# The Saga of Plum Brook Ordnance Works As a World War

Vol. 1, No. 9 —Final Edition— August 18, 1945

Army-Navy "E"
April 3, 1943

1st White Star
November 6, 1943

2nd White Star
September 9, 1944

3rd White Star
March 17, 1945

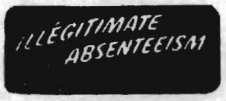
THE PLUM BROOK NEWS

*Published in the interest of the men and women of Plum Brook Ordnance Works, Sandusky, Ohio, by the Operating Contractor—Trojan Powder Company, Allentown, Pa.*

W. H. Evans . . . Editor

Offices: Building One Telephone: Extension 3256

## You: Plum Brook Men and Women, Helped MacArthur Keep Date!




**This little "cut" was carried in most issues of the NEWS the last two years in the fight against "Illegitimate Absenteeism."**

## Auld Lang Syne!

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,*
*And never brought to min'?*
*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,*
*And days of auld lang syne?*
—Robert Burns.

Should "auld acquaintance" be forgotten? Let's hope not! More, we *know* it will not be!

Through the dark days of the war, through the war-weary years, through spring, summer, fall and winter we ate and worked together. On many a night we had fun and relaxation together. Friendships, solid friendships were brought into being—never to be severed, never to be forgotten.

All over Plum Brook this week were ample evidences that many friendships have been made that will endure for life . . . no matter where each one goes his separate way. There may have been times when we tried one another, when tempers ran short, when we griped and behaved like any healthy G.I.Joe or American . . . or . . . for that matter . . . any human being. Out of all this rubbing elbows, though, came final understanding. Out of it all came a strong and deeply etched desire to want to see again the oher fellow in the days to come.

"Auld acquaintance" will not be forgotten.

## TNT --- Alpha And Omega

Having helped to produce a major part of the explosives used in the great war just ended, you have, and will have, always, the right to be proud of the part you played in winning the war. More, Plum Brookians can always take added pride in remembering that the last shots fired, the last bombs dropped on Honshu and other Jap-occupied territory, contained TNT. It was, then, TNT from the beginning and right up to the last round. In the days and years to come, when you are asked what you did during the war against the dictators, there will be no need for detailed explanation about some small item or part of a thousand and one parts that also helped to win the war. Just say . . . and say with excusable pride . . . "TNT!" P.S.: This doesn't mean that we are minimizing the part also played by both DNT and Pentolite. It is just that the lay world thinks today of all explosives in terms of the abbreviation "TNT."

## PLUM BROOK'S HISTORIC MARCH 24, 1945

**This picture was taken Saturday, March 24, 1945, when 122 days without lost-time accidents had been accumulated, thus setting a world's record for government-owned, contractor-operated, high explosives plants.**

## Plum Brook Administrative Officials

**Major J. H. Eliott**
**Present Commanding Officer**
**Plum Brook Ordnance Works**

**J. B. Bronstein**
**Vice-President And**
**General Manager**
**Trojan Powder Company**

**Col. J. F. Rodenhauser**
**Plum Brook's First**
**Commanding Officer**

**J. J. McIntire**
**Assistant General Manager**
**Trojan Powder Company**

**Lt. Col. J. Robert Fisher**
**Plum Brook's Third**
**Commanding Officer**

**T. L. O'Shea**
**Works Manager**
**Trojan Powder Company**

**Major L. K. Kalimyer**
**Plum Brook's Second**
**Commanding Officer**

**H. W. Tutchings**
**Assistant Works Manager**
**Trojan Powder Company**

## Saga of Plum Brook---1941-1945

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As these lines are written, Plum Brook is almost as quiet and as peaceful as the day, over four years ago, when ground was broken for the mushrooming of this great plant.

From the studios in Communications are coming stirring martial airs and patriotic songs that quicken the beat of one's heart and put a lump in the throat. Outside our Building One window, what seems like a thousand birds are throating a medley of songs just as if the feathered songsters knew that peace had come at last to the world of men.

