

City of Alcoa Centennial Historic Tour

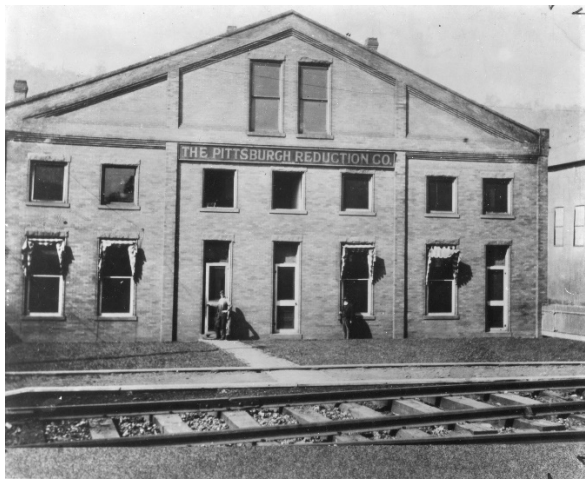


**A special note of thanks to Sen. Art Swann for
sponsoring the publication of this booklet.**

City of Alcoa Centennial Tour

The City of Alcoa was incorporated July 1, 1919, and this year we are celebrating the City's Centennial.

What is most important to understand about Alcoa, historically, is two-fold: First, to know that had it not been for the Aluminum Company of America (now, locally, Arconic Inc.), the City of Alcoa and its school system would never have existed; and, second, to understand something about the magnitude of the aluminum industry as it once existed here.



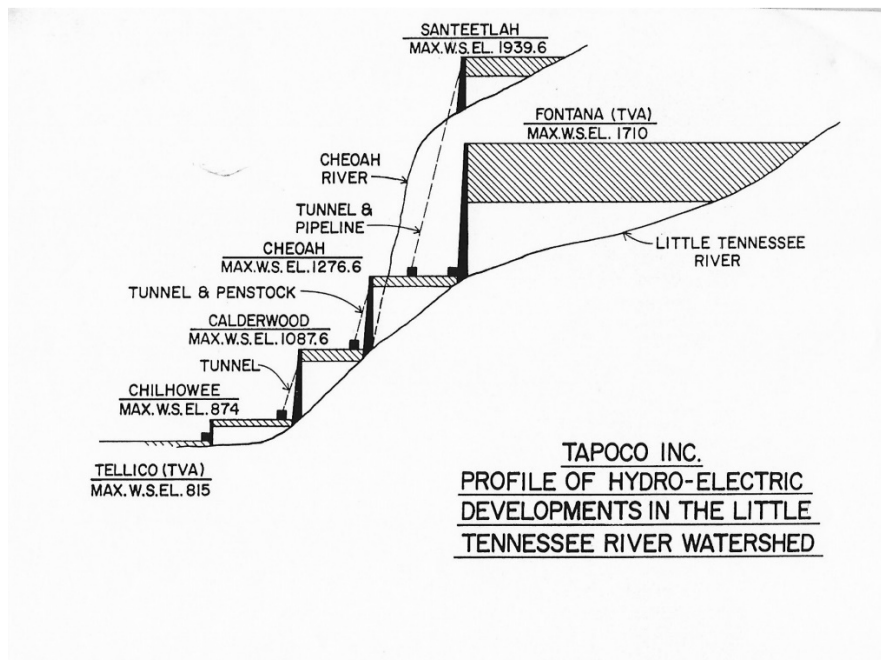
In 1886, Charles Martin Hall invented an electrolytic process for smelting aluminum that, for the first time, made the production of aluminum economically feasible. In 1888, Hall, Alfred E. Hunt, and others formed the Pittsburgh Reduction Company—just 22 years before the company, which changed its name to the Aluminum Company of America in 1907, made its way to East Tennessee.

The company faced two immediate tasks if it was to succeed. First, it had to create a market for its product; the company had to develop applications for aluminum. Second, the company continually had to strive to cut its costs and reduce the price of its product in order to create that market, and that is primarily what brought the company to East Tennessee.

