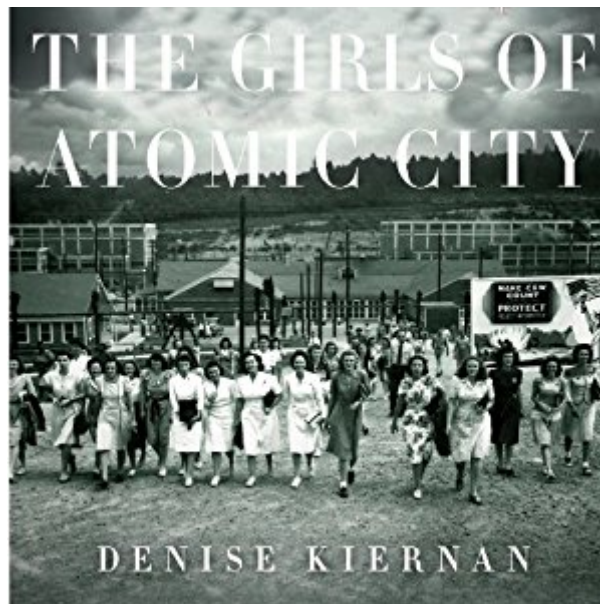


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# The Girls Of Atomic City: The Untold Story Of The Women Who Helped Win World War II



## Synopsis

At the height of World War II, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, was home to 75,000 residents, consuming more electricity than New York City. But to most of the world, the town did not exist. Thousands of civilians - many of them young women from small towns across the South - were recruited to this secret city, enticed by solid wages and the promise of war-ending work. Kept very much in the dark, few would ever guess the true nature of the tasks they performed each day in the hulking factories in the middle of the Appalachian Mountains. That is, until the end of the war - when Oak Ridge's secret was revealed. Drawing on the voices of the women who lived it - women who are now in their eighties and nineties - *The Girls of Atomic City* rescues a remarkable, forgotten chapter of American history from obscurity. Denise Kiernan captures the spirit of the times through these women: their pluck, their desire to contribute, and their enduring courage. Combining the grand-scale human drama of *The Worst Hard Time* with the intimate biography and often troubling science of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, *The Girls of Atomic City* is a lasting and important addition to our country's history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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.

I readily admit to my appalling lack of knowledge about WWII. When it comes to history my interest lies further back in time but I have found myself reading a fair bit about this war lately; it has become a popular period for writers of both fiction and non fiction. This particular book fascinated me because I knew absolutely nothing about the goings on in Oak Ridge, TN. I thought all of the atomic "stuff" was done in New Mexico. Stupid me. The US government went into Oak Ridge and bought up a huge swath of land and basically built a city into which hundreds of workers were brought to work on "the Project." Most of them were women as most of the men of the country were off fighting the war. They signed agreements that they would not talk about anything they did, saw or heard while there. They were provided housing, food, etc. It was a virtual enclosed world. Each employee had a badge allowing them entrance at certain points and access to certain areas. The book chronicles the stories of a representative number of the various women that worked there. Each woman's tale is told from how she came to Oak Ridge, to what she did and how she interacted with the other women in the complex. The stories are fascinating and I must say that I was pulled in by the foreword. Ms. Kiernan's writing is so inviting you don't feel you are reading a non-fiction book. The women's lives are so very compelling. I must admit that one of the things that fascinates me about WWII/post WWII society are the attitudes towards women. They were expected to get married, stay home, etc. Then the war came and the men went off to fight and the women did their part by going off to work and work well. Then the men came home and the women were supposed to forget all

they did and go back into the kitchen. Really?

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