Up on A Area hill, the houses and recovery buildings are still and, apparently, lifeless. Against a gloriously blue sky a plane is winging westward. Waving majestically on the flagstaff is Old Glory. Waving too are colorful emblems of merit and achievement—the Army-Navy "E" burgee with three white stars af-

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# Two High-Explosives, Major, Facility Comes To a Close

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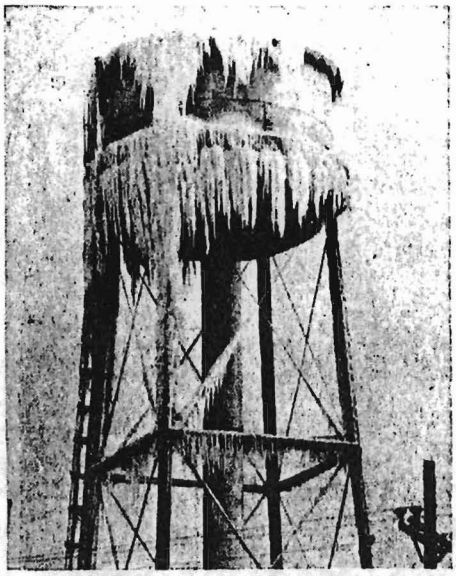
### ICICLES IN 1944-45 WINTER



From 110-foot water tower, near Powerhouse One, hung 16-foot long icicles during January, 1945. Safety bureau took the usual . . . and extra . . . precautions.

Plum Brook Saga—Continued

fixed, and the Minute Man blue banner.

Peace has settled over Plum Brook and its 10,000 acres. Peace has settled over an anguished world. The men and women who have labored here, keeping faith with the men on the far-flung ramparts of sea, land and air, dare to say "I have no regrets. I did my best." Because we dare to say that, we have rightful cause to feel that we have won the nod of approval of all those who depended upon us here—from the first round at Pearl Harbor that shocked the world, to the last round that was dropped on the mainland of the Japanese empire. Through faith and work, by patience and unity of purpose, by tolerance and understanding, we travelled the circuitous and tortuous road, ever upward and onward, to final Victory! With Victory achieved and Peace at hand at last, it is for us to go onward still, facing the problems of the future as we faced the future in the darkest days of the last four years, facing with sanguine body, mind and spirit the horizons in the kaleidoscopic future.

Plum Brook Beginning

That Plum Brook was located here and built on time is the result of the perspicacity of men connected with the War Department. The trend in Europe and in Asia fooled them not and failed to catch them asleep. While the hurried construction of Plum Brook was a miracle of American ability, time and life would have been lost had not the far-seeing minds of the War Department moved before the Axis descended upon us—as they eventually did.

Thousands of men were working here nightly four years ago this time. An industrial empire was being born and given life. Construction was not yet completed when the Japanese attacked us at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. The cry for explosives went up. Almost before the very roofs of buildings had been placed, War deparment and the operator, Trojan Powder Company, were teaming up to produce the sorely-needed explosives for our inadequately equipped Armed Forces. The start of operations by Trojan Powder Company brought in thousands of men who added to the thousands already here for the construction phase. Everything had to be done in a hurry. There was no

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### THE LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE

It's a familiar landmark to all who have traveled Fox and Taylor Roads. The school was built about 66 years ago.

## INSURANCE CONVERTIBLE

Employees who carry group insurance under the plan in effect here are reminded that, upon severance of employment here, the insurance policy is cancelled. The employee may, however, apply for one of the regular policies available through Aetna Life Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut, at regular rates and WITHOUT MEDICAL EXAMINATION. Application for such a policy must be made within 31 days from time of leaving employ of Trojan Powder Company. For any further information, contact the Insurance Claims section, Building One, at once.

## THE PIN . . . OF EXCELLENCE!

Noticeable around Plum Brook last Wednesday morning was the number of "E" pins worn on the garments of both male and female employees.

The facial expressions that told of deep happiness over news of the end of hostilities were matched by pride in the little pin that men and women had won from their government because of continued excellence and outstanding performance on the production lines.

It was clear that the real significance of the pin had come home to all and sundry. It was equally clear that all will treasure it in the days and years to come as a symbol of service to country and of keeping faith with the members of the Armed Forces all over the world.

## ERIE COUNTY HOSPITABLE—COOPERATIVE

The war years, especially for those at Plum Brook who had come from out of town, were made more comfortable and pleasant because of the fine spirit of hospitality and cooperation shown by the peoples and organizations of the communities surrounding Plum Brook.

