

OUR CENTURY

1941

AT A GLANCE

Ohio workers churn out war goods

At least until Dec. 7, World War II was good news for Cleveland. The Chamber of Commerce announced that a billion dollars in government contracts had been placed in Cleveland from June 1940 through December 1941. Cleveland had 43 more manufacturers than in 1940 and railroads moved 25 percent more tonnage. Residential construction to house the workers pouring into Cleveland added 7,270 units, costing \$46 million.

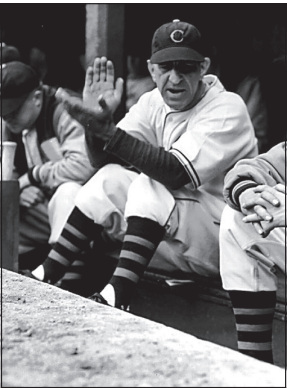
It was, the chamber announced, “the highest level of all time of industrial employment in Greater Cleveland,” surpassing the booming 1920s. While Ohio industrial employment rose 21 percent, payrolls were up 42 percent, reflecting higher wages. With full employment, Criminal Court received only 896 felony cases, barely half the 1,787 heard in 1932.

The drawback was that prices rose by 11 percent over 1940, with food up 19.5 percent. Coffee jumped from an average of 18.6 cents a pound to 24.3 cents. A pound of bacon cost 35.9 cents, up from 29.4, and a dozen eggs was 51.7 cents, up from 36.4.

When Common Pleas Judge Frank Lausche, a Slovenian-American, announced for mayor, every nationality group in the city swelled with pride. The “cosmopolitan” vote and Lausche’s oratory — he regularly moved himself and his audiences to tears — defeated Edward Blythin, Harold Burton’s chosen successor, by a record 50,000 votes.

Lausche began a 30-year reign of Democratic mayors, mostly ethnic, noted for honesty, frugality and independence from party Chairman Ray T. Miller.

Oscar Vitt was gone, to the relief of the Indians players. Roger Peckinpough, who had



Roger Peckinpough cheers on one of his boys.

managed the team from 1928 to midway through 1933, was back for a second tour. The team had added pitcher Jim Bagby Sr., son of one of the 1920 heroes. Still, the 1940 rebellion had taken something out of the team.

Bob Feller led the league for the third straight year in wins (25), complete games (28), innings pitched (343) and strikeouts (260), and outfielder Jeff Heath batted .340 with 24 home runs. But the team dropped below .500, finishing in a tie for fourth place.

The highlight of the season came July 17 when Joe DiMaggio brought his record 56-game hitting streak to the Stadium before 67,000 fans. He was robbed of hits twice by Ken Keltner on smashes down the third base line. On his last at-bat, he hit another smash at shortstop Lou Boudreau, who turned it into a double play.

After the season, Cy Slapnicka resigned as general manager for health reasons and Peckinpough was promoted to replace him. President Alva Bradley called reporters to a night press conference in a darkened Stadium on Nov. 25 to introduce the new manager. To their surprise, it was Boudreau, who, at 24, was the youngest in major league history. Events 12 days later would put many of the Indians in a different kind of uniform in 1942.

The Western Reserve Red Cats celebrated the New Year by defeating Arizona State 26-23 in the Sun Bowl at El Paso, Texas. This would be another banner season for Reserve, climaxed by a 26-6 victory over the Case Tech Rough Riders before 38,827 fans on Thanksgiving; it was the 50th meeting of the rivals. Reserve placed three players and Case two on the 11-member Associated Press All-Ohio team.

The Thanksgiving crowd was topped two days later when 46,686 fans turned out at the Stadium to for the 11th annual Plain Dealer Charity Game. The Collinwood Railroaders and Lincoln Presidents battled to a 12-12 tie to share the championship of the Senate, as the city league was called.

In contrast, the city’s National Football League team played its last game of the season Nov. 24 before what The Plain Dealer described as “5,000 frosted and mournful fans.” The Rams lost, 7-0, when tailback Parker Hall’s pass in the flat was picked off by a Chicago Cardinal end for a touchdown.

A WPA survey revealed that 42,543 dwelling units in Cuyahoga County — 13 percent of the county’s total — needed major repairs, had outside toilets or lacked running water, bathing facilities, furnaces or electricity. Worst of all were Tremont and the area from E. 22nd to E. 105th streets between Carnegie and Woodland avenues.

The Real Property Inventory called for “a wholesale program of rehabilitation and demolition as the answer to the social problems caused by bad housing and as a protection for the community’s economic investment.”

