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2023-04-27 los alamos - compound to county pt I

This weekend, I found myself staying in Los Alamos for a volunteer role in which I judge children on the quality of their software. Clearly this is not the kind of opportunity I would turn down, but I also always take an excuse to drive back up the hill. I only lived in Los Alamos briefly, but it left a big impression. It's a unique place in many ways, born of a rather unusual history.

The role that Los Alamos as a place, Project Y and the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory as an institution, and more broadly the Manhattan Engineering Works played in World War II is widely documented. The Manhattan Project-era history of Los Alamos is actually surprisingly uninteresting to me, because few physical remnants of it exist in publicly accessible areas. There has been a concerted effort to offer more frequent public tours of places like Omega Canyon as part of the Manhattan Project National Historic Park, but the reality of DoE security requirements and complete paralysis of DoE outreach efforts during COVID mean that these have not made much forward progress.

Unfortunately, LANL remains littered with historic buildings---demarcated by a brown sign bearing an "H" placed by the laboratory historian---that no one other than employees will ever see. And employees don't tend to make much note, because when you work in the institution it seems rather unremarkable. The nuclear weapons program poses a fascinating historiographical puzzle that way, and I sometimes lament that the laser-focus of most nuclear history on the pre-1945 period leaves even many nuclear history enthusiasts oddly unaware of the evolution of DoE facilities in even the 1950s. While unfortunate, this blindness to the Cold War era is quite practical: once the arms race kicks in, the proportion of historical record that remains classified shoots steeply upwards.

This is all sort of a preamble to explain that I am not going to discuss the history of Los Alamos as it was founded, there are plenty of good sources on that. Instead, I'm going to get into some of the fine details of how Los Alamos became the place that it is today. I will also ponder as to whether or not Omega Bridge is, was, or could be rigged to explode, so stay tuned for that bit of urban legend.

There are aspects of the post-WWII story that ought to be fairly easy to research, though; areas of nuclear weapons installations that are now quite public. The formerly secret nuclear towns are, today, just towns. From a formal perspective these sites are Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Richland, Washington; and Los Alamos, New Mexico. Los Alamos is, in my opinion, the most interesting, and it's certainly the most the one I'm staying in right now, and so I want to talk a bit today about part of the nuclear story that you don't often hear: The transition of a secret military installation to a mostly (but not entirely) normal town. A mid-sized one, by New Mexico standards.

Los Alamos was originally created as a military installation, most of it hastily constructed of temporary buildings and reused facilities of the ranch school that had formerly occupied the site. Not just housing but all municipal services were managed by the military, and of course during WWII the fact that Los Alamos existed at all was a secret (although not an especially well-kept one in Santa Fe). Shortly after the war it became clear that this posed a problem. From our perspective, many years later, WWII might seem to crossfade seamlessly into the Cold War, but that was not the case at the time. The conclusion of WWII was seen sometimes as the conclusion of war entirely.

In the years shortly after the Japanese surrender, the War Department was tasked with a disarmament of incredible scale. The War Surplus Administration was tasked with most of the liquidation, and repurposed several military installations (including Sandia Army Base, which it shared tenuously with what would become Sandia National Laboratories) as storage yards to hold the numerous assets (including not just airplanes but entire buildings) that it was expected to auction off. The clearance of military assets declared excess after WWII took decades to run its course and lead to the phenomena of the military surplus store, which have now largely faded away as our modern military industrial complex (and particularly its inability to produce replacements for anything) has eliminated the concept of military surplus.

The Atomic Energy Commission, formed almost immediately after the closure of the war to assume responsibility for the former Manhattan Project, was not at all immune. Especially the late '40s and '50s, when the Missile Gap had not yet become a leading political issue, the AEC was expected to tighten its belt. This meant finding a way to economize the enormous industrial complex it had created, unwinding all of the costly special measures that had been justified as wartime expediciencies. One of these was the whole matter of having installed the Corps of Engineers as a functionally socialist administrative authority over entire towns.

In 1993, Los Alamos established a sister city relationship with Kremlyov, now called Sarov, and formerly a series of number-suffixed codenames typical of Soviet "closed cities." This unusual kinship of American military company town and Russian military company town is presumably rather strained by today's geopolitical events, but the sibling relationship of the cities is a profound one. Sarov is, to put it in simple terms, the Los Alamos of Russia. Los Alamos is still dominated (politically, culturally, and often physically) by a large government laboratory that employs most of its residents. Sarov is much the same. Sarov features rows of dull, government-constructed housing projects to which its residents were assigned. Los Alamos is much the same, except that today, those government housing complexes are sold and leased at rather exorbitant prices.

