

# The Manhattan National Historical Park established November 10, 2015

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on November 16, 2015)

It has been a tremendous honor for me to have been selected to serve as a member of a 20 person Scholar's Forum for the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The careful selection of the team took place several weeks ago, but the work of the forum took place in the Department of the Interior building on C Street in Washington, DC, on Monday, November 9, 2015 and Tuesday, November 10, 2015.

The group was made up of representatives from all three sites, Oak Ridge, TN, Los Alamos, NM, and Hanford, WA, as well as two representatives from Japan, one from Hiroshima and the other from Nagasaki. There were also professors, authors, a representative of the US Corps of Engineers, someone from the National Science Foundation, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Smithsonian and Tribal Affairs.

See what an amazing range of expertise, all of whom gave of their time to work together for two days to assist the National Park Service as they begin the process of defining the major themes to be used to tell the story of the amazing history of the Manhattan Project and its ensuing ramifications on our world. It was hard work, but exceedingly rewarding for me to see all that energy devoted to something I have been working at in a very small way for about 10 years. They were able in a matter of hours to bring to bear resources I could never have hoped to access. It was an amazing several hours...I could hardly sleep at night because of the anticipation and the excitement!

You can easily see why the National Park Service is our nation's storyteller! They have the expertise to know how to bring to the table the right mix of experts to get at the heart of an issue and to pull the essence of a subject into the light in a way that the general public can understand and appreciate the significant and substantial history of a given event or series of events. It is great to see this expertise in action!

The Manhattan Project National Historical Park is certainly a unique adventure for the National Park Service. Three sites make for a challenge they have not often faced. Yet, the leaders of the Scholar's Forum quickly stated that this park would be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Park! It would consist of the most advanced technical assets, would use online resources, would make extensive use of existing exhibits and oral histories, and would reach into new areas that have not been tried before.

An early example of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Park is the K-25 Virtual Museum <http://www.k-25virtualmuseum.org/> released in conjunction with the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. You will like this experience, try it!

2016 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service. They are already making plans for celebrating that milestone. The Manhattan Project National Historical Park is the 409<sup>th</sup> national park and will be a feature that will be used as an example of what the National Park Service is doing on this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We can be glad of that as it will cause resources to be applied to this newest park.

Here's an example of the expertise applied to this Scholar's Forum process. After brief introductions to help the group understand the various backgrounds each of the participants brought to the process, brainstorming ideas in focus groups for each of the three sites generated a list of unique aspects of each site's history as well as a list of common elements shared by all of the sites. Enlightening to say the least! We all learned things we had not known about the various sites.

During the breaks, I was able to explore the historic Department of the Interior building which is adorned with several sets of murals on the second floor including a series of huge Ansel Adams black and white photographs of the west! I went back to that exhibit more than once during the two days we were there.

The Scholar's Forum participants were also provided reserved seats at the Signing Ceremony on Tuesday, November 10, 2015, in the auditorium of the South Department of the Interior building located

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on Constitution Avenue. Several representatives from each of the three sites were provided reserved seats at the front of the auditorium as well. So, we had "front row" seats to history!

Senator Lamar Alexander was there and asked the Oak Ridge delegation to join him for a photograph. He also told the "Senator McKellar story" as he opened his remarks. A shining example of the stories that will help capture the imagination of the visitors to the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. Other representative from the other sites spoke as well. But the main singular event was the actual signing ceremony by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz establishing the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Secretary Jewell called the new park "America's most transformative scientific discoveries that fundamentally altered the course of the 20th Century." Secretary Moniz traced the origin of what is now the Department of Energy to the innovative scientists of the Manhattan Project but also to the communities formed then and still continue today as partners with the DOE to bring the "world countless scientific breakthroughs that benefit humanity." National Park Service Director Jarvis said, the park will "tell the complete and complex story of one of the most consequential projects in our nation's history."

I saw the complexity in action at the Scholar's Forum. Our discussion ranged from the impacts of the Manhattan Project on society to the consequences of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan to the legacy of the creation of the nuclear age as well as the technological advances. Of course, the people story is imperative to be told well as the unique sense of place for each of the three sites.

One of the most rewarding discussion focused on the importance of taking a large world view of the importance of peace rather than war. We recognized the tremendous variation in the number of deaths attributable to global war that peaked during World War II and accepted the responsibility to include the strong desire to promote eliminating war all together across the world as an aspect of the interpretation of the history of the Manhattan Project, not just the creation of the atomic bomb. The disaster of again using nuclear weapons is too devastating to be acceptable.

