

## News from Nan

### DICK'S FAMILY HISTORY

# THE WORLD WAR II “MANHATTAN PROJECT” TO MAKE ATOM BOMBS IN MY HOME TOWN

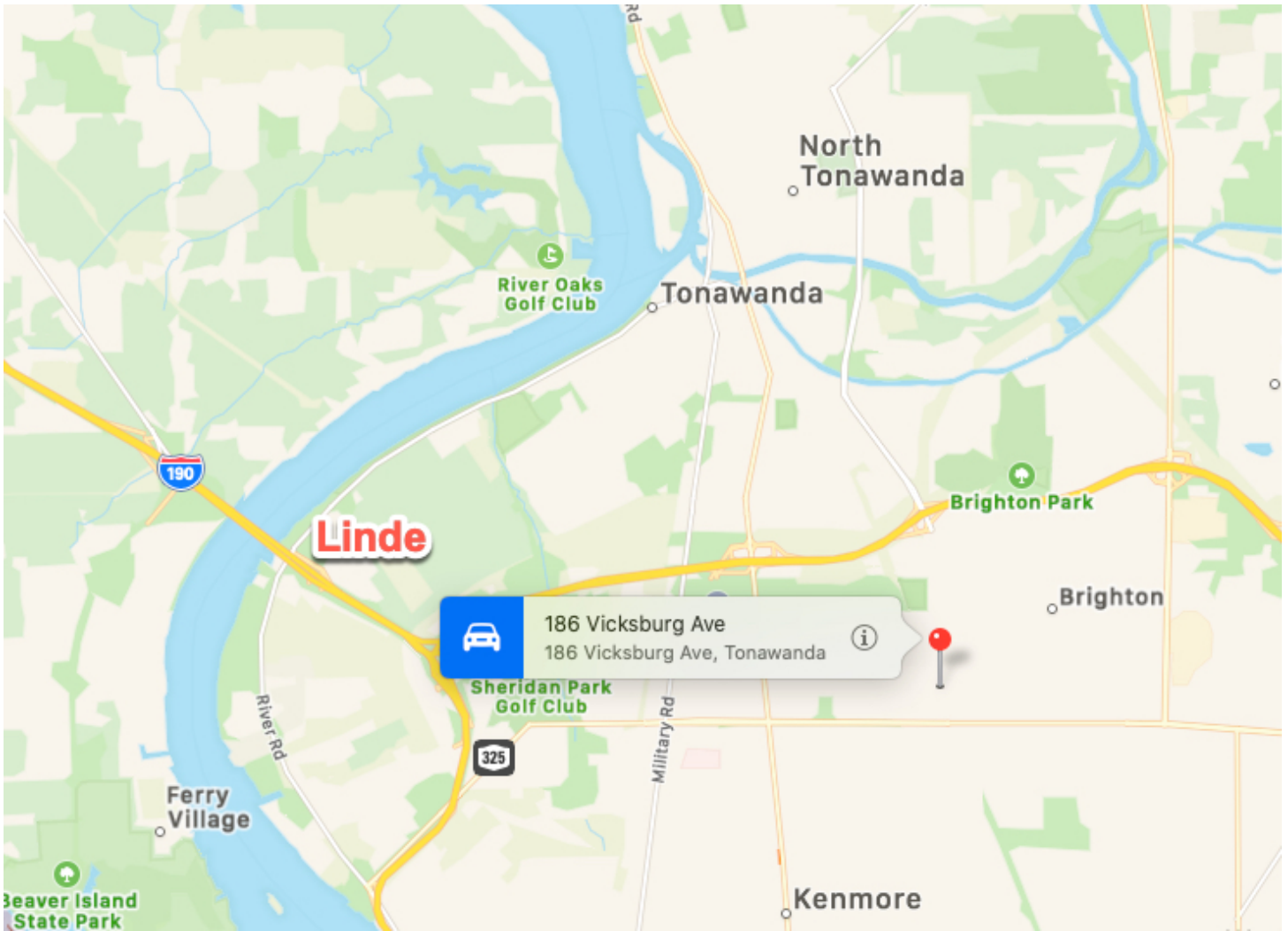
AUGUST 1, 2021 | DICK

A family story I heard from my parents was that my grandmother, Louise Rebmann Moseley, worked at the Wurlitzer factory in North Tonawanda during World War II. My mother also told me that my grandmother worked on the Manhattan Project during the war. I used to discount these stories until recently when I learned that part of the Manhattan Project was actually located in Tonawanda during the war and that the Wurlitzer company converted to defense projects (instead of jukeboxes and organs) during the war.