Here is a critical difference: while Russia has made some efforts towards normalizing its closed cities, the United States has eliminated them. Instead of a government installation, Los Alamos is today a democratically governed town that just happens to have an intensive dependence on the Department of Energy. It all started in 1949.

Most of what is now Los Alamos County was obtained by the Army by either transfer from other federal agencies (mostly the Forest Service, as Los Alamos is firmly within the Santa Fe National Forest) or purchase from the private holders. Construction of the laboratory began in late 1942. At this point in time, Los Alamos remained a steep, forested site on the border of two counties. The Army operated by the chain of command was not especially concerned with administrative boundaries. The entire area was simply considered to be a federal reservation---completely under the control of the federal government, which was not an unusual arrangement for military sites at the time.

From the beginning, Los Alamos enjoyed some very limited form of municipal government. A "town council," formed in 1943, consisted of seven members that served in an advisory role only. They represented the municipal needs of residents to the Army, the actual government of the installation.

Post-war, the federal enclave began to cause confusion [1]. Were Los Alamosans residents of New Mexico? During the Manhattan Project secrecy they had all semi-officially been considered residents of Santa Fe, but as Los Alamos came to fame they started to use their Los Alamos addresses on paperwork. Consequently, Los Alamosans were denied the right to vote, on account of their not residing within the State of New Mexico. This matter was thought resolved when the State Legislature specifically authorized Los Alamos residents to vote in state elections in 1947, but that decision didn't hold up to review by the New Mexico Supreme Court---a review prompted in part by a state court having refused to hear a Los Alamos divorce proceeding due to questions of jurisdiction, highlighting yet more problems with the federal situation. Adding insult to injury, the state Attorney General ruled that Los Alamosans would have to pay non-resident rates for hunting and fishing licenses. The legal environment was quite unsatisfactory and led to an escalating campaign sometimes referred to as "Civil Rights for Los Alamos."

In an effort to resolve the conflict, US Rep. Fernandez of New Mexico introduced HR 54 to the 81st congress. The bill was actually quite simple: it would "retrocede" the jurisdiction over Los Alamos to the state of New Mexico, conditional upon acceptance of jurisdiction by the state. The matter was seen as quite urgent and so HR 54 was rushed through to pass before the New Mexico legislature ended its own session. Almost simultaneously, State Senators Roach (hailing from Hot Springs, which would later be known as Truth or Consequences) and De Vargas (Española, Los Alamos's closest neighbor) introduced SB 110. This bill authorized the governor to accept jurisdiction over the area, and quickly after the passage of both pieces of legislation, Governor Mabry wrote to President Truman indicating the state's acceptance.

The normalization of Los Alamos proceeded at a pace that is hard to imagine in modern government. The next month, a duo of bills continuing the process reached Mabry's desk. One created a new category of county, notable mostly for the fact that its officials would receive no state salary. The second sliced the Los Alamos Reservation out of Santa Fe and Sandoval Counties and established Los Alamos County in the resulting hole. Hot on the heels of the new county, the state legislature authorized the incorporation of the City of Los Alamos. A slew of other bills addressed more minor matters ranging from regulation of bus service between Española and Los Alamos to, well, the fishing licenses.

One might wonder why Los Alamos was established as a county, instead of being merely a city in Santa Fe or Sandoval county. The reason, unsurprisingly, was a matter of politics: Los Alamos residents wanted representation at the state level, and state senators and representatives were allocated by county. The formation of a new county would guarantee positions in the state legislature, the mere incorporation of a city would not. There had been an effort towards incorporating a city starting in 1948, but the proposed city charter was set aside in favor of the county. Ultimately, the project to create the county determined the structure of both the county and city governments.

Over the course of April and May of 1949, the newborn County, and its School District elected their first councils. While still largely a military installation, Los Alamos now had a government other than the AEC and Corps of Engineers. The fact that the AEC site manager is virtually always quoted in newspaper articles about the elections reveals the ongoing importance of federal largess. Indeed, while Los Alamos residents now elected their own county government, the actual governance of the city remained largely unchanged: the municipal government was the AEC, advised (but *only* advised) by the town

council. In some senses, the county was now the municipal authority, but the AEC owned the entirety of the county, granting it superior power in many senses. The path to normalization would prove rocky, not least because of this city-county contradiction.