There was always a splendid spirit of understanding, helpfulness and cooperation from the municipal bodies. The fine people who opened their homes and accommodated men and women workers contributed to the success of the facility here more than they realize. The chambers of commerce and other business organizations, the numerous service clubs and civic, fraternal and patriotic bodies, the churches and the schools all opened their doors and hung up the welcome sign. The merchants who remained open on pay-day periods and honored workers' checks are to be remembered for their spirit of cooperation. The attitude of the school authorities in making available the use of their recreational facilities to workers here was most commendable and conducive to a maintenance of morale. The ready and unstinting praise given by leaders in various endeavors and fields throughout Erie County was always deeply appreciated here by the men and women who make possible the achievements for which recognition and praise were forthcoming.

Hundreds of workers will return to their old homes in various parts of this great country with, we dare say, an oft-time nostalgic feeling for "Vacationland."

### THE OLD WINDMILL

The old windmill we'll all remember — in the field north of Taylor Road.

Plum Brook Saga—Continued

time to lose—with the Germans coming westward and the Japs sweeping through the Pacific and threatening to land on the Pacific coast and dictate the terms of our surrender in the White House. But this is America, a nation of free men and women. With our backs to the wall, but with a sudden surge of strength and virility, with unity of purpose and uncunquerable spirit, we met the challenge . . . in what we were to call the Plum Brook way which . . . after all . . . was, is and always will be the American way!

With a plant designed, before the war, to produce a certain quantity of explosives, we not only met those specified schedules on time but, later, doubled and tripled our output and the record—of which all men and women here can be proud in the years to come—is nearly a billion pounds of explosives—TNT, DNT and Pentolite. Without the wonderful spirit manifested by the men and women here, that magnificent record could not have been achieved. The big guns on our battlships, the guns in our tanks, the tin fish in our submarines, the bombs that dropped through open hays—all would have been useless and duds without the explosives the men and women made here and, of course, elsewhere. Someone, during the last four years, said that "TNT" meant "Today Not Tomorrow." That was, of course, facetious, but it was a mighty slogan and in all respects it was true because Plum Brook did make and deliver TNT and other explosives on schedule throughout the trying days.

Attending the staggering production here was our program of Safety. All will remember the World's record that was established in March of this year, a record for government-owned, contractor-operated high explosives plants. We can always recall with pride, too, the second-place award in the year's contest conducted jointly by Ordnance and National Safety Council. And a spot on the Honor Roll of National Safety Council. Because we worked safely, our government and Armed Forces profited by a record of no loss in production. And because we worked safely, we face the years ahead of us able to make a living, able to discharge our obligations to our family and loved ones. The response of Plum Brook men and women to the appeals and exhortations of the Safety bureau helped to contribute to the record made by the entire explosives industry which, statistics prove, is second only as a safe place to work, to the communications industry. All of us have been subject to an intense and intelligent safety program of education and understanding. For the rest of our lives we shall be guided by the commonsense rules and regulations that became part and parcel of our daily

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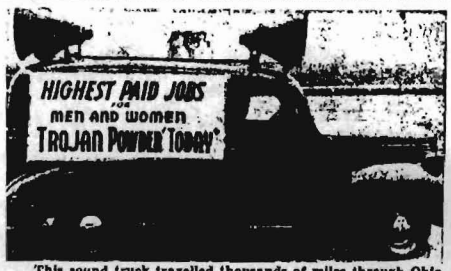
### RECRUITING SOUND TRUCK ATTRACTED MANY




This sound truck travelled thousands of miles through Ohio and Kentucky to recruit urgently-needed manpower during the summer and fall of 1944

# Most of Us Spent Our First and Last Moments In Building One

**Plum Brook Saga—Continued**

work-life and even our at-home conduct and habits. No longer, to most of us, will the subject of Safety he just "one of those things." It will be a serious subject. We'll look upon it as an old friend—a Plum Brook friend. And we shall be the better and wiser for it.

When we had got our production problems smoothed out and the precious poundage was being shipped to the loading plants and war fronts and the safety meetings had been organized and both production and safety practices were going hand in hand, we were called upon by Government to invest in war bonds, in gilt-edged securities that would circumvent inflation, they would give us a financial nest-egg for the days to come. In March of 1942 we invented a slogan: "We're buying a flying fortress." We organized our own workers' committee and we bought enough bonds and more to buy that flying fortress. In fact, we kept on buying more bonds and more bonds. We bought many flying fortresses after that. A mural of the original one is on the cafeteria walls today. As the special war loans were launched, we took each one of the seven in our stride. Never once did we fail to meet the quota set for us. We not only met each quota but exceeded each one! For our fine record, we elicited commendation from county, State and national war finance committee heads and authorities. In three and one-half years of bond buying, we purchased nearly three and one-half million dollars worth! It was a record of which every man and woman here can always be proud. It was a decision that reflected individual wisdom, economic foresight and outright patriotism. It was a move that will not be regretted, that will pay big dividends in economic security and comfort in the years to come.