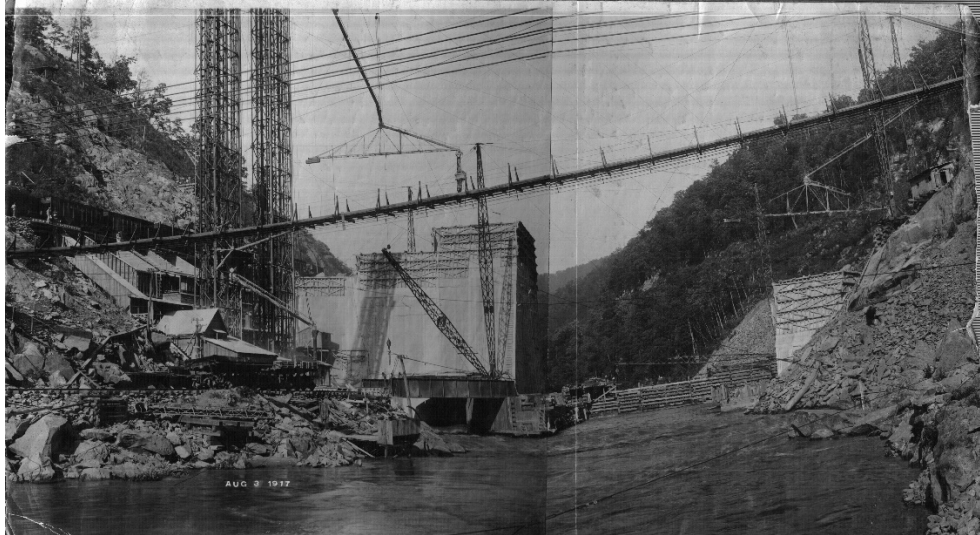
There are two primary components in the production of aluminum: Bauxite, the ore from which alumina is obtained, and electricity. It takes massive quantities of electricity to produce aluminum. Hall's discovery was to pass an electric current through a molten chemical bath, thus separating, or reducing, the aluminum from what it is otherwise found chemically attached to in the earth's crust. The demand for electric power, therefore, required the company to build plants in locations distant from Pittsburgh where inexpensive sources of energy, including hydroelectric power, could be found.



Little Tennessee River



By 1909, the company had learned of the Little Tennessee River and its tributaries. Due to the annual rainfall in this area, the rapid fall in elevation along the river, the river currents and the state of economic development in East Tennessee, it was the perfect place to obtain cheap power. In 1910, the company began buying property and riparian rights in this area, ultimately acquiring almost all such rights along a 40-mile stretch in the Great Smoky Mountains. In the same year, the company acquired Knoxville Power Co. (which had earlier been granted, by the Tennessee General Assembly, a license to build a dam on the Little Tennessee River), and by 1914 Union Development Co. and Tallassee Power Co. in North Carolina. It is believed that the company was the first company in history to develop a long-term power plan. It has been said that for every dollar spent on constructing plants in Blount County, the company spent another dollar constructing dams and powerhouses.



The dams included Cheoah (1919), Santeetlah (1928), Calderwood (1930), Glenville (1941), Nantahala (1942) and Chilhowee (1957).



Calderwood Camp

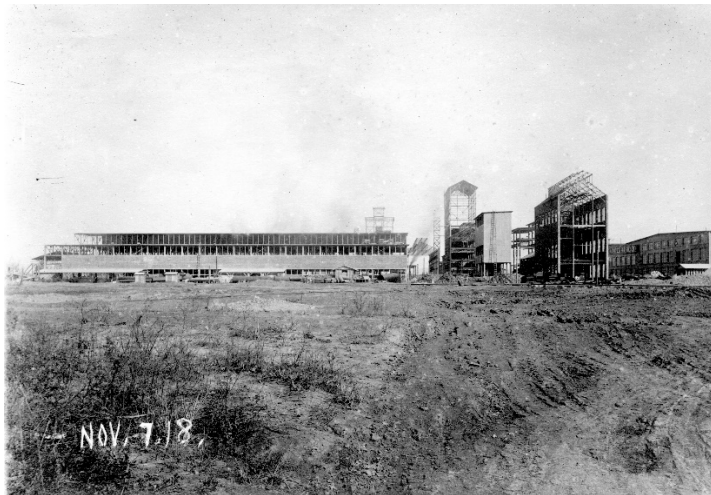
ALCOA's first construction in the area came in the mountains in a village that came to be known as Calderwood. It was established as a base camp and village for workers to extend a railroad for purposes of construction of the dams. This village was initially known as "Alcoa," taken from the initial letters of ALuminum COmpany of America.



