Tennessee's Roots

First land bought near Calderwood - construction of dam begins	Smelter plant activated	City of Alcoa incorporated	Cheoah Dam completed	West Plant opened	Santeetlah Dam completed
1910	1913	1916	1919	1920	1928

It was finally Saturday, the end of a six-day work week. Screwdriver Rogers packed up his carpenter's toolbox and headed into the cold drizzle to begin his walk home. This was the same walk he had made every Saturday evening since taking a job building housing for the Cheoah Dam workers. His own house was in Robbinsville, N.C., where his wife and baby would be waiting. If he walked steady all night, he could make it home in 12 hours.

In 1916, Pittsburgh's Aluminum Company of America hired Screwdriver Rodgers and hundreds of other mountaineers from western North Carolina and East Tennessee to build -- in the middle of the wildernes -- Cheoah Dam, the first of ALCOA's hydroelectric dams that would provide electricity for it's newly built smelter in Alcoa, Tennessee.

Cheoah Dam

You see, the founder of ALCOA, Charles Martin Hall, invented the process of using electricty to produce aluminum for the commercial market. The Hall process requires a plentiful and inexpensive source of electricity, so in 1910, when company officials sought to expand operations, they knew it would be necessary to find just such a source and to locate their new plant nearby. Their search led them to the Smoky Mountain highlands... and the history of Tennessee Operations began.

ALCOA

Calderwood Dam completed	North Plant Fabricating plant opened	Chilhowee Dam completed	Can Reclamation opened	Continuous Cold Mill started	West Plant closed	Hotline modernization completed
1930	1942	1957	1975	1987	1989	1990

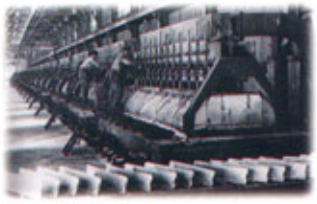
Tennessee's Roots

Building the dams was the first step to making ALCOA part of East Tennessee history. Next, in 1913, came the construction and opening of the smelter that would turn alumina into molten aluminum. With aluminum production in full force, the first fabrication operations was opened in 1920. Knoxn as the West Plant (because it lay five miles west of the smelter), the facility produced products ranging from aluminum pie plates and siding to aluminum for patio furniture and pots and pans.

The First Slab

It was nearly 20 years later, in 1939, before another expansion to Tennessee Operations began. The United States was on the verge of entering WWII, and the leaders of ALCOA decided the company should do its part to help. By 1942, Tennessee's North Plant fabricating facility was in operation, making aluminum sheet for the 300,000 airplanes that were built for the war. Tennessee's aluminum contribution to the country's air force was so vital that it was rumored that a German U-boat captured off the east coast during the war had orders to destroy ALCOA's plant.

After the war, ALCOA began an aggresive marketing campaign to increase the public demand for new aluminum products. Tennessee Operations was it's largest production facility, with employment swelling to as high as 12,000. The plant helped lead the company into the consumer age by making products for the aerospace, automotive and construction industries.



Tennessee's Original Pots

It was in 1965 that the company started working on a new market use for aluminum -- the beverage can. Previously dominated by the steel market, the beverage can market posed a challenging opportunity for ALCOA. Tennessee Operations was earmarked to lead the effort in can sheet production, along with a sister plant in Evansville, Indiana.

In 1975, a Can Reclamation facility was opened at Tennessee to handle the millions of aluminum cans already being recycled in the United States. And in the late '80s, Tennessee underwent a major modernization in order to meet the demands of the beverage can market. The Continuous Cold Mill, heralded as the world's largest and most technologically advanced rolling mill in the world, opened in 1987. Tennessee's product lines were streamlined to just one -- can sheet.

No longer needed, the West Plant fabricating facility was shut down in 1989. In 1990, the WWII vintage Hotline was replaced with a state-of-the-art, five-stand mill.

The Hotline

Today, Tennessee Operations is still producing molten metal in its smelter and is home to the most sophisticated rolling mills in the world. It is considered a world benchmark in the production of high quality aluminum can sheet.

ALCOA