In the 1940s, Buffalo and the surrounding areas were major producers of defense products for World War II. There were two military aircraft factories, Bell Aircraft and Curtiss-Wright, and naval landing craft were manufactured at local ship yards. Demand for labor to produce these and other products was acute, and by 1942 local women were being heavily recruited to come to work. My grandmother was one of the recruits. Details about all this can be found in the book *>World War II Buffalo* by Gretchen E. Knapp.

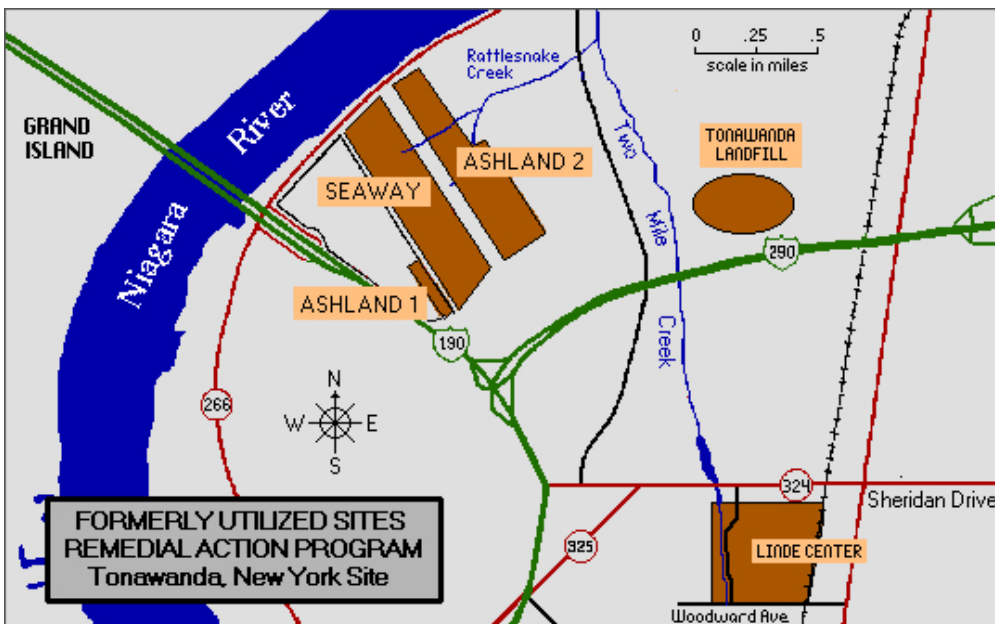
Now for the Manhattan Project part. Early in the war, the Tonawanda Laboratory was constructed at the Linde Ceramics Plant in the Town of Tonawanda. The plant was built for the U.S. Army's top secret Manhattan Engineer District (MED), better known as the Manhattan Project. The Laboratory was engaged in refining uranium ore from 1942 to 1949. The refined product was shipped to weapons labs (also part of the Manhattan Project) where it was used to make atomic bombs. Over 30 local Buffalo companies provided tools and parts for this project.

The Linde plant was located just three miles from where I was living as a young infant at 186 Vicksburg Avenue in Kenmore. My grandmother and grandfather were living in Tonawanda at the time.



Tonawanda Linde Plant

Since the war, the Linde plant in Tonawanda has been the subject of multiple toxic waste cleanup efforts, because many tons of radioactive waste were left behind, as shown on the following image.



*Toxic waste sites in Tonawanda, New York*

In my research I have not found any direct connection between Wurlitzer and the Manhattan Project, but there might be one. Here is a page from a magazine in 1943 that shows Wurlitzer winning a Army-Navy award for their work.