Reduction Plant

Stop 1 – Corner of Lincoln and Rankin Roads

In 1913, the company began construction of a reduction plant in Blount County in an unincorporated area then known as North Maryville. That plant would be in operation by 1914.



Carbon Plant

By 1918 a carbon plant was also under construction, and together these two plants would constitute the smelting, or reduction, unit of the local operations. These plants did not manufacture products, but rather produced the raw aluminum which would then be used to make products. Together, these plants came to be known as the South Plant. The high tension yard located there, where the power was brought in from the dams in the mountains, covered 45 acres and was the largest such yard in the nation, with the greatest capacity of any such yard in the nation.



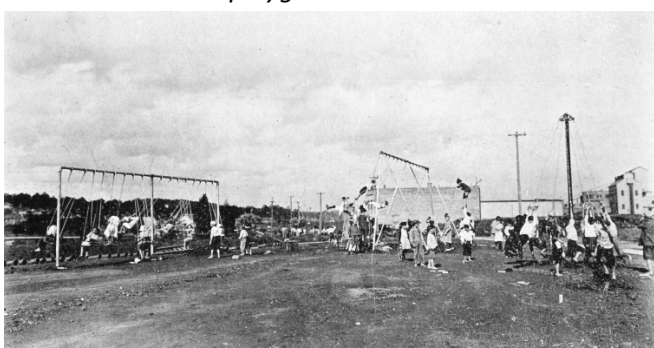
Mule Barn



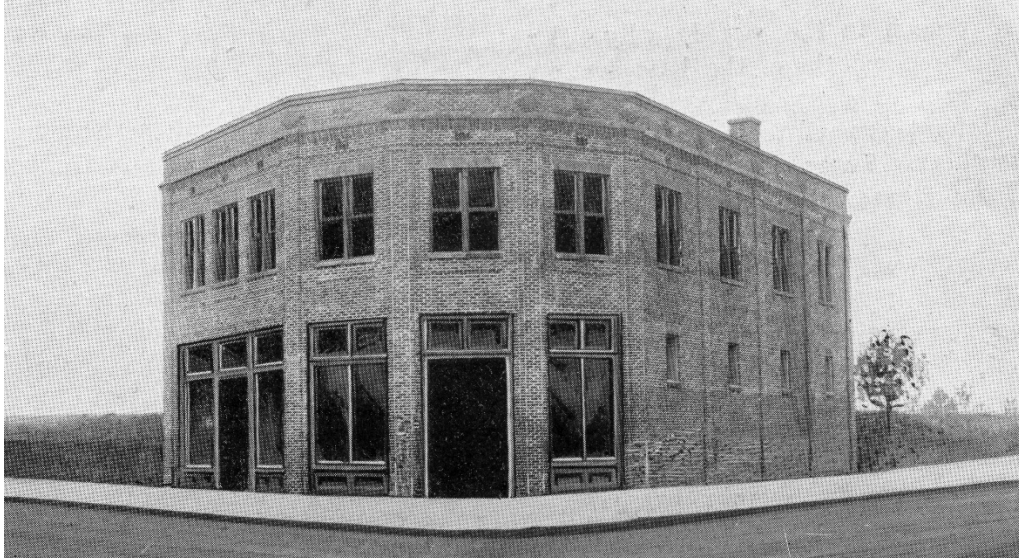
In 1914, a barn was built on this property to house teams of mules used in construction of the first plant buildings, and in this Bassel community, named for Guy Mannering “G. M.” Bassel, a civil engineer involved in the construction of Company facilities in East Tennessee, beginning with surveying property for the dam sites in 1911; surveying the original tract that would become the City of Alcoa; and then serving as a construction engineer for the erection of plant buildings, streets, and utilities. From 1920 to 1929 he served as city engineer.

