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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Richard M. Buckner entitled "A History of Calderwood, Tennessee." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

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A HISTORY OF CALDERWOOD, TENNESSEE

A Thesis

Presented for the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a history of an ALCOA company town, Calderwood, Tennessee. The town was an important base of operations for ALCOA's development of hydroelectric power during the years 1910-1956. ALCOA's arrival exposed the rural people of East Tennessee to industrialization, and their working relationship with this company caused a fundamental change in their lifestyles.

During the early 1900's there were many northern companies which invested heavily in the abundant raw materials in the South. ALCOA was very interested in a steady supply of inexpensive hydroelectric power, and they found a good source in the Little Tennessee River watershed. In 1910 they were successful in acquiring a strategic piece of land, the Howard farm, where they established a base of operations in Blount County, Tennessee. The village was first named Alcoa in 1910, then changed to Calderwood in 1919. The company supervisors established a good rapport with the local workers, thus preventing any labor unrest which would have hampered their efforts. In turn, the local mountain people showed a great deal of adaptability, which contributed to good relations between labor and management.

The town of Calderwood was practically self-contained and was equipped with a hospital, eating facilities, adequate housing and necessary support facilities. Blacks and whites worked and lived in Calderwood for several years under the close supervision of ALCOA's engineers.

Calderwood survived the Great Depression and World War II. But the village disintegrated when ALCOA transferred most of its workers to Alcoa in 1956. Today, in the 1980's, the former residents of Calderwood continue to reunite each June in the village. This is a history of that ALCOA company town, Calderwood, and the people who lived there.

PREFACE

The author wishes to thank the many former residents of Calderwood who were kind enough to grant personal interviews. Their contributions are the heart of the study. The ALCOA personnel department in Alcoa, Tennessee was very helpful in giving the author access to company records. The Department of History awarded the author two Bernadotte Schmidt Research Awards, which helped to support the early research. Dr. Charles Johnson's constructive criticism and patience was greatly appreciated, as were Dr. Bruce Wheeler's and Dr. John R. Finger's. Finally, Mr. and Mrs. F. L. Weaver, and my wife Paula, encouraged me throughout this study. They also have my gratitude.

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CHAPTER I

NORTHERN COMPANIES EXTEND THEIR INFLUENCE SOUTHWARD-- ALCOA COMES TO BLOUNT COUNTY

In 1910, when R. S. Peotter, W. C. Penn and J. W. Rickey, engineers from the Aluminum Company of America, explored the Little Tennessee River in their search for potential dam sites, they probably neither realized nor cared that their trip symbolized a much larger historical-economic movement.[1] For at least two decades, northern-based and northern-owned companies had made a concerted effort to invest their capital in the South. Because of this, many of the coal mines, oil wells and steel mills of the South were owned by the great northern financiers such as J. P. Morgan, Andrew Mellon and John D. Rockefeller. The Aluminum Company of America, which was backed by Andrew Mellon, was a part of this transformation when it began to build dams and smelting plants in Blount County, Tennessee in 1913-1914.

This study, which is a history of Calderwood, Tennessee, a village near one of those dams, will be initially concerned with two questions. What were the causes of this economic phenomenon? How did it find its way into this obscure part of East Tennessee? The answers are in large part a history of East Tennessee and, perhaps

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[1]Narration of slide show, "50 Years with ALCOA," ALCOA Archives, Tennessee Operations.

of the United States around the turn of the century.

The Civil War had much to do with this phenomenon. The legacy of the war remained very much with the South for at least a half century after the guns stopped firing in 1865. The Confederacy was in large parts destroyed, with cities like Richmond, Columbia, and Atlanta standing as empty shells, their industrial capacity greatly diminished and their commercial power destroyed. Property values in the former Confederate States decreased by one-half in the decade after the Civil War. Most of the railroads had been destroyed or dismantled, even in important transportation centers such as Chattanooga. An investment of two to four billion dollars in slaves had evaporated. Mississippi, which was the fifth richest state in per capita income before the war, became the poorest.[2] Even though East Tennessee did not suffer as much as other parts of the South, armed bands of outlaws and deserters roamed the hills during the war, killing and plundering almost at will. The economic instability and financial weaknesses inherent in the post-war South would make it an easy and willing prey to outside investors.

Slowly, the South began to rebuild its economy. In small towns all over the Piedmont area of the Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia small factories, mostly textile mills were built. Financing these operations was difficult, and local businessmen often tried to scrape

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[2]John Ezell, The South Since 1865 (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 26-32.

together local money from hundreds of holders of individual stocks. Quite often they were successful, and in many villages and hamlets in the Piedmont cotton mills sprang up in the 1880's. In what one historian calls the "religion of industry," southerners began to view industrialization almost as progress ordained by God. As one North Carolina minister said, "next to the grace of God, what Salisbury needs is a cotton mill!"[3] Even though economic panics, especially the one in 1893, might prove to be disastrous to these textile mills. the receptivity to industrialization shown by the civic "boosters" and workers alike would remain.

But North-South economic ties had largely been broken by the Civil War. Undoubtedly the most important economic axis in the post-Civil War period was found through the North and the West. The Frontier, with the potential economic returns that it offered, especially with the railroads, was certainly the primary focus of the national economy in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

When the northern business interests looked south after the Panic of 1893, they saw both poverty and potential. With astonishing rapidity, the national resources and major industries came under northern control. The Richmond and West Point Terminal Company, one of the major railroad lines in the South, was nearly bankrupt by the Panic of 1893. In 1894, J. P. Morgan bought up over 7,500 miles of its tracks, and virtually monopolized the railroad network in the South with the new company, the Southern Railroad. He loaned large sums of

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[3] Ibid., 137.

money to the owners of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad and was very influential in that rival company, bringing under his indirect control over 10,000 miles of railroad.[4]

The state of Florida was virtually divided up by two northerners, a Connecticut Yankee, Henry Plant and a former Rockefeller associate, Henry Flager. Flager proved to be the more powerful and became the dominant economic power on the east coast of Florida from St. Augustine to Miami. At his death in 1913, he owned 765 miles of Floridian railroads, enough hotels to accommodate 40,000 guests as well as many newspapers and utility companies.[5]

In the extractive industries, which were plentiful in the South, northern investors exercised a dominant role. In 1907, J. P. Morgan bought out Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company which had built seventeen iron furnaces from Alabama to Tennessee. Along the coast of Texas and Louisiana, John W. Gates' Texas Company and Andrew Mellon's Gulf Company gained control of most of the oil reserves in spite of an incredible number of wild-catters. Under the Mississippi Delta mud in Louisiana, vast reserves of sulfur were bought up by Mellon and Morgan. Bauxite, from which aluminum is refined, is located in four southern states, Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Mellon quickly brought up these known reserves and was in good position to monopolize the aluminum industry.[6]

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[4]C. Van Woodward, Origins of the New South (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 292-93.

[5]Ibid., 293-297.

[6]Ibid., 302-305.

The Aluminum Company of America, organized first as the Pittsburgh Reduction Company, was centered in New England in 1910. Because the refining of aluminum required a tremendous amount of steady electricity, the company had tried to develop hydroelectric power near their plant at Massena, New York, on the Long Sault River. But the political and economic situations were not favorable there and the proposals to build a dam fell through.[7]

The company soon began to look for other sources of hydroelectric power. The geographic and economic climate of Blount County, Tennessee, fit its situation beautifully. With the highest mountains east of the Rockies and the highest annual rainfall in the United States except for the Northwest, it was and is an excellent source of hydroelectric power.[8]

The Aluminum Company was hardly the first group attracted to the Little Tennessee Valley. It had already drawn many businesses prior to 1910. Because of the abundance of slate in the area, the Abram's Creek Roofing Slate Company was incorporated in 1886. The purple, green and black slate was mined, taken down the creek on a tram road and shipped down the river on barges. The company changed hands several times, but continued until the Great Smokey Mountains National Park took over the land. The great influx of British capital and technology during the nineteenth century had also found its way

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[7]C. F. Hord, "Speech to Alcoa Rotary Club" (March 10, 1965), ALCOA Archives.

