



The Experimental Breeder Reactor-1 in Idaho was the first to generate electricity from atomic energy.

With the restart of the Browns Ferry Unit 1 reactor in Alabama in 2007 and the current project to complete Watts Bar Unit 2 in Tennessee, Bechtel has played a key role in the renaissance of nuclear power in the United States. Not surprising, considering that the company helped invent the industry more than half a century ago.

Bechtel was involved in the design

of the Atomic Energy Commission's Van de Graaff nuclear accelerator at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 1948. That led to a government contract to build the Experimental Breeder Reactor-1 at an old naval proving ground in Idaho. The reactor was small by today's standards—only 100 kilowatts—but its success assured its place in history as the first reactor to generate electric

power from nuclear fission.

After Congress gave private companies the right to build and operate nuclear power plants in 1954, Bechtel embarked on a strategy to become the premier designer/builder for the nascent industry. Stephen Bechtel Sr., then president of the company, called it "an investment in technology" that would enable Bechtel

"to position ourselves in an industry that we were convinced was going to be very big."

Bechtel went on to design and/or build more than half of the nuclear power plants in the United States, including the largest—Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station near Phoenix, Arizona.