The children who lived in the Bassel community initially attended City of Maryville schools. In 1918, shortly before commencement of the new school year, Maryville officials notified the Company that Maryville would no longer be able to accept Bassel students due to overcrowding. The Mule Barn was hastily converted to a school, known as the Aluminum Company of America School. It was later named Bassel School—that name being carried over to the new Bassel school building in 1923. When the new school building was opened, the Mule Barn became home to various Company offices on the first floor, and later, on the second floor, the City of Alcoa municipal offices.

Mule Barn School playground



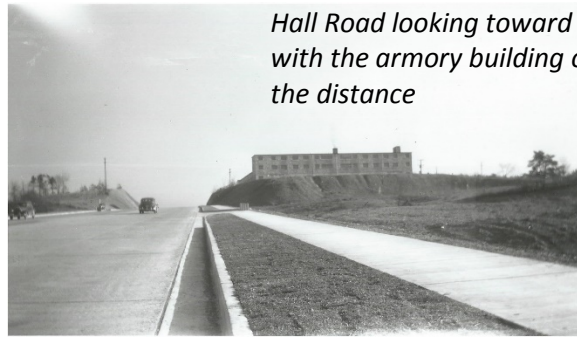
First Alcoa post office – Lincoln Road, now the site of CVS



The Johnson & Law Building on Lincoln Road



Hall Road viaduct extension opening, circa 1946



Hall Road looking toward Maryville with the armory building on the hill in the distance

Photo by Dean Stone

Lincoln Road homes

- looking east toward South Plant and Hall Road

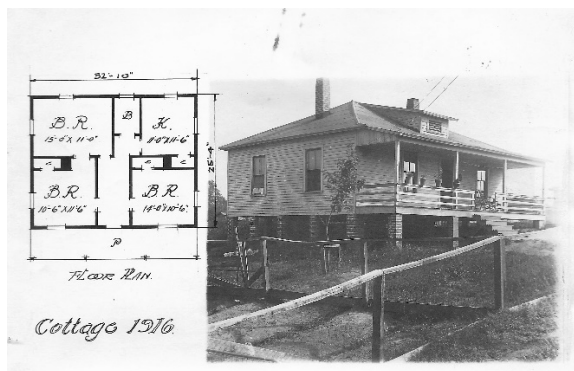


- looking west toward Midland Center

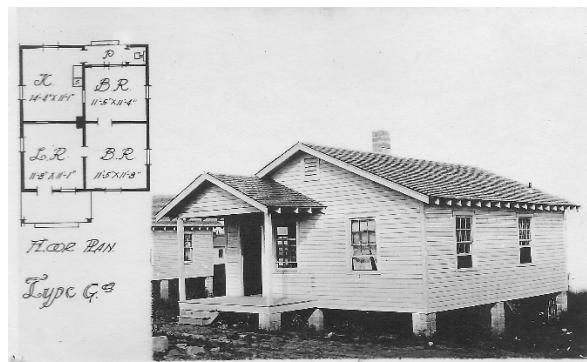


Stop 2 – rolling tour along Glascock Street and vicinity

Typical of corporate practices of the time, the company set out to develop a townsite for its workers. In all respects the local community that was built represented the epitome of a company town. ALCOA constructed and owned the homes that were built for the workers, owned the streets and utilities, and generally controlled life in the city. While all of that was true, it is also important to note that the company exhibited a commitment to establishing a fine quality of life for its workers. Edwin S. Fickes, a civil engineer who rose to chief engineer and vice president of the company, and Robert F. Ewald, a company hydraulic engineer, laid out a plan for the city that included homes, streets, schools, churches, one acre of park for each 100 residents, recreational facilities, and water and sewer facilities. While it may sound humorous today, it was an important fact of public health, in 1919, to note that when the company homes were constructed, Alcoa had the highest percentages of homes with indoor plumbing of any city in the state of Tennessee. Thousands of shade trees were planted in parks and along city streets.