[8]Carson and Alberta Brewer, The Valley So Wild (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1975), 232-235.

into this isolated region. In 1848 Abram's Creek-Chilhowee Cotton and Woolen Factory was chartered. Two Englishmen, William and Robert James owned the mill, which reputedly spun the finest yarn in East Tennessee. The economic chaos of the Civil War caused them to close the mill in the 1860's.[9] Babcock Lumber Company had lumber camps along Slick Rock Creek and Citico Creek, drawn by virgin forests in the area.[10]

A long history of transportation routes through the valley to North Carolina and Georgia emphasized its logistical importance. The Calloway (or Parson) Turnpike, completed in the 1850's, ran roughly parallel to the Little Tennessee, through Deals Gap above Calderwood, and on into North Carolina and Georgia. The Turnpike crossed at Tallassee Ford close to where Calderwood is located in the 1980's. The railroads were built in the valley in order to open up freight travel to the East Coast. The Knoxville, Montvale and Chilhowee Railroad Company was chartered in 1891 to construct a railroad from Maryville to Abram's Creek and then to North Carolina and the East Coast. The Tennessee and Carolina Southern Railroad was chartered in 1902, and built a railroad up to Chilhowee.[11]

Private utilities were also very interested in developing the hydroelectric power in the valley. In 1905, Knoxville Power Company, a

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[9]Inez Burns, History of Blount County, Tennessee (Nashville, 1957), 244-45.

[10]Conversation with Vic Weals, July 5, 1979.

[11]Burns, Blount County, 280.

wholly-owned subsidiary of ALCOA, was given the authority by the state legislature to build a dam on Tallassee Ford, near the present site of Calderwood. Tallassee Power Company, based in North Carolina, also had obtained rights to build dams across the state line. Later, nearly all of the electric utilities in the Little Tennessee River Watershed would be bought and reorganized by ALCOA as Tapoca Incorporated.[12]

Even though the natural resources of Blount County were the main concern of the Aluminum Company, the company was no doubt impressed with the receptivity that the area showed to industrialization. For quite some time, the civic and business leaders of Blount and Knox Counties had been trying to attract new industries. In 1911, the Appalachian Exposition was held in Knoxville, a national fair focusing on the natural resources of the region and their economic potential. By advertising the natural resources the Exposition hoped to "bring investors into this region to buy mineral properties, establish factories, which will give employment and run loose a large amount of money."[13] Even tiny Maryville, with a population of only 2,381, was affected by this boosterism. It participated in a similar event, the National Conservation Exposition, and claimed that there was no "better opportunities for Manufacturers than exist within the confines of Blount County."[14]

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[12]Hord, "Speech."

[13]Maryville Times, September 15, 1911.

[14]Ibid., May 16, 1913.

The Maryville Times, then a small weekly paper, constantly promoted Blount County. With enthusiasms like "East Tennessee in general and Blount County in particular is in many ways the most favored section of this country," and "Blount County has undeveloped water power amounting to more than a thousand horses," the paper invited rather indiscriminately any industry which would like to settle there. The needs of both Blount County and the Aluminum Company meshed, and their complementary relationship exists to this day.[15]

The focus of this analysis, one which uses counties and companies with necessary but unfortunate personification does not, of course, capture all of the past. Blount County and the Aluminum Company did not negotiate; the people who represented them did. These rather well-to-do men, who frequently had mutual interests and common goals, represented only a small fraction of the larger society. What the broader segment of southern society thought about industrialization is less easily known. In many cases, industry was perceived by southerners as a way to escape the often precarious existence of farming. It was certainly preferable to many farmers to work a fixed number of hours, however long, and get a weekly paycheck than to take chances with uncertain weather, infertile soils and unfavorable markets. Often a higher standard of living resulted, so industry was perceived as progressive. This certainly was the case with the Aluminum Company and Blount County, but it did not necessarily apply to all of Southern Appalachia. This peculiar part of the South is full of contrasting

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[15] Ibid., June 6, 1913.

and conflicting groups and institutions. In Central Appalachia, where most of the nation's coalfields are located, the mining companies were and are perceived as a threat to all of the workers. Certainly the populist uprisings in the South often expressed an intense anti-northern, anti-business feeling. Southern Appalachia is a diverse region, and defies the rigid stereotypical descriptions which it too often receives.

The tremendous influx of northern capital to the South around the turn of the century penetrated even into the isolated region of the Little Tennessee Valley. The Aluminum Company, riding the crest of this movement, ventured into Blount County quietly and smoothly. The fundamental changes it introduced into this part of Southern Appalachia were soon to be felt by many residents of Blount County, Tennessee.

CHAPTER II

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CALDERWOOD, 1910

As Samuel Hays has pointed out in Response in Industrialism, industrialism exposed many Americans to a "shock of change." Because industrialization usually disrupted a well-entrenched familiarity with an agricultural way of life, the response was often negative. Many who became industrial workers eventually resorted to collective bargaining to combat those changes and gain economic advantage. This did not occur in Blount County. One purpose of this paper is to try to understand why it did not and the economic and social conditions which made it so. The powerful ALCOA engineers sent to oversee the early construction efforts reflected the generally paternalistic attitude of ALCOA and helped to diffuse any labor unrest. Finally the adaptability and the flexibility that the local men showed as they experienced new economic and social conditions probably was the most important factor which contributed to the relative stability of this area during its first exposure to industrialization.

A subsidiary of ALCOA, The Knoxville Power Company, began buying land in Blount County years before it was revealed in the local papers. One of the most valuable parcels of land was the 1,200 acre farm of John Howard which was located on the Little Tennessee River about 30 miles southeast of Maryville. The Howard farm soon became what is now known as Calderwood.

There have been, of course, innumerable cases of industries buying up land for industrial and mining sites, and displacing unfortunate farmers in the process. In Southern Appalachia many mountain people who lived for years literally on top of potential coal mines in central Kentucky or on possible ski resorts in western North Carolina have been bought out with only a few dollars. The historical picture of these transactions has been deservedly bleak, but the purchase of the Howard farm by the Knoxville Power Company in 1910 presents another story.

The Howard farm was situated along the Little Tennessee River in what was then known as Chilhowee Valley. The Howards were descendants of the Hardens, and were from a long line of prosperous businessmen/farmers. The Hardens had come from North Carolina in 1837 and had kept a number of slaves on their farm, which was unusual for this mountainous part of East Tennessee. When the Howards married into the family in 1874 they continued this large scale farming operation. It is clear that the Howards, like the Hardens, were not stereotypical hillbilly families, but prosperous, shrewd businessmen.[16]

The Howard farm was a large one, huge by Blount County standards. In 1910 there were over 1,700 farms in Blount County and only ten of them had over 1,000 acres.[17] This farm was a diverse one with many sources of food and revenue. On the rich bottom lands which were

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[16]Eleanor Baptist, "The Story of Calderwood Valley," unpublished article (1947), in possession of author, 1-2.

[17]United States Thirteenth Census, Farms of Blount County, 1066.

typical along the Little Tennessee River, the Howards put over two hundred acres in corn, probably for the silage which their livestock needed. Most of this livestock was hogs, but they also sold cattle, sheep, mules and chickens. The scale of their farm products alone would indicate that they were prosperous, indeed, middle class farmers. Other aspects of their lives confirm their social status.[18]

In 1905, John Howard built a ten room, two story farm house which was a very impressive residence. It stood for many years, becoming a residence for the early engineering crews for ALCOA. The prominent house was a convenient stopping place for travelers on their way to North Carolina or Georgia, and the Howards rented out rooms overnight, profiting from what was described by one descendent as a lucrative business in lodging and feeding the travelers. Mrs. Howard had a spinning wheel, reel and winding blades, candle molds, and her own loom for making clothes. The Howards rode to town in a three seated top hack with curtained sides, drawn by a team of horses.[19]

The Howards were also very active in their local community. For many years both John and his son Lee were election officers for the upper 17th district of Blount County. John started a one room school in nearby Tabcat Creek which his children attended. He paid the teachers and boarded them at his own home. When the officials from the Knoxville Power Company came to buy Mr. Howard's farm in 1910, they no doubt talked to a successful farmer/businessman who

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[18]Baptist, "Calderwood," ibid., and private interview with Winston Henry, April 1980.