Mobilizing for war

Stunned by news of Pearl Harbor, Clevelanders respond in force

By Fred McGunagle

Some heard it on the New York Philharmonic broadcast, some during the Giants-Dodgers football game. Most got the word from shocked friends telling them to turn on their radio. They listened with a thrilled dread as announcers read bulletins that were sketchy and contradictory.

By Monday morning, Dec. 8, the situation was clearer. “JAPS WAR ON U.S., BRITAIN; BOMB HAWAII, PHILIPPINES; CONGRESS TO HEAR F.D.R.” said The Plain Dealer in its largest type. Thousands of downtown workers skipped lunch to crowd around loudspeakers and hear a solemn President Franklin D. Roosevelt say: “I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, Dec. 7, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire.”

Cleveland sprang into action. Safety Director Eliot Ness had put the city’s Civil Defense plan into effect Sunday afternoon. Police were sent to guard Muny Light and other city buildings. Only people with “legitimate business” were to be admitted to the airport. The new mayor, Frank Lausche, called an emergency City Council meeting to buy 20 air-raid sirens and 47 pieces of firefighting equipment.

The Naval Reserve posted guards around the Central Armory, across Lakeside Ave. from City Hall. Police were told to watch for suspicious people around defense plants. The Cleveland Automobile Club announced formation of a motor corps of 1,000 members available to evacuate civilians from stricken areas, transport medical workers and provide other defense services.

In contrast to America’s entry into World War I, there were no parades or patriotic rallies. But on the day after the attack, 570 men appeared at recruiting stations to enlist, and the Navy office announced it would remain open 24 hours a day. Cleveland Indians pitcher Bob Feller was among the first Navy enlistees.

City Council passed legislation putting the city on “war-time footing” and establishing blackout regulations. Suburbs quickly followed.



Admiral Ernest King: Local man named commander in chief of the U.S. fleet.

The Plain Dealer printed a Page One list of tips for good citizens in case of emergency: “If planes come over, stay where you are. Don’t make unnecessary telephone calls. Don’t run. Don’t scream. . . . Should the enemy use gas, go at once to the innermost room in your house. . . . If bombs start to fall near you, lie down. The safest place is under a good, stout table. . . . Answer tappings from rescue crews if you are trapped.”

On Dec. 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, which then declared war on them. Civil Defense officials announced a need for 27,000 air-raid wardens and called on World War I veterans to volunteer; 1,000 turned out for the first meeting.

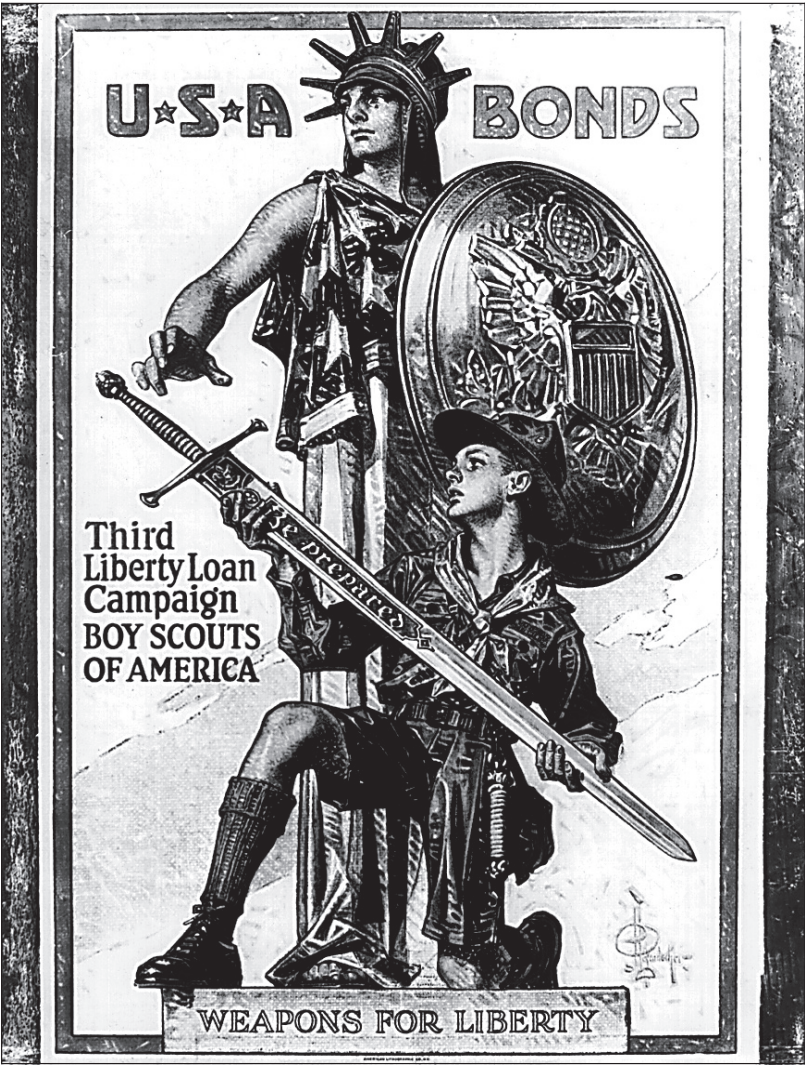
Hospital officials announced that medical emergency squads would be available around the clock for air raids and “emergencies arising from sabotage, fires, explosions and similar conditions.” They promised to set up 250 beds and cots in unused rooms for temporary care of injured people. University Hospitals issued a call for 200 volunteers to assist nurses in wards.