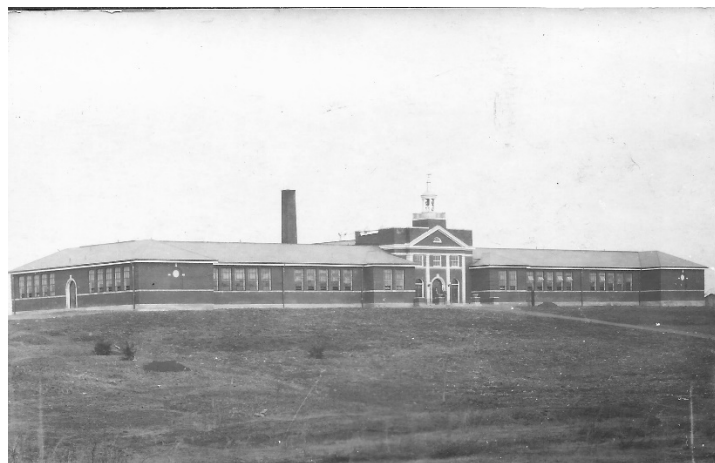
Bassel Home



Hall Home

The first approximately 150 homes were constructed in 1916 in the Bassel and Hall communities, the latter at the time being known as Peniel, then Walnut Hill.

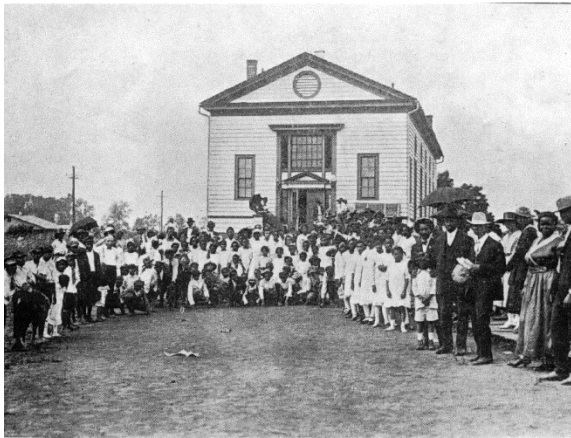
Stop 3 – rolling tour along Joule Street



Bassel School 1923

Stop 4 – Hall Community

Hall Community Building 1918



Commercial Building 1919

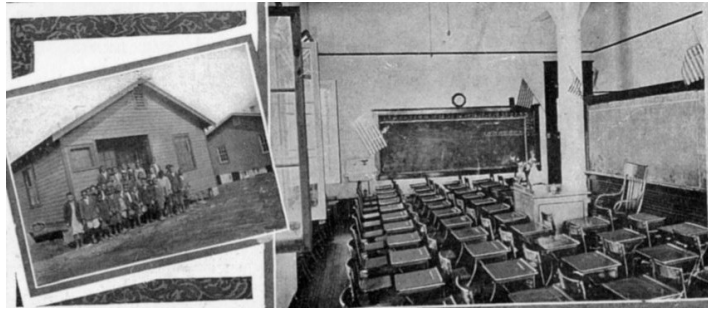


First African-American faculty 1919

At this time in American history, life was racially segregated. That was true here, as well. Indeed, racial attitudes were borne out in the company's belief that African Americans and Mexicans could withstand the heat of the South Plant potrooms better than white workers, and due to their dark skin. The company heavily recruited African American and Mexican workers, including by sending a black recruiter through Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi to hire workers to come here to help construct the plants and then to work in the potrooms. The homes that were built for those workers in the Hall community were smaller than the homes constructed for white laborers, and often the bathroom consisted of only an enclosed toilet on the back porch. Still, the homes had running water and electricity, and they were a marked improvement over what these workers had known as sharecroppers in the Deep South. The company also constructed a Commercial Building and a Community Building in the black community.



