war measure for the production nitrate, a key componei United States Nitrate Plant Number 188. ong the largest synthetic nitrogen works in with a capacity of 110,000 tons of 10 ium nitrate per year. The plant and its industrial town were erected with little o cost between February and November of After two brief periods of operation, one at of November 1918 and the other in February the 2,306 acre site lay idle for the next years while Congress and private industry d its disposition, a problem that had less to do e plant itself than it did with the hydro-power nearby Wilson Dam

the commercially successful "cyanamide " for the fixetion of atmospheric nitrogen, No. 2 superseded U.S. Nitrate Plant in the , which had been constructed town of Sheffield, Alabama. Plant Number d the then innovative Haber process, etic method of producing ammonia. Difficulties erating Plant Number 1 and an urgent ected demand for ammonium nitrate led the ince Department to contract the American amid Company, the only manufacturer on the with proven experience in nitrogen on, to build U.S.N.P. No. 2. A subsidiar any was formed, the Air Nitrates Corporation ced February 16, 1918.

ted as a producer of cyanamide fertilizer ican Cyanamid had only recently begun to on the production and oxidation of key steps in the manufacture of These new processes involved nium nitrate. -heating oyanamide in large pressure vessels, m as autoclaves, to produce ammonia and erting ammonia into nitric oxide by means of a al catalyzer. Just prior to the American entry the war, American Cyanamid secured these al autoclaves from Germany and had set up rimental plants in Canada and in this country to nis and nitric oxide using the new U.S.N.P. No. 2 utilized this new nology in the largest installation of its kind with leves and 696 catalyzers capable of ucing 50,000 tons of fixed nitrogen annually.

nical plant for the production of ammonium rte, U.S.N.P. No. 2 was actually a series of reat plants, each producing an intermediate in a lengthy and mechanically complex process. On an unprecedented scale, No. 2 assembled state of the art N.P. mologies for the production of calcium carbide, ld air, cyanamide, ammonia gas, nitric soid, and um nitrate



U. S. MITBATE PLANT NO. 3 MUSCLE SHOALS, ALABAMA

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highing of the armstruct demand for ammonium nitrate ceased and the Ordnance Department was directed to keep the plant in standby condition. U.S.N.P. No. 2 stood idle until taken over by the Tennessee Valley Authority in Over the course of the next few decedes, 1933 many of the plant's buildings and equipment were used in TVA experimental work in fertilizer development. In addition, during World War Two, the plant was an important supplier of calcium carbide and ammonium nitrate, using rehabilitated portions of its original furnace department and nium nitrate departments.

As a supplier of ammonium nitrate for World War One, United States Nitrate Plant Number 2 was in the right place at the wrong time. Built to fulfill dual fense and domestic peacetime goals, the immense size of the plant was an obvious handicap to economic operation in saturated fertilizer markets. The plant and adjoining Wilson Dam became the birthplace of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the promise of hydroelectric power and fertilizer development did indeed come to fruition, elbeit many years later than expected.

U.S.N.P. No. 2 stands today only as a shell of its original industrial grandeur. One of the largest collections of equipment ever assembled for the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen has since been removed, scrapped, or buried

This recording project is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long range program to document the engineering, industrial, and transportation heritage of the United States. The HAER program is administered by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record Division (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the The Tennessee Valley Authority-Muscle Shoals Recording Project was cosponsored during the summer of 1994 by HAER under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, Chief of HABS/HAER direction of Ropert J. Repsch, Unit of Indestration and by the Tennessee Valley Authority with the assistance of Charles Tichy, Historic Architect and the staff of the Tennessee Valley Authority's Environmental Research Center, Muscle Shoals, Alshama.

The field work, measured drawings, historical report and pholographs were prepared under the direction of Eric N. DeLony, Chief of HAER and Project of Eric N. DeLony, Chief of Hack and Project Leader, Richard O'Connor, Project Historian; Jet Lowe, HAER Photographer; and Craig N. Strong, Project Architect. The recording team consisted of Tom Behrens, Field Supervisor, Balázs Krikovszky (ICOMOS) and Sergio Sanchez, Architects; Brian F. Coffey, Historian; and Susie B. Leong, Illustrator.

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places are also included on the National Register of Historic Places, which also has an online database operated by the National Park Service (NPS). Nomination forms for historic places typically include historical research pertaining to the property as well as photographs. Finally, the Library of Congress is the keeper of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS). These documentation programs are a part of the NPS program tasked with creating full documentation of historic places - records include measured drawings, photographs, and written reports. Oftentimes documented historic places have been demolished, but these records have been preserved and digitized for the public. For historic topographic maps, there are several websites hosted by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) - two such databases are called USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer and topoView.

## **RESEARCHING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY**

Because history and the collection of history is an ongoing venture that concerns everyone, research into a community can be greatly enhanced by engaging with people. Most people are eager to contribute their time, personal stories, family photographs, or their own historical research. Institutions such as universities, libraries, and community organizations

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