

This picture was taken when one of the gigantic nitrate plants, part of the Muscle Shoals project, was in course of construction. Two of these plants constituent from nitrates is used as fertilizer in agriculture, and it is believed that by producing this at

THE world has been taught to believe that great industrial successes and vast public improvements are matters of cold dollars and cents, of close-figured margins and percentages.

The five o'clock whistle in these days of materialistic thought is the Mason and Dixon line which divides the business day's reason from the night's romance.

But listen to the tale of Muscle Shoals, and then decide whether romance is a question of moonlight, and whether indeed the cold reasoning processes by which man earns his daily bread are not bound up closely with those wonderful idealistic dreams which he nurses close to his heart.

Muscle Shoals—it is a name with which the great public was unfamiliar three years ago, but a name whose very strangeness has attracted the curious attention of the nation since its enunciation became general—signifies a portion of the Tennessee River. Thirty-six miles of this river, which is the greatest artery carrying the industrial blood of the South and traversing its very heart, has been designated by that title.

"Muscle Shoals," articulates the average person. Then he pauses. The sound of the name arouses his curiosity.

American names, mixtures of Indian, French, Spanish, English, Biblical, German, and what not, have always been the subjects of half-amused contemplation. Their derivations are always mysteries.

Not until an American becomes famous does anyone manifest interest in his ancestry, or in the amusing anecdotes with which every man's life is filled. But let a Lincoln die or Plymouth Rock be celebrated, and the glasses of fiction and history brim with the beverages of beautiful story.

So it is with Muscle Shoals. Until 1918, one hundred millions of Americans had lived in serene unconsciousness of such a place. But now the sound of a name, the romance of an Aladdin-like construction, the cries of partisan politics, the pleasant prospect of an awakening South, and the nation's demand for the complete utilization of its vast natural resources, have combined to direct national attention toward an obscure part of northern Alabama. And in the awakening thought, the origin of the name has been sought.

On this point the oldest native of the Muscle Shoals district, which includes within its bounds the thriving cities of Sheffield, Tusculumbia and Florence, is of little help.

There are many mussel shells on the shores of the river in the 36 miles of its length designated by the title, Muscle Shoals. Most of the inhabitants believe that the name is therefore merely a corruption of "mussel shells." Not so, according to other delvers into local history. Rather the name comes down from Indian times, these persons assert.

Way back when the Indians roamed the forest, so the story goes, the great fall of water, 134 feet in 36 miles, was one of the strategic points over whose control the Indian tribes struggled for mastery. The natural difficulties faced by the war canoes in traversing the river caused the Indians to designate the place

with a long involved name signifying the amount of human muscle necessary to propel a war canoe through the river.

Along came the white man, few of words and iconoclastic in thought. He heard the name and found the meaning. So he expressed the English equivalent, and promptly forgot the more picturesque title by which the Creeks, and the Cherokees and Colberts, called their ancient battle ground.

It was a century and more ago, when the potentialities of the Muscle Shoals district first attracted the attention of persons of national note and the occasion of that interest is intertwined strangely with the romance of history.

About three miles from the present site of Florence, Alabama, there lived Colonel John Coffee. He was a pioneer planter and friend of Andrew Jackson. When the latter was engaging the British forces at New Orleans in 1815, Colonel Coffee heard that the American general's little army of woodsmen were in danger of annihilation. The planter quickly gathered a force of irregulars and marched to Jackson's relief. He was in time, and history gives Coffee much of the credit for Jackson's victory.

Subsequent to the battle, General Jackson with his victorious troops marched northward through Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Congress, happy over the success, granted Jackson's request for a \$10,000 appropriation for a highway from New Orleans to Nashville. Jackson's march determined that highway and a portion of it is now the main street of Florence, Alabama. When Jackson reached this place, he tarried awhile with Colonel Coffee and was struck with the beauty and natural resources of the territory.

His admiration grew into resolution to become an owner of some of this property. The result of this determination is told in the dusty deeds in the Florence courthouse. Grants from the United States to the Cypress Land Company cover much of the territory now involved in the Muscle Shoals project.

Among the Cypress Land Company shareholders were Andrew Jackson and James Madison. Madison had been President before the date of the deeds. Jackson was President later. The documents indicate that the United States received \$50 an acre for the property sold to the land company.