This Manhattan Project National Historical Park has tremendous potential for education and advancing the awareness of the importance of pursuing peace across the world. Now that it is established, let us all work together to make it the very best national park it can be. Encourage others to contribute ideas, contribute ideas yourself. Join in the effort to create a 21 Century Park right here in our own city!

And many of you did already join in the celebration today! The 10 tours of Y-12 and ORNL went well, in spite of some "Murphy's Law" type problems at the very beginning when a power outage caused the power in Building 9204-3 to go off and the west end of Y-12 to be shut down. Tour participants reported that the tours met or exceeded their expectations. The Oak Ridge High School Auditorium was almost filled to capacity today and WOW, what about that Oak Ridge High School Chorus! Good coverage was provided to the ribbon cutting for the fountain in Jackson Square and an overflowing crowd was there in the fountain area for the reenactment of the famous Ed Westcott photograph, "War Ends."

Finally, the Contact/Visitor Center for the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is located in the American Museum of Science and Energy. The Superintendent of the Big South Fork Park is going to be providing a Park Ranger stationed there. At first there will only be a ranger there on Saturday's, then in a few weeks, they will increase the time spent there until they reach a seven-day schedule.

What an exciting time to be in Oak Ridge at the north end of "The Oak Ridge Corridor" as Senator Lamar Alexander suggested.

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Oak Ridge delegation with Senator Lamar Alexander

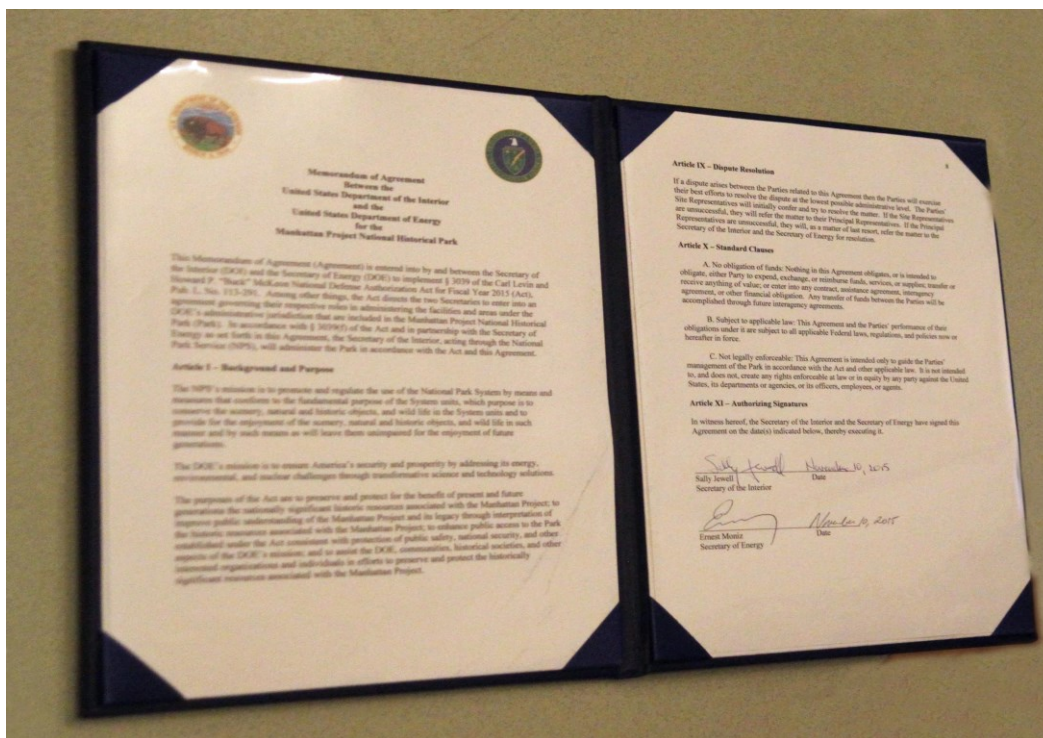


The Oak Ridge delegation with the Secretaries



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The signed document

## The Manhattan Project National Historical Park



Beautiful adornments for our streetlight poles!

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Manhattan Project National Historical Park sign at the American Museum of Science and Energy