

OUR CENTURY

1942

AT A GLANCE

Demand for housing heats up with war

Business activity in Cleveland was 48 percent above prewar levels, the greatest increase among the 147 trading areas in the nation. The city paid the price in a housing crunch. The vacancy rate was 0.3 percent for units renting from \$20 to \$65 a month — within reach of war workers.

The opening in November of the gigantic Cleveland Bomber Plant (later the Chrysler and Cadillac Tank Plant, and now the International Exposition Center) drew even more workers from Appalachia and the South. The Metropolitan Housing Authority did its part by opening Carver Park and an extension of Outwaite Homes, and built such suburban developments as Euclid Homes, Lake Shore Village and Brooklyn Acres.

Civilian Defense started a registry of units available to war workers and called on homeowners to take in roomers and boarders. Zoning codes were ignored as tenements and single-family houses alike were cut up into smaller units, creating what would be postwar slums.

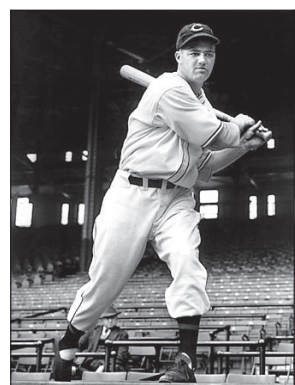
Tom L. Johnson's 40-year-old dream came true on April 29: The public transportation system came under municipal ownership. Cleveland City Council issued \$17 million in revenue bonds to buy the Cleveland Railway Co., which had been formed in 1910 by a forced merger of Johnson's municipal traction company and the private "Con Con."

The private company was happy to sell. Like other companies, it was losing employees to the draft. Rapidly rising ridership and parts shortages were putting a tremendous strain on its aging equipment — 770 street cars with 206 trailers, plus 425 buses and 29 trackless trolleys. To avoid scraping precious tires, bus drivers were ordered to stop away from the curb. The day the deal was completed, the government indicated it might "draft" fare boxes so the metal could be used for warplanes.

Defeating an attempt to make employees patronage appointees, council gave them Civil Service protection under the Utilities Department. Walter McCarter was put in charge at a salary of \$11,500 a year, \$1,000 less than he had made as operating vice president of the private company. A year later, control was moved to the Cleveland Transit Board, its members appointed by the mayor with council approval.

With tires and gasoline in desperately short supply, the city belatedly mourned the passing of the interurbans. The last line, the Lake Shore Electric, had ceased operations in 1938; the rights of way, which could have been rapid transit lines, had been sold off.

A tsunami-like wave, reported to be from 4 to 20 feet high, hit the Lake Erie shore from Bay Village to Geneva on June 1, sweeping seven people into the lake, where they drowned. Another 32 drowned on Dec. 3 when a winter storm separated the barge Cleveco from its tug, the Admiral, and both sank.



Ken Keltner

Lou Boudreau, the "boy manager," had two hits in the opening game and the Indians beat Detroit 5-2. But Bob Feller was in the Navy and Hal Trosky's migraine headaches had forced him to retire. For the season, Mel Harder was the top pitcher with 13 wins and Ken Keltner's .287 — four points higher than Boudreau — the team's top batting average. The Indians finished fourth.

The biggest crowd of the season at the Stadium — 62,094 — was for a July 7 game between the American League All-Stars, who had beaten the National League the day before, and a team of former major leaguers now in the service. The All-Stars knocked Feller out of the box and won 5-0.

The NFL Rams improved their record to 5-6, but the Western Reserve Red Cats were still Cleveland's football team, beating Case 25-0 on Thanksgiving before 15,441 at the Stadium.

The big game of the season, as usual, was two days later. The Lincoln Presidents defeated the Collinwood Railroaders 26-0 in The Plain Dealer Charity Game. The attendance of 28,077 was helped by the appearance of 29 high school marching bands.

Earlier in the year, Eliot Ness had been involved in a 4:30 a.m. hit-skip accident. He never was charged, but it marked the end of his usefulness in Cleveland. On April 30, he resigned as safety director to become national director of the Federal Social Protection Program, an agency combating venereal disease among servicemen.

The Plain Dealer celebrated its centennial with the publication of "The Plain Dealer — 100 Years in Cleveland" by Archer H. Shaw.

War Show a big hit at home



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Motorcycles, "peeps" and radio-equipped cavalry scout cars roar over the ground at 45 mph during preparations for the Army War Show at the Stadium. Motorcycles are equipped with "tommy guns," and the "peeps" are mounted with 50-caliber machine guns.

Scrap drives, war bond parades keep Clevelanders' minds off bad war news

By Fred McGunagle

The war was everywhere. It dominated the newspapers. It dominated daily life. Never was it closer than the weekend of Sept. 20-22, 1942.

The Army brought its traveling War Show to town to boost home-front morale. Clevelanders who paid 55 cents admission filled the Stadium nightly to watch 2,000 soldiers shoot off 1½ tons of gunpowder.

The show began at sundown with Retreat as the Stars and Stripes were lowered. Then came exhibitions of close-order drill and calisthenics. Medics and engineers, respectively, ran out to set up a first-aid station and a pontoon bridge under combat conditions. Cavalry horses charged thrillingly across the Stadium turf.