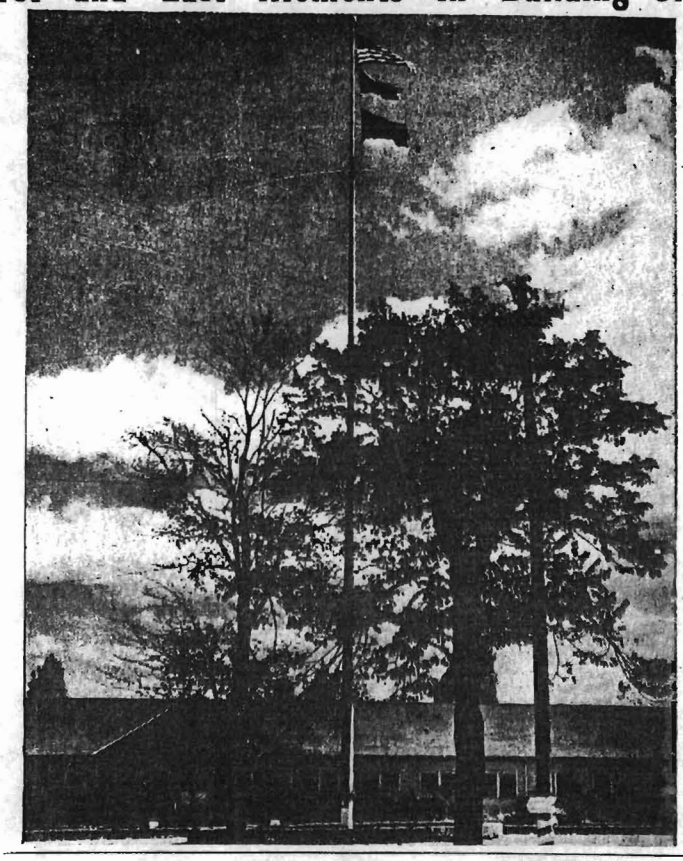
The Red Cross asked us for blood. We responded promptly, eagerly! We not only met every quota set, but exceeded every quota. Plum Brook men and women wrote a long-to-be-remembered record with their blood—831 pints of it for precious, life-saving plasma. We gave liberally and always to the annual Red Cross drives. We gave to the funds for Red Cross recreation chests for service men located in isolated spots. We gave liberally and always to the Community Fund—War Chest annual campaigns—always exceeding the quotas established for us. We gave to the special Army-Navy fund. Erie County authorities, without exception, began to say "We can always count upon Plum Brook men and women. They never fail." We recall the day when one employee lost his home by fire and he himself, badly burned while trying to rescue his wife and small babe and a patient in a hospital, was presented with a fund of $300 in a matter of twenty-four hours. Another needed a platinum pin for a hip injury. Again Plum Brook's heart for humanity beat strongly and the fund of $150 for the pin was raised quickly. As you and I separate and go out several ways, we shall always remember to what heights of humanity Plum Brook reached. Nowhere was the spirit more magnificent, more unselfish, more solicitous about the welfare of those less fortunate than we—whether they be at home or abroad throughout a crying, agonized world!

When our government asked us to conserve gasoline and rubber and tires and automobiles and fuel oil and fat and paper and a hundred and one other once-seemingly unimportant articles of scrap and throw-aways, we answered the call. Government appealed to you Ordnance and Trojan Powder Company management joined in and cooperated with that appeal. You, the Plum Brook worker, gave the answer. You did conserve. You did share the ride with your fellow worker and, because of your splendid response and cooperation, you did keep faith with the soldier who needed what you went without, and conserved, more than you and I. You helped the food problem by starting Victory gardens. When food shortage, when sugar shortage, when tobacco shortage made running the cafeteria a nightmare, you shrugged it off and, in the good old American spirit, "went along' and said it was "all for the cause."

When war workers, the country over, began to feel that the other pasture was greener and wanted to jump their job, you answered by cutting the vicious habit of being absent from work, to a low of 2.8%—the lowest achieved in Erie County and a record that could stand up against any made in war plants throughout the entire country. When you were asked to stick to the job, you stuck to it . . . to the end. The soldier stuck to his job and you stuck to yours. For your part, he will be ever mindful. You, yourself, will always be proud—proud that you didn't desert your post in time of war.

