

Gun Site

TA-8, Anchor West Site



TA-8, historically known as Anchor West Site, was used during World War II to conduct gun tests in support of the atomic bomb design known as “Little Boy.” The buildings at TA-8 included standard proving-ground facilities that were designed with a central control area for explosives operations. Three concrete, bombproof buildings were built into a ravine and were designed to be partially underground. Placing the buildings lower in the ravine allowed for gun emplacements to be positioned above the roof levels of the three buildings. This unique proving-ground layout lessened the hazards associated with using high-alloy gun tubes and with firing the tubes in free recoil. Gun Site was also the location where components of the “Little Boy” combat units were assembled before being shipped to the Pacific.

Historical Significance and Recognition

As the former location of “Little Boy” design, testing, and assembly, Gun Site has been recognized as nationally significant by the Atomic Heritage Foundation, the Energy Communities Alliance, and Congress. The Department of Energy has declared this site a Signature Facility of the Manhattan Project, and it has been formally declared eligible for the National Register of Historical Places. In addition, the Department of Interior has identified this site as a potential National Historic Landmark and a key facility for inclusion in the proposed Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Restoration Project

LANL has been conducting phased restoration work at Gun Site, with the goal of restoring the facility to its original Manhattan Project appearance. In November 2009, several dilapidated, post-war additions were removed: a building addition located on the dock at TA-8-1, and a green blast wall and entry area at TA-8-3. These additions were associated with high explosives and chemistry work (crystal production) at TA-8 that was unrelated to the wartime design, testing, and assembly of the “Little Boy” (gun-assembled) weapon. During the summer of 2012, additional restoration work was conducted at Gun Site, including substantial concrete repairs, loading dock and stairway repair and reconstruction, and vegetation removal and drainage improvement work in the earthen fill located on top of the three buildings.

