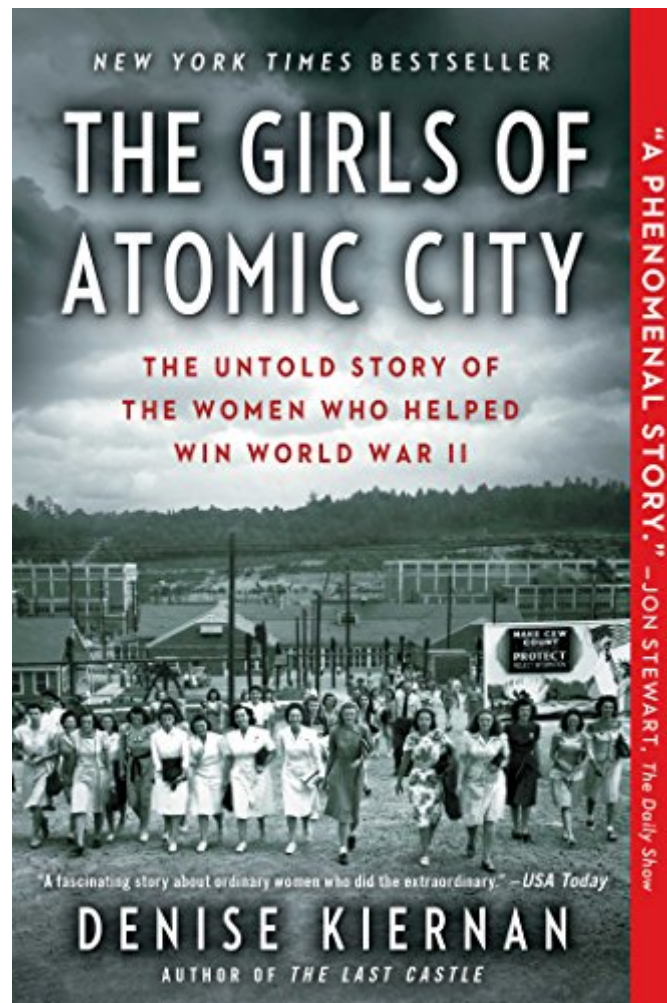




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# The Girls Of Atomic City: The Untold Story Of The Women Who Helped Win World War II



## Synopsis

Now a New York Times Bestseller! The incredible story of the young women of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, who unwittingly played a crucial role in one of the most significant moments in U.S. history. The Tennessee town of Oak Ridge was created from scratch in 1942. One of the Manhattan Project's secret cities, it didn't appear on any maps until 1949, and yet at the height of World War II it was using more electricity than New York City and was home to more than 75,000 people, many of them young women recruited from small towns across the South. Their jobs were shrouded in mystery, but they were buoyed by a sense of shared purpose, close friendships--and a surplus of handsome scientists and Army men! But against this vibrant wartime backdrop, a darker story was unfolding. The penalty for talking about their work--even the most innocuous details--was job loss and eviction. One woman was recruited to spy on her coworkers. They all knew something big was happening at Oak Ridge, but few could piece together the true nature of their work until the bomb "Little Boy" was dropped over Hiroshima, Japan, and the secret was out. The shocking revelation: the residents of Oak Ridge were enriching uranium for the atomic bomb. Though the young women originally believed they would leave Oak Ridge after the war, many met husbands there, made lifelong friends, and still call the seventy-year-old town home. The reverberations from their work there--work they didn't fully understand at the time--are still being felt today. In *The Girls of Atomic City*, Denise Kiernan traces the astonishing story of these unsung WWII workers through interviews with dozens of surviving women and other Oak Ridge residents. Like *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, this is history and science made fresh and vibrant--a beautifully told, deeply researched story that unfolds in a suspenseful and exciting way. As heard on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition*. One of Goodreads' Most Popular Books of March 2013. One of *Time*'s Editors' Picks for Best Books of the Month (History). One of *Time*'s Editors' Picks for Best Books of the Month (Nonfiction). One of *Time*'s Big Spring Books (History).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The other reviews on "The Girls of Atomic City" are wonderfully written. I agree with all the positive comments on the book's accurate reflection of the times, and I loved getting to know "the girls". I wanted to write a review because of a family connection! I'm 91 and have always been interested in keeping alive the stories of my relatives. I remember in 1943 my aunt came to tell my mother that she had accepted a very important job in Tennessee, but that she could not talk about it. She would be leaving soon and wanted to say goodbye. My aunt honored the code of silence about her work at Oak Ridge all her life. Long after the war we knew she had something to do with the project to build the atomic bomb, but I had no idea of the challenging reality she faced until reading the book on my Kindle. Many puzzle pieces about my aunt have now fallen into place. I am so grateful that the author decided to tell this story of how ordinary women put their country's needs ahead of their own. It is wonderful that their contribution is being recognized.