[19]Ibid., 4-5.

knew how to handle himself, at least in the local business world.[20]

On September 13, 1910, some interested businessmen from out of town called upon the Howard family. There are no records of this meeting, but Zina Howard, the granddaughter of John Howard, recalls the sale of the farm that day. The visitors asked to speak to John Howard privately, so they were ushered to John's bedroom in the back of the house. Behind closed doors, the Howard farm was sold that day for $35,000, but not until a day later did John inform his family. The sale came as a great disappointment to John Howard's son, Walter Lee, who expected to inherit the farm, as well as to the rest of the family who did not want to leave their long-time home. Company officials, including Andrew Mellon, tried to soothe any hard feelings by buying the family Christmas presents, and by their polite manners when they began to pay visits to the farm before the Howards left. Even though they left their farm in Chilhowee Valley, the Howards seemed to be well prepared for this change. They had bought another large farm closer to Maryville beforehand.[21]

The sale of this important piece of property came three years before any land purchase by ALCOA would be reported in the local

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[20]Maryville Times, April 27, 1906, October 28, 1910, and March 3, 1911, and Baptist, "Calderwood," 5-6.

[21]Private interview with Zina Howard, June 22, 1980. John Howard agreed to sell the farm on September 13, 1910, but the title of the land changed on March 6, 1912, according to the records of the Blount County courthouse. The 1910 issues of the Maryville Times, which would have listed the transaction are destroyed. The best available account of the price paid to Howard is with this granddaughter Zina, because the deed lists the price as the "sum of one dollar."

newspaper, the Maryville Times. By keeping the public uninformed, the company was able to purchase a giant tract of land relatively quietly and apparently was able to prevent real estate prices from soaring.

Soon the Knoxville Power Company owned thousands of acres of land in the Little Tennessee Watershed. This subsidiary of ALCOA was directly in charge of constructing the dams and then supplying the hydroelectric power to the smelting plants. Initial plans called for a network of seven major dams on the Little Tennessee River, but only four dams were built: Cheoah, Santeetlah, Calderwood and Chilhowee. Because of its central location in the valley, the Howard Farm served as a base camp for the construction operations.[22]

ALCOA aggressively pushed ahead with its construction efforts, transferring some of its most capable engineers and managers to the former Howard farm, then known as Alcoa, to supervise the work. Nearly all of these men were from the North, and were well-educated, aggressive, capable employees.

One of the most powerful at the construction camp was I. G. Calderwood, for whom the village was named in 1919. Educated in Maine as an engineer, he began to work for ALCOA at the Massena, New York, operations. He served as a special constructions superintendent for ALCOA's early power projects in Massena before he was transferred to Calderwood soon after the company purchased the Howard farm. He was a powerfully built man, standing over six feet tall and weighing over

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[22]ALCOA Archives, unnumbered page of presentation commemorating "Alcoa's 50th Anniversary in East Tennessee," October 1960.

two hundred pounds. He turned out to be an ideal choice to head the initial ALCOA construction efforts.[23]

One of the first obstacles that the engineers faced at Calderwood was its isolation. Mrs. J. W. Rickey, wife of a prominent engineer and the first person to coin the word ALCOA, described her initial visit to Calderwood:

> We traveled by train from Knoxville to Chilhowee. At Chilhowee we took a mountain wagon which had huge wheels with loose axles which could take the mountain roads, and drive to the Howard farm.

This mountain road was nearly impassible in the spring because it was near the river and the spring thaw always flooded it. This logistical problem demanded a solution, and I. G. Calderwood found it.[24]

The Southern Railway had its terminus at Chilhowee, six miles downstream from Calderwood. The extension of the railroad was crucial to the construction efforts of Alcoa, and in 1916 they asked the Southern officials how long it would take to complete the track. When the railroad officials said it would require six months, ALCOA engineers snapped that they could do it in six weeks. Southern agreed to let ALCOA build the railroad and permitted them to bill the railroad company for the expense. In February 1916, during the bitter winter, I. G. Calderwood was asked to supervise the operation. He quickly ordered supplies from all the major cities in the South and recruited a work force of over a thousand men. In spite of the intense cold and rugged

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[23] Ibid., "Four Veterans and I. G. Calderwood," 1-2.

[24] Undated letter to C. C. Conner, ALCOA archivist, from Mrs. J. W. Rickey.

terrain, they were able to complete the railroad in six weeks. Soon the railroad began to stop at Calderwood once a day, leaving Maryville at 8:30 a.m. and arriving at Calderwood at 10:30. This lifeline was a crucial accomplishment for Alcoa. Grace Wilhoit, a secretary for the early engineering crew, remembers Mr. Calderwood in 1916 as "very stern, very business like . . . but just as fair as the day was long."[25]

Some of the early impressions of Mr. Calderwood were larger-than-life. A widely circulated yarn about him was retold by Fred Milligan:

> (He) was very much against any liquor in his camp . . . he hated stills. In 1928 when we were getting ready to start Santeetlah Dam Mr. Calderwood was out in Hughes Hollow looking for cross ties when he found a still all draped in black cloth. It was pumping away full stream when Mr. Calderwood kicked it out of operation. The owners, who must have been hiding above him on the ridge, put a couple of 30-30 bullets through his shoulder.
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> Story has it that he stood up, cussed the moonshiners soundly, went home, got in his bathtub, and he and his wife dressed it secretly. He went about work and nobody know [sic] for a month that he had ever been shot.

Even though this story probably exaggerated the power of this man, the respect that he won from East Tennessee seems to have been genuine.[26]

Because of the remoteness of the area, Mr. Calderwood had provided crude barracks for the employees. Most of them were one room "shotgun" houses made of 1 by 12 planks and battened by 3/4 inch strips. The employees were served three good meals a day because Mr. Calderwood insisted on it. As early as 1916 a company doctor was brought to

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[25]Ted Tindell, "Six Miles to Calderwood," in Blount County: Communities We Live In (Maryville: Brazos Press, 1973), 131 and Maryville Times February 17, March 2, 1916.

[26]ALCOA Archives, ibid., and interview with Grace Wilhoit, April 20, 1980.

Calderwood to look after any injured employee. This was remarkable since at that time Blount County had few doctors and no hospital.[27]

This remarkable man left Calderwood for Alcoa's operations at Niagara Falls, but was recalled to supervise the construction of Santeetlah and Calderwood dams. Perhaps his long experience in the North had personally exposed him to labor troubles, and he plainly recognized that it was imperative that he establish a good rapport with the local work force. Surely the ALCOA officials, centered around the Pittsburgh area had seen many strikes and had instructed him to provide the basic necessities for the rank and file to head off any labor unrest. It seems plain that ALCOA did not want to alienate the work force from its Northern engineers nor the industry they planned to build. Their success in doing so cushioned their entry into Blount County, and prevented any acute shock of change.[28]

Yet, the construction crews which were primarily made of local men also showed a degree of adaptability. Winston Henry, a farmer in the Chilhowee Valley, began to work for the surveying crews in 1911. He did not rebel against this economic transition, but simply wanted a larger part in it. He remembered that while working for the surveying crews, he quickly found out that the crew members whom the engineers brought with them were inept and lazy. He often carried out his duties as rodman and tried to pick up the slack caused by the others. When he found that the northern crew members were making $85 a month (even the

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[27]Tindell, Blount County, 133.

[28]ALCOA Archives, ibid.

black cook was making $100 a month), he demanded a raise--and got several. Henry was a good example of a person faced with occupational changes brought on by industrialization who was able to accept and work within his new role as a wage earner.[29]

That broad acceptance apparently did not wear off to any great degree. Many factors point to a wide acceptance of ALCOA as an industry. A poll taken of former Calderwood residents, many of whom came from rural backgrounds similar to Winston Henry, indicated that they were satisfied with their work there. The average working tenure of the male employee was over 30 years, which shows remarkable labor stability. Even today there is very little employee turnover (less than 5% yearly) at ALCOA's plants in Blount County. Basically, ALCOA was accepted in Blount County because of the solid backing they received from the business community, and because of the deference that was shown to them by their cooperative labor force. The rank and file ALCOA employees would not organize nor launch a major strike until 1937.[30]

The first generation of the rank and file workers at Calderwood were not exclusively local men and women. Cherokees, who seemed to fit in well with the construction business, worked on the grading of the rugged terrain near Cheoah Dam. But there were also a large number of blacks recruited to work in Calderwood. ALCOA sent recruiters to Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi to get black laborers because "they

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[29]Henry interview.