How well did you, the Plum Brook worker, do in the time you were here? Let the actions of your Army and Navy answer that! Four times did they confer honor upon you and your fellow-workers. They conferred upon you the Army-Navy "E" or symbol of "Excellence" for outstanding accomplishment. They renewed this honor and lasting distinction three times later. As proud and loyal Americans, you will always see that red, gold and blue burgee flying from the flagstaff in front of Building One. The "E" and the triple white star! Not many plants throughout the country could boast as much! You and I and Ordnance and Trojan management, working as a team, did that, put that burgee up there and kept it there with an "E" and three white stars! It will be there always—in our memory and in our hearts!

You, the Plum Brook worker, have, through the past four years, proven to all skeptics, domestic and foreign, that the American way of life is no weakling's way. As we travel, for the last time, the macadam stretches of the Firelands, let us pray that God permit the American way of life to endure, that, with the end of the war and Peace prevailing, the American way of life be turned into new paths for service, paths that are bordered by beneficence, humanity, tolerance and understanding. The Plum Brook way was the right and decent, American way. Let's keep to that way . . . forever!



## WAR'S END TAKEN QUIETLY

*Plum Brook took the end of World War Two . . . quietly.*

*There was quiet elation of course and, here and there—especially among female employees, there were misty eyes and tears of happiness because their loved ones were safe at last. On Wednesday morning, one could feel that a great load had been lifted from the hearts and minds of all. Workers appeared on time as usual . . . were constant and faithful until the end.*

*News of the cessation of hostilities found all Plum Brook organized for the great event and everything functioning smoothly and according to well-worked out plans. Police, Fire, Hospital, Safety and Plant Protection all had their assignments and coordinated procedure. With precision, actual production operations were discontinued and on Wednesday morning, under a fleecy-clouded, blue sky, the usual signs of operation were eloquently absent—absent for the first time in many long days.*

*For those whose fine endeavors here had come to an end, Payroll division was working at top form to issue the last long checks. The various divisions of Service department were functioning too so that terminations could be consummated efficiently and satisfactorily. Thus, with little fuss and formality and with the exception of the necessary clean-up work that will be required to convert the property to a full peace-time status, the saga of Plum Brook Ordnance Works, as a World War Two explosives-producing facility, was ended.*

## "To Bed" For The Last Time!

This special edition of the Plum Brook NEWS is the final one and, in a sense, a souvenir copy for you.

In it you will find a brief resume of the great job you did here, a resume of achievement and recognition of which every man and woman, who was a part of the unbeatable team here, can be proud. We have also included pictures of the best known buildings—Building One where the majority of Plum Brookians were engaged to work here; Building Ten, the center of both Ordnance and Trojan management administration, and the cafeteria which contributed such a major part in feeding and satisfying the inner man and woman in the days of both plenty and scarcity of food.

The editor of the NEWS takes this opportunity to thank every employee for his cooperation in making the paper newsworthy and enjoyable through the years. Such cooperation has made possible a portrayal of life at Plum Brook.

## PLUM BROOK . . . A MELTING POT

Plum Brook, from the first breaking of ground and the days of plant construction, to the close of operations, was a melting pot of race, creed and religion. Men and women came from every state in the Union and from beyond our borders. Almost every conceivable walk of life was represented. The age of workers ranged from sixteen, in Administration area to the near eighty in both Administration and Operation areas.

In common cause we worked and ate and played together. May that spirit continue to govern the hearts of all Plum Brook and the world!

## WAVED IN '41— OLD GLORY GOES UP AGAIN TODAY!

**With express permission of the commanding officer, Major J. H. Ellett, the first American flag raised to the breezes on the staff in front of Building One, will be raised again today. The flag was brought out of the local archives, for the first time in over three years, on Memorial Day last. This grand old Flag was flying the day Pearl Harbor was struck by the Japanese. Other and newer flags have since taken its place on the lofty pole. Always the Flag has waved here proudly and has been raised regularly in accordance with strict military etiquette. Today, nearly four years after Pearl Harbor, Old Glory goes back to its proud place, the gladly waving symbol of free men . . . everywhere! Long . . . and forever . . . may it wave. .**

*For the Future: Give a Thought to Safety!*