First, a legal issue relating to the state constitution prevented Los Alamos residents having a vote for what were ostensibly their state senator and representative in 1950. Even more, the creation of Los Alamos as a new type of county produced more problems than anticipated. In the years after 1949, numerous legal questions had to be resolved. The state legislator had to be asked to grant Los Alamos County the authority to pass ordinances: the state attorney general interpreted the 1949 act establishing it as providing only for the enforcement of state law, perhaps because the AEC was the de facto municipal authority. But as Los Alamos became less of a military installation, it seemed more important for it to have a body of municipal law outside of AEC policy.

In 1951, equipped by the state with the power of ordinances, Los Alamos County began to institute traffic law. This is not to say that Los Alamosans had been free to drive whatever speed they wanted, but town police had been enforcing regulations that were really more AEC rules of personnel conduct than laws. This was just one of the many small steps required to remove the AEC as the local authority, and the legal challenges of 1949-1951 paved the way for Los Alamos independence.

The operation of a town proved rather difficult, though, when considering that the town was directly interspersed with AEC offices and research facilities. First, the AEC had security concerns about what were now townsfolk, not necessarily laboratory personnel, wandering about. Second, the Corps of Engineers and AEC were rather explicitly looking to get out of the business of recreational facilities, roads, and even churches. In order to separate the operation of the laboratory from the operation of the town, they needed to be physically separated. The saying goes that good fences make good neighbors, but in Los Alamos it took a canyon.

I should explain, here, that the town of Los Alamos now consists of a series of mesas. Today, these are Los Alamos Mesa, North Mesa, and Barranca Mesa, tracking the town's expansion towards the north. Between the mesas are canyons, so steep that parts of them remain dimly lit during the day. The canyons were cut out of what was once a plateau by erosion, leaving the mesas behind. To the west a mountain ridge provided harder ground, stopping the progress of the expanding canyons. There, Diamond Drive skirts the ends of the canyons, connecting the mesas together. The overall layout is a bit like a hand, not in the sense of Michigan, but with separate fingers. The "palm," though, the west part of the city, is steep and rugged---as much so as the canyons in some places, limiting urban expansion.

Los Alamos Mesa, which we might call the eponymous mesa, is the oldest part of the town. During WWII, the core of both housing and laboratory operations shared the narrow protrusion, edging towards the cliffs as more space was needed. South of Los Alamos Mesa is Omega Canyon, and its great depths provided a level of isolation from the rest of the laboratory that made it a relatively safe place for experimentation. Los Alamos's first reactors operated there. As the lab expanded its nuclear and high explosive operations, both more facilities and more isolation were needed, prompting expansion both down canyons and to neighboring mesas. The lab expanded particularly to the south, onto South Mesa, across Omega Canyon from Los Alamos Mesa. South Mesa, already becoming a major part of the lab, was the perfect refuge for the reclusive installation.

In 1953, the lab up and moved. It was not so much a move as a replacement. Most of the original WWII structures on Los Alamos Mesa were already in poor or questionable condition, having been thrown together as temporary facilities for what was then a

temporary project. Nearly all laboratory facilities on Los Alamos Mesa were demolished, their users moving to newer buildings primarily on a nearby part of South Mesa known as Technical Area 3, or TA-3 [2]. Facilitating this move, a handsome arched bridge over Omega Canyon, known as Omega Bridge, was built in 1951 to provide an easy trip between the two mesas that were otherwise separated by a particularly steep and difficult crossing. From 1953 onward, Omega Bridge mostly (but not at all completely) separated the lab from what came to be called the townsite.

Los Alamos was not exactly made normal, though. Even after the separation of town and lab the townsite continued to be a secure area in the eyes of the AEC, which operated a checkpoint (depicted in one of the most famous Los Alamos photographs) on the "Hill Road" up the side of Los Alamos mesa where visitors had to show identification and a plausible justification for their entry---a "closed city," just like its Soviet counterparts. Oddly, the opening of Los Alamos to the general public came with little fanfare or even discussion. In 1957, the AEC announced an administrative decision to discontinue the checkpoint, allowing just anyone to drive up the hill. It solicited comments from residents and received only three, two for and one against. The main objection seemed to be that residents had become accustomed to the "gated community" life and regretted having to start locking their doors. One newspaper article snuck in a bit of a jab about how Los Alamosans would now have to fear unexpected visits by their in-laws, a comment that seemed to reflect the general view that opening Los Alamos was inevitable and not that important of an occasion.

