



## BOMB GIRLS – LIFE AT THE DIL PLANT IN AJAX

In the Spring of 1940 two army surveyors arrived in Pickering Township to scout a location for what would become the largest munitions plant in the British Commonwealth. In a little over a year, after rapid construction, the Defence Industries Limited plant was operational, producing a variety of shells on four lines and shipping them overseas where they were badly needed on the front lines. The plant operated 24 hours a day, 6 days a week and required a large labour pool to keep the lines running. Recruiters were sent all over Canada looking for people, mainly women, to come and work here. For many, it was an opportunity to have a high paying job while and see another part of the country. In just over 4 years of operation, the plant produced over 25 million shells: a testament to the hard work and dedication of these employees. Once the war ended, many returned home with a little extra money in their pockets, while others remained to create the town we now know as Ajax.

Not much remains from the original plant. Many of the buildings were demolished or repurposed. The men's and women's residences were removed to make way for other developments. The building plans and logistical information were shipped to Ottawa for safe keeping in case there was a need for another plant in the future. As for the employee records, all were destroyed. There is still evidence of the plant around Ajax. The Steam Plant smokestack is a Town landmark and the "temporary homes" which housed some of the families still stand on the north side of the 401.

If you would like to learn more about Defense Industries Limited, please visit the [Ajax Public Library Digital Archive](#). Here you will find:

- the D.I.L Online Exhibit
- photos from the DIL days
- video and audio recordings of interviews from people who worked at the plant
- a digitized collection of the Commando newspaper (the DIL employee newspaper)
- a digitized copy of *Ajax: the War Years* by Ken Smith, featuring a map of the DIL plant
- a digitized copy of *A Town Called Ajax* which details the history of our Town of Ajax

The Local History Collection is housed at the Main Branch of the Ajax Library (55 Harwood Avenue S) and we now look after the Town Archives. The archives are only accessible to the public by appointment but there are always displays featured at Town Hall. If you have any questions or wish to see a particular item, please contact:

**Elaine Lievaart**  
Community Engagement Associate  
(905) 683-4000 X8806  
[elaine.lievaart@ajaxlibrary.ca](mailto:elaine.lievaart@ajaxlibrary.ca)

**Maria-Lise Dobri**  
Archives Services Librarian  
[maria-lise.Dobri@ajaxlibrary.ca](mailto:maria-lise.Dobri@ajaxlibrary.ca)

