

which shows that from 1930 to 1940, the overall number of farms in Colbert County decreased from 2,900 to just over 2,200 farms. Simultaneously, the total number of acres of farmland in the county increased nearly 125% from an excess of 181,000 acres to over 228,000

(Below) Army-Navy "E" Award for Nitrate Plant #2, Presented to War Industries for Excellence in Manufacturing, 1943; Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Record Group 142; National Archives and Records Administration – Atlanta, Identifier 6120911



acres. The estimated average farm size in the county increased by 38.3 acres in that decade indicating the consolidation of farmland into fewer, but larger farms. By 1940, there were fewer than 500 farms operated by people of color in Colbert County; of these, only 158 were owned or partially owned by a person of color.

The population census records detail the people of Colbert County who worked for TVA at Wilson Dam and U.S.N.P.2, some of whom were people of color. The census also records where people lived, whether they owned their property, and if that property was a farm. However, Huston Cobb, Jr, resident of Leighton, conveyed to local historian Butch Walker that his father, Houston Cobb, Sr. owned a farm while working for the TVA. Better, more reliable pay may have been had at the dam and plant, which could supplement the income of subsistence farming left at home for younger children and wives to contend with. Mr. Cobb, Jr. recalls that this was true for many of the men in the community at the time. Everyone who attended church would wear their work badge to specify they had a job. The community of color had many proud, rural farmers taking on more and more to make ends meet. So if the TVA set out to change the valley, they succeeded.

(Below) "Negroes Speed War Work for Tennessee Valley Authority. Alonzo Bankston is a Furnace Operator in the TVA Plant Producing Carbide for Use of Plants Manufacturing Synthetic Rubber." Palmer, Alfred T., Photographer. Nitrate Negatives. June 1942. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, *Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives*.

