, the work building dams caused the outbreak and to rectify it they sprayed copious amounts of Paris Green into the reservoirs and lakes. Paris Green is now classified under the Dangerous Substances Directive as Toxic to Humans and Dangerous for the Environment (Nature). In the TVA film, *Tennessee Valley*, the TVA explains their solution to the malaria problem using Paris Green sprays. The film claims that it is safe for humans and fish, but deadly to mosquitoes. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration lists copper acetoarsenite (the chemical name of Paris Green) as a level 6 poison, which puts it on par with arsenic. It is poisonous to ingest, inhale, or absorb through dermal exposure. If it is heated or ignited, it forms arsenic oxide and is explosive; when dissolved in water, it forms phytotoxic arsenic. The lethal dose for ingestion is just 7 drops. [67] The film shows it being sprayed liberally in Tennessee's waterways. The quality of water and potential harm to wildlife wasn't the only threat the TVA posed to the environment.

---

[66] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Endangered Species. America's Mussels: Silent Sentinels." https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/clams/mussels.html (accessed March 13, 2018.) International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, "IUCN Red List of Endangered Species" "Epioblasma lenior" (Narrow Catspaw, Stone's Pearly Mussel), http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/7874/0 (accessed March 28, 2018).

[67] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Cameo Chemicals, COPPER ACETOARSENITE, Chemical Data Sheet." CAMEO Chemicals version 2.7 rev 3. https://cameochemicals.noaa.gov/chemical/2981 (accessed March 28, 2018).

Even though Whisnant only devotes one chapter to the TVA, he has a firm grasp on the conflicting messages about the TVA's impact on the environment. He opens the chapter with two quotes. The first, from the authority's first director and public relations mastermind Lilienthal, which says, "This is the story of great change . . . It is a story of the people and how they have worked to create a new valley." Whisnant contrasts it with a statement from Harry Caudill's *My Land Is Dying*, which says, "TVA now controls the fate of the coal-bearing regions of Appalachia, its role has been nothing short of disastrous." Whisnant goes further and elaborates on the disaster calling the TVA "environmentally destructive." In his view the most egregious offense was the turn in the late 1950s from hydroelectric power to strip mining and burning coal for its steam plants. "By 1968 TVA was using 5.5 percent of the total U.S. coal output, or 1,600 carloads a day, making it the nation's largest single user of strip-mined coal."[68] The product of this massive coal consumption was sulfur dioxide and acid rain. It was the 1970s before anything was done toward resolving these problems. His views are not entirely negative, however. He balances his criticism with an explanation of the state of the Tennessee Valley before the TVA intervened. The valley had been ravaged by poor land management and single-aim programs that often had contradictory goals. The TVA was comprehensive in its planning, each portion working toward a single goal of rejuvenation for the region. He again quotes Lilienthal's lofty claims, "What God has made one, man was to develop as one."[69]

[68] Notably, the strip mining was primarily done in Kentucky. Technically the TVA kept the promise not to strip mine the Tennessee Valley.
[69] David E. Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*, Rev. ed., "All Forms of Human Concerns: The Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-75," Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990.

Conclusion The TVA didn't directly claim to build communities, but the overall idea was that its intervention would strengthen the area. One sentiment resounds over and over in the oral histories. Tight-knit communities were torn apart. Perhaps because Jefferson was so needlessly destroyed, the displaced members of the community felt this more acutely than in other places. Toby Francis said it best, "You didn't have much of a choice, you just had to make the best of it. I knew people who resented because they knew that the farm that they grew up on–if the house had been sitting in the same location, just like the town of Jefferson[, it would still have been there.] Families moved, and neighbors moved in different directions, and you may never see them close up again. You're breaking up a whole community." [70]

The TVA's claims were bold and while some of them fell short, it is undeniable that it had a hand in the transformation of the region. The TVA promised progress and that it would make Tennessee residents' lives better. How the people of Tennessee felt about the TVA shows that their experience was much different than what they were led to expect. The original heroic narrative the TVA perpetuated lived up to its claims in some respects. In retrospect, the key flood control measures may have saved the area. However, as this paper outlines, the TVA also did a great deal of harm to the displaced residents and natural resources. Whether or not the TVA lived up to its claims, it is apparent that the whole story cannot be told without the democratic inclusion of the voices of the people who lived it.

[70] Toby Francis, interview by author, (35:02, 58:16).

Bibliography

Articles of a Treaty, Oct. 2, 1798. *Between the United States of America, and the Cherokee Indians.* "American Memory: A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875." Library of Congress. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=007/llsl007.db&recNum=73 (accessed April 1, 2018).

Associated Press, "Corps of Engineers says releasing water from Tenn. dam prevented more damage to Nashville," Fox News U.S. http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/05/11/corps-engineers-says-releasing-water-tenn-dam-prevented-damage-nashville.html (accessed March 15, 2018).

Boyd, Dollie Kathleen. "Remaking the Landscape for Recreation and Economic Development: The Impact of Tims Ford Reservoir on Franklin County, Tennessee," M.A. Thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 2013. http://jewlscholar.mtsu.edu/handle/mtsu/3529 (accessed February 6, 2018).

Carpenter, Jo Roe. "Tennessee's First Major Land Law: The Surveyors' Districts, 1806." http://www.tngenweb.org/law/tnland-1.htm (accessed April 13, 2018).

"Dates in History." U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District. http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/About/History/Dates-in-History/ (accessed March 3, 2018).

