## Kansas Memory



#### 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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# KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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June 14 - 1945		ın
Kansas Aircraftmen		
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Wichita Plants Now		
Employ Only Half		
Workers Used Jan. 1		
BY ROBERT OTEY Wichita, Kan., June 13.—(A)—		
The Wichita aircraft industry, which mushroomed into a gigantic		
industrial empire employing 60,- 000 workers at is peak, has been		
pouring more than \$100,000,000 annually into the pockets of Kan-		
sas workers. The rapid rise and gradual de-		
cline of the huge mechanical en- terprise is an industrial story		
which will go down in Kansas history. In the great effort to make the United States the se-		
make the United States the ar- senal of democracy its humming machinery turned out thousands		
of aircraft in one of the state's major contributions to World War		
II. Big Backlog		
Cutbacks subsequently erased 22,000 workers from the aircraft		`th
payrolls of December, 1943—when the employment peak reached 60,-		effe Li
000—but the industry still maintains an average of more than		pla
\$1,300,000,000 in contracts, awarded and building, monthly.		an
At the 1943 peak, contracts were pegged at \$1,359,762,511, the high-		
est point reached by Wichita in- dustries on the industrial graph		:le
of the Midwestern District, Air Technical Service Command.		uı
The figure has maintained an almost steady pace from month to		nan
month and, during the period prior to recent cutbacks by the War Department, totaled \$1,337,-		
950.813.		10

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155 "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, producwere 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 Manu-April when the Aero Parts Manu-facturing 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 Last month, when the War Department announced further curpartment 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 reductions. Whittled Down Today Wichita aircraft workers have been whittled to little more 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 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.