[30]Private poll taken of 75 families who formerly lived in Calderwood. Thirty responded to the poll.

could be counted on to do the dirtier work." Curiously, most of the local blacks in Blount County were not recruited to work at Calderwood, and had very little contact with those who did. A picture of the crews extending the railroad line to Calderwood in 1916 shows a number of blacks who supposedly were "expert spike drivers." Often the number of black laborers equaled the white workers in the construction camps, which numbered up to 3,000 laborers.[31]

Again, it is clear that ALCOA officials were acutely aware of the potential for labor unrest, and recruited blacks to do the less desirable work. Because they, too, seemed willing to accept their place in this occupational hierarchy, a minimal amount of labor and social unrest took place. Most of the blacks who worked at Calderwood left when all of the dams were built in 1930 and went to work on the TVA dams built during the New Deal.[32]

The initial experiences of ALCOA officials with the rank and file at Calderwood were rewarding. They bought an invaluable piece of property, the Howard farm, with no trouble at all. The early work crews from the area fit in well with this new business which exposed them to work specialization and the business chain of command. They were also exposed to a variety of different social groups, including northern engineers and laborers, Cherokee construction crews

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[31]Henry interview, and Russell Parker, "Alcoa, Tennessee: the Early Years, 1919-1939," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, LXVIII (1976), 88.

[32]Conversation with Archie Simpson, October 1980, and interviews with Pink Patton and Harold Wilkerson, July 1979.

and black laborers. The fact that most of these fundamental changes in Blount County took place with little disruption indicates that most of the ALCOA employees accepted this era of industrialization with few reservations.

CHAPTER III

THE WORKPLACE OF CALDERWOOD, 1910-1930

It became increasingly clear, as early as 1912, that Calderwood was becoming a strategically located village which would serve the interests of ALCOA during the construction of its dams for quite some time. Because the dam construction was projected to take over 18 years, ALCOA constructed a number of durable, functional houses, as well as the facilities necessary to support a work force of over 3,000. This company town reflected the efficiency and social values of the engineers that built it. The social ties among the residents of Calderwood reflected the interdependence of the people who inhabited it. Hospitals, food stores, hotels, parks and executive lodges were all a part of this isolated outpost in Southern Appalachia, which reflected genuine commitment from both management and rank and file to cooperation in this new company town.

It also reflected the tremendous growth of company towns during this period. During the years 1880-1910, over 600 company towns were built in Southern Appalachia, and company towns grew faster than non-company towns in some areas at a rate of 5 to 1. Clearly Calderwood was not a peculiar part of the past of Southern Appalachia but was part of a much larger economic and social movement.

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[33]Ronald D. Eller, "Industrialization and Social Change in Appalachia, 1880-1930: A Look at the Static Image," in Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case, Donald Askins, Linda Johnson and Helen Matthews Lewis, editors (Boone, N. C.: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 39.

Calderwood was not the original name of the village. It was first named Alcoa by the wife of J. W. Rickey, an ALCOA engineer, in 1910. By 1912, it had a post office and a dozen buildings, and the Maryville Times was referring to it as Alcoa. But, when the city of Alcoa, near Maryville, was incorporated in 1919, the village was renamed Calderwood. A large number of legislators in Nashville were confused when Alcoa was incorporated, and thought they were incorporating the isolated village on the Little Tennessee River.[34] This confusion could have been deliberately caused by company officials who were attempting to overcome local citizens' opposition to the naming of the town after the industrial giant.

In 1915, V. J. Hultquist, one of the most powerful men in Calderwood, came to take charge of townsite construction. Originally from New York and born of Swedish parents, he had graduated from Ohio State University in 1908 with a degree in mechanical engineering. He started to work for ALCOA in 1915, and had been instrumental in townsite construction at the ALCOA plants in Baden, North Carolina. When he transferred to Calderwood in 1915, he planned this company town along functional, efficient lines.[35]

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[34]ALCOA Archives, "50th Anniversary," Parker, "The Early Years," 87, and Maryville Times, July 18, 1913.

[35]Conversations with Charles Hultquist, June 25, 1980 and November 1980.

Workers and families were housed in military-type barracks and grouped in residential patterns according to race, marital status, and occupation. The black workers--by far the largest group, lived in the center of the village known unceremoniously as "nigger town." The white construction workers lived next to the river at "Indian Mounds," about a quarter mile away from the village. The unmarried office and clerical workers lived in the old Howard home, known as the "Calderwood Club House." The ALCOA engineers lived in adjacent villages named Cedar Valley and Strawberry Hollow in neat, white, frame houses. I. G. Calderwood and later Sam Wilkerson, lived in Calderwood in a huge, two-story frame house with five bedrooms and three bathrooms.[36]

Segregation of the workers along class, occupational and racial lines, reflected more the values and experiences of V. J. Hultquist than it did the social conditions of Blount County. Hultquist, one of several ALCOA engineers who were northern and well-educated, no doubt had experienced segregated neighborhoods in the Northeast where he had lived and worked. To set up the town along the lines that he did seemed to him as reasonable, orderly and fair. But up to that time Blount County had not experienced either such acute segregation or such orderly residential patterns. At the turn of the century Blount County was a predominately rural, sparsely settled area. Blacks, although they did have a stable community near what is now

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[36]Interview with Gladys Wilkerson, November 1980 and conversation with Pink Patton, February 1981.

Alcoa, were scattered through most of the 17 civil districts of Blount County.[37] The new experience of living in an area of relatively dense population and of working within a structured environment could have caused problems between and among blacks and whites. Responsible management and genuine cooperation helped to prevent social unrest.

Certainly the ability to make life easy or hard for many people at Calderwood was within V. J. Hultquist's authority. He was not only superintendent of construction including both plants and townsites, but also collected rents, sold Alcoa real estate, operated the Knoxville Power Company Light and Water Departments, the Alcoa Terminal Railroad, the Brick and Tile Works, the Farms and Dairy, the Quarry and Concrete Mixing Plant, the Woodworking Shop, the Trucking Department, and the Landscape and Gardening Nursery. Whether he was driven by the practical benefits that management gets from a labor source that is reliable and stable, or whether he was genuinely concerned about the villagers' welfare, he worked "18 hours a day 6-1/2 days a week" establishing and running the town of Calderwood. His son, Charles, remembers, in the early days of Calderwood, that on more than one occasion his father drove toward Knoxville to find a market for the bricks from the Brick and Tile Shop so that workers would not have to be released during slack periods.[38]

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[37]United States Tenth Census, Population of Blount County, passim.

[38]Hultquist interview.

The multiplicity of facilities in Calderwood made this a self-supporting town. One of the most valuable and impressive of these facilities was the hospital, which existed long before Maryville had one. It registered its first patient on June 6, 1917, and by November 1918 had taken care of 156 injured workers. It had an operating room, sterilizing room and laboratory, a capacity of 20 beds and was served by a staff of one doctor, one nurse, two nurses' aides and a cook. Although the hospital was racially segregated, the medical staff defended the arrangement, saying "while we have different rooms for people of different races the same care is given to all . . . suffering is universal."[39]

Through their company newsletter, the Aluminum Bulletin, the management preached preventive measures. As early as 1919, there were articles in the Bulletin advising workers to use the right amount of light while reading and to avoid the use of saccharin. In every issue, the Bulletin had a number of pages devoted to occupational health care. It especially stressed the use of proper tools and protective clothing. Departments would always be listed as to which did--or did not--have lost time accidents. Friendly competition was often encouraged between these groups to determine which had the best safety record.

The cost of this health care was apparently quite reasonable. A report in 1920 listed the dues collected from the employees as $641.50 from a labor force of 1,034. The cost per month per employee

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[39]Parker, "Early Years," 92, and V. J. Hultquist, "History of the City and the Company," ALCOA Archives, and conversation with Charles Hultquist, November 1980.

was $.62, certainly a very affordable expense. This type of health care plan is commonplace today, but no doubt it was then considered to be quite progressive.[40]

After the last dam, Calderwood, was built in 1930 and the construction workers left, the company retained a doctor to care for the power house crews, the maintenance men, and the office workers. In 1947, Dr. Robert Harelson, the last company doctor to live at Calderwood, moved to Maryville. ALCOA hired a nurse, Mrs. Ola Williams to replace him. Trained at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and very much experienced in the field of public health, she not only became Calderwood's nurse, but quickly assumed as much authority as any doctor.