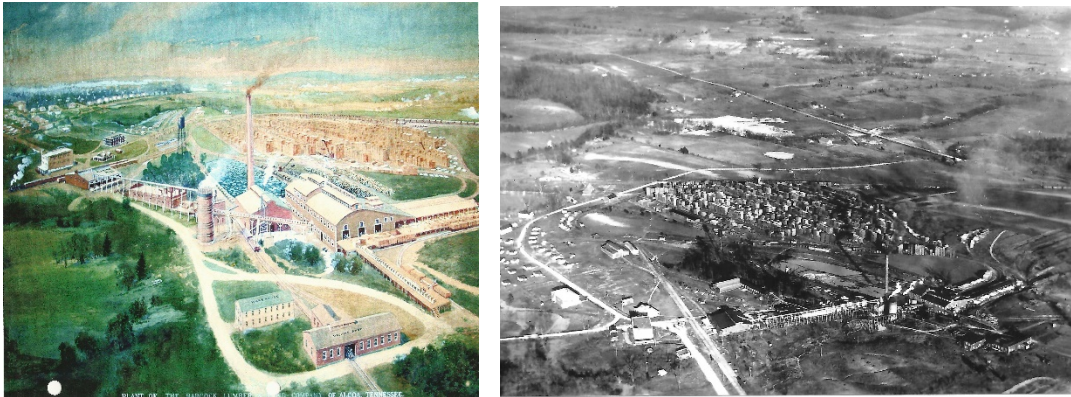
Initially school for African American children was held in small frame buildings.



Charles M. Hall School 1926

When the Commercial Building opened in 1919, the school was moved to the upstairs of that building. In 1926, the new Charles M. Hall School was opened. Initially the school went only through the tenth grade, and in order to graduate from high school, black students had to finish their last two years at Austin High School in Knoxville. It was not until 1939 that Hall had twelve grades and graduated its first class.

Stop 5 – Wright Road and Edison Street vicinity



Babcock Lumber Company



Babcock Clubhouse and Dormitory

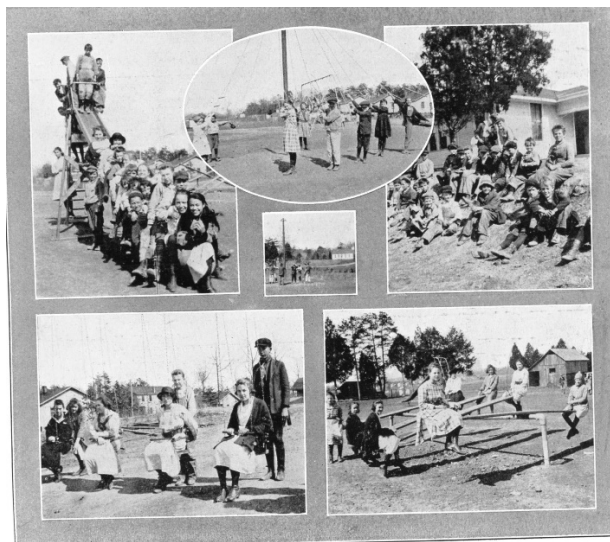
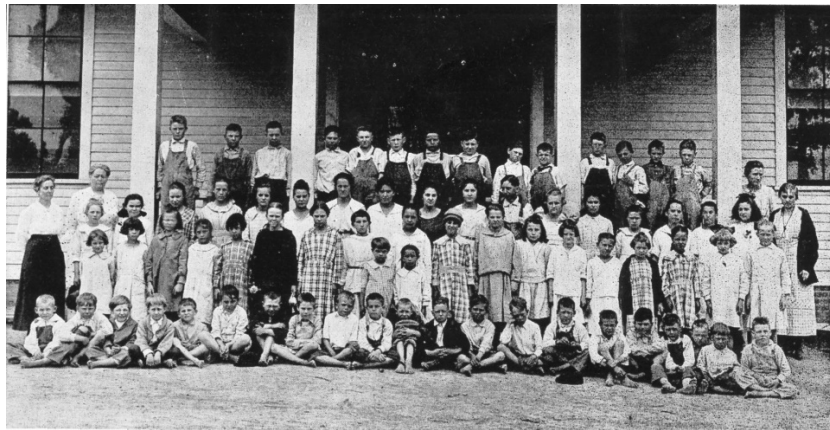
As dominant as the aluminum company was in this area, it was not Alcoa's only business. In 1916, Babcock Land and Lumber Company acquired 350 acres along Pistol Creek and constructed a sawmill, planing mill, commissary store, and clubhouse/dormitory. The Vose community took its name from the maiden name of C. L. Babcock's mother. C. L. Babcock was Alcoa's first mayor. At the same time that he served as mayor here, his brother, Everett Vose "E. V." Babcock, served as mayor of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When the lumber company located here, it also built approximately 200 homes for its workers along the streets named for its wood products, including Maple, Locust, Oak, Birch, and Cedar Streets. The company also built a school for the children of its employees known as Vose School.

