

DATA SHEET

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Tennessee
COUNTY: Anderson
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE JUL 10 1975

1. NAME

COMMON: Norris District
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN: Norris		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Third	
STATE: Tennessee	CODE: 47	COUNTY: Anderson	CODE: 001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

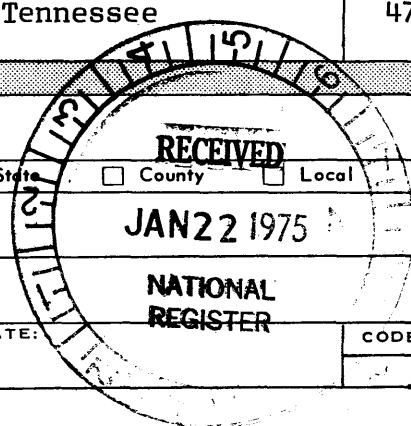
OWNER'S NAME: Multiple owners	STATE: Tennessee
STREET AND NUMBER:	
CITY OR TOWN: Norris	
STATE: Tennessee	
	COUNTY: Anderson
	ENTRY NUMBER
	DATE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Anderson County Register's Office	
STREET AND NUMBER: Courthouse	
CITY OR TOWN: Clinton	STATE: Tennessee
	CODE: 47

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:		
DATE OF SURVEY: <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The town of Norris, located about fifteen miles northwest of Knoxville, is a planned community of 1400 residents covering an area of approximately 4,000 acres. Located within its boundaries are some 400 dwellings, approximately eighty-five per cent of which were built from 1935 to 1937 when the town was begun. The town was based primarily on Ebenezer Howard's Garden City approach to town planning. Norris still possesses its original green belt area and the original section of the town is still very much pedestrian oriented with foot paths segregated from traffic and winding tree lined streets which reduce car speed. The buildings were consciously placed in harmony with the topography and in some cases clustered around a common green.

Norris was the first project totally planned and built by the Tennessee Valley Authority, in conjunction with the construction of Norris Dam, the first power dam built by TVA. Because of the urgent need for housing for workers at the dam, it was necessary to proceed with the construction of houses before the overall town plans were complete. The first building was a rambling frame cafeteria, now the headquarters of TVA's Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife Development Division. The only roads were mere tracks through woods and farmland when the cafeteria started serving construction workers on three shifts. Cooks worked in overcoats when cold weather struck before windows were installed; but they kept the chow lines open with food at twenty-five cents a meal for all they could eat. Buses shuttled men to the construction site and barracks-like dormitories were built to replace tents where many of the workers had been living. Permanent houses soon appeared for 2,100 workers.

Some basic principles were kept in mind during planning and construction. Norris was to be a permanent small town, even then envisioned as a segment of the Knoxville metropolitan area; houses and roads were to blend with, not defy, the slant and curves of hills; open areas scattered throughout were to supply play space and eye appeal; design in everything from buildings to signposts was to be straightforward and simple; the whole was to be encircled by a greenbelt of rural and forest land for agriculture and recreation. Norris was the first town in this country to use the greenbelt concept completely.

The sometimes eccentric ideas of the first TVA board chairman, A. E. Morgan, strongly influenced early Norris. Morgan had a high regard for the people and culture of Southern Appalachia and he saw the role of TVA as preserving the individualism of the region while strengthening it economically. Chimneys and fireplaces went into Norris homes along with wiring for electric heat. Hand-riven oak shingles covered roofs. The "dog-trot" of hill country houses was one of a dozen basic

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

RECEIVED

JAN 22 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER

(Number all entries)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Tennessee	
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ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
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7. Description (Continued)

house designs used with exterior variations - brick, weatherboarding, native stone, cinder blocks, and shingles. All had open screened-in porches. Each household was assigned a plot of the common land for gardening.

A special "hillside house" was planned to fit steep sites, avoiding deep land cuts and extensive tree cutting. Houses literally nestled into hills and trees in random pattern, often in semi-circles around open green spaces. Roads also curved to adapt to the land. Native stone lined gutters along natural drain channels in lieu of roadside curbs. Many interiors were wood paneled. Door latches and light fixtures were wrought iron forged at Antioch College in Ohio, former home of the Morgans.

