

I. COUNTY DESCRIPTION

A. County Profile

Proud History, Bright Future

Anderson County was originally a part of Knox County, which once extended all the way to the Kentucky border. However, by 1801 there were enough people in the region above Copper Ridge and Poplar Creek to warrant the establishment of a new county, named Anderson for Judge Joseph Anderson. A county seat was decreed and built that year, near a popular spring and ford on the north side of the Clinch.

The town was originally named Burrville for Aaron Burr, but in 1809, in the wake of Burr's disgrace, it was renamed Clinton for Thomas Jefferson's vice president, George Clinton.

As in most of East Tennessee, the mountainous terrain and the settlement and land distribution pattern did not lend themselves to the sprawling farms and plantations which, in other parts of the South, relied on slave labor. Though slave holding was not unheard of here, it was a distinct minority position: when the slavery issue pulled the South and Tennessee into secession and war in 1860, Anderson Countians found their loyalties bitterly divided

More significantly, the mining of coal from the mountains developed into a major industry. Coal and land companies dominated this region, and communities, centered on the mining life, grew up at Coal Creek, Beech Grove, Briceville, and Rosedale. The life was hard, with long hours of toil and regular loss of life in cave-ins and other disasters. The coal industry has declined in recent years, but the sturdy descendents of these mineworkers, still living in the old communities, are a living heritage of this demanding way of life.

The coal industry in the north of the county brought growth to Clinton, as well. The railroad from Knoxville to the coalfields reached Clinton in 1869, providing the town uncommonly easy ingress and egress for what had been, still, an isolated area. The legal affairs of the mining operations were conducted in the county seat, and there was general, steady commercial and industrial growth.

The very face of Anderson County changed in 1934 when the Tennessee Valley Authority, one of the more ambitious New Deal agencies, chose a site near Coal Creek for construction of its first major dam. The dam was named for Nebraska Senator George Norris, a major TVA backer.

The huge project provided thousands of jobs and kept the county relatively prosperous during the heart of the Depression. Many families suffered the tragedy of forced evacuation, however; and whole communities were dismantled and moved to make way for the coming reservoir.

When the Norris Dam floodgates were closed in 1936, the region gained a source of cheap electricity for the vast rural areas, which had done without up to that time. However, the most important result was the control gained over the mighty Clinch River, which had annually brought havoc-making floods to towns and farmlands downstream.

Drastic change again came to Anderson County in 1942 with creation of the city of Oak Ridge, originally a secret wartime project and now the largest community in the county. At the height of World War II, thousands of construction workers, technicians, and top nuclear physicists were shipped to the huge complex in the county's West End, chosen for its isolation and seclusion. Only a few knew the true nature