

Y-12 and Stone & Webster

In my continuing search for the early documents authorizing Y-12's construction, the original contract W-7401-eng-13, issued on June 29, 1942, still evades me. I continue the search!

Bill Wilcox, the Oak Ridge City Historian, and retired Technical Director of both Y-12 and K-25, offered up a copy of *A Report to the People Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation in World War II*. He said it contained copies of two letters that I might want to share with you readers. In addition to the letters from Colonel Nichols and General Groves, the small black book contains a map of Oak Ridge dated September 27, 1945, prepared by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill Architect – Engineer and The Roane-Anderson Company.

The title of the map is, *Town of Oak Ridge – Tennessee, Manhattan District – Corps of Engineers* and the subtitle is *Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation Managers of Construction*. The rest of the 144 pages of the little book are devoted to the War Plants where 40 other products were manufactured that were designed and constructed by Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation. Uranium 235 was the 41st product listed.

The book opens with a quote from President Harry Truman on October 3, 1945, "The people of the United States know that the overwhelming power we have developed in this war is due in large measure to American science and American industry, consisting of management and labor."

In their opening paragraph, Stone & Webster states, "We have entitled this book 'A Report To The People', because the projects described were designed and built during World War II as part of America's effort to preserve the freedoms of the peoples of the world."

The two letters that Bill wanted me to share are:

Army Service Forces
United States Engineer Office
Manhattan District
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

6 August 1945

Mr. John R. Lotz,
Stone & Webster Engineering Corp.,
90 Broad Street,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Lotz:

Now that the Manhattan District project has proven its success and the atomic bomb has received the acclaim of press and radio, I wish to express the appreciation both of myself and of my staff for the contribution made by the Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation. No firm connected with the project has played a more effective part. The job just couldn't have been done without you.

The public is prone to hail the inventor and the final product and to overlook the engineering and construction that is essential if the idea of the former is to be translated into the latter. The engineering problems you faced were numerous, unique and staggeringly difficult, the time schedule only slightly short of impossible. We of the army appreciate your remarkable achievement and desire to make it of record.

It is indeed fortunate for the nation that the Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation has such a competent organization. Mr. R. T. Branch and Mr. A. C. Klein, Mr. F. R. Creedon and the others who did such a notable job deserve the nation's gratitude. Your own leadership was indispensable.

Please accept at this time my sincere congratulations and thanks for a job successfully done and efficiently done.

Sincerely,

K. D. Nichols,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
District Engineer

Here is the second letter Bill suggested I share:

WAR DEPARTMENT
P. O. Box 2610
Washington D C

18 December 1945

Mr. R. T. Branch, President
Stone & Webster Engineering Co., Inc.
90 Broad Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Branch:

This is our first Christmas at peace in five years. I wish to express my gratitude to you and through you to your employees and to your subcontractors and their employees.

The Manhattan Project played the vital part in the unexpected early ending of the war. By our united efforts victory was achieved much earlier than had been expected. Without our success many more American lives would have been lost in battle against the Japanese.

Cooperation by industry, labor, science, the Army and Navy and government as a whole was the true secret of our accomplishment. Only in America could so much have been achieved in so short a time. Only in America could there have been brought into action the intelligent cooperative efforts, of the tens of thousands, which were essential to the success of such a vast undertaking. Without American industry's unprecedented skill and efforts the Manhattan Project would not have succeeded.

Throughout the past three years I have made great demands on your company. No one outside the project can ever know how much we depended on you and the quality of your performance. Those of us who know will never forget.

To you, your subcontractors and all of your employees, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely yours,

L. R. Groves
Major General, USA

These two letters lend support to the vital role Stone & Webster played in the Manhattan Project. The rest of the book details 40 other products they helped provide during World War II. Y-12 was constructed by Stone & Webster.