

Kentucky newspaper's 1949 look at city, part 4

Monument to Schizophrenia: Oak Ridge, A City of Death, Seeks A 'Normal' Civic Life, part 3
(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 20, 2015)

Here is last half of the second installment in the series of articles Sam Adkins, staff writer for the Louisville, Ky., daily newspaper, The Courier-Journal, wrote about Oak Ridge. The first article in the series was published on Aug. 14, 1949, the fourth anniversary of the surrender of Japan and we divided that installment into two columns for this Historically Speaking series. We have also broken the second of Sam's articles into two columns. The third installment in the series will come next.

The editor of The Courier-Journal has given permission for Adkins' series of articles to be reprinted in part here. I think you will appreciate seeing the view of Oak Ridge history from the perception of a reporter looking at us from one state away. Remember, this is 1949!

...

Continuing with Sam Adkins' second article:

National Laboratory

The Oak Ridge National Laboratory of the Atomic Energy Commission is near the Clinch River about 12 miles from Oak Ridge to the southeast. Designed and built by the E. I. du Pont de Nemours Company, it started live as a small pilot plant on which the design of the huge plutonium plant at Hanford, Wash., was based. As against the astronomical figures for the other plants, it cost a mere \$12,000,000. The peak construction period found 3,247 persons at work on it.

Significantly, the National Laboratory is one of the very few Oak Ridge installations whose activities have not been curtailed since the war. The peak operational personnel during the war was 1,234. On March 15 of this year, approximately 2,000 persons were at work in the plant area.

This is easy to explain: the laboratory is the heart of this country's atomic developments of the future. It is given over largely to atomic research, both in the field of atomics as weapons and that of atoms for peacetime purposes.

Originally known as the Clinton National Laboratory, this plants consists of more than 150 buildings, large and small. These include the only chain-reaction pile (or reactor) on the Oak Ridge reservation, chemistry buildings, a technical laboratory, a physics laboratory, a power house and many others.

Steam Power Plant

If possible, Oak Ridgers are proud of their high-temperature, high-pressure, variable-frequency steam power-generating plant than they are of the showier more unusual U-235 plants. And it's quite an installation, at that.

It is the largest steam plant ever built anywhere in the world in one operation. Designed by the Kellex Corporation and Sargent & Lundy of Chicago and built by the J. A. Jones Construction Company at a cost of \$34,000,000.

This layout has a generating capacity of 238,000 kilowatts, or twice the capacity of the T.V.A.'s Norris Dam.

The paradox of this gigantic, coal-burning steam plant in the heart of the T.V.A. region isn't as paradoxical as it might seem. The phases of the atomics program require variable-frequency current, which the T.V.A. can't supply from its power dams. There too, the steam plant is insurance against possible power failures.

The main power house contains three coal-fired boilers, each designed to produce 750,000 pounds an hour of superheated steam at a pressure of 350 pounds and a temperature of 950 degrees. It also houses 14 turbo-generators ranging from 1,500 to 35,000 kilowatts capacity.

Kentucky newspaper's 1949 look at city, part 4

Monument to Schizophrenia: Oak Ridge, A City of Death, Seeks A 'Normal' Civic Life, part 3
(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 20, 2015)

Work on the power plant began April 13, 1944. Just 90 days later, it began producing power; and the project was at full generating capacity in July, 1945.

N.E.P.A. Project

The Research Project for the Application of Nuclear Energy to the Propulsion of Aircraft (N.E.P.A. for short) is one of the most interesting and least publicized Oak Ridge activities. It's also relatively small, with only about 600 persons employed. However, most of the 600 are, in general, persons of high technical or scientific rank.

Seeking to find some way to use atomic energy to make airplanes fly, N.E.P.A. is a combined operation of 10 aviation companies and the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics, working with the Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corporation as prime contractor for the U. S. Air Force. The atomic Energy Commission is co-operating.

Oak Ridge Institute

Both the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky have stakes in the Oak Ridge institute of Nuclear studies, Inc., one of the most unusual educational institutions to be found anywhere on earth.

The institute is a nonprofit corporation chartered by the State of Tennessee and financed partly by its 24 members, all Southern universities (including U. of L. And U. of K.) and the A.E.C. Each university pays \$1,000 a year and the A.E.C., rounds out the annual budget of \$900,000.

The institute is headed by Dr. William G. Pollard, formerly professor of University of Tennessee (and, incidentally, a high-school classmate of this writer), as executive director.

This corporation has four major purposes:

1. To stimulate co-operation between the government and participating universities in undertaking fundamental research in the field of atomic energy.
2. To foster increased opportunities and improved programs of graduate studies and education in nuclear energy in educational institutions in the South.
3. To aid in the recruiting and training of scientific personnel.
4. To utilize the unique facilities in the Oak Ridge Area for graduate research and instruction. For instance, Oak Ridge National Laboratory has the only atomic reactor pile anywhere in the South. So fellowships are given to teachers and students of members universities to come to Oak Ridge and work on projects demanding such a pile. Incidentally, these aren't the fellowships assailed by Senator Hickenlooper. In this case, the member university must nominate the person seeking such a fellowship. If he is accepted, he receives from \$2,100 (for a student with no dependents) up to \$6,000 a year (for a full professor). Moreover, since this stipend is a grant, it's tax-free.

One major activity of the Institute is the conducting her of special schools in the handling of radioisotopes. It also is preparing to embark upon its own major project in cancer research. A 30-bed hospital and laboratory is being erected; and special types of cancer cases from throughout the South will be brought here for study, experiment and treatment.

...

I think Sam's connection to Oak Ridge might well have been that "high school classmate" relationship he shared with Dr. William Pollard, one of the people most directly responsible for the Oak Ridge National Laboratory being located here in East Tennessee. He saw the value of the Graphite Reactor for research purposes. Ultimately Dr. Pollard started the Oak Ridge Institute for Nuclear Studies which has evolved into the Oak Ridge Associated Universities.

Kentucky newspaper's 1949 look at city, part 4

Monument to Schizophrenia: Oak Ridge, A City of Death, Seeks A 'Normal' Civic Life, part 3
(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 20, 2015)

Next in this Historically Speaking series is the third installment of Sam Adkins' series on Oak Ridge written for the Louisville Courier-Journal in 1949.



Oak Ridge National Laboratory with the Graphite Reactor as it appeared in 1949



Image of seal of the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies: Universities of Kentucky and Louisville are among the 24 members of the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies in 1949