

Argonne National Laboratory



Leona Woods Marshall Libby

Leona was a young physicist who worked with Enrico Fermi at the University of Chicago. She was present when a nuclear chain reaction was proven possible with an experiment called Chicago Pile 1. She also spent some time working with plutonium at Hanford Engineer Works.

Leona Woods Marshall Libby

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Lise Meitner

Lise was an Austrian physicist who often worked with a scientist named Otto Hahn before she secretly moved to Sweden to escape Hitler's policies. Otto conducted experiments that split nuclei, but it was Lise and her nephew who figured out what happened and named the process fission. She declined a job working on the bomb at Los Alamos.

Lise Meitner

"Ida Noddack-Tacke (cropped)" by Unknown
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Ida Noddack

Ida was a chemist who was the first to suggest that nuclear fission was happening in Enrico Fermi's experiments. At the time, no one took her seriously or gave her credit for the idea.

She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times, but never won.

Ida Noddack

Los Alamos National Laboratory



Katherine "Kitty" Oppenheimer

Kitty was a botanist married to the scientific director of Los Alamos, J. Robert Oppenheimer. With Robert, she moved her family to New Mexico and for a time worked there testing blood for radiation. She found living at Los Alamos challenging.

Katherine "Kitty" Oppenheimer

Los Alamos National Laboratory



Lilli Hornig

Lilli was a chemist who worked on plutonium and explosives at Los Alamos. She was there during the Trinity test and afterwards signed a petition to not drop an atomic bomb on Japan.

She was born in Czechoslovakia but her family moved to America because her scientist father was threatened by the Nazis.

Lilli Hornig

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Maria Goeppert-Mayer

Maria was a physicist who worked at many universities, including the University of Chicago with Edward Teller and Enrico Fermi on nuclear physics. She later won a Nobel Peace Prize for describing details about nuclear structure.

Maria Goeppert-Mayer

DOE/Ed Westcott



Calutron Girls

The Calutron Girls at Oak Ridge were young women who operated the electromagnets called Calutrons at the Y-12 plant in Tennessee. This process enriched uranium for an atomic weapon, which was a secret from the women working the dials.

Calutron Girls

DOE



Laura Fermi

Laura Fermi was an author, historian, and wife of physicist Enrico Fermi. Laura and Enrico secretly moved their family from fascist Italy to America where they lived in many places, including Chicago and Los Alamos. Laura was not allowed to know what her husband was working on for the Manhattan Project until after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Laura Fermi



Nurses

Many women moved to Hanford, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos to work as nurses for the growing populations. This was seen as a way they could help the war effort. They helped test blood for radiation, did first aid, and cared for mothers and their babies who were born in these secret cities.

Nurses



Waitresses

Many women moved to the secret cities of Hanford, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos to work as waitresses, maids, or cooks. The jobs paid well, and workers were needed with so many men fighting in the war.

Waitresses

DOE/Ed Westcott



WAC

During WWII over 150,000 women served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Some of these women were sent to work at the secret cities of Hanford, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos. They did jobs such as scientist, cryptographer, telephone operator, clerk, and many others.

WAC

DOE



Secretaries

Many women moved to the secret cities of Hanford, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos to work as secretaries, typists, and technicians. The jobs paid well, and this was seen as a way to support the war effort.

Secretaries