Using her home basement as an office and being on 24-hour call, Ola, as she is affectionately known, was the nearest medically trained person within 30 miles. She often would call doctors in Maryville to explain the symptoms of a patient and make recommendations for treatment. The doctors on call rarely disagreed with her diagnoses. Accidents requiring surgery had to be sent to Blount Memorial Hospital, but she vividly remembered treating a wide variety of illnesses and disasters, including drug overdoses, snakebites, heart attacks, pneumonia and scarlet fever. The school at Calderwood welcomed her first aid clinics, and she gave the schoolchildren their required innoculations. Mountain families who had no connection with ALCOA

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[40]Aluminum Bulletin, I (November 1918), 2, and (July 1920), 12-13.

or Calderwood brought their children to her when they were sick and she charged them the same price--nothing. Clearly, from the earliest hospital to the latest company nurse, ALCOA showed a major concern toward the employees health at Calderwood. Hospitals, health plans, innoculations were no doubt new and progressive measures in Blount County, and did much to keep a healthy and stable work force and to bind a community emotionally to this new way of life brought about by industrialization.[41]

To feed a rather large and diverse work force required many different facilities, all of which had the full support of the ALCOA management. There were several mess halls which resembled ones which might be found on an army base. In the Calderwood Club House the office employees were fed regularly at one table, family style. Mr. Calderwood, who loved good food, paid particular interest to the feeding of the workers. In 1919, on a hot Saturday in June, a large group of ALCOA executives from Pittsburgh toured the newly completed Cheoah dam. These visitors, including ALCOA president A. V. Davis and 350 boosters from Maryville and Knoxville, stopped at Calderwood where they were guests of ALCOA at a chicken dinner. The Aluminum Bulletin noted that "Mr. Calderwood is to be complimented for the excellent food which he had arranged."[42]

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[41] Interview with Ola Williams, February 1980.

[42] Bulletin, July 1919, 2-5.

Certainly eating is one of the most basic of all human needs, and the special attention that ALCOA placed on the feeding of its workers did much to cement the bond between the workers and management. By bringing them together at work, at home, and at mealtime, they also provided much time for the establishing of friendships. It is no small coincidence that one of the highlights of the Annual Calderwood Reunion is a huge picnic lunch with an incredible amount of delicious food.

There were other parts of the village which were very important to its food supply. The ALCOA engineers, notably B. H. Ritenburg, were responsible for the Calderwood farms. Down next to the river bottoms, workers were allowed to grow their own gardens, and many did. A 1926 photograph shows a sizable field of corn being grown.[43]

One of the central parts of the village was its commissary. This general purpose store which sold piece goods and hardware, had a barbershop, housed the post office, and sold food as well. Fresh meat came in from Knoxville, and eggs and chickens were supplied from local people. Canned goods, fruits and vegetables were available and most importantly, they were available on credit. If a worker needed food, he could buy food on credit and pay on the next payday. Contrary to many other company stores which charged high prices and interest on credit charges which kept workers perpetually in debt, the credit

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[43] Ibid., November 1919.

system of the commissary was run rather loosely, was interest-free and was on the honor system.[44]

The supply of milk and butter for the construction camp came primarily from a dairy located across the river. On farmland that he leased from ALCOA, Mr. J. G. Lowe ran a small dairy on about 21 acres for many years, but in 1930 he was deeply in debt. Burt Smelcer, who had just been hired to work for him, bought the farm just as it was in the process of being repossessed. For over fifteen years, Burt produced 6 to 8 cases of milk daily from about 15 cows. He milked by hand and stored the milk in gallon glass containers under a nearby spring house. Burt remains proud of the fact that even though he lacked modern sanitation equipment, the quality of his milk was excellent. Dr. Dan Thomas periodically checked the bacteria level in Burt's milk and it often showed a lower bacteria count than pasteurized milk in Maryville's grocery stores.

These diverse ways of supplying the food to the workers, including mess halls, gardens, the commissary and dairy revealed ALCOA's concern, but it also revealed the interdependence of the community. The workers at Calderwood, many of whom came from small subsistence farms, could choose a variety of ways to get food. Many of the Calderwood residents, of course, did not totally shed their agricultural roots, and their many gardens along the river bottoms bear witness to that. But generally, one of the basic modern societal

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[44]Interview with Grace Wilhoit, April 1980; Weaver, Wilkerson and Patton interviews.

changes taking place at this time was that people bought their food instead of growing it. This transition is reflected in village life in Calderwood.[45]

Probably the most widely known part of Calderwood is Scona Lodge. Located across the river (Scona is an Indian word meaning across the river), on what was Burt Smelcer's dairy farm, it is the main ALCOA executive resort. Mr. A. D. Huddleston, an ALCOA executive who was responsible for lobbying for ALCOA in Nashville, wanted a place where he could entertain legislators and prospective customers. In 1933, after the company officials persuaded Burt and Vivian Smelcer to become its caretakers, they began to construct the lodge. Construction crews dragged down many of the big oak trees from the neighboring mountainsides, used the river rocks for the foundations, and by 1934 they had built an impressive lodge and a summer house. The accommodations included several rustic bedrooms and meeting rooms with fireplaces for special guests, which included Tennessee governors McCallister and Browning, Texas governor John Connally, and Senator Alben Barkley. When the guests arrived on their weekend retreats they had a variety of ways to relax. They could play on the 18 hole par-3 gold course, catch trout on the Little Tennessee River or relax and enjoy the beautiful landscaped lawns and spectacular mountainous scenery. Scona Lodge still operates today, and the lodge has probably been the best known part of Calderwood.

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[45] Interview with Burt and Vivian Smelcer, June 1980.

The village life of Calderwood extended beyond the average work day. Because of the isolation of Calderwood, ALCOA engineers were forced to provide essential services for the workers in order to attract and keep a steady labor supply. What they did was to create a well-equipped functioning company town, and the extent to which they looked after the needs of the employees continually tied the rank and file to their company, and to a whole new way of life. Grace Wilhoit remembers, "that's one thing about the Aluminum Company, we were off up there in the mountains in the early days, but listen, we had the best--they saw to that."

CHAPTER IV

AFTER THE CONSTRUCTION YEARS, CALDERWOOD, 1930-1956

It was probably not noticed by most of the people who lived in Calderwood, but by 1919 the village had begun to change. In July of 1919, the town of Alcoa was incorporated, and many of the engineers at Calderwood soon moved there to run the new town and work at the nearby ALCOA plants. V. J. Hultquist, who was responsible for the construction of the village, was mayor of Alcoa from 1919 to 1948, holding one of the longest municipal tenures in the country. Clearly the focus of the company had shifted from the isolated output of Calderwood to Alcoa.[46]

Not surprisingly, Alcoa in many ways mirrored the village of Calderwood. There were many well-built company houses in Alcoa which were similar to the houses in Calderwood. In Alcoa the company built three communities, continuing to segregate the workers along racial lines--Bassel and Springbrook were white, and Vose was black. There was even a surprising number of Mexicans in Alcoa at the time, and V. J. Hultquist worried about the prospects of creating three separate communities, one white, one black and one brown. But most of the Mexicans soon moved away in search of other jobs.[47]

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[46] Parker, "Early Years," 90.

[47] Ibid., 88.

The company also built support facilities for Alcoa, including hospitals, commissaries, and schools. The beautiful park near Springbrook school is a reflection of the company's desire to gain approval in the eyes of the people in Alcoa as it had done in Calderwood.[48]

But there was still much work to be done on the dams along the Little Tennessee River. By 1919, only one major dam, Cheoah, had been built. In 1927 Santeetlah dam was built, and by 1930 Calderwood dam was finished. The company would not build another dam until it built Chilhowee in 1956. With Calderwood dam completed, the construction town of Calderwood quickly melted away. The large black community vanished as many of the workers traveled to the construction sites of the new TVA dams to find work. The other construction workers, many of whom came from all over the United States, had a choice of either trying to find employment with ALCOA in Alcoa, leaving the area entirely, or staying to work in Calderwood.

The workers who remained in Calderwood from 1930 to 1956 were composed of a maintenance crew, a small group of office workers, and a group which operated the power plant at Calderwood. In all, there were less than 200 people in the village of Calderwood. A thriving construction camp of around 3,000 had been reduced to a tiny village of a few hundred. Prior to 1930 the people had been a heterogeneous group, but soon after 1930 they were largely a middle class, exclusively white, community, reflecting the middle class values of

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[48] Ibid., 87.

education, hard work and frugality. Some of the institutions which they brought to the village, including the school, churches, and their own forms of recreation, reflected the life of middle-class, small town America which existed a generation ago. The company's involvement in these after-work affairs remained supportive, but much more passive than their involvement in other company-related activities.[49]

Prior to ALCOA's arrival, Blount County had provided only a minimal amount of education for its children. In early 1914, there were a total of 122 teachers in Blount County, and 101 had less than a high school education. Only four teachers had graduated from a four-year college. The teaching salary was $210 annually, and often teachers boarded with some of their pupils' parents to help with their living expenses. Most of the teachers were women, and it was an unwritten rule that a woman could not be married to a man with a good job and still hold a teaching position. The school term was only 110 days because the county could not afford to extend it any longer, nor could the rural farm families afford to be without their children during planting and harvesting periods.[50]

When the village of Calderwood was established, the company quickly constructed a large white frame school house near where the Methodist church now stands. After the children ascended the rather

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[49]Patton and Wilkerson interviews.

