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## Trane Company and the A-Bomb

The massive Manhattan Project to create the atomic bomb required contributions by many companies on the homefront. One of them was the Trane Company in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

James Trane started a family plumbing business in La Crosse in 1885. He was joined by his son, Reuben, who was a mechanical engineer. What set them apart from other plumbers was their creation of a low-pressure steam heating system.<sup>1</sup>

James, Reuben, and Stella Trane incorporated the Trane Company in 1913 as a heating and plumbing business.<sup>2</sup>

The company patented its first air conditioner in 1931. Seven years after that, Trane developed a new water chiller for air conditioning large buildings.<sup>3</sup>

During World War II, the Trane Company, along with many other manufacturers in the area, produced equipment that aided the war effort. By the end of 1942, 95 percent of the work that the 1,022 Trane employees produced was for war production.<sup>4</sup>

For example, Trane air conditioning units decreased the humidity from the air entering blast furnaces. This application regulated the humidity in blast furnaces and increased steel output by 10 percent.<sup>5</sup> The steel produced was also of better quality.<sup>6</sup>

The Trane contribution to the making of the atomic bomb was much more closely guarded.



(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 August 8, page 4)

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### Sources & Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> "Rich Heritage," *Trane Technologies*, 2019, <https://www.trane.com/commercial/north-america/us/en/about-us/our-history.html>.

<sup>2</sup> "Trane Firm Incorporates," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1913 April 5, page 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Trane Technologies*.

<sup>4</sup> "La Crosse At War," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1942 December 31, page 13.

<sup>5</sup> "Trane Blast Furnace Air Conditioning Units Speed Up Production Of Nation's Steel Mills," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1942 July 12, page 2.

<sup>6</sup> "Trane Plant Aids In U.S. Effort To Boost Quality Steel Production," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1942 February 23, page 1.