

A brief overview of some historical details of the city of Oak Ridge, Part 9

After the gates were opened and the public was given access to the main parts of the city of Oak Ridge, other aspects of the transition to a more normal Tennessee city began to be planned by the Atomic Energy Commission. However, it still took several years to complete that transition.

One of the first things attempted was to phase out the support provided by the Army to the residents of the city of Oak Ridge. The Roane-Anderson Company, which had taken the responsibility and the brunt of the complaints since 1943, announced its decision to withdraw on July 3, 1951, effective January 3, 1952.

Sam Sapirie, the manager of the Atomic Energy Commission's Oak Ridge Operations Office at the time, is quoted in a July 13, 1951, *Knoxville News Sentinel* article as saying, "We regret very much the Roane-Anderson Company's decision to withdraw from its operation here." He went on to say, "The company has performed a remarkable variety of work for both the Atomic Energy Commission and the Manhattan District. Very often under the most trying conditions, the company's management has made a substantial contribution to the development of the Oak Ridge community operations since the war, and we are indebted to all the company's personnel for their co-operation and their diligence through these busy years."

Sapirie's reflection on the years of service provided by Roane-Anderson Company from 1943 to 1952 does not go into the details of the services provided. The Roane-Anderson Company was the sole provider of all services to the Manhattan District's Clinton Engineer Works city of Oak Ridge. They did not do anything for the three government sites, but all things within the city were under their purview and responsibility.

These nine years of services were sufficient to cause the city residents to come to rely on them and to be most reluctant to relinquish the services or provide them at a cost to the residents. However, the transition to a more normal city operation and incorporation as a city in Tennessee was being pushed by the Atomic Energy Commission.

Lyle D. Worrel was a key individual who served from the beginning to the end of the entire sequence of events that saw the city from its earliest construction days in 1943 to incorporation in 1959 and transition to normal city status in June 1960. He was first the Roane-Anderson Company's manager of administration and then promoted to the assistant project manager position in 1946. It was said in the *Oak Ridger* on July 3, 1973, at the time of his death, that he was, "a 'buffer'—and a very effective one—between the conflicting priorities and expediencies of those early days."

A major element in the transition away from Roane-Anderson Company's total service provider role was the formation of a new company, Management Services, Inc. Worrel headed up this new company, and he took with him three of Roane-Anderson Company's managers, Walter H. Leedhom, Ralph E. Callahan, and C. C. Martin. Additional members of the board of directors of this newly formed company were Edward A. Bagley, Earl C. Bollinger, and Dr. Christopher P. Keim.

MSI's primary role was different than that of Roane-Anderson Company. The *Oak Ridger* stated in retrospect (July 3, 1973) that "MSI's job was to work itself out of a job: To facilitate the takeover of housing by private owners; to smooth the transition of municipal service operations to the newly incorporated city. That the transition occurred as well as it did is evidence of Lyle's ability and desire."

The *Oak Ridger* article written at Worrel's death went on to state, "It was justice, indeed, that MSI's handling of Oak Ridge municipal services earned it the experience and reputation that led to its being engaged in a similar major role for the then very new space program at both Huntsville, Ala., and Cape Kennedy, Fla."

The article further stated, "Lyle Worrel was always a good friend to the *Oak Ridger* as he was to many with whom he had contact here over so many years. Few men, as he did, have dealt with so many people in relationships which are traditionally strained (landlord-tenant; citizen-city service) and earned not just their respect, but also their affection."

A July 16, 1951, article in the *Oak Ridger* cites the reason for Roane-Anderson Company being dismantled in Oak Ridge was a need for personnel by its parent company, Turner Construction Company. Obviously, at least four of their management team chose to stay in Oak Ridge.

However, Leroy C. Macneal, Roane-Anderson Company project manager, and other top executives did leave Oak Ridge to return to the parent company. At the time of Macneal's departure, Worrel was his special assistant.

The original contract with Management Services, Inc., was to run until June 30, 1956. However, it was understood that did not mean MSI would necessarily run the municipal functions that long. Incorporation of the city was already being discussed, and the intention was set up a city government structure that would take over these functions.

An excerpt from the MSI contract with the Atomic Energy Commission states, "The agreement with management services includes provisions for contract changes as progress may be made in Oak Ridge toward home ownership, free enterprise, and self-government."

Next we will see the transition when MSI closes in Oak Ridge and a note from Guilford Glazer.