Norris was a testing ground for new building ideas. Cinder block houses with no finish other than paint inside and out, smooth slab floors of colored concrete, and tin roofs were innovations in low-cost housing (from \$2,325 to \$3,150). Improved insulation with mineral wool and aluminum foil helped cut the cost of electricity for home heat and also kept houses cool in summer. Norris was a pioneer for large-scale electric home heating. Ceiling heat, now a common method, was first placed in two Norris homes. A few homes have coal dust in the attics to remind of another heating experiment, a "combination of an old-fashioned Franklin stove and a modern forced-draft hot-air furnace." Use of these was short-lived.

TVA set up a demonstration dairy farm and poultry farm, shops for training in woodworking, metals, electrical work, and drafting, and a ceramics lab to experiment with local clays. The rustic community building with its natural log columns was an activity center. A Sunday school class, open to all denominations, met there and later grew into the Norris Religious Fellowship Church, still non-denominational.

The food store in the new town center was the Norris Cooperative Society in which shares sold for \$10 with one vote to a member regardless of the size of investment. The store delivered to homes twice daily and consistently lost money. It was dissolved in favor of a private lessee in 1938. The Norris Creamery had become the first private business under lease in 1937.

As a part of the Norris Dam project, TVA constructed a 21-mile freeway which crossed the dam and connected with two important highways leading

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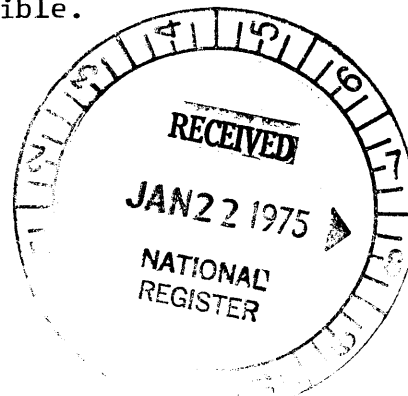
7. Description (Continued)

out of Knoxville. Designed as a scenic highway with a 250-foot right-of-way and with access and sign control it became Tennessee's first freeway-type highway. For Norris, the Freeway helped to overcome some of the isolation of the townsite and proved important to the orderly transition of the construction village to a permanent town within the greater Knoxville region.

The operation of the town required continuing financial support, and Congress finally demanded that Norris be put on a self-sustaining basis or be disposed of. On June 15, 1948, the town was sold at public auction as a unit to Henry D. Epstein, who headed a group of Philadelphia investors. The sales price was \$2,107,500. Sale provisions gave existing tenants a year's occupancy right and a preference in the purchase of individual houses. The Epstein group contributed little to the town. They sold off all the existing houses and then in 1953 sold their remaining real estate holdings to the Norris Corporation, a local corporation formed by Norris residents.

Norris today has no neon signs, few commercial services, and no public transportation. The majority of the houses remain as they were originally, with the exception of asphalt shingle roofs that have replaced the original wood shingles. Also, many carports and garages have been added to replace the old community garages that were planned for short walking distance to homes from rear drives.

With the opening of nearby Interstate 75, the area will be faced with pressures for new development. Residents of the town are concerned, and are determined that the atmosphere of the original town of Norris will be preserved as nearly as is possible.



I. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1934-37

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

In the chronology of new-town development in the United States, Norris stands between Stein and Wright's Radburn (1928-1929) and the Resettlement Administration's greenbelt towns (1935-1938). Being the first self-contained new town in this country to utilize greenbelt principles completely, it has with varying degrees of accuracy been called "Model Town," "The First Planned Community," and "The First All-Electric Town." The primary significance of the Norris District, therefore, probably lies in the area of urban planning. It was the first project totally planned and built by the Tennessee Valley Authority. It is interesting to note that many of the concerns of those early depression years were similar to our present-day concerns. Then, as now, there was a search for programs to deal with problems of population distribution, land use and settlement patterns, rapid and disproportionate growth of large cities, loss of economic strength of rural areas, and generally unsatisfactory living conditions, especially for the poor, in the large cities. The idea of a new town in the Tennessee Valley originated with the then newly elected President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. He saw in regional planning an opportunity to bring together solutions to both the farm and city problems. He proposed that programs be developed which would help establish small industries in rural areas and also help people move to small villages. Looking for an opportunity to work out the elements of this program on a small scale before it was attempted nationally, the President proposed to A. E. Morgan, the Chairman of the TVA Board, that TVA build a model community using this concept. Financing of the community was to come from the \$1.4 million which had been included in the Norris Dam project for temporary housing of workers plus \$750,000 from the Division of Subsistence Homesteads which the President had created within the Department of the Interior.

