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TVA Co-operating In Brasstown Program

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY IS
AIDING IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

(Mr. Robertson was in Murphy some time ago gathering material for the following article that appeared in Sunday's Asheville Citizen-Times. He made the acquaintance of a number of people in this section while gathering the data for the story—the Editor).

By A. T. ROBERTSON, JR.

Murphy, Sept. 22.—North Carolina tapers off for 150 miles west of Asheville. Murphy seat of the westernmost county of Cherokee, is on central time. Nine miles from Murphy is the small community of Brasstown, which is on a time all its own, perhaps unique in the civilized world. Brasstown is the site of the John C. Campbell Folk school and its associated farm co-operatives. They have frequent meetings, members coming from Murphy on central time, and from adjoining Clay county on eastern time. To avoid confusion, Brasstown set its clocks permanently half way between. When its 3 o'clock at Murphy and 4 o'clock to the east, in Brasstown it's half-past three.

The pleasant Brasstown valley is rich in soil and in pioneer ways and speech. DeSoto is said to have visited in 1540 an Indian village there, dug up last winter by the CWA and the relics sent to Washington. In the last century the L. and N. and Southern railways pushed in from the South and East, tapping veins of tale and marble, bringing drummers to enjoy the lavish tables of Murphy's small hotels. Among traveling men Murphy is famous for its good food. Today the highways are good, but the distance from large cities are still great.

Here the Tennessee Valley Authority hopes to lay the foundation of a rural civilization to inspire the rest of the world.

\$20,000 Grant Made

The developments so far are three. To the Folk School's farm co-operatives, long admired by Chairman A. E. Morgan, of the TVA the Tennessee Valley Associated Co-operatives have made a grant of \$20,000. Urged by the Folk school Murphy has organized a co-operative cannery, with a grant of \$6,000 from the TVAC. Since May the engineering division of the Authority has kept an office in Murphy, drilling and investigating one of the sites for a \$13,000,000 dam across the Hiwassee river.

Three different sites for the Hiwassee dam are under consideration two in Tennessee and one 14 miles below Murphy, which at present seems to have an excellent chance. But wherever the dam is located it will tie into the flood control and electric power system of Norris, Muscle Shoals, and Wheeler dams, and furnish cheap electricity certainly to the Murphy and Brasstown valley. Rates here at present are high, ten cents per kilowatt hour for the average home consumer and when the pumps are turned on at the talc mines, the picture show has to shut down.

Little Brasstown is a pioneer in the field of mountain co-operatives which the TVAC is just exploring. The Folk school and its co-ops were begun in 1925. Dr. Morgan and his family are old friends of Brasstown. His son Griscom worked in the summer of 1930 on the Folk school farm while a student at his father's famous work-and-study college of Antioch and in 1933 the Folk school found Dr. Morgan's daughter Frances an "Antioch job" as teacher of a mountain school near Highlands. Shortly after the TVA was organized the chairman treated Brasstown to a visit from its first airplane, to confer with Mrs. John C. Campbell, at the Folk school.

School Organized In 1925.

The John C. Campbell Folk school was organized in 1925 by the widow of Mr. Campbell, author of "The Southern Highlander and His Homeland." It is deliberately modeled after the successful folk schools of Denmark, on which Mrs. Campbell is an authority. A Dean, Georg Bidstrup, is its farmer. It has their motto, "I Sing Behind the Plow."

For four winter months, when farm work is lightest, the school offers a course for young adults. Around a main topic of discussion which may be almost anything from Indians to geology, all sorts of subjects are brought in, always with plenty of work in forestry and

farming for the boys and keepin' house for the girls. Last winter the course was centered about the TVA which studied from every angle contains almost enough material for a liberal education. And here is one mountain community well informed about the purpose and meaning of the Authority.

As many as 25 may live at the school during the winter course, and at least 10 are working out their expenses at any time of year. The work is not heavy, but is like the work of a large and enterprising family. For its schooling there is not an educational "unit" or a "credit" to be had, but few are the mountain boys and girls who know of it who would not change a year of high school for a year of the Folk school.

On the train from Asheville to Murphy a boy bound for a visit to Brasstown told about a friend across the line in Georgia. "He carved a little wooden mule, and took it to the craft guild at the Folk school. They said it wouldn't quite do. He carved another, and they turned it down, too. So he hitched his own mule by the fence all day, and carried him from life, and now he's making good money carving right along." One of Brasstown's small wooden mules stands on the President's desk.

On the train back to Asheville another Brasstown boy was leaving to join the army. "I don't believe there's a person comes to stay here but he's a new person when he leaves," he said. "It gives you new ideas about everything. Of course I'm coming back."

Enterprises Are Varied

The folk school and community are one, with a savings and loan association a co-operative creamery with a membership in four North Carolina and two Georgia counties, and a farmers' association, now linked together as the Mountain Valley co-operatives; a craft guild for the wood-carvers, whose "mad" and "sober" mules and ducks and pigs have won fame; and a woman's club and a men's club, whose purpose is largely to have a good time.

A joint bus excursion of the men's and women's clubs recently returned from Norris dam and the TVA town of Norris.

"It's the finest sight I ever did see!" said Mr. Scroggs, aged 70, on his return. His grandson, a 17-year-old Brasstown wood-carver, is making tables for the houses at Norris.