Stop 6 – rolling tour along Poplar Street



Home of first mayor, C.L. Babcock

Stop 7 – Vose School 1919



Vose School playground

Stop 8 – North Plant at Hunt Road



The crowning achievement of the Company came in 1940 to 1941 when the North Plant was constructed in order to produce aluminum sheet for airplanes for World War II. When the North Plant was built, it was the largest aluminum sheet mill in the world, consisting of the world's largest factory under one roof (55 acres) with the world's longest continuous mill of nearly a half mile. With the coming of the North Plant, local employment reached a peak of somewhere between 11,000 and 12,000 workers. Tennessee operations was the largest integrated aluminum production center in the world. By 1957, Tennessee Operations workers produced 20% of all aluminum made by the company world-wide.

Stop 9 – Springbrook Gymnasium

Springbrook School 1932



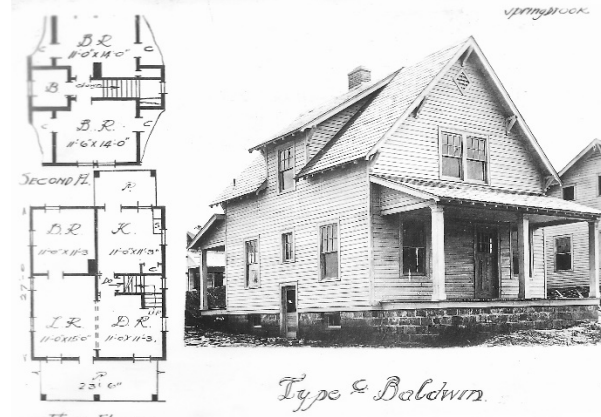
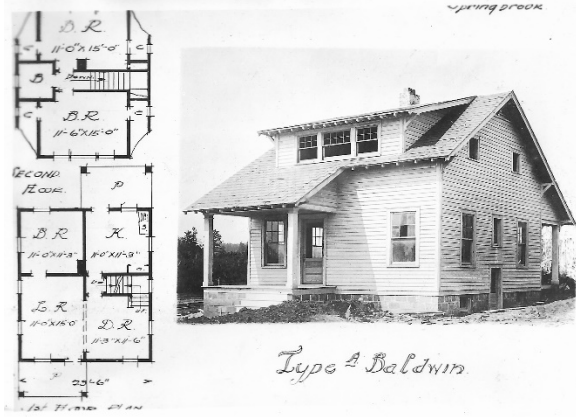
Springbrook Gymnasium 1927



In 1921, Springbrook School was opened.

