

History of the Manhattan Project

Manhattan Legacy Service was the name chosen since the Y-12 Plant began with the Manhattan Project. The Corps of Engineers Construction Division, Major General Thomas M. Robbins, and his Deputy, Colonel Leslie Groves, took a train to Tennessee with Colonel James Marshall (district engineer of the Manhattan Engineer District) to inspect the proposed Tennessee site. Major General Groves was impressed.

On 29 September 1942, United States Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson authorized the Corps of Engineers to acquire 56,000 acres (23,000 ha) of land by eminent domain at a cost of \$3.5 million. An additional 3,000 acres (1,200 ha) was subsequently acquired. Approximately 1,000 families were affected by the condemnation order, which came into effect on 7 October 1942. Protests, legal appeals, and a 1943 Congressional inquiry were to no avail. By mid-November 1943, the U.S. Marshals were tracking notices to vacate on farmhouse doors, and construction contractors had begun moving in. Some families were only given two weeks' notice to vacate farms that had been their homes for generations; others had settled there after being evicted to make way for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the 1920s or the Norris Dam in the 1930s. The ultimate cost of land acquisition in the area, which was not completed until March 1945, was only about \$2.6 million, which worked out to around \$47 an acre. When presented with Public Proclamation Number Two, which declared Oak Ridge a total exclusion area that no one could enter without military permission, the Governor of Tennessee, Mr. Prentice Cooper, angrily tore it up.

Initially known as the Kingston Demolition Range, the site was officially renamed the Clinton Engineer Works (CEW) in early 1943. While Stone and Webster concentrated on the production facilities, the architectural and engineering firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill designed and built a residential community for 13,000. The community was located on the slopes of Black Oak Ridge, from which the new town of Oak Ridge got its name. The Army presence at Oak Ridge increased in August 1943 when Nichols replaced Marshall as head of the Manhattan Engineer District. One of his first tasks was to move the district headquarters to Oak Ridge although the name of the district did not change. In September 1943 the administration of community facilities was outsourced to Turner Construction Company through a subsidiary, the Roane-Anderson Company (for Roane and Anderson Counties, in which Oak Ridge was located). Chemical engineers, including William J. Wilcox Jr. and Warren Fuchs, were part of "frantic efforts" to make 10% to 12% enriched Uranium 235, known as the code name "tuballoy tetroxide", with tight security and fast approvals for supplies and materials. The population of Oak Ridge soon expanded well beyond the initial plans, and peaked at 75,000 in May 1945, by which time 82,000 people were employed at the Clinton Engineer Works, and 10,000 by Roane-Anderson.