

Another consequence of the flooding was the location of many archaeological sites and cemeteries. Alabama has a long history of human occupation and had been settled as a state for more than 100 years by the time TVA flooded the valley. A survey of known archaeological sites and cemeteries was conducted within the flood zone. Many of the cemeteries within North Alabama were African American and when the water rose, the cemeteries would be underwater or difficult to access. TVA recorded careful notes for each cemetery including all legible names and inscriptions, a general count of the graves, and in some cases when the cemetery was large, a drawing was produced. TVA then contacted the nearest kin, when possible, who would determine whether or not the cemetery would be moved to a new location. In every case in North Alabama in which the cemetery was known to be exclusively used by people of color, the family decided to leave the cemetery and their ancestors be; no cemeteries for people of color are known to have been moved by the TVA.

Malaria Control

Malaria, an infectious disease spread by mosquitoes, was a particular concern for everyone in the Tennessee Valley. The disease had long troubled residents of the valley affecting their well-being and ability to

work. The creation of dams and lakes would only increase the risk of infection if left uncontrolled. TVA identified the worst-affected area as being in the Middle Tennessee Valley – specifically from Guntersville in Marshall County to Pickwick, Tennessee, west of Lauderdale County. Thorough studies were conducted on the disease, information was distributed, and precautions were taken to reduce or eliminate the disease. Mosquito-proofing of houses with nets, destruction of favorable breeding grounds, and fumigation were used in the effort. Although some of these measures would benefit all who lived in the valley, TVA literature expresses particular concern for white people. Although today scientists know of a correlation between a lower rate of malaria and people with African ancestry due to the prevalence of sickle cell anemia which interferes with the parasite that causes malaria, this does not account for the lack of concern for people of color in the Middle Tennessee Valley. Several of the family relocation cases in North Alabama mention families of color suffering from malaria.

(Right) Cover of TVA Pamphlet “Malaria and Its Control in the Tennessee Valley,” 1942; Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Record Group 142; National Archives and Records Administration – Atlanta, Identifier No. 281495. (Below) 1941 Malaria Survey Map; “This Map Shows the Results of the Malaria Control Program’s Survey for Malaria in the Guntersville Reservoir Region,” March 10, 1942; Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Record Group 142; National Archives and Records Administration – Atlanta.