Denise Kiernan has succeeded in her new book, "The Girls of Atomic City," to tell the story of Oak Ridge, TN, during the Manhattan Project in a way that is unique and gives insight until now hidden. Writers who have focused on this story before have either featured the technical details or have focused on the overall and truly amazing accomplishment that ended a World War having already killed 54,000,000 people! A great story, however, told. But, Denise takes a much more intimate and personal approach to telling this amazing story in Oak Ridge (where 60% of the approximately \$2 billion "Project" was spent) using the eyes (and memories) of some of the working ladies who actually did the real work of separating uranium (without knowing it), checking the leaks in pipes (not knowing where the pipes went), keeping the statistical data, doing the hard work of a janitor, a

chemist (who got closest to the "product") and secretaries who saw documents they could never discuss. This approach results in a more realistic telling of the day to day activities in Oak Ridge and the government sites of X-10, Y-12, K-25 and S-50. The intrigue springs from every page! The stories of these nine ladies, (Helen, Colleen, Celia, Toni, Jane, Kattie, Virginia, Dot and Rosemary), each unique, yet each holding much in common, is bound together by Denise's wonderfully talented skill as a writer. She paints a composite picture of Oak Ridge and the Manhattan Project that will become a classic in the literature of this extraordinary historical accomplishment that has led to so many technological advances of the Nuclear Age. This amazing world changing experiment was begun using many women from various backgrounds as workers. The interviews and detailed memories of the lives Denise touched while researching this book have produced more than a mere book, she has created lasting relationships with the last of the living who actually experienced something many cannot imagine. They were personally involved in what has been labeled the most significant military industrial scientific breakthrough in the history of the world. Remember, these nine represent literally thousands of other women who worked just as diligently, just as courageously, to help win that awful war. Denise captures the grit, the determination and the resultant exuberance when their efforts produced that glorious peace stopping the killing. Reading "The Girls of Atomic City" is a delightful and spellbinding tale that were it not true would be fiction of the highest order, but it is real...these women lived it. Denise has captured it. The book is a must read for anyone who studies the Manhattan Project history or especially the history of Oak Ridge, TN, and who wants to share the insights of these women who were there when it happened.

The author, Denise Kiernan, wanted to share the untold story of some very brave women who helped build the atomic bomb in a secret town called Oak Ridge during WWII. None of the women knew what (except to work) they were going to be doing, but they were going to contribute to ending the war. Kiernan felt she could relate to the independent young women that first arrived at Oak Ridge. Kiernan's thesis was it didn't matter what job these women did, every single one of them was just as important as the other and they were all in the same boat. It was important to Kiernan to tell this piece of history as accurately as possible and to include as many of these women's experiences as possible. She felt this story could inspire other young women to go out on their own and know they could accomplish anything they want to. Before Kiernan went to personally interview some of the women of Oak Ridge, who still lived there, she researched as much as she could on the internet. She read as many Department of Energy reports and any other reports as she could get her hands on. There were also many trips to

the National Archives in Atlanta where most of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Manhattan Project documents were kept. I really feel the author gave me a clear picture of life at Oak Ridge. She added the science of the basic building of the Atomic Bomb and at the same time gave a personal and up close account of what it was like to work and live in Oak Ridge. She was also able to give the people of Oak Ridge the recognition they deserved for their part they played in history. I think the author's intended audience was anyone who enjoys reading about history, but more so to those who like the more personal side. I feel this would be a good read for any history buff. Women young and old would also enjoy the story of the women who worked and live in Oak Ridge.

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