Just how soon governmental authorities were im-

pressed with the wisdom of taking steps to develop the Tennessee River resources is uncertain. By 1828, however, the Muscle Shoals situation had received such consideration that the Federal Government purchased the canal rights from the state of Alabama. Payment for this purchase was made in public lands. In 1836 a start was made toward the building of this canal. Various enterprises interfered, however, and it was not until the political difficulties incident to the Mexican War and Civil War had been overcome, that the canal materialized. In 1876 the building of the canal was authorized, and the 11 locks built permitted, in 1890, the passage of the first boat down through the river.

Residents in Alabama and lower Tennessee were not satisfied with this improvement, however, and in the early years of this century Senator Morgan introduced a resolution in the Senate for a study of the Tennessee watershed. An army engineering board reported to Congress, recommending the improvement of the lock canal system. The Muscle Shoals people had by this time formed pretty definite ideas that the building of a dam and the utilization of the water power were the prime objects to be aimed at. Therefore, this engineering report met with their strenuous opposition, and it was subsequently withdrawn. This event occurred in 1911. The next step was the authorization of a diamond drill survey of the river bed.

This survey collided with the start of the World War, and then the Muscle Shoals enthusiasts saw their opportunity and seized it. Alarm was great over the danger that the country's supply of nitrates might be threatened through hostile submarines barring the way to Chile, which had been the source of the world's nitrate supply. Nitrates are necessary to high explosives.

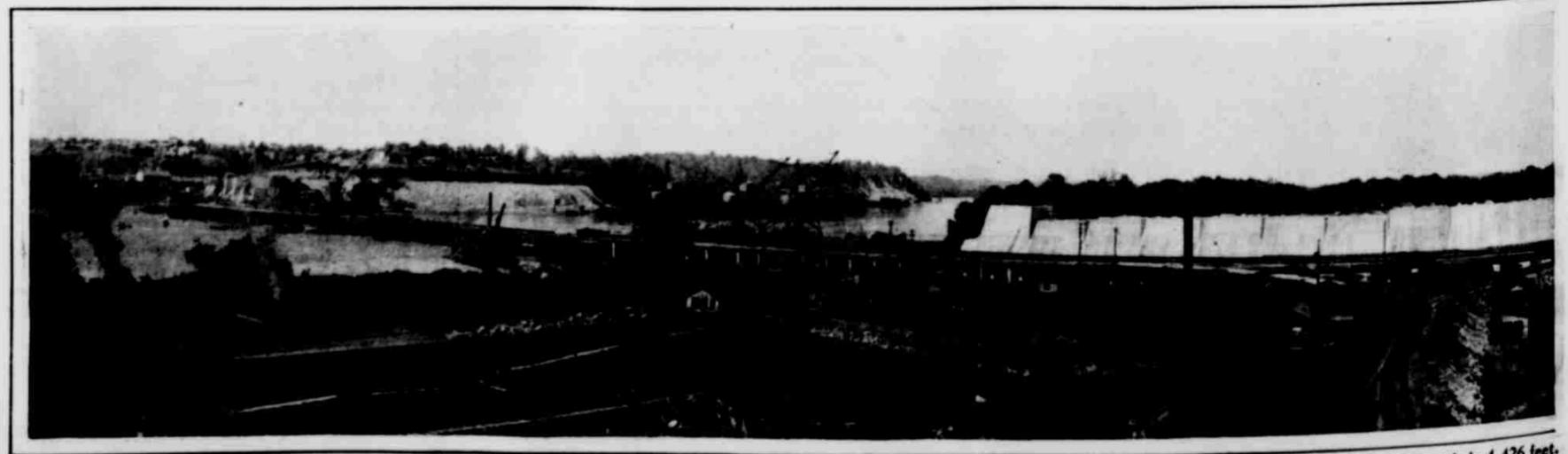
The feasibility of the processes for extracting nitrogen from the air had just been demonstrated.

The Muscle Shoals people marched on Washington with their long cherished ideal. "Build a nitrate plant at Muscle Shoals and utilize the vast undeveloped power from the Tennessee River" was their proposition.

It was considered. Senators Bankhead and Underwood used their influence in its behalf. Opposition was negligible. The need of nitrates was clear. The location, back a safe distance from the sea, was ideal, and though the speed with which a dam

complete would cost \$50,000,000. Because of the economy

An Industrially Awakened the Huge Muscle Shoals



The uncompleted Wilson Dam at Florence, Ala., part of the Muscle Shoals project. Its total length is 4,426 feet. complete would cost \$50,000,000. Because of the economy