At the same time, Los Alamos began to grow. The post-WWII stand-down did not last long, and as relations with the Soviet Union chilled into the Cold War, the AEC suddenly became a top priority once again. One of the clearest symbols of the post-war expansion of the lab is White Rock. Los Alamos county consists mostly of the lab, the townsite, and an area south of the lab known as White Rock. White Rock is sometimes considered a "resurrected ghost town." Originally constructed as a temporary camp for construction workers, White Rock was completely abandoned for most of a decade, during which all of the temporary structures were demolished. In the 1960s, increased staffing at the lab created a housing crunch in Los Alamos County, and a brand new White Rock was built on the same site.

White Rock is an odd place---seldom has the term "bedroom community" fit a town better. Los Alamos is small even today, but White Rock is much smaller, and almost purely residential. It's curiously suburban, considering how far it is from the nearest large urbanization. While it fits into small Los Alamos county with the townsite and is just as close to the lab by some measurements, White Rock is also pretty far away. The most direct road between White Rock and the townsite passes directly through the lab. Today, it is restricted to badged employees only, although that's a fairly recent situation. Even so, it has always been the case that Pajarito Road between the two towns was somewhat restricted and prone to closures. The next best route between the two means driving all the way back to "the Y" of highways 502 and 4, basically leaving Los Alamos county in order to drive back into it again. It's a ten mile trip over some fairly difficult terrain.

The matter of White Rock's isolation provides a good example of the tensions between public administration and dependence on the AEC. White Rock has never been incorporated, but fell under the governance of Los Alamos County. While the County was nominally independent throughout the '50s and '60s, it continued to rely on the lab and the AEC to provide most basic services. Residents paid utility bills to the AEC for power and water and, in case of emergency, called the AEC fire department.

In the '60s, a house in White Rock burned to the ground. The response by the AEC fire

department was very slow, a situation attributed both to the lack of a full staff at White Rock's small fire station and the fact that White Rock had never been connected to the lab's central fire alarm system (presumably a Gamewell fire telegraph network, common equipment at the time). The lack of a fire telegraph was compounded by some sort of dispute between White Rock residents and Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph. I have had a hard time finding more details on this (and you know it's the kind of thing I badly want to find details on), but the general situation seems to have been that there were very few telephone lines in White Rock and Mountain States had required exorbitant rates to install more.

This is a pretty typical matter of small-town politics, but here the politics were not between the residents and the county but between the residents, the county's barely teenage government, and the vast bureaucracy of a secretive agency of the executive branch. Town hall meetings were held, but progress was slow. There were many examples of disputes like this, often over rates, the promptness of repairs, and AEC's cooperation with new housing construction. The whole thing was very similar to another phenomenon of rural New Mexico politics, the various small towns and ranch houses that had received their running water (and sometimes electricity) from the railroad by consequence of their close proximity to a station or water tower. In both cases, residents seeking lower rates and modernized service found themselves fighting an uphill battle against a huge organization that saw them as a low priority, if not an outright expense.

These problems didn't exactly surprise anyone---the military has found itself in similar situations many times, and in some ways this *was* a military problem, Los Alamos having been willed into existence by General Leslie Groves. Nuclear weapons, though, had been divorced from the military by the creation of the AEC. Despite the military legacy, it was now a civilian operation, and the federal government was not keen to see the AEC build a "force support" and base operations organization that paralleled that of the military [3].

In 1955, congress passed the Atomic Energy Community Act. The Act ordered the AEC to begin to sell off their housing stock, transfer commercial, recreational, and religious property to outside companies and organizations, and hand off the operation of utilities to local governments or private providers. The goal of the AECA was to eliminate the AEC towns, encouraging residents to purchase the housing they occupied (by giving them priority status and a slight pricing discount) and incorporate governments or start organizations to assume control of public services. The number of words the act spends on the issue of government-owned churches highlights the extent to which the AEC had completely operated AEC towns, but under the AECA the AEC was set to wash its hands of the whole municipal government exercise within five years.