# FLAG OVER

## Wurlitzer Workers Win Coveted Army-Navy "E"

Interesting story behind No. Tonawanda division's shift from juke boxes to vital war work

**NORTH TONAWANDA, N. Y., Oct. 23.**—With elaborate and impressive ceremonies staged October 19 on the beautiful grounds of Wurlitzer's North Tonawanda plant, the armed services bestowed their coveted production award on the assembled Wurlitzer workers.

The colorful presentation ceremony was witnessed by a large throng. The program opened with selections by the American Legion Band of the Tonawandas and the raising of the Colors by the Wurlitzer Color Guard. The assembly then sang America, at the close of which the master of ceremonies, Capt. William H. Graham Jr., public relations officer, Eastern Procurement District, A.A.P. Material Command, addressed the gathering.

A Service Song Medley by the Wurlitzer Male Chorus was followed by the presentation of the Army-Navy Production Award by Col. Walter E. Richards, Air Corps U. S. Army, and resident representative at Curtis-Wright Corporation Buffalo plants. At the conclusion of his address, the "E" burgee was posted with appropriate ceremonies.

Brief speeches of acceptance were made by Carl E. Johnson, Wurlitzer vice-president and manager of the North Tonawanda division; R. C. Holfing, president of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company, and Fanny R. Wurlitzer, chairman of board of directors.

### Pins to Employees

Next came the presentation of Army-Navy "E" pins by Comm. Robert S. Smith Jr., U.S.N., resident inspector of navy material, Buffalo, N. Y. He was assisted by a returned wounded veteran of World War II. The pins were accepted on behalf of the employees by four representative workers, Samuel D. Brown, Mrs. Alex Jones, Ruth Heidenfeldt and George Kramer.

The ceremonies concluded with the singing of Prayer of Thanksgiving by the Wurlitzer Mixed Choir and the Star-Spangled Banner by the assembly.

The conversion of the North Tonawanda division from the manufacture of the popular and colorful automatic phonographs to materials of war interrupted one

of the most spectacular careers any unit of the music industry has ever known. Wurlitzer is now manufacturing inter-telephone communication systems for aircraft, special amplifiers, rectifiers and attenuators, resin bonded plywood components for aircraft, including ramps, floors, doors and miscellaneous wooden accessories.

Altho the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company has been associated with the manufacture of fine musical instruments since 1856, behind the founder, Rudolph Wurlitzer, was a direct tradition of five generations of musical craftsmen dating back to Nicholas Wurlitzer, a lute maker in 1636.

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company supplied both the Federal and Confederate armies with bugles and drums during the Civil War and also supplied them to the United States Government during the Spanish-American War.

### Long History

Rudolph Wurlitzer started the manufacture of pianos in 1869 in the Eugene DeKloet factory in North Tonawanda and at a later date the production of the "Mighty Wurlitzer" theater organ was started and at its peak in popularity Wurlitzer was producing one of these huge organs every working day.

The first wholesale and retail Wurlitzer store was started in Chicago about 1879. Today there is one in practically every leading city from Coast to Coast.

In 1929 the Wurlitzer Company started the Wurlitzer Foundation for the Advancement of Music for the purpose of making a musical education easier for beginners. As many as 20,000 pupils have been actively studying music on all types of instruments in Wurlitzer studios.

In 1932 the DeKalb division of Wurlitzer, which manufactured pianos, also started to produce accordions and in 1934 the first Wurlitzer automatic phonograph was produced in the North Tonawanda factories. At the start of World War II, Wurlitzer was the largest manufacturer of automatic phonographs in the world.

Today many Wurlitzer juke boxes are providing music for the armed forces at their bases both in this country and overseas.

In accepting the Army-Navy "E" Award on behalf of the men and women of the North Tonawanda division, Carl E. Johnson, vice-president and manager, pledged the acceptance as a challenge "for further and greater efforts in the cause of victory."

# WURLITZER



FAMOUS ARMY-NAVY "E" FLAG. Presented to North Tonawanda (N. Y.) plant of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company in impressive ceremonies, October 19, 1943. Left to right: Carl E. Johnson, vice-president and manager; Col. Walter E. Richards, U. S. Army Air Corps, and Samuel D. Brown, representing Wurlitzer employees.