Sale of defense bonds and stamps jumped; the stamps could be pasted in a book and turned in for a bond when they totaled \$18.75. The chairman of the Ohio Defense Savings Committee called for volunteer



PLAIN DEALER FILE

President Franklin Roosevelt addresses Congress after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Even the Boy Scouts volunteered to do their duty for the war effort, which included helping sell war bonds.

speakers who would urge workers to sign up for savings bond payroll deductions. Four thousand Boy Scouts volunteered to train for whatever duties might help; Mayor Lausche told them, “You will be needed.”

County voters passed two levies for war relief by wide margins. The Red Cross called on civic and business leaders to support a million-dollar war fund campaign and on all to give blood “to save the lives of American soldiers and sailors.”

Ohioans’ chests swelled on Dec. 20 when Admiral Ernest King, who grew up in Lorain, was named commander in chief of the U.S. fleet. Congress passed a law requiring all men 18 to 64 to register with the Selective Service, with those 19 to 44 subject to military service.

Air-raid sirens sounded Dec. 21 from the roof of Central Police Station. The test had been well-publicized, but Ohio Bell, police and newspapers braced for frantic calls; there were none. As a result of the test, officials announced 86 sirens would be needed to cover the county.

Wartime boards took control of much of the economy. When the American Tobacco Co. refused to rescind a price increase for Lucky Strike cigarettes, the Office of Price

Administration announced a price ceiling that canceled the increase. The OPA also established temporary ceilings — soon to become permanent



Frank Lausche: Ethnic Clevelanders swelled with pride at his election.

— on wool, cotton and rayon textiles.

Roosevelt called labor and industry leaders to Washington to work out arbitration procedures for disputes under a no-strike policy. The OPA and local Civil Defense officials set up a committee to rule on landlord requests to raise rents above those of Jan. 1, 1940, which was retroactively declared “fair rent day.”

The Office of Production Management halted tire sales to all but those in essential services and set a limit of 919 tires to be sold in January, even for those essential services. Others would have to retread their old tires. The Plain Dealer warned readers to make sure their spare tires were locked securely in their trunks and their cars parked in safe places, because if a tire was stolen, there would be no replacement.

As 1941 ended, America was in retreat in the Pacific. Wake Island fell. The Japanese swarmed over the Philippines. On Dec. 30, U.S. forces abandoned Manila and Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s men fell back to Bataan for a last stand.

New Year’s Eve was more restrained than the year before. Horn-blowing revelers filled restaurants and hotel ballrooms, but others filled the city’s churches, praying for the boys overseas and the hundreds of thousands who would soon be joining them.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Feb. 13: German Gen. Erwin Rommel’s troops march into northern Africa.

April 17: Nazi troops invade Yugoslavia, quickly taking Belgrade.

May 27: The Royal Navy sinks the German warship Bismarck.

May 1: Orson Welles’ masterpiece “Citizen Kane” debuts in Hollywood.

June 20: German troops invade the Soviet Union.

Dec. 5: Facing bitter, wintry conditions and a determined Russian counterattack, Nazi troops, having come

within 20 miles of Moscow, begin retreating.

Dec. 7: Japanese planes bomb Pearl Harbor, killing more than 2,000 soldiers and destroying 19 ships and 200 aircraft.

Dec. 8: The United States declares war on Japan.

Born: Jesse Jackson, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Paul Simon, Faye Duna-way, Donna Shalala, Stokely Carmichael.

Died: Baseball great Lou Gehrig, Irish writer James Joyce, former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, British writer Virginia Woolf.