

Manhattan Project National Historical Park

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In 1914, Detroit businessman Ashley Pond constructed a log cabin on the Pajarito Plateau in north-central New Mexico. The one-room structure served as the office for the Pajarito Club, a guest ranch for well-heeled city folk looking for a little Wild West adventure. Although the Pajarito Club was short-lived (it disbanded in 1916), Pond remained in the area and went on to found the Los Alamos Ranch School in 1917. The elite prep school offered classical education and rigorous outdoor activity for boys ages 12–18. But once more, Pond's business venture was fleeting. In 1942, the U.S. government purchased the school and launched Project Y (now Los Alamos National Laboratory) of the Manhattan Project in its stead. You know the rest.

But what about the cabin? Pond Cabin, as it's now called, is not only still standing, but the approximately 400-square-foot structure has amassed quite a bit of history under its corrugated metal roof. During the Manhattan Project, Italian physicist and Nobel laureate Emilio Segrè used the cabin for plutonium chemistry research that resulted in the surprising discovery that the Thin Man plutonium gun-type weapon design would

never work. As a result, the wartime Laboratory was extensively reorganized to develop an alternative: the incredibly complex Fat Man plutonium implosion-type weapon.

Today, Pond Cabin is one of nine Laboratory properties included in Manhattan Project National Historical Park (MPNHP), which was signed into law on November 10, 2015 and tells the story of America's nuclear weapons science, technology, and industry during World War II. The Los Alamos site is one of three locations for the park—the National Park Service's first multisite, multistate endeavor, which also includes key Manhattan Project facilities in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Hanford, Washington.

In Oak Ridge, for example, park-goers can tour the X-10 Graphite Reactor that produced small quantities of plutonium; in Hanford, guests are bussed to the B Reactor, which produced plutonium for the Trinity Test and the Fat Man bomb. In Los Alamos, however, the situation is a bit different because *none* of the designated park buildings are currently accessible to the public (they are located on sites still being used for nuclear weapons research)—and likely won't be for several years.

“How do we provide visitor access while also maintaining the kind of security and controls that are so important for active sites, as they are right now, for scientific discovery and research?” Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell asked during MPNHP's memorandum of agreement (MOA) signing with the DOE. “How do we maintain security and safety concerns for the public?”

The answer is: Very carefully.

Read the rest of the story [here](#).

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