

TVA's "Godless" Model Town Has Joint Religious Service

Villagers Of Norris Gather At School For Simple Ceremony Open To All Creeds—Residents Declared Pleased With System

[By the Associated Press]

Norris, Tenn., Dec. 22—Quakers, Catholics, Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians joined in a simple, three-hour religious service in the Tennessee Valley Authority's model town of Norris today—the town that has been called "Godless."

Such has been their custom each Sunday since the TVA established the town two years ago for its employees and workers engaged on the \$34,000,000 Norris Dam nearby.

The cozy little village, nestled among wooded hills, recently was a target for criticism by Gov. Eugene Talmadge of Georgia, who charged that the "TVA has copied Communism by refusing to permit denominational churches to be built at Norris."

100 Attend Services

Bundled in overcoats and wraps, more than 100 men, women and children walked or rode through a heavy snowstorm today to the red brick schoolhouse, near the center of town, for their Sunday worship. It is their community church.

First there was Sunday School with classes held in the various school rooms. N. A. Hicks, 32, of Asheville, N. C., one of the town's two barbers, is superintendent.

"From 130 to 140 of all ages and denominations attend Sunday School each Sunday," he explained. "Each class votes on its Sunday School literature. Some have Baptist literature,

some Congregational and some other literature."

He said he favored a community church now and even when the town's population becomes permanent.

"It would be foolish to build a separate church for each of the town's twenty denominations," Hicks declared.

Following Sunday-school nearly one hundred persons gathered in the small school auditorium-gymnasium for church services. There was a song service, scriptural reading by the congregation, a collection and a sermon by Eric Thomsen, former pastor—in all little or no different from services in thousands of other churches.

This interdenominational form of worship, G. L. Jensen, TVA personnel representative, said, is favored by ninety-eight per cent. of the town's 1,700 inhabitants.