

# Lions Club Project to Benefit the Manhattan Project National Historical Park

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of March 28, 2022)

I was first introduced to this project when approached for a map that showed all the building at the three government sites. I was immediately intrigued. As the project has matured I have kept track of progress and even invited to attend meetings to discuss details of the plans. Recently Bill Truex and I were talking about the project the idea of letting people know about it through publishing an article in Historically Speaking. Learn about this exciting new outdoor 3D map project as Bill Truex tells us about it.

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Imagine: bringing a key piece of World War II-era history to life for all who visit the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, located right here in Oak Ridge—especially for the visually impaired, blind and disabled—people who are too often left on the sidelines in our communities.

This is what the Oak Ridge Lions Club is developing in the form of an accessible 3D topographical table map of the Oak Ridge Reservation as it was in the mid 1940's. The map will be given to the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, and it will be located on the grounds of the Oak Ridge History Museum at the Midtown Community Center (102 Robertsville Road) in the heart of Oak Ridge.

The Lions have been working closely with the National Park Service, Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association, Department of Energy, and numerous others (including this columnist), to ensure that the design of the table map accurately includes the key features of the science and production sites (K-25, X-10, and Y-12), and tells the Oak Ridge story in the most effective way possible.

The Lions want to help all students visiting the Park and studying World War II history, appreciate the role the Manhattan Project played in the outcome of the war. This will help all visitors gain insight into this vital history and how it relates to Oak Ridge.

The Lions met initially with three potential vendors who are experienced in designing and building such projects, and all were enthusiastic about working on it. After in-depth discussions, one of the firms, Sculpture and Natural Science Exhibits, has been selected to continue planning the detailed design, sculpturing and fabrication of the table map.

The accompanying photos show two maps. One is a similar topographical display that was crafted for another National Park, showing how the Oak Ridge map would conceptually look. The other is a map of Oak Ridge showing the preliminary design concept for the actual local table map.

The tactile table map for the Oak Ridge project will afford visitors a means to orient themselves with the Oak Ridge area as it was in the latter years of WW II. It will also fulfill one of the Lions Clubs' core missions, which is to improve the quality of life for people who are blind or visually impaired. Visitors will not only learn about the key science and production sites but will also be able to feel the terrain and explore the layout of the area. Important sites and buildings will be designated with Braille and English labels.

Another benefit of a 3D display is that it will demonstrate how the sites were located apart from each other due to the local topography, to increase the safety of the workers and residents, and to provide security and secrecy—both vital to such a sensitive government effort. The envisioned design will also

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help visitors better understand the scope of the Manhattan Project and the challenge of managing and supporting a town of 75,000 at its peak.

The preliminary design is rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 4 feet by 10 feet; the bronze relief map will be installed on a base of cast concrete and weathered steel—a structure that will endure for many years. The base will be wheelchair accessible and ADA-compliant. As you can tell, the topographical map will not only be beautifully impressive, but also educational and informative, thus creating an iconic amenity for the local National Park as well as an enduring landmark for the citizens of Oak Ridge.

The total cost of the map is approximately \$100,000, with just over 70% of that amount required for the sculpture, fabrication, and foundry phases (each a complex process requiring specialized artistic and technical skills). The balance of the cost is for design work, site visits, delivery, constructing the map base, and installation.

When the project was discussed with representatives of Explore Oak Ridge, the local visitor's bureau, they confirmed that the historical tourism segment of the leisure travel industry is growing rapidly. Thus, the table map is an investment in attracting these visitors and making their experience more compelling, after which they will be more likely to recommend a visit to the Manhattan Project National Historical Park to their friends and family.

You might wonder why and how the Oak Ridge Lions Club (chartered in 1946) embarked on this project. When Lions Clubs International—made up of over 40,000 clubs world-wide—celebrated its centennial in 2017, it challenged all clubs to do something in and for their local community that would be a lasting contribution as well as a tribute to Lionism.