Folk dances and songs are more alive at Brasstown than elsewhere. Their "singing games," a combination of both are not exhibitions or gymnastics but fun. Brasstown gets most of its visitors, even business men's clubs, to play them.

In a grove near the school farmhouse stands the museum two old log houses joined by a "dog-tun" and put up by the men of the community out of their regard for the Folk School. In the house is only what furniture the pioneers of this region had when they came. The Fourth of July is old folks' day at the museum, where the spontaneous recollections would fill volumes of Southern mountain lore.

As part of the duty of the TVA, Dr. Morgan has mentioned the preservation "of the best in the culture of the region, encouraging it to develop according to its own genius." This has also, said members of the Folk school, been the purpose of the school from the start. Certainly it differs from all other mountain schools in the completeness with which it has worked into the life of its community.

\$12,000 Expended

Of the TVAC grant of \$20,000 the Brasstown co-operative have already spent more than \$12,000 a greater cash outlay than any of the other TVA-sponsored co-operatives has yet made. Brasstown, however, is already a going concern. Its creamery already doing business in a territory of 100 square miles, has been enlarged to double its capacity. Arthur C. Jackson, TVAC administrator, helped to draw plans for a pretty low stone cottage equipped to churn and store 6,000 pounds of butter a week. Already, it is selling 2,000 pounds a week, chiefly to Atlanta, Ga., 148 miles away. Soon it will begin to make cheese.

The co-operatives is also building a plant for fattening poultry, using at a profit the buttermilk from the creamery, and dressing the fowls,

eliminating the middleman with more profit to the local farmers and a better product to the consumer.

Other possible developments with the TVA funds, said Mrs. Campbell, are better equipment and service for a co-operative mill and food store; and further expansion of the craft guild, which has already become the chief income of scores of families. It is possible the savings and loan association can increase its service to make "long-time loans to start young people."

In Murphy a cannery has stood idle for four years. Privately operated, it failed during a period of high prices, when with means selling at \$2 nobody had a surplus to can. Next year, with means at 25 cents, said Manager J. H. Hampton, the farmers prayed for the cannery to come back. It came back on July 17, 1934, when a TVA-sponsored co-operative opened for business, after leasing the old cannery for one dollar a year. Here, as at Cranberry, Green Mountain, Hendersonville, and Wayneville, blackberries alone have lifted a load from the local relief office. The Murphy cannery paid out \$3,000 for blackberries in one month's operation.

All these canneries are expecting to get their share of relief cattle to be canned. The county relief administrator, J. W. Gray, has received his orders from Raleigh for Cherokee county relief sewing units to make 150 men's coats and caps, 250 women's dresses and 50-butcher's aprons, for beef canners to wear.

Cannery Has 40 Members

The Murphy cannery has so far only 40 members, holding company stock at \$5 a share but plans to expand through Cherokee, Clay, Graham, and Macon counties in North Carolina, and Towns and Union counties in Georgia. With TVAC funds of \$6,000 to work with, and generous subscriptions of preferred stock by Murphy businessmen, they feel hopeful.

When they have so expanded, the Tennessee Valley Associated Co-operatives will have on paper at least a good foundation laid all through Western North Carolina.

In the Norwest corner, the Carolina Mountain Co-operatives are operating canneries and other co-operative activities in four counties. In the middle block of six counties, centering around Asheville, the Farmers' federation is already doing a good co-operative job. In this region, the TVAC has aided the one Federation cannery at Hendersonville, and has set up a TVA-sponsored cannery at Wayneville. In the far western tip of the State, extending over into adjoining counties of Georgia, the Brasstown co-operatives and the Murphy cannery association will eventually reach into every home.

Dale Lee, Murphy businessman, is secretary and treasurer of the cannery; Mrs. John C. Campbell, J. M. McMillan, J. H. Ellis, W. M. Fain and J. W. Dyer are directors. Here as elsewhere the county agent was active in getting the movement started. He is A. Q. Ketter, formerly manager of the Brasstown creamery.

Murphy Seeks TVA Dam

Little dam, what now?" asks The Cherokee Scout, Murphy's newspaper, about the proposed Hiwassee river project. No one as yet knows. J. D. Blagg, engineer in charge of the present surveying of the dam site, has received no word of the decision. The TVA has 23 million dollars left of the 48 million dollars allotted by the last Congress. It will build three more great dams, to join Norris, Wheeler, and Muscle Shoals—the Pickwick, the Aurora, and the Hiwassee. A battle is at present raging between the various communities which want the Hiwassee dam near them. If it should be built at the Coleman site, 14 miles below Murphy, prospects are for a dam 185 feet high, the water to pass through a 4,000-foot tunnel with a 7-foot drop. The lake will back up 17 miles. At least 1,000 men would be put to work, and the dam would cost on this site approximately \$13,000,000—less, Murphy adherents claim, than it would cost at the other sites under consideration.

The Aluminum Company of America has in Graham county a very large power lake, Lake Santeetlah, and has for some time planned to build another near it. A recent dispatch stated that the TVA has lately been buying options on all the land near the site of the Aluminum company's proposed new lake, not already held by the company. A subsidiary,

(Continued on page 8)