

Seneca Army Depot Story—After World War II **by Seneca County Historian Walter Gable**

The end of World War II led to a sharp decrease in the civilian employment at the Depot. There were only 595 civilian workers in November 1946. The Depot was maintained as a permanent post for storage purpose. At the start of the Korean War in June 1950 there were 803 civilian employees. In July 1952, however, there were 1821 in the workforce. Two large General Services Administration warehouses were constructed in 1953 and 1954. In July 1956, came the North Depot Activity, apparently the site of nuclear weapons or their components. In 1959, 120 Capehart housing units were built along Route 96 as housing for military personnel and their families.

In the mid-1970's there were about 300 to 400 military personnel and 600 to 800 civilian workers at the Depot. In 1961, the North Depot Activity was consolidated with the Seneca Ordnance Depot. In August 1963 the facility was transferred from the Chief of Ordnance to the U.S. Army Supply and Maintenance Command, and the depot facility was renamed the Seneca Army Depot (SEAD). On July 1, 1966, the Seneca Army Depot was reassigned to the U.S. Army Materiel Command.

In the early 1980's it was publicly disclosed that the Depot was a major nuclear weapons storage site. The 1982 FOIL documents suggested that the Depot was probably the Army's large storage area for nuclear weapons and possible storage site for neutron bombs if they are produced. It was also learned that the uranium for the Manhattan Project (to develop an atomic bomb during WWII) had been stored at the Depot before shipment to Oak Ridge, TN. A February 8, 1982, *New York Times* article said the Depot employed 800 civilians, and that about 400 troops were stationed there, including 250 military police trained as anti-terrorists and reportedly authorized to kill any intruders approaching the bomb bunkers. These revelations led to anti-nuclear groups picketing the Depot. A Women's Peace Encampment set up its residence on a farm just north of the village of Romulus in late July 1983. That summer nearly 12000 women visited the Encampment and demonstrated against the deployment of the Pershing II and Cruise missiles.

Construction of a LORAN-C Transmitting Station was started in 1977 and dedicated on August 2, 1978. This U.S. Coast Guard facility would be used by ships and aircraft as far away as 1000 miles to guide them in their flight and navigation. It was the first LORAN-C station to use solid state components rather than vacuum tubes.

The end of the Cold War about 1990 led to the closure of the Seneca Army Depot. In October 1995 the Seneca Army Depot was approved for the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list. Final base closure came in 2000. The base closure meant the loss of many civilian jobs and concerns about the economic vitality of the mid-Seneca County area.