We chose the table map as a concrete way to (1) support the new Manhattan Project National Historical Park, just established in 2015; (2) further the Lions' mission of aiding visually impaired and blind people; and (3) contribute to the awareness and education of all about an important part of early Oak Ridge history.

We are excited to invite the community to join us in bringing the 3D table map idea to a beautiful, bronzed reality. If you, or a parent or other relative, or any special person in your life, is working, or has worked their career at any of the Oak Ridge facilities, this is a meaningful way to honor that service by supporting this project. Donations are welcome in any amount and needed as the fund-raising phase is now gearing up.

The Oak Ridge Lions Club is a participating member of the Smoky Mountain Lions charities, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and so all donations are fully tax deductible. All funds collected for this project are maintained in a separate dedicated account. Donors will be recognized with appropriate signage/markers at the map site, and arrangements can be made for substantial contributions to be paid over a multi-year period.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the project, you are welcome to contact Lion Bill Truex, Legacy Project Coordinator, on 865-643-5940 or at [billmairzy@tds.net](mailto:billmairzy@tds.net). If you are part of

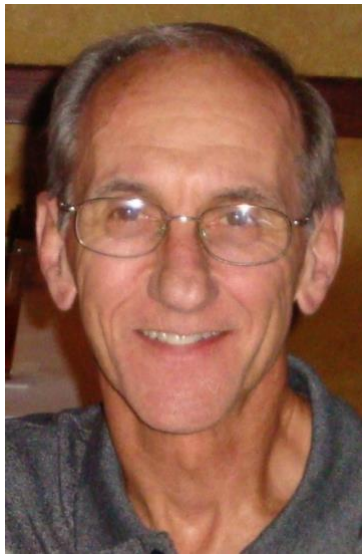
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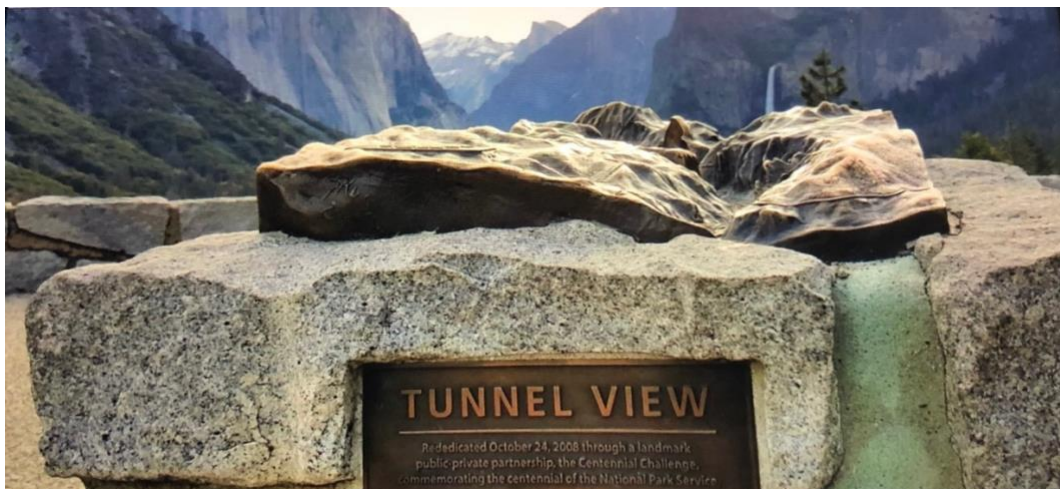
a group or organization whose members would like to learn more about the project, we would be glad to meet with them and share our exciting vision.

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Now there you have it! A plan to create an outdoor relief map of the Oak Ridge area that is attractive and accessible by all. Thank you, Bill Truex, for bringing this project to Historically Speaking readers.



Bill Truex



An example of a relief map of a portion of Yosemite National Park

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An Artist concept of how a portion of the Oak Ridge relief map would appear