Tanks plunged off ramps to crush junked cars like eggshells. Tank destroyers raced out to engage the tanks in a battle. Infantrymen charged a tree-studded Japanese stronghold at the north end of the field. Noise and smoke filled the Stadium as soldiers fell and medics dashed out to treat them. The field artillery turned the night into a deafening roar. Finally, the Yanks were victorious and the American flag replaced the Rising Sun and the band played the "Star-Spangled Banner."

In the light of day Saturday, the war was less dramatic but still inescapable. The front page told of house-to-house battles in Stalingrad, Allied forces moving close to Tunis, Flying Fortresses bombing a Japanese fleet near Guadalcanal, the Japanese overrunning Burma.

The local and national news was all war, too. The War Production Board announced a house-to-house and farm-to-farm canvas for scrap, asking residents to save old bathtubs, skid chains and anything else that could be melted down to make bombs. A war scrap pile mounted on Public Square. Alexander Winton contributed a prized 1896 car.

With all available raw materials diverted to the military, there were shortages of everything. Dyke School of Commerce and Spencerian College merged because they no longer could get enough typewriters for two colleges. With tires unavailable, gasoline rationed and buses jammed, many Alcoa workers were riding bicycles to the Harvard Ave. plant.

As the weekend continued, Chester Koch, the city's coordinator of patriotic activities, urged high school bands to play for the hundreds of men marching off to induction stations daily. With overtime piling up at defense plants, the War Manpower Board sent letters to men with "critical skills," telling them to get defense jobs or be drafted; nonessential companies feared they would be forced out of business. The U.S. Civil Service Commission started programs to train women for defense work.

The Post Office announced new restrictions: Official mail and V-mail (microfilmed letters to and from the troops) would get priority. The Blue



Chester J. Koch, Cleveland director of patriotic activities, in 1984.

Star Mothers opened a downtown canteen for servicemen. Seven hundred air-raid wardens, auxiliary police and firemen conducted the first dim-out of the Parma-North Royalton area, having made advance visits to alert the farmers.

War news filled almost every page of the Sunday Plain Dealer, especially the page devoted to military promotions and lists of the previous day's inductees. On the business pages, Chevrolet dealers were meeting to discuss how, with no new cars to sell, they could make their customers' old cars last through the war. Building permits were up in the city but down in the suburbs, where prices were too high for builders to qualify under regulations for obtaining supplies.

On the society pages, brides were wedding freshly commissioned lieutenants and ensigns, and the Daughters of the American Revolution planned blood drives and war bond drives. On the travel page, the director of the Office of Defense Transpor-



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Sgt. Charles Young and Hazel Lee examine a cannon on Public Square. Cleveland's mayor wanted the cannon and others scrapped for war armaments.

tation said pleasure travel was allowable as long as it didn't interfere with troop movements.

On the food pages, Helen Robertson advised housewives that now was the time to can tomatoes, pears, green peppers and squash. Mayor Frank Lausche said he would shun the Public Hall convention of the pac-

ifist Jehovah Witnesses and go to the War Show instead. (A Witnesses meeting in Klamath Falls, Ore., the same weekend touched off a riot.)

Most tellingly, the war showed up on the obituary page, where young Cleveland servicemen were prominent among their elders.

When the last War Show was over, the troops packed up and moved from the lakefront to the next city, leaving the headlines to the real bombs and bullets. Gradually, the news was getting better. The United States no longer was retreating in the Pacific. In June, the Navy had turned back a giant Japanese fleet at Midway with heavy losses. Marines fought their way hand-to-hand through the jungles of Guadalcanal, the first step on the long road back from Pearl Harbor.

In November, a largely U.S. force invaded North Africa. As the year wore on, the British stopped Gen. Erwin Rommel's Panzers at El Alamein, short of Cairo and the Suez Canal, and German troops also bogged down in the Russian snows, unable to dislodge the defenders of Stalingrad.

It was, as Churchill had said of the North Africa invasion, "not the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

During a war bond parade in May 1942, a float from the National Youth Administration of Ohio showed a girl and boy using welding equipment.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 20: Nazi leaders meet in Berlin to develop plans for "the final solution."

Feb. 15: Japanese troops capture Singapore.

March 12: President Franklin Roosevelt orders Gen. Douglas MacArthur and his troops to retreat from the Philippines. "I shall return," MacArthur promises.

April 14: Gen. James Doolittle and leads aircraft carrier-borne bombers on a surprise raid over Tokyo.

June 7: The fleet headed by Adm. Chester Nimitz defeats the Japanese in the battle of Midway.

June 25: Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower assumes command of U.S. forces in Europe.

Nov. 4: British troops led by Gen. Bernard Montgomery rout Germans under Field Marshall Erwin Rommel during fierce desert fighting in western Egypt.

Dec. 2: Scientists at the University of Chicago achieve the first controlled nuclear chain reaction, the first step toward building an atomic bomb.

Born: Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali), Barbra Streisand, Harrison Ford, Paul McCartney, Moammar Gadhafi, Martin Scorsese, Jimi Hendrix.

Died: Boer War Gen. James Hertzog, actor John Barrymore, songwriter and playwright George M. Cohan.