

## How did the “Manhattan Project” get its name?

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asking about the name “Manhattan Project,” you are by no means alone. This is one of our most asked questions at the Bradbury. It’s nearly as common as, “Where are the bathrooms,” and “Where should we go for lunch?”

Colonel James Marshall established the Manhattan Project on the 18th floor of an office building at 270 Broadway in Manhattan in June of 1942. The Army Corps of Engineers worked out of it, and New York City was peppered with physics laboratories, including a major one at Columbia University. Much of the United States’ stockpile of uranium ore was in the city in warehouses or on docks, arriving from the Belgian Congo. This Army establishment was called the “Manhattan Engineer District” after its location.

The Army soon decided that New York City was too crowded and too close to the coast for privacy. The laboratories at Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Hanford, Washington; and Los Alamos were established in isolated places, far from urban centers, and away from the coast for security reasons. While the Manhattan office itself was closed down, the name stuck to the resulting locations as a whole.

The Army also operated a “United States Engineer District” (or possibly “Detachment”) that handled many support tasks around the country. Los Alamos wives are said to have not been thrilled to receive their government issued linens, all stamped “USED.” The Los Alamos Historical Museum does, in fact, have a handkerchief with a “USED” stencil on it.

*Gordon McDonough, Science Evangelist*

Occasionally questions are sent in to [edu-bsm@lanl.gov](mailto:edu-bsm@lanl.gov) or are left in our feedback box in the Museum.

We work to provide answers to these questions on [our blog](#) and the site where we list our [favorite questions and answers](#).



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