Stop 10 – rolling tour of former West Plant site, Faraday Street, and Springbrook Community

Springbrook homes



West Plant Sheet Mill



West Plant Office Building



Springbrook Community – Maury Street, July 26, 1920



As mentioned earlier, in 1919 ALCOA began construction of the sheet mill, later known as the West Plant. By 1920, the first aluminum sheet was being produced at the plant. By 1923, the West Plant led all ALCOA plants in the nation in aluminum production, producing 2,500,000 pounds of aluminum per month, 750,000 pounds of which was being shipped to the Ford Motor Co. Through the years, many different products were produced there, including aluminum siding, powder for aluminum paint, sheets for cookware, aluminum roofing, window blinds, and ALCOA Wrap aluminum foil. Indeed, at one time every inch of ALCOA Wrap sold in America was produced here.

Alcoa High School 1939



When the new school was opened, it was considered to be one of the finest schools in the area and its construction and features, including many aluminum components, were proudly featured by ALCOA in its national publications.



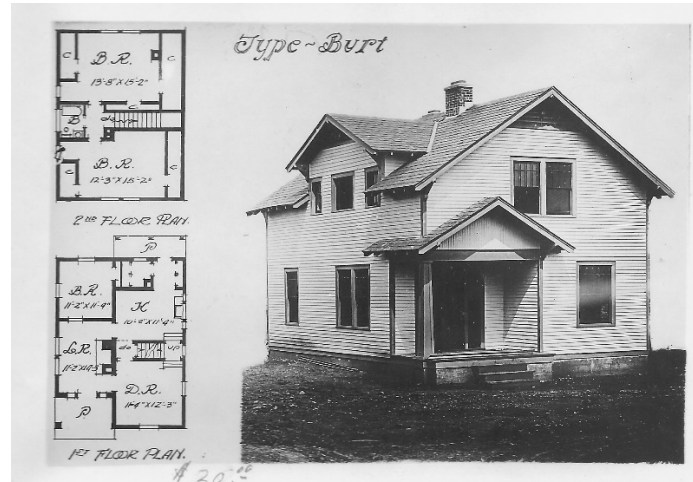
West Plant Sheet Mill and Springbrook Community pre-1927

Stop 11 – rolling tour along Maury Street, Alcoa Road, and Springbrook Road

Between 1917 and 1920, another 700 to 800 homes were constructed in Bassel and Springbrook, including all the homes located in the old Springbrook community along Nobel, Perkins, Remsen, Dalton, Boyle, and lower Ramsay, Maury and Lodge Streets.



Maury Street homes



Chandler Springbrook Road home



Hultquist Springbrook Road home



Stop 12 – Springbrook Pool 1930's



Centennial Historic Tour Map





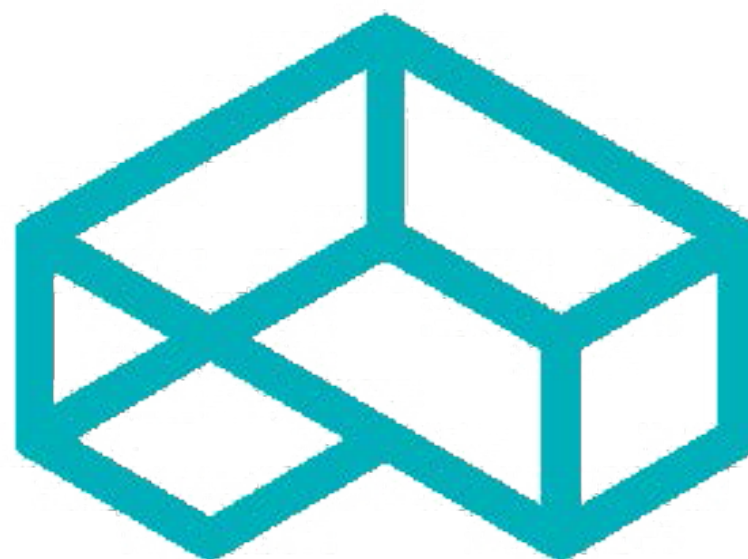
Sponsored By



Blount Partnership
Tourism Development



LDA ENGINEERING



ARCONIC

KNOXVILLE



TVA
EMPLOYEES
CREDIT UNION

DENSO Manufacturing TN, Inc.
C2RL, Inc.