APPLIED HOME ECONOMICS IN T.V.A. HOUSES[1]

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IN BUILDING the new communities at Norris, Wheeler, and Pickwick Landing dams to provide for necessary housing in connection with construction of the dams, the Tennessee Valley Authority has approached the problem of the small house from a standpoint of home economics in every sense of the term. These houses are truly homes and actually economical—real homes in arrangement, appearance, and equipment; economical in first cost, in upkeep, and in the expense and labor of housekeeping.

Too often the difficulty of making practical application of the science of home economics has been due to thinking that there is a final or all-embracing solution based on a preconceived technological formula or an esthetic strait jacket. The designers of so-called "model" kitchens, for instance, too often seem unaware that the living requirements of people are as variable as the people themselves. Eating in the kitchen or sleeping in the living room may be entirely unacceptable to one group and distinctly preferable to another. Nor is this entirely a matter of social standards or relative ability to pay. Some of the luxurious apartments of Park Avenue and the "Gold Coast" provide for just this sort of doubling up. The T.V.A. is not attempting to impose a brand-new way of living upon the people of the Valley. Rather we are attempting to blend modern forms with the long-existing living habits and social customs of the locality.

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Altogether, at Norris, Wheeler, and Pickwick dams, the T.V.A. has built 511 houses, the great majority of them of permanent or semi-permanent construction. Among these are bungalows and story-and-a-half and two-story types varying from two to six rooms in size and based upon more than forty different floor plans. Thus a wide choice is available to the people who make these houses homes.

At Norris the location of each house was an individual problem. Owing to the rugged nature of the site, streets are winding, blocks are irregular, and every building plot varies from its neighbor in size, slope, and topography. In determining the position of the house on the plot, it was recognized that an abundance of sunlight and fresh air within the house is often as much a matter of orientation as it is of windows and doors. Another consideration was that the kitchens as well as the living rooms should be favored with attractive views, but this was not a difficult problem on a high but rugged plateau bounded by wide valleys and steep river bluffs and with irregular mountain ranges on every hand—in fact almost every window in the town frames an extensive and attractive view.

Aside from the varying preferences and requirements of different people and families, the functioning of even the simplest house is a complex affair when we pause to consider the diversity of its routine activity and its effect on the safety, health, comfort, and privacy of its occupants. Among other things, it is at once capable of serving—sometimes simultaneously—as a workshop and factory, social and recreational center, nursery and training school, warehouse and