There was one catch: the AECA did not apply to Los Alamos. In its original form, it applied only to Richland, WA (at the Hanford site) and Oak Ridge, TN (at Site Y-12).

The trouble was this: not only residents of AEC towns but also the counties and states that contained them feared the consequences of an AEC withdrawal. Not only was the AEC responsible for just about all public operations, AEC towns were mostly found in remote areas where the cost of these services was quite high. This was true of Richland and Oak Ridge, but it was especially true of Los Alamos, which remains difficult for utilities to reach today. The end of AEC water and electrical service might be the end of water and electrical service at all, the residents being unable to afford to continue them.

The AECA tried to address this problem on a few fronts. First, it created a pool of funding from which the AEC would pay not only expenses related to the transfer but also "local assistance funding" for ten years. The amount of "local assistance funding" was

to be determined by the AEC, but it was specified that it should cover reasonable costs incurred by the newly "self-sufficient" communities. Tellingly, the Act says that in determining the payments the AEC should consider "the fiscal problems peculiar to the governmental entity by reason of the construction at the community as a single purpose national defense installation under emergency conditions." It was understood that AEC towns were not exactly financially efficient, and in most cases were left to resolve considerable infrastructure and housing problems resulting from the Army's emphasis on speed over sustainability.

The AECA even included an interesting sort of guarantee of a future for these towns. It stated that purchasers of housing from the AEC would be repaid from AEC funds if, at any point in the following fifteen years, the AEC failed to maintain certain levels of employment and population in those towns.

Still, for Los Alamos the problems were seen as too great. It took the Army to build Los Alamos and it just about kept the army to keep it running. I will likely write a follow-up post on the specific matter of water and electrical supply in Los Alamos, but consider that drinking water for Los Alamos had to be obtained from wells that were drilled 1,500 to 3,100 feet deep... *starting from the canyon floors*. The water produced by those wells was then pumped upwards of 1,000 feet uphill through rugged terrain. Just the cost of the electricity to operate the system was considerable.

Los Alamos's exclusion from the AECA did not last long, though. Likely the relative success of the program in Richland and Oak Ridge was encouraging, and in 1962 congress amended the AECA to add Los Alamos to the list. The enthusiasm was measured, though: most of the 5-year deadlines in the AECA were extended in the case of Los Alamos, with the deadline for transfer of utilities stretched to 1998.

The land transfer program was slow getting off the ground. It took until 1965 for the first sales of AEC-owned housing to begin, but that year many Los Alamos residents became homeowners rather than renters. The process was not entirely straightforward. Army housing built in Los Alamos consisted heavily of duplexes. The AECA stated that the "senior" resident of a duplex, typically the one who had lived there longer, had the priority right to purchase the whole building. In practice, this involved a frustrating paperwork process of obtaining an application from the AEC office and submitting it, then waiting to hear the AEC's determination of priority purchaser status, and then putting in another application to purchase and waiting yet longer.

Still, by early 1966 several hundred housing units had been sold, with a little more than ten additional sales being handled each day. With a total of over 1,500 units to sell the process would take most of the rest of the year, but the pace was still impressive considering the complexities of real estate transactions---especially with the federal government. In many cases the AEC was financing the sales, offering a mortgage backed by the AEC itself to the buyers, and the 15% discount against appraised value for the single-family units made it a hard deal to turn down. Many of these duplexes are still standing today, often with surprisingly ambitious additions.

The fervor of the housing sale process was accelerated by the housing crisis. It is difficult to find housing in Los Alamos today, and this has been true almost since Oppenheimer first selected the site. '60s reporting on the housing sale process is invariably accompanied by coverage of the general housing shortage and other projects intended to alleviate it, like a planned new apartment complex in White Rock, the demolition of a number of four-plex "Sundt" units to make room for more dense housing, and the planning of a new apartment complex on the edge of Los Alamos Mesa. The concept of developing the bottoms of some of the wider canyons as neighborhoods was already in

play at this point in time, and as we will see later this plan (and its challenges and controversies) has been an ongoing part of housing politics.