De Gennaro, Nancy. "Bill to save Smyrna's historic Johns-King home fails in Tennessee General Assembly," *Daily News Journal*, April 23, 2018.

https://www.dnj.com/story/news/2018/04/23/bill-ketron-mike-sparks-liberty-hill-johns-king-home-cherokee-trail-tears-civil-war/528260002/ (accessed April, 24, 2018).

Dunn, Ruth, 2017, interview by Louis Kyriakoudes, September 19, 2017.

Finer, Herman. *The Administrative History of the Tennessee Valley Authority*, unpublished manuscript, 1938.

Franklin County Residents Oral History Interviews, interviews by Dollie Kathleen Boyd, 2008. Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Fulcher, Bob. "The Songs of Norris Dam." *The Tennessee Conservationist*, July, 2000.

Gant, George F. and Charles Crawford. *Oral history of the Tennessee Valley Authority: interviews with Dr. George F. Gant, December 28-29, 1971*. Oral History Research Office, Memphis State University, December 28, 1971, (2:14). https://archive.org/details/oralhistoryoften00gant (accessed March 1, 2018).

Grigsby, Karen. "20 Things to Know About the 2010 Flood." *Tennessean*, April 25, 2015, updated May 3, 2016. https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/2015/04/30/nashville-flood-20-things-to-know/26653901/ (accessed March 15, 2018).

Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Patai. *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Hargrove, Erwin C. *Prisoners of Myth: The Leadership of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1990*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Hargrove, Erwin C. and Paul K. Conkin, ed.s, *TVA, Fifty Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy*. Urbana and Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. “IUCN Red List of Endangered Species” “Epioblasma lenior” (Narrow Catspaw, Stone's Pearly Mussel), http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/7874/0 (accessed March 28, 2018).

Jefferson Springs Oral History Project, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University.

Jefferson Springs and Hickory Grove Subject Folder, Albert Gore Research Center. Middle Tennessee State University.

Kirkland, Edwin Capers. "TVA, Roosevelt, Scopes Trial in Mountain Songs." Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin vol 50, no. 3 (1984): 102-109.

Lamb, Barry. *Images of 19th Century Rutherford County: Its Homes & People.* Nashville, Tenn.: Panacea Press, 2007.

McCraw, Thomas K. “*TVA: Fifty Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy*. by Erwin C. Hargrove; *The Myth of TVA: Conservation and Development in the Tennessee Valley: 1933-1983*, by William U. Chandler.” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 311-315, Southern Historical Association, (May, 1985).

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

McMillin, Woody. *In the Presence of Soldiers: The 2nd Army Maneuvers & Other World War II Activity in Tennessee*. Nashville, Tenn.: Horton Heights Press, 2010.

Middle Tennessee Oral History Project, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “Cameo Chemicals, COPPER ACETOARSENITE, Chemical Data Sheet.” CAMEO Chemicals version 2.7 rev 3. https://cameochemicals.noaa.gov/chemical/2981 (accessed March 28, 2018).

Old Jefferson Subject Folder, Rutherford County Archives. Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

O'Neill, K. M., “Why the TVA Remains Unique: Interest Groups and the Defeat of New Deal River Planning.” Rural Sociology, Vol 67, Issue 2: 163–182. doi: 10.1111/j.1549-0831.2002.tb00099.x

“Oral Histories: The Old Locks Era.” U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District. http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/About/History/Oral-Histories/ (accessed March 3, 2018).

Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson. *The Oral History Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Pritchett, Herman. *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943.

Ari Reid, “Advantages and Disadvantages of Afforestation,” *Sciencing*, Updated April 25, 2018.

Rock Castle Archive papers, uncategorized.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Message to Congress Suggesting the Tennessee Valley Authority," April 10, 1933. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, “The American Presidency Project.” http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14614 (accessed March 5, 2018).

Schulman, Bruce J. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Shacklett, Bill and John Lodl, *Murfreesboro*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2012.

Sharpe, Tammi and Elias Schneider. “Telling it like it is.” *Forced Migration Review*, Vol. 52, May 2016.

Tennessee State Planning Commission. *Partners: Industry and the Tennessee Community; A Guide to Community Industrial Development*. Nashville, Tenn.: Publications of TSPC, Industrial Development Division, no. 181., 1947.

Tennessee Valley. Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936. Digitized film reels. Series: Motion Picture Film Documentation of the Diverse Activities of the Department of the Interior, 1916 – 1976. Record Group 48: Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, 1826 – 2009. National Archives Identifier: 11704. Local Identifier: 48.73. Five film reels., https://catalog.archives.gov/id/11704 (accessed February 15, 2018).

Tennessee Valley. Department of the Interior, Tennessee Valley Authority, 1936, Video Transcript for Archival Research Catalog Identifier 11704. https://www.archives.gov/files/social-media/transcripts/transcript-tennessee-valley-1936-11704.pdf (accessed February 15, 2018).

Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville. Survey Notes, 1807. Microfilm roll AC-1511.

TVA. *Lessons for International Application*, International Labor Office, Montreal, 1944.

TVA. “Our History.” Tennessee Valley Authority. https://www.tva.gov/About-TVA/Our-History (accessed March 10, 2018).

"TVA in Tennessee: Fiscal Year 2017." Tennessee Fact Sheet. Tennessee Valley Authority. https://www.tva.gov/file_source/TVA/Site%20Content/About%20TVA/2017_TN_fact-sheet_FINAL.pdf, (accessed March 28, 2018).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Endangered Species. America's Mussels: Silent Sentinels." https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/clams/mussels.html (accessed March 13, 2018.)

Weeks, Terry. *Heart of Tennessee: The Story & Images Of Historic Rutherford County*. Rutherford County, Tenn.: Courier Printing Company, Inc., 1992.

Whisnant, David E. *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*, Rev. ed. Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990.