

# National Park Service Department of the Interior

Manhattan Project National Historical Park  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee



December 2020

## Manhattan Project History in December

- German Physicists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman split uranium in December of 1938. On December 22 Otto Hahn sent a manuscript to a peer-review scientific journal but not before contacting Lise Meitner on December 19. Meitner and her nephew Otto Frisch were able to describe Otto Hahn's findings as nuclear fission.
- On December 1939 Irene Joliot-Curie and husband Frederic Joliot Curie demonstrated that the fission of uranium nuclei can lead to a nuclear chain reaction.
- Enrico Fermi and his team produced the first controlled nuclear reaction. Chicago Pile-1 on a squash court in the University of Chicago on December 2, 1942. Two months later construction of the X-10 Graphite Reactor began in Oak Ridge, TN.
- Chemical separation of plutonium from the X-10 Graphite Reactor began on December 1943.
- Construction of the chemical separation plants at Hanford, WA was completed in December of 1944.
- On December 25, 1946 Soviets created their first nuclear chain reaction in a design similar to Enrico Fermi's reactor at the Chicago Met Lab.



**Santa Claus goes through a security check at Elza Gate guard house (photo by Ed Westcott, 12/14/1944).**

**Rangers will Join Local Girl Scouts for a Hike** in Oak Ridge this month. During the hike the Girl Scouts will have an opportunity to learn about their community, what makes it so special, and how it came to be in early 1943.

**We're Seeking Volunteers to Assist Our Operation.** Opportunities include staffing the visitor contact station at Children's Museum of Oak Ridge and meeting and greeting visitors while providing information about the park. Opportunities to provide informational programs may also exist.

Volunteers usually work in four-hour blocks but can vary depending on the availability of the volunteer. Prospective volunteers should be interested in providing information to visitors from all over the country in an indoor setting. No money handling will be required, and volunteers will receive training about the Manhattan Project and World War II history, as well as National Park Service operations.

For more information about becoming

a National Park Service volunteer at Manhattan Project Oak Ridge site, please call Effie Houston at (423) 569-9778, or at [effie\\_houston@nps.gov](mailto:effie_houston@nps.gov).

Even though colder weather is starting to creep in **Our Victory Garden is Still Producing Cool Weather Crops.** Our cabbage, beets, spinach, and lettuce are still looking healthy despite the very cool evenings last month. Produce is delivered to local food banks on Thursdays.



**Park Visitor Center Desk  
at the  
Children's Museum of Oak Ridge  
461 W. Outer Drive,  
Oak Ridge, TN 37830  
(865) 482-1942  
or visit us:**

[www.nps.gov/mapr](http://www.nps.gov/mapr)  
[www.twitter.com/MnhtnProjectNPS](https://www.twitter.com/MnhtnProjectNPS)  
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