[50]Interview with Herma Cate, and Maryville Times, January 9, 1914.

steep wooden steps leading to the schoolhouse, they studied in one of four rooms. The desks were bolted to the floor, which was oiled regularly to keep the dust down. The building took advantage of the sun to light the rooms and had large windows throughout. The school was heated by coal stoves.[51]

The school was at first intended to provide education for the children at Calderwood because the nearby communities of Happy Valley and Tallassee had their own one or two room schools. The black community in Calderwood had its own school. The company's involvement in the early years of the school was intense, with the village having their own school board and school superintendent. The teachers were hired and were paid by the company, and quite often lived in the Calderwood Club House, a boarding house for single workers. Many of the engineers' wives in particular were instrumental in establishing and running the early school in Calderwood. By the 1920's, though, the school at Calderwood was faced with many changes which were occurring both within ALCOA and the Blount County School System.[52]

After 1919, many of the engineers transferred from Calderwood to Alcoa. The involvement of the company in Calderwood school was never again as strong and direct as it had been in the early years of the village. In 1930 the completion of the Calderwood Dam drained off

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[51]Cate interview.

[52]Interviews with Betty Post and Herma Cate; and Bulletin, II (February 1920), 10.

many construction workers, and they, of course, also took their children with them. This withdrawal of the company employees and many of the pupils was balanced by a consolidation of the Blount County School System. The small schools in the neighboring communities of Happy Valley and Chilhowee were closed and the students were enrolled in the school at Calderwood. Technically, the Calderwood school was thereafter the responsibility of the Blount County School System.[53]

But the school, in fact, remained the responsibility of the company. The county was never able to provide the many supplies and financial aid necessary to maintain a school. Herma Cate, an English teacher at Maryville College who taught at the school, remembers that if the school needed something, Bud Lloyd, the office manager at Calderwood would be notified and it would be provided. But the support that the company gave the school at Calderwood was markedly different from the support it gave to the Alcoa schools. There, the teachers and school superintendent were appointed by V. J. Hultquist, Alcoa mayor and ALCOA engineer. He also had the authority to fix their salaries. Yet at Calderwood, the school benefitted from the company's financial contributions, but the teachers were paid and were under the direct but loose authority of Blount County. This best-of-all-possible-worlds position resulted in a very progressive school, as Herma Cate remembers, one which often drew the attention of other teachers in the county, who came there to observe the school and get ideas.[54]

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[53]Cate interview.

[54]Cate interview; and Parker, "Early Years," 90.

After the departure of most of the engineers and the construction workers, the school continued in the same old, barn-like building, with 100 students enrolled through eight grades. But in the late 1940's, after some persuasive talking by the Calderwood teachers, the company built a new school, a very sturdy brick building with a cafeteria.[55]

A poll taken in 1980 of 30 families who lived in Calderwood indicates that they valued education highly. Out of 65 children from these 30 families, none of them had less than a high school education. Thirty-nine of the children, most of whom had started school in Calderwood, graduated from either a university or a business college. A few today hold doctorates and some are practicing medicine.[56]

Of course their choices in education were influenced by many other things outside of Calderwood, but almost all of them began their schooling there. The community had a keen interest in education, one which was complemented by the support of the company. Many of the parents had lived through the Depression, but had seen better days during the New Deal. They wanted for their children even a better life, and a better education. One of the main reasons that many families chose to move away from Calderwood was to permit their children to attend the high schools in the towns of Maryville and Alcoa.[57]

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[55]Cate interview.

[56]Poll taken of 75 Calderwood families.

[57]Interview with F. L. Weaver and O. P. Patton.

In this region of Southern Appalachia, which often has been depicted as a region where education is not valued, there existed for quite some time a little enclave working hard to educate its children. This may have been the exception to the stereotype, but what it does point out is that Southern Appalachia is a very diverse region, one which often cannot be easily stereotyped. ALCOA's continual supportive role was a positive influence upon the school in Calderwood.

Another equally important institution within this tiny company town was the church. There were two churches in the community, one Baptist, the other Methodist. There also existed for quite some time a non-denominational Sunday School. In all cases the workers organized and conducted their own services. The company often aided the development of the churches through providing the use of their buildings, land and construction materials.

The Baptist church, along with the Howard farm itself, was one of the few structures which preceded Calderwood. It was located near where the present church is, among a few poplar trees. This church, known first as Poplar Camp Church, was well attended during the construction years of Calderwood. Many revivals were held there, and the support for the church grew to a point that a new church was necessary for the congregation. In the mid-1950's a new brick church was built near the top of a small hollow overlooking the village. The company donated the land to the church as well as some building materials, with the understanding that if the church ever ceased to function, the property would revert to the company. In the 1980's the Calderwood Baptist Church still stands, drawing upon a handful of families still

at Calderwood and families at Tallassee and Happy Valley for its congregation.[58]

The Methodist church had its beginnings during the construction days at Calderwood. For many years a large group of church-goers conducted a non-denominational Sunday School above the commissary in the middle of the village. They met in a large open room on Sunday mornings, which was the same place where the Saturday night dance was held. This Sunday School, which occasionally invited a minister to preach, emphasized fellowship rather than conversion.[59]

But in 1944, Marvin Gass, a young University of Tennessee student who was also a preacher on a Methodist circuit, conducted a week-long revival in the large room above the commissary. The revival was a success, and 19 people were converted. Reverend Gass, responding to an interest from the community, helped organize the Calderwood Methodist Church soon after his revival. There were 13 charter members, and this church became a part of the Methodist circuit which included the churches at Oakland, Vonore, and Walnut Grove. The salary of Reverend Gass, $1,000 annually, was paid by these four churches.[60]

The Methodist Church met for several years above the commissary, but in 1954, Methodists began to build their own church near where the old school was located. The building of the Methodist Church at

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[58]Interview with Grace Wilhoit and conversations with Beecher Millsaps and Frank Nichols, June 1981.

[59]Conversation with Marvin Gass, March 10, 1981.

[60]Ibid.

Calderwood is something which many members of its former congregation look back on with pride. They quite literally built the church with their own hands, after the work day and on weekends. Men laid brick, hardwood floors, and roof tiles. Women spent many hours varnishing the floors, pews and exposed inside beams.[61]

That church grew out of some of the traditions which are very strong in Southern Appalachia. The Protestant, fundamental churches have been an integral part of this region since the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century. Even though the workers in Calderwood might have worked and lived in new and different places than their parents, they were able to accept it in part because they brought with them something old and familiar--the church.

The Methodist church held preaching service twice a month. In the tradition of the Calderwood community, the minister was invited to eat with a member of the congregation every time he preached. But most of the other church activities were conducted by the congregation itself. The Women's Society of Christian Service was very active, and conducted fund raising activities for needy families in the community. They also sent contributions to Methodist missions overseas and to the relief of some miners in Appalachia. These church activities helped to break down some of the isolation that affected the community. Because of the conference-wide meetings to which Calderwood Methodist

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[61] Weaver interview.

sent representatives, the community felt drawn closer to Maryville--as well as to each other in Calderwood.[62]

The church received some additions to its congregation when the creation of Chilhowee Lake flooded some churches downriver from Calderwood. But in 1956, when most of the office force was transferred to Alcoa, the core of its members left. It continued for a few years, finally closing in 1964. In the 1980's there have been attempts to convert the picturesque Methodist church into a retreat lodge, but thus far they have failed. According to the agreement made between the church and the company, the church and the property became ALCOA's property in 1964 when the church disbanded.[63]

The people of Calderwood, in spite of the village's isolation, never really lacked any form of recreation. All types of sports, and community activities reinforced the community ties established at work, school, and church. The team sports in particular reflected the years when every small crossroads proudly supported their own ball team.

