

Aluminum Company of America ^[1]

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by Susan Bales, 2006

Additional research provided by James L. Hunt.



Construction of the Narrows Dam and powerhouse on the Yadkin River near Badin, a project of the Aluminum Company of America, 1917. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

[Aluminum Company of America](#)^[2] (Alcoa) established an aluminum smelting plant in east Tennessee in 1914. Alcoa purchased sites on the Little Tennessee River in North Carolina between 1910 and 1925 in order to build hydroelectric generating stations for its smelting operation. A complex of dams constructed in the North Carolina-Tennessee borderlands supplied electricity to the reduction plant at Alcoa, Tenn. The company subsequently perceived a growing demand for electric power by individuals and communities in far western North Carolina. In response, the Nantahala Power and Light Company was formed as a state public utility in 1929, bringing the first electricity to a number of the state's western farms and towns.

[Alcoa's Badin Reduction Works](#)^[3] in [Stanly County](#)^[4] and the Alcoa, Tenn., plant have employed North Carolinians and contributed to the local economies since early in the twentieth century. The French-owned Southern Aluminum Company first chose the Badin site on the Yadkin River. Unable to complete construction because of the war in Europe, the French company sold the partially built dam and powerhouse to Alcoa in 1915. Alcoa finished the Yadkin Narrows hydroelectric plant and constructed the Badin Works, which has operated regularly since its opening in July 1917. Over the years, the company expanded hydroelectric capacity with generating facilities at Yadkin Falls and High Rock. The Badin Works now produces primary aluminum, cast sheet, and high purity aluminum.

In 1986 Alcoa moved a wholly owned subsidiary, [Permatech](#)^[5], from Pittsburgh, Pa., to the town of Graham. Permatech manufactures ceramic products used in handling molten aluminum, and about two-thirds of its output goes to other Alcoa plants. In the early 2000s, Alcoa also operated Alcoa Distribution and Industrial Products in Catawba, Six R Communications, L.L.C., in Monroe, and T.I.C.S. Corporation in [Charlotte](#)^[6]. The relationship between Nantahala Power and Light Company and Alcoa was severed in 1971, when demand from North Carolina customers exceeded Nantahala's production. Alcoa agreed to cease purchasing electricity from Nantahala, and in 1988 the electric company was sold to [Duke Power Company](#)^[7] of [Charlotte](#)^[6].

References:

Charles C. Carr, *Alcoa: An American Enterprise* (1952).

George David Smith, *From Monopoly to Competition: The Transformation of Alcoa, 1888-1986* (1988).

Additional Resources:

[North Carolina Digital Collections](#)^[8] search results for Aluminum Company of America

Subjects:

[N.C. Industrial Revolution \(1900-1929\)](#)^[9]

[Businesses](#)^[10]

[UNC Press](#)^[11]

Authors:

[Bales, Susan](#)^[12]

[Hunt, James L.](#)^[13]

Origin - location:

[Alamance County](#)^[14]

[Stanly County](#)^[15]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press](#)^[16]

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[4] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/stanly>

[5] <http://www.permatech.net/>

[6] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/charlotte>

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