

Behind The Fence – What was being built and the secrecy required

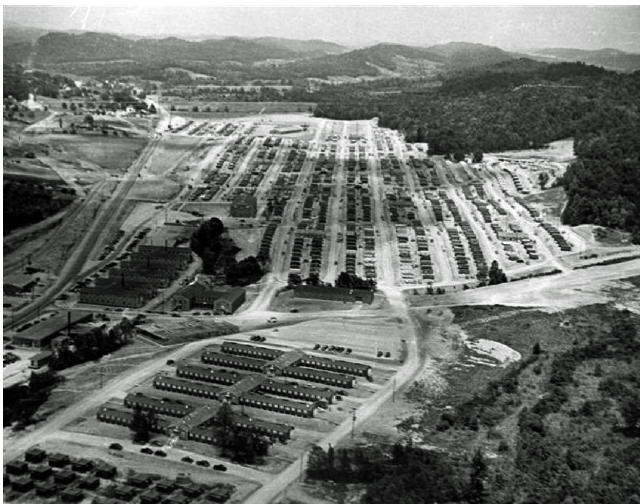
Clinton Engineering Works (C.E.W.) was separated into several different communities. It wasn't until after the war when the buses started going through the gates that people realized C.E.W. was more than just their particular housing area, shopping center, and war-time facility.

The division and segregation of each community was vital to the secrecy the military was enforcing in the city. The less the residents knew, the better. They had no way of knowing that there were four facilities being built. They had no way of knowing there was more than one town site, more than one movie theater, more than one school.

Happy Valley was the town located next to the K-25 Gaseous Diffusion Plant. This was more of a camp site than an actual town. The campsite was made up of hutments, trailers, dormitories, and barracks. A few farm houses remained on the land and were used by higher level officials.

While Happy Valley was situated near the K-25 site, Town Site was filled with workers who were busy building the Y-12 and X-10 plants. They had no way of knowing there was another Manhattan Project facility being built in the next valley.

Each plant had a secret code name, designed specifically to mean absolutely nothing. This was intentionally done so outsiders who might get inside the gates wouldn't know what was going on at each plant. The only plant name that had a tell-tell sign was the K-25 plant. The 25 was taken from the Uranium 235 that was being produced in the plant, and the K stood for Kellogg, the subsidiary of M.W. Kellogg Corporation that was engineering and constructing the building. By the time General Groves arrived in Oak Ridge and found out about this, he thought that changing the name would attract too much attention, so he left it as it was.



Stealing Secrets

General Leslie Groves had requested compartmentalization in all matters related to the Manhattan Project because he wanted to limit any knowledge of the project held by any individual so that person would not betray it to an enemy. By limiting discussion to a few top officials, this was possible. However, Groves' wishes were not completely followed. According to his biography, *Racing for the Bomb* by Robert S. Norris, Groves listed eight major objectives for secrecy:

- To keep knowledge from the Germans and the Japanese
- To keep knowledge from the Russians
- To keep as much knowledge as possible from all other nations, so that the US position after the war would be as strong as possible
- To keep knowledge from those who would interfere directly or indirectly with the progress of the work, such as Congress and various executive branch offices
- To limit discussion of the use of the bomb to a small group of officials
- To achieve military surprise when the bomb was used and thus gain the psychological effect
- To operate the program on a need-to-know basis by the use of compartmentalization.

Richard Feynman was one of the great young scientists working on the bomb at Los Alamos. Feynman took it upon himself to demonstrate the inadequacy of the security systems at Los Alamos. Because there was not much to do in the way of entertainment during down time, Feynman spent much of his free time playing practical jokes on his colleagues – breaking into offices and file cabinets and leaving notes for his friends to read. In addition, when he found holes in the fence, he made it a practice to sneak out, then walk back in through the gate until the guards realized he was only going one direction. Feynman often borrowed the car of his friend, Klaus Fuchs, so he could visit his ailing wife. Feynman would later learn that Fuchs was actually one of the employees who had been selling the secrets of Los Alamos. Fuchs, who was a German communist turned British citizen, would rendezvous with Russian spies at a meeting place in Santa Fe regularly from 1942 to 1945.

The full scope of infiltration by the Soviet Union is still not fully known, but we do know that after the war, several men and women were revealed as spies including Alan Nunn May, David Greenglass, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and Klaus Fuchs.

According to Groves, a spy like Greenglass would never have learned so many of the secrets of Los Alamos with his low-level clearance if he was not told those secrets by the security violators themselves.