

Kansas aircraftmen standing by their riveting guns

This article from the Topeka Daily Capital covers the rapid decline in aviation industry jobs at the end of World War II. In particular, Wichita, Kansas, lost 22,000 aviation industry-related jobs by June 1945.

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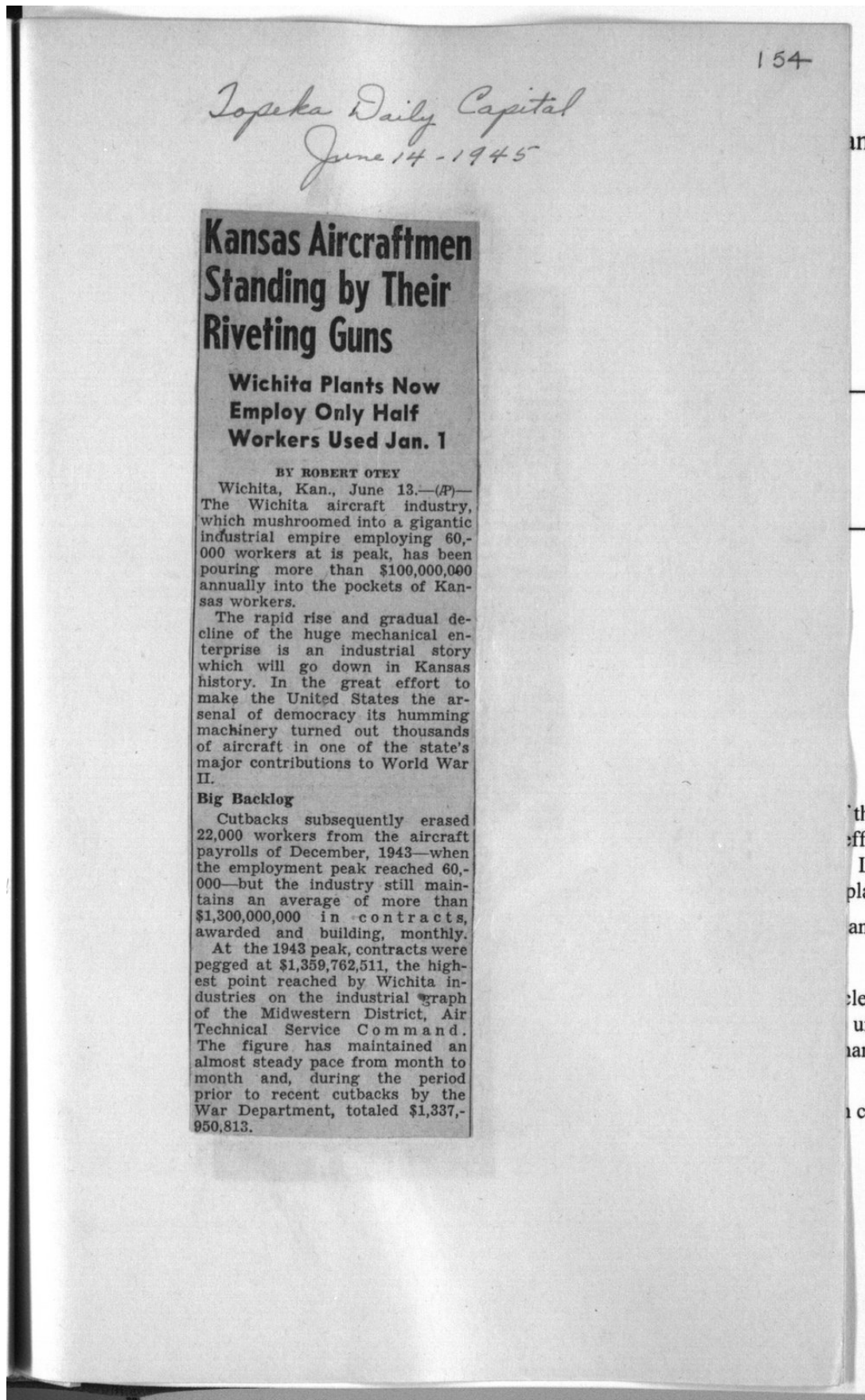
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"We are not dismantling our production decks," commented Brig. Gen. Ray G. Harris, commanding general of the district, "but only stripping them for action against the Jap." He pointed out that while smaller plane production and new tooling were curtailed or halted, production of the huge B-29's continued to increase to keep contracts at a nearly steady level."

Absent Workers

The latest cutbacks began in April when the Aero Parts Manufacturing Company, producing major sub-assemblies, was closed down by the termination of all its existing contracts. Other local war industries absorbed a portion of the 2,000 Aero Parts employes, but many others moved to greener pastures in other parts of the country.

Last month, when the War Department announced further curtailments in the aircraft ranks, another 3,400 workers were dropped—3,000 at Beech and 400 at Cessna. Boeing, builder of the huge Superfortress, and Culver, producing a light plane still classified on the Army-Navy "secret" list, suffered little by the sharp reductions.

Whittled Down

Today Wichita aircraft workers have been whittled to little more than half the 60,000 figure of December, 1943. Only 38,000 remain, still engaged in the dying industry—17,916 at Boeing; 10,200 at Beech; 2,467 at Cessna; 612 at Culver; and approximately 6,805 at subcontractors. Only Culver has logged an increase from the 1943 production peak.

Payrolls, however, still stand at the almost fantastic level of more than \$9,000,000 a month. At Boeing more than \$5,000,000 is paid out while Beech pays nearly \$3,000,000 every thirty days. Cessna contributes \$500,000 during the same period and Culver adds another \$125,000. Thousands of dollars more are paid monthly by the myriad of subcontractors.