

Unusual addition to 101 Bus Terminal Road

D. Ray Smith | *Historically Speaking* | The Oak Ridger | November 20, 2007



101 Bus Terminal Road was first the home of the Security Forces as noted by Bill Sergeant

Last week we looked at the existing addition to the southeast corner of the building at 101 Bus Terminal Road. We also examined the unusual arrangement of bars on one exterior window, bars at the top of two cells, a heavy door, a pass through from the hallway to one cell and the general impression of a jail. Yet, the rooms lack some of the most basic “jail” attributes.

Another phone call after last week’s column convinced me this area never was a jail at all. Harry Thomas, retired Oak Ridge policeman, began his career there in 1944. He remembers when the room was built and knew a little about what it was intended to do. He was not allowed to go there during the brief time it was used for its original intended purpose. He did not have the security clearance needed to see the equipment that was placed there. On the one occasion he did go there with escort, the equipment was covered with a cloth so he could not see what was there.

Yet, Harry knew from experience that the two “cells” were never used as a jail. He made a really good point by noting there were no toilet facilities there! I hadn’t thought of that. So, both Harry Thomas and Bill Sergeant are in agreement as to the original reason for the addition and that it never was a jail.

Unusual addition to 101 Bus Terminal Road

D. Ray Smith | *Historically Speaking* | The Oak Ridger | November 20, 2007



Oak Ridge Police officers standing in front of 101 Bus Terminal

Now we will look at Bill's description of the original reason for the addition to the southeast corner of the main portion of the building at 101 Bus Terminal Road. It was not originally a jail, but something more important in the minds of the folks charged with protecting the uranium 235 being separated at Oak Ridge's Y-12 Plant and K-25 Gaseous Diffusion Plant. Keeping it safe and secure was a primary responsibility at that time. This would have been in the August, 1945 through December 1946 timeframe, after the end of World War II but during the time where a high level of apprehension existed regarding the very special material being created at Oak Ridge, uranium 235.

The Y-12 Plant was the electromagnetic separation plant of the Manhattan Project and was built exclusively to separate uranium 235 from uranium 238 using Calutrons (named for **CAL**ifornia **U**niversity **Calu**TRON). 22,000 people worked on 1152 Calutrons for a year to separate enough uranium 235 for Little Boy, the first atomic bomb used in warfare and helping to bring a quick end to World War II.

After the war's end, K-25 began to produce uranium 235 at the highly enriched level. Y-12 continued to produce the highly enriched uranium for a year and a half after the war ended. The Alpha calutrons were shut down when K-25 began to produce more enriched material than the Alpha calutrons were capable of producing. The Beta calutrons were shut down, with the exception of Beta 3 calutrons, on December

Unusual addition to 101 Bus Terminal Road

D. Ray Smith | *Historically Speaking* | The Oak Ridger | November 20, 2007

1946 when K-25 became capable of producing highly enriched uranium. This precious and very specialized material needed to be stored and protected until it could be made into atomic bombs.

A specialized and unique building was located over Chestnut Ridge, the ridge south of Y-12. It was Building 9213. It was intended to store the uranium 235. A large bank vault door was installed in the building and a specialized vault was built into the heart of the building to store the uranium 235. That door is still there and it still moves on its hinges at just a touch of a person's finger!

Building 9213 was only used for a short time for its original purpose, no more than two years. A new facility was built that was designed to look like a farmer's barn and silo and in later years came to be known as "Katy's Kitchen" because a lady named Katherine Odom used to eat her lunch on a picnic table outside the building. This was during the 1950's and the nickname stuck.

The uranium 235 was moved to this more camouflaged facility because the people responsible for protecting the special material wanted the safest possible storage location. The first name for the facility, used during its design and original designation of Building 9214, was code named "Operation Dog." Interestingly, this facility was only used to store the enriched uranium from May 1948 until May 1949.

Another change that was taking place during that same timeframe was the transition from an Army controlled Manhattan Project to the civilian Atomic Energy Commission that became active on January 1947. It was during this transition that Building 9214 was designed and built. When the AEC took over from the Army, the AEC Security Patrol moved into Building 9705 on Bear Creek Road near the middle of Y-12. It was then at the time of the movement into Building 9214 and the movement of the main security responsibility from 101 Bus Terminal Road to Building 9705 that the security communications center at 101 Bus Terminal Road was deactivated. According to Harry Thomas, it was closed up and never used for anything other than maybe records storage by the Oak Ridge Police Department.

This same timeframe saw the transition from Army Security forces at 101 Bus Terminal Road to AEC Security Patrol for the three sites. The Oak Ridge Police Department relinquished the responsibility to respond to emergencies at the uranium 235 storage site, but kept the responsibility for the city of Oak Ridge. Before that transition, Harry Thomas tells of being taken to the south side of Chestnut Ridge and being made familiar with the roads to get to Building 9213. He was one of the police officers intended to be used to respond to an emergency there.

Next week we will continue this saga of 101 Bus Terminal Road and associated buildings at Y-12 and in the woods south of Chestnut Ridge.