Wild game was plentiful in the mountainous terrain surrounding Calderwood, and the early residents often went hunting. I. G. Calderwood hunted bear in nearby Jeffrey's Hell. During many long nights construction workers went coon hunting. The Little Tennessee River contained many fish, and the men eagerly awaited the few times in the

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[62]Records from the Women's Society of Christian Service, Calderwood Methodist Church, Calderwood, Tennessee, 1942-1961.

[63]Manuscript from F. L. Weaver.

year when the water from the Calderwood lake would be entirely shut off, leaving the empty stream bed often waist-high with fish in places. All types of game fish (except trout, which were introduced in the 1950's) could be quite literally scooped out or gigged. Even though East Tennessee is not on a migratory flyway, every winter there would be many ducks and geese which would land for a while on the Little Tennessee. In the 1980's those birds still rest in the Calderwood lake during their annual migration, but are protected from hunters because it is now a wildlife refuge.[64]

Moonshine and gambling were also a part of the mountain culture and a part of the rougher life of Calderwood. It was never difficult to find any of the local mountain dew, especially on paydays. Many fruit jars of the potent drink could be found in the homes of Calderwood and the consumption of liquor quite often accompanied some serious poker games.

A gambling hall was even provided for the black community during the early years of construction. The company posted two guards outside and often escorted any disorderly blacks to a nearby jail. But most of the activities of the black community are unknown. They did play baseball on their own field, and attended the company sponsored movies, but even though they represented a large--perhaps the largest--group of workers at Calderwood, they left the area quickly after 1930.[65]

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[64] Interview with Joe Lee, March 14, 1981.

[65] Ibid.

But most of the recreation at Calderwood did not involve the mountains: rather it revolved around the activities of small-town America. Communal activities entertained families in Calderwood for many years. The dance hall (which also doubled as the early Methodist Sunday School) was the scene of Saturday night dances, and was the site of the annual Halloween Dance. Often the community was entertained by the Aluminum City Band, an orchestra from Alcoa. The community theater, which for many years showed movies six nights a week, was available not just for the Calderwood residents, but for many mountain families from Happy Valley as well. Even when the movies were cut down to once a week, Thursday night, Mr. F. L. Weaver remembers clearly that the whole community, plus the neighboring village of Happy Valley, looked forward to the event. Admission in the 1930's was 25¢ for the adults and 10¢ for children. The Calderwood residents often boasted they had the best theater in East Tennessee.[66]

The company sponsored many baseball teams prior to 1930, including one from Calderwood. They were elaborately equipped, and often played teams from other parts of Blount County plus teams made up from men who worked in the ALCOA plants in Alcoa. After 1930, the company withdrew much of their support, but the interest in team sports was maintained, and even increased. The company did furnish two dozen balls and six bats a year, plus a ballfield, but any other expenses were met by the teams and their families. The baseball team was a part

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[66]ALCOA Archives, "Interview of Tappoca Employees," Bulletin II (February 1920); and Weaver interview.

of the Smokey Mountain League, and played teams from tiny hamlets all over East Tennessee. Pea Ridge, Rocky Branch, Bungalowe, Vinegar Bend, Cherokee, Lanier--all had baseball teams. Although most of the games were strictly amateur, the Calderwood teams played teams from Madisonville for a fixed fee to cover travel expenses. Once, when they played the team from the community of Carpenters Campground, a post-game watermelon split that the Carpenters coach offered was withdrawn when the team was trounced by Calderwood.[67]

The basketball teams were on a semi-professional basis. The Calderwood team played teams as far away as Knoxville and Sevierville, with 60% of the gate going to the winners and 40% to the losers. The basketball gym was a converted dairy barn, which also doubled as a skating rink.[68]

Young boys played Little League baseball at Calderwood. They also were able to participate in Boy Scouts through the local troop sponsored by the village.

The women of the village also participated in team sports, and Joe Lee remembers that they had an exceptionally good women's softball team. Many of the office workers, women as well as men, played tennis on the company courts night and day.[69]

In the early days of Calderwood, after the short weekends that were often packed full of recreation, most of the village would congregate around the railroad depot on Sunday evenings. There, as

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[67] Lee interview.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

they exchanged small talk, re-living perhaps a team victory or pondering on what next week's work would bring, they would await the arrival of the train. The villagers who had left for the weekend returned on that Sunday afternoon train, and their arrival reunited them with their families. Trains, baseball teams, and small towns--all of the characteristics of American life which existed a generation ago--Calderwood was able to share.[70]

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[70] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CALDERWOOD REACTS AND DECLINES, THE END OF A COMPANY TOWN

The village of Calderwood, which existed for almost 46 years, thrived during some of the most tumultous times in American history. The years 1910-1956 saw two world wars, the Great Depression and the New Deal. Needless to say, all of these events made themselves felt upon this village in the mountains of East Tennessee. In spite of its isolation, war, depression and politics all affected the workers' lives, and in the case of women, probably changed their role in the work place permanently. The rise of unions also influenced the life at Calderwood, as many of the rank and file laborers sympathized with and participated in union activities in Alcoa. Because of the village's involvement with these events and the degree to which outside economic and political occurrences had an impact on Calderwood, one could almost question whether or not the village was indeed isolated.

Construction had been going on for about seven years at Calderwood when World War I began. During the eighteen months of America's involvement in the war quite a number of young men left Calderwood to go overseas. The Aluminum Bulletin was filled with patriotic articles during the war, urging workers to cooperate with their supervisors and work diligently at their jobs for the sake of the war effort. The company conducted Liberty Bond rallies, declaring that "we believe in the United States of America first and the Aluminum Company of America

second."[71] Armistice Day was celebrated with a parade in Knoxville which was attended by many people in Calderwood.

Calderwood dam was completed in 1930, at the beginning of the Great Depression, the worst economic downturn in the 20th century. It is remarkable that ALCOA had enough liquidity to operate during the 1930's, a time when a great number of plants were shut down. But the plants slowed down very little and aluminum ingots stockpiled. The business gamble paid off when World War II contracts swept away 42,000 tons on hand in 1938.[72]

The New Deal measures, which were passed in part to combat the Depression, affected the work force, the community and ALCOA. The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 caused the company to process much more paper work on employees. As a result the office work force was increased to handle their new assignments. Mr. F. L. Weaver remembers that when he began to work for ALCOA at Calderwood in 1937, the paperwork associated with Social Security taxes was one of his primary responsibilities. The WPA did some work in the playground around Calderwood, placing rocks around an unsightly eroded ditch to prevent further washoff. TVA became another source of hydroelectric power in the valley, and even acquired Fontana dam from ALCOA. The National Labor Relations Act reinforced the growth of labor unions

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[71] Interview with Grace Wilhoit, Bulletin I (February 1919), and narration from slide show, ALCOA Archives.

[72] Parker, "Early Years," 98.

during the 1930's, and influenced union activity in Calderwood.[73]

Although ALCOA survived the Great Depression, it does not mean the company's work force was not affected. The hours of many of the rank and file were cut from 60 hours per week gradually down to 24. At the same time, some of the company's hiring practices, such as the hiring of relatives and friends of those already within the plants, began to cause genuine resentment among ALCOA workers and those wishing to become ALCOA employees. The ALCOA New Kensington Plant in New Jersey, built before the Tennessee plants, paid their workers much more than the Alcoa plant, and this inequity was another source of dissent among ALCOA workers.[74]

For 25 years ALCOA had operated with few restrictions in Blount County. The remoteness of the Appalachian region and the lack of any significant governmental regulations reinforced the authority of ALCOA and its management. Their power was absolute and their judgments were final.

Management seemed to abandon their paternalistic attitudes during the early years of the labor unions, when they attempted to prevent the organization of the union. If the first 25 years at Calderwood was marked by a benevolent management and a cooperative labor force, the remaining years would be marked by a competition between management and labor union.

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[73]Weaver interview.

[74]Lee interview.

Because of their specific grievances against ALCOA concerning nepotism and wage rates the first labor unions began to organize in Alcoa in the mid-1930's. The company resisted efforts to organize, and Calderwood employees met on the creek banks in secret to avoid being fired. They also sympathized with the rank and file in Alcoa, and participated in their strikes. The 1937 strike was an extremely violent one, and two men were killed in Alcoa when police and workers clashed at a picket line. The AFL sponsored union, in order to bring pressure on ALCOA to negotiate, threatened to cut off the electricity to the smelting plants. This would cost the company a great deal of money, because if the power is cut off from the smelting pots during the process, the aluminum "freezes" in the pots, and it is extremely expensive to scrape it out.

