

A brief overview of some historical details of the city of Oak Ridge, part 7

Continuing the look at a brief summary history of the city of Oak Ridge, the Roane-Anderson Company transitions to the Management Services, Inc., as the city matures after the war.

The Roane-Anderson Company had been formed by the Turner Construction Company to manage the "city in the wilderness" and for the period starting in the fall of 1943, continuing until July 1951, when the Roane-Anderson Company was dissolved and its duties transferred to Management Services, Inc. Roane-Anderson Company had served to manage the city of Oak Ridge during the Manhattan Project and continued to do so after the war. However, the services provided changed over time from a full service to a managing services provided by private companies.

Roane-Anderson Company's size ranged from a high of 10,500 employees in January 1945 to a low of 150 employees by July 1951. Lyle Worrel had served in a leadership role in the company from its inception in 1943. Now he found himself in the position of being the person in charge of the new venture and continuing the change in the manner that city services were managed. Oak Ridge was changing from its early role of fully supported by government provided services to a more typical city.

In the early years of the Manhattan Project the Army Corp of Engineers responsible for the overall project sought help managing the city of Oak Ridge. The Roane-Anderson Company formed by the Turner Construction Company did not build the city, Stone and Webster, the same company that constructed the Y-12 electromagnetic separation plant, did the actual construction work as designed by Skidmore, Owens and Merrill.

However, the Roane-Anderson Company managed the city. In George Robinson's *The Oak Ridge Story*, page 94 says, "Roane-Anderson assumed the responsibility of managing, operating and maintaining the 'secret city.' Its assignment was to keep the residents in a reasonably satisfied state of mind; the whims of a tenant thus had high priority. In time, an Army officer attached to the Manhattan District described Roane-Anderson as 'the best whipping boy the Army ever had.'"

Some facts described by Robinson on pages 95 and 96 of *The Oak Ridge Story* will help define the scope of Roane-Anderson Company's job. They organized and operated a transportation system of over 800 buses, ninth largest in the United States (and our own Lester Fox and his brother had 100 of them!). Robinson went on to say that this transportation system covered 2,400,000 miles a month and carried an average of 120,000 passengers per day during peak operations.

Roane-Anderson supervised 17 cafeterias serving 40,000 meals a day. It operated a cold storage plant that handled 1,200,000 pounds of perishable merchandise a month, 75 percent of which was meat. It ran a farm with a herd of 3,000 cattle and a chicken ranch. It operated a 35 mile railroad line with five locomotives and a crew of 105 workers. It operated a million-dollar-a-year laundry business. It supervised the assignment of more than 500 housemaids, laborers and even had a group of hostesses to orient newcomers to the city.

Roane-Anderson was landlord for 35,000 houses, and managed the Guest House which provided accommodations for many of America's most distinguished scientists and leaders. It purchased supplies for a 337 bed hospital and paid salaries of hundreds of policemen, firemen and patrolmen.

Additionally, Roane-Anderson housed 15,000 residents in separate male and female dormitories, and sought out nearly 200 private businesses to serve Oak Ridge residents. And finally, it maintained schools and other public buildings, operated water and electrical systems, central steam plants and provided for sewage and garbage disposal. It truly was a one-stop service provide for the city of Oak Ridge.

It was into this complex operation that Lyle D. Worrel found himself in November 1943. His secretary said of him, as quoted in an article, "You're In The News," written in *The Oak Ridge Journal* in 1947, when

Worrel had been in his job almost four years, "Worrel is a 'very, very, very active man, who is happy only when he has one million and ten things to do at once.'" So, obviously, he fit right into the "city in the wilderness" frontier town of Oak Ridge created at the Clinton Engineer Works.

By the time the Roane-Anderson Company succeeded in changing its role from a "one-stop" shop for all Oak Ridge residents' needs to a far less robust organization that managed sub-contractors for much of the daily operations of the city, Lyle Worrel, who had maintained a leadership role in the company, was poised to continue to lead the transition toward normalcy. In July 1951, the Roane-Anderson Company, owned by Turner Construction Company and formed solely to fulfill the government's request to manage Oak Ridge, was dissolved. A new company, Management Services, Inc., was formed to replace it.

This transition to a locally owned corporation, all the stockholders were Oak Ridgers, was a part of a much larger effort to convert Oak Ridge from a government operated city to a self-governing, self-supporting municipality, began in 1948. The Atomic Energy Commission started planning to open the gates to the public, allow private ownership of homes and other structures and to incorporate the city.

Change was happening all around. The Cold War had created a new mission for the Y-12 Plant, that of machining uranium and other components for the nation's growing stockpile of nuclear weapons in response to Russia having exploded an atomic bomb test on August 29, 1949. The gates to the city of Oak Ridge were opened and the public was allowed to enter on March 19, 1949.

More to follow as Oak Ridge and the government sites move into the 1950s and change abounds.