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Sentinel

Porter Historical Society presents lowdown on LOOW during World War II

The latest exhibition of Town of Porter Historical Society's museum in Youngstown unveils some military secrets about the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works' role during World War II. Better known under its abbreviation, LOOW, the 7,500-acre site between Youngstown, Ransomville and Lewiston was one of the largest sites supporting war activities in the country.

"This is known to many of the local people, especially the farmers who had their land seized by the federal government in 1942," said Mary Ann Rolland, president of the society. "But not many others appreciate the activities that went on here."

A full "city" of buildings, built to look like a village and farming community to prevent discovery from the enemy, grew up during 1942. During that time, LOOW contained 500 buildings, exclusive of temporary structures temporary structures, that were actively producing TNT munitions for the war effort.

The site also had its own power plant, water supply, fire department

and well-equipped hospital. After only nine months, TNT production at LOOW ceased, and much of the labor force as well as water supply equipment and piping were transferred to Oak Ridge, TN. The LOOW plants eventually closed, due to newer technology and excess production across the country.

The museum's display draws on recently declassified military aerial photos, arranged in a panoramic manner, showing sights previously only known to the few who were authorized to work at LOOW.

"These photos bring a whole new perspective to this effort, when you see the magnitude of this endeavor that grew in a few months from the farms and orchards," said Ann Roberts.

The display also includes a collection of *LoowDown* magazines from the 1942/43 period of operation. These samples of employee weekly newsletters for the LOOW employees give fascinating insight into which helps to shed light on the organizational efforts mounted as part of the World War II domestic campaign of the war effort.

Many long-time Western New York family names can be discovered in these employee communication documents.

"It is interesting to see how time has erased nearly all of this extensive complex, where there were streets, buildings, water and sewage utilities throughout," Roberts said.

The federal government still maintains the Niagara Falls Storage Site, which contains half of the world's mined radium 226, a by-product of the atomic bomb projects. But much of the area is now back in private hands, with firms like Chemical Waste Management and Modern Corporation operating on the site.

The public is invited to examine these unique photos and documentation from the war era, until the exhibit closes on June 5. The Town of Porter Historical Museum is on the second floor of the Youngstown Village Hall, in the red brick school at 240 Lockport St.

For more information call 745-1271.