At Calderwood all of the rank and file went on the picket line, but management continued to run the power plants. This did not stop union sympathizers, who attempted to dynamite transmission lines and shot at line insulators. When power was cut off from Calderwood, the company attempted to buy power from Tennessee Power Company in Madisonville. The union sympathizers successfully cut off the power from this source by destroying some substations near Maryville, temporarily leaving large parts of East Tennessee without electricity.[75]

The drive to establish a union threatened to divide the community at Calderwood. Strikers were refused credit at the company store, and

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[75] Ibid.

had to go to Fred Humbel's store in Chilhowee for food. Sometimes management would harass union sympathizers by giving them dirty, undesirable assignments at work. The situation was made more acute in Calderwood by the close-knit nature of the community, where strikers and management lived, worked, prayed and played together, often seven days a week.[76]

But when the union was voted in by an overwhelming vote at Alcoa and Calderwood, the management accepted it. An elaborate grievance procedure was established, where a worker could seek redress for mistreatment on the job. The check-off clause, pay raises, and layoff criteria were not accepted by management until the 1940's, but the unions were in to stay as a part of the great labor movement of the 1930's.[77]

Much of the labor unrest was quieted at the outbreak of the Second World War. Almost immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the unions promised that there would be no strikes for the duration of the war. The National Guard was sent to patrol the transmission lines and the ALCOA dams to protect them from sabotage. The company later hired their own guards to do this work. The labor force in Calderwood was depleted during the war as many of the men were drafted. Most of the men returned, by Ray Stiles, an office worker, was killed in action in Normandy in 1944.[78]

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid. Sammy E. Pinkston, "History of Local 309, United Steelworkers of America, Alcoa, Tennessee" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, 1970), 47, 59.

[78] Weaver interview.

During the war there was a labor shortage, but in the East Tennessee area it was made more acute because of the establishment of Oak Ridge. During the war, many of the men were replaced by women, especially in the office. After the war, however, quite a few of the women stayed on the job. This phenomenon was not an isolated one, because during the war and thereafter, many white, middle class women joined the work force permanently. In Calderwood and Alcoa they seemed to have many opportunities for employment.[79]

Besides the women who worked in the office, Herma Cate taught at the Calderwood school, Ola Williams was the community nurse, Vivian Smelcer managed Scona Lodge with her husband and several women ran the company hotels and boarding houses. In Alcoa there were many women who worked in clerical positions, and the Aluminum Bulletin was managed by three successive women editors. Many women worked in the Alcoa plants, and those plants were the only aluminum plants where the female employees received the same rate of pay as the men. None of the women were in the management ranks during the 1940's, but it is clear that women were not excluded from employment with ALCOA. They, just as the men, accepted the new society centered around this industry as a better life than the one from which they came.[80]

During the war, the National Park movement created a new park near Calderwood. The Great Smokey Mountains National Park was

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Interview with Herma Cate, Ola Williams and Vivian Smelcer; Bulletin I (November 1918), III (January 1920); and Pinkston, "Local 309," 49.

dedicated by Franklin Roosevelt on September 2, 1940, at Newfound Gap, and many of the Calderwood residents attended. The company had sold 16,288 acres of their holdings to the Park Service as the park was being formed.[81]

Clearly these major events of the 20th century made inroads to this tiny company town, breaking down some of the isolation which hampered, but sometimes protected, the village life. But because it was a company town, the lifeblood of the community depended upon the will of ALCOA. Certainly wars and depressions affected Calderwood, but they were spectacular events which affected the whole nation. Quieter actions, such as the decisions made by the company officials, were not as spectacular but they often were as powerful.

The company rarely ever sold houses to employees at Calderwood. Unlike company houses in Alcoa, which V. J. Hultquist offered to sell at cost, the houses of Calderwood were exclusively rental property. As the employees reached retirement age, they had to move out of Calderwood because they could not live in company houses unless they were employed. This company policy was not rigidly enforced, and retirees were often given up to a year to find another place to live after they had quit work. This policy gradually forced the older Calderwood residents out of the village to Happy Valley, Maryville, and Alcoa.[82]

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[81] Carlos Campbell, Birth of a National Park (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 188.

[82] Bulletin I (May 1919), 45; Weaver interview.

Another company policy, one which added to the further disintegration of Calderwood, was the transfer of the office personnel from Calderwood to Alcoa in 1956. This move, which was an economy move made to streamline the administrative arm of the Alcoa plants, marked the end of the village of Calderwood. So, actually, the village had led both a fragile but durable existence, surviving two world wars and a depression, but falling apart with the stroke of an ALCOA's executive pen.[83]

There were still other reasons for the demise of the village. The lack of a good high school in the area discouraged families from staying in the village. Lanier High School, which was 19 miles away, simply was not viewed as an acceptable school by many parents at Calderwood. Also, the attraction of the towns of Maryville and Alcoa drew some of the villagers away. Some of the workers, tiring of the inconvenience of living at Calderwood, preferred to move to Maryville or Alcoa and commute.[84]

As the village declined and eventually died, the bond that the villagers had formed was not broken. In 1964, the first annual Calderwood reunion was held at the Calderwood Methodist Church. The crowd was so large that they packed the fellowship hall of the church and overflowed onto the church yard. Since then, every June, an annual gathering is held at Calderwood. Former Calderwood residents, many of whom travel from as far away as Texas and Florida, reunite each

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[83] Tennessee Alcoan, X (February 1957), 2.

[84] F. L. Weaver to Jane Martinez, March 23, 1981.

year at a picnic near the office building. But as they exchange their small talk during the hot June afternoons, they are not trying to re-create something that they lost. This tight-knit community, one which worked, ate, slept, worshipped and played as a community is continuing to celebrate the spirit they have always shared.[85]

The study of the village of Calderwood yields a somewhat different picture of Southern Appalachian life, a life which has visions of ignorant, obstinate mountain people, stubbornly clinging to a meager way of farming and suspiciously rejecting outsiders. In fact, Southern Appalachia is a much more diverse region than that. The Howard family had descended from the Hardins, who were prosperous slave-owning farmers. They owned over 50 slaves, placing them among the elite 7,000 families in antebellum South who owned as many slaves. The Howard family very likely profited very much from their sale of their farm to ALCOA, because the Maryville Times reveals that many of the Howard men probably used this capital to speculate in land sales. Today, in the 1980's, Miss Zina Howard lives in a comfortable home and is on the board of directors of a Maryville bank. Clearly, the Howard family was not the stereotyped hillbilly--ignorant, poor, and obstinate.[86]

Nor were the early Calderwood employees the incapable, stupid hillbilly that is in the popular view. Most were never strangers to

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[85]Thomas H. O'Connor, The Disunited States (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 23; Maryville Times, February 2, 1915, July 10, 1914, October 5, 1919; and interview with Zina Howard.

[86]Ibid.

hard work, and they used this experience as they began to work for ALCOA in Calderwood. They also showed a remarkable degree of adaptability, mastering the skills required of an electrician, a carpenter, a machinist or a surveyor. Not only did they readily accept this industrial giant, but many quickly learned the proper skills to establish their own niche at Calderwood.

The towns of Calderwood and Alcoa are inextricably bound to ALCOA. This giant, multinational company had the power to make the work place a pleasure or a burden. Until TVA and other New Deal measures came in the 1930's, their authority was absolute, their power unquestioned. But in a credible, benevolent way, unlike the coal mining towns and cotton mill towns in Southern Appalachia, they provided the basic necessities for the workers as well as occupations. Because of this, they cultivated a loyalty among employees that has endured over 50 years. The labor turnover at the ALCOA plants is negligible, and the management understands that abrupt transfers to New York, Iowa, Texas, Brazil or Indonesia will be a way of life for them. ALCOA can demand this loyalty because they have shown a genuine respect for their employees. Strikes and the rise of labor unions are evidence that serious differences exist, but one will rarely find an ex-ALCOA employee who does not think highly of the company. The coming of ALCOA into Blount County has given a different kind of order to a formerly agricultural region, which had been an area dependent upon good weather, bountiful harvests and high prices.

The generation of people who worked for ALCOA during its first few decades in Blount County faced an entirely new way of life. Most

of their employees came from farming families who had grown up around planting and harvesting--seasonal time frames. The eight-hour day, supervised labor and weekly pay checks were the basis of a new life for their generation. The generation of the 1980's has retained basically the same work place.

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