## TALENT and TUNES ON MUSIC MACHINES

A column of music information for phonograph operators. The Billboard's Annual Talent and Tunes Supplement is issued the last week in September each year.

By GLADYS CHASINS

IT'S no longer news that Hollywood is grabbing up all the name bands for pix, but it is news that a couple of the studios which before now didn't bother much with bands in their musicals are now falling in line. Paramount, which last year produced only one flicker with a band (Milt Britton), now has Stan Kenton and Ozzie Nelson working on films. United Artists has signed Sammy Kaye for a flicker and is lining up a string of name bands for two other musicals soon to go into production. MGM, Columbia, 20th Century-Fox and Universal have been on the "band wagon" for many months now and with Paramount and UA added to the list, that means practically all the major studios are becoming regular stopovers for bands. . . . With film production being turned over more and more to musical fare, studios are also lining up former band vocalists. The boom in swooners is an old story, but on the femme side, Julie Gibson, formerly with Jimmy Greer, has just been signed to a contract by Paramount and Vivian Blaine, former chairper with Bobby Byrne and Al Kowalin, is slated for a build-up by 20th Century-Fox. Some of the former female band singers now under film contracts are Ginny Simm, Dorothy Lamour, Nan Wynn, Harriet Hightower, Alice Faye, Betty Hutton and Betty Grable. . . . Decca's Philadelphia salesman, Elwood Hays, esti-

mates he sold thousands of disks by obscure artists during the recording boom, but not without taking heaps of abuse from local dealers who wanted "names." Now that Decca is starting to bring out waxings by name artists, Hays feels he has a right to be independent. When a dealer complained the other day, Elwood grabbed the record from him and drawled, "Look, it's round, it's black, it spins around and it makes a noise. Do you want it?"

### Territorial Favorites

**MEMPHIS:** On the Sunny Side of the Street. Fats Waller.

This old-time hit currently singing a comeback in Tennessee may be cropping up more and more in coming weeks. It's one of the oldies being featured in Columbia's new musical, *Is Everybody Jeppsy*, which is currently in national release and which seems to have stirred demand for a couple of the songs in the score during key city openings. There's a long list of waxings available, included—(See TALENT AND TUNES on page 71)

### WANTED TO BUY

Wurlitzer 500A and 506 Keyboard. Advice how many and best price.

**AUSTIN PHONOGRAPH CO.**  
108 EGA FIBB AUSTIN, TEXAS



PINS FOR EMPLOYEES. An impressive moment in the Wurlitzer "E" Award ceremonies was the presentation of "E" pins to representatives of employees. Pvt. Ken Neppes, wounded veteran of World War II, presents pins. Employee representatives are (left to right): Samuel D. Brown, George Kramer, Mrs. Alex Jones and Ruth Heidenfeldt.

### WANTED TO BUY

50 Classics, Voguees or Hi Tones, or what have you. Cash waiting. Wire, write, call:  
**FRANCO NOVELTY COMPANY**  
24 NO. PERRY STREET PHONE 3475 MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

### WURLITZER PHONOGRAPHS FOR SALE

4.....Wurlitzer Model 71 | 2.....Wurlitzer Model 81  
6.....Wurlitzer Model 710 Stands  
Make us your best possible offer on one or all.

### ADVANCE MUSIC COMPANY

2482 University Avenue Saint Paul, Minnesota

*Wurlitzer wins the Army-Navy "E" award in 1943*

◀ 2021    ▶ BELL AIRCRAFT CORPORATION    ▶ BUFFALO    ▶ CURTISS-WRIGHT CORPORATION    ▶ LINDE CERAMICS PLANT  
◀ LOUISE REBMANN MOSELEY    ▶ MANHATTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT (MED)    ▶ MANHATTAN PROJECT    ▶ NEW YORK  
◀ NORTH TONAWANDA    ▶ RADIOACTIVE WASTE    ▶ TONAWANDA    ▶ TOXIC WASTE    ▶ WORLD WAR II  
◀ WURLITZER COMPANY