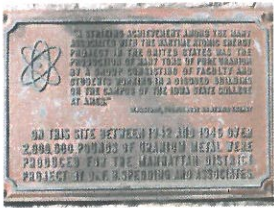


# The Register's Editorial: New national park should include ISU's role in A-bomb

The Register's Editorial Staff 12:22 a.m. CST December 20, 2014

[The Des Moines Register](#)



(Photo: Iowa State University)

One of the last items of business before Congress adjourned for the year was a seemingly peculiar bill authorizing the creation of a new national park to preserve the history of the atomic bomb.

National parks call to mind forests and historic battlefields, not musty science laboratories. But the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will give visitors the experience of seeing where the work was done in super secrecy during World War II. That project produced the first A-bombs that vaporized two cities in Japan in 1945.

The Manhattan Project put physicists, chemists, engineers, mathematicians and other scientists to work across the country on converting the newly discovered power of nuclear fission into the most destructive bomb the

world had ever known.

The national park will focus on three major sites at Los Alamos, N.M.; Oak Ridge, Tenn.; and Hanford, Wash. The project involved work in many other places across the country, however, including on the campus of what was then known as Iowa State College in Ames. In a small building near where the Food Science Building stands today, rare-earth chemistry expert Frank H. Spedding launched a project that developed a process for producing pure uranium cast in large ingots that dramatically reduced costs.

The Ames Project provided a third of the uranium used in the first successful self-sustaining chain reaction and controlled release of nuclear energy on Dec. 2, 1942, in a squash court at the University of Chicago. More than 2 million pounds of uranium were produced by the Ames scientists for the Manhattan Project using a process still in use today. The Ames Laboratory was established in 1947 by the Atomic Energy Commission to do research in chemical, materials, engineering, environmental, mathematical and physical sciences.

The product of the Manhattan Project was truly a weapon of mass destruction, but the story of its development is worth preserving and telling to future generations. Iowa's role in this project should somehow be included in the new national historic park.

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