Urban transformation brought its inevitable controversies. During the sale process, residents of some Los Alamos homes (such as the "Denver Steel" homes found near the high school and named for their origin and steel construction) complained that the AEC was expecting similar prices for homes in their "more congested" area. AEC management rebutted to the newspaper with a set of statistics on the ratio of home sizes to lot areas, revealing that even in cramped Los Alamos residents enjoyed lot sizes that would make a downtown Albuquerque resident such as myself jealous [4].

The concern over increasing Los Alamos density was just one aspect of the urban planning confusion. The AEC's administration of the town had erred on the side of the pragmatic, and on account of the housing shortage the AEC continued its policy of growth even as the sales process was ongoing. On the other hand, the residents tended to favor preservation of the town's forested, green space studded nature---a wonder of mountainous northern New Mexico. One particular flashpoint was a large grassy lot near the Los Alamos Community Center (today the Fuller Lodge Art Center). The AEC platted the lot for commercial use, while the county ruled that the space should be reserved as a park. The controversy went on for months, with such contributions as a letter from the New Mexico Garden Clubs calling for preservation. The fact that the AEC owned the land gave it a lot of authority over the matter, but by the next year the process of selling the Community Center area, and the Community Center itself, to the county and private interests had already begun. Ultimately the AEC tended to pursue its original policies for as long as it owned a section of town, with priorities shifting to those of the county once an area had been transferred.

The AECA had an express goal of making AEC towns self-sufficient, while still being comfortable enough places to live that the AEC could readily attract staff. While this provided some built-in motive for the AEC to support the town, there remained inherent tensions between the interests of the bomb builders and those of a small town in northern New Mexico. The AEC, after all, was not exactly democratic. Despite the incorporation of the county, the people of Los Alamos still felt that they had a limited ability to actually influence policy. Besides, as the AEC began to sell off property, its surprisingly informal, ad-hoc authority in the town began to subside. The transfer of the schools to the ownership of the county school board in 1966 was taken as one major sign of the AEC's withdrawal from civil life, but that withdrawal left a rather significant hole: the city government.

The mid '60s made it clear that Los Alamos needed a city government, but given the politics of the area there was surprisingly little appetite towards incorporating Los Alamos as a city. It's always hard to divine the reasoning for these political decisions when they were made so long ago, but numerous newspaper articles and letters suggest one clear reason: Los Alamos county consisted almost entirely of the town of Los Alamos by population, except for White Rock. The residents of White Rock were already frustrated by the perceived lack of consideration they received, and incorporating Los Alamos to leave White Rock as "unincorporated Los Alamos County" seemed certain to worsen the problem. Besides, the AEC transfer program had to give land to an entity that existed, not one that might exist in the future, so essentially all public land and resources were being transferred to Los Alamos County. In many ways, such as the operation of parks and schools, the County was the municipal government. The movement of Los Alamos politics shifted away from city government entirely, and towards the amplification of the County's power. Just a few years later, this would lead to one of the more curious events in New Mexico's municipal law.

Let's save that for part II.

[1] Federal enclaves always do, and the concept of a "federal enclave" was mostly eliminated by SCOTUS in 1953, *Howard v. Commissioners*, a case dealing with another WWII war expedient federal installation. That one wasn't nuclear in nature, but instead a Navy ordnance plant in Louisville. The City of Louisville thought its employees ought to pay city taxes, the employees didn't want to, and so legal history was made. They had to pay the taxes.

[2] The practice of organizing land into "Technical Areas" comes from the Corps of Engineers and was historically seen at a number of military installations. The term "Technical Area" was originally intended to distinguish areas used for research and experimentation from cantonment areas, used mostly for personnel services and housing. Today, the convention has mostly faded from military use but is almost universal at nuclear weapons sites. Because renumbering TAs is seen as potentially confusing or at least distasteful, the TA numbers often reflect history more than geography, such as LANL being headquartered in TA-3. Sandia is headquartered in TA-1, but has no TA-2 at all, etc.

[3] Not many decades later, the military would also try to get out of the business of operating bases, significantly reducing the amount of military housing and privatizing the operation of what remained. The current state of most military bases suggests that the decision for the AEC to no longer provide housing to employees was probably the right one, despite the challenges it has created at Los Alamos today.

[4] My house doesn't actually even fit on my lot, a perennial cause of extra paperwork and frustrated surveyors. Fortunately most of Los Alamos was platted by the Corps of Engineers as part of the process of contracting housing construction, so the surveying situation is relatively straightforward.