Norris possesses significance also in the area of industry not only because of its relationship with the construction of Norris Dam, the first TVA power dam, but also because of the innovative building ideas, including the practicality of low-cost cinder blocks for homes, insulation processes devised to cut the cost of electric heat, and the utilization of electricity for home heating. Also, the Norris

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Augur, Tracy B., "The Planning of the Town of Norris." American Architect, April, 1936.
 Brewer, Alberta, "Norris - First Planned City," Tennessee Valley Perspective, Fall, 1973.
 Gray, Aelred J., "The Maturing of a Planned New Town - Norris, Tennessee." The Tennessee Planner, Vol. 32, 1974.
 Webb, William S., Norris Basin, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1938.

SW 16/763270
 4006970
 NW 16/760930
 4009920
 HL

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

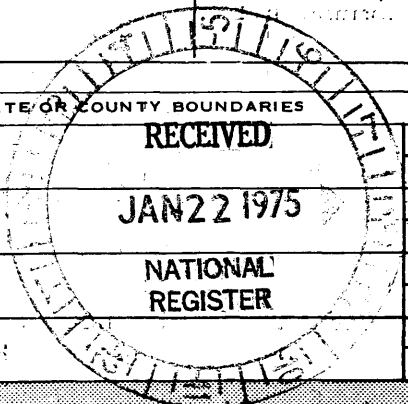
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	36 °	12'	02"	84 °	05'	51"			
NE	36 °	12'	58"	84 °	03'	38"			
SE	36 °	11'	53"	84 °	02'	28"			
SW	36 °	10'	25"	84 °	01'	22"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **3,000**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

UTM NE 16/76420
 4011710
 SE 16/766020
 4009740



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Herbert L. Harper, Field Services

ORGANIZATION: **Tennessee Historical Commission** DATE: **1/16/75**

STREET AND NUMBER:
170 2nd Avenue, North

CITY OR TOWN: **Nashville** STATE: **Tennessee** CODE: **47**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: Lauren [Signature]

Title: Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

Date: 1/20/75

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 7/16/75

ATTEST:

[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: 7-8-75

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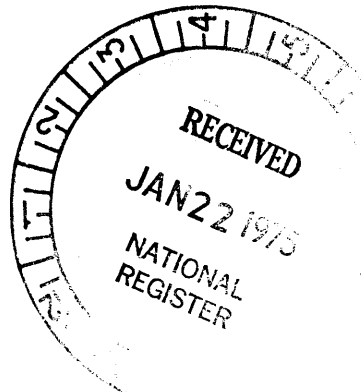
8. Significance (Continued)

Creamery became the first all-electric milk-producing plant in the world, and Norris was the first town in Tennessee to have a complete system of dial telephones.

Norris scientific laboratories have been pioneers in their fields. The TVA ceramics laboratory, started in 1935, was the training ground and experimental base for many flourishing artists and industries. It did basic research in the use of local clays for ceramics as well as in design. It was succeeded in 1937 by the United States Bureau of Mines which conducted experiments with aluminum oxide production and synthetic mica in the period 1937-1965. The TVA hydraulic laboratory, established in 1936, has now grown into the TVA Engineering Laboratory which conducts experiments for all the TVA divisions including sophisticated equipment to monitor and protect the environment.

Early Norris experiments in social planning included a school-centered community with training programs in many crafts and skills. Ceramics, woodworking, and metal working were among the crafts taught. For years Norris School was a model for new methods of progressive teaching through areas of interest, activities, and projects, rather than the traditional memorizing of texts. The school was monitored and evaluated by leading educators throughout the nation and was much in the spotlight from 1934 to 1948, when it became a part of the Anderson County system.

Although the Norris District in age is ten years short of the 50-year criteria for National Register properties, it is strongly felt that because of the uniqueness of the town and the several areas of significance which it possesses, it would make a valuable addition to the National Register, and the 50-year requirement should be waived.



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- Draper, E.S., "The TVA Freeway," American City, February, 1934, pp. 47-48.
- Graff, Orin B., "The School as the Community's Meeting Place," School Executive, November, 1944, pp. 65-68.
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- Morgan, A.E., "The Purposes and Methods of the Tennessee Valley Authority," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, March, 1934, pp. 50-57.
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- Roseman, Samuel I., compiler, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. I, The Genesis of the New Deal 1939, Random House, New York.
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- Webb, William Snyder, Norris Basin, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1938.