

LINDENVILLE

By Jacquelyne Kious

SSF's population doubled after the US entered WWII. Over 40 industries operated in the city by 1940 with many, including Western Pipe & Steel, involved in the war effort. Western Pipe had 700 workers in the late 1930s; a number which increased to over 15,000 by 1945.

It is difficult to underestimate the state of emergency the country was under following Pearl Harbor. Supporting the war effort was a 24-hour a day job. Thousands of new workers were needed in SSF alone to staff the factories and shipyards around the clock. People came from across the US heeding the call to come to California to support the war effort. But the lack of housing quickly became a big issue.

With a war-time emergency declared, the federal government began construction on four housing sites in SSF. The largest, Lindenville, was located in an open field between what is now Victory and Railroad Avenues. It eventually had 720 units housing over 4,000 people. Because housing needed to be built so quickly, the units were far from comfortable. Lindenville consisted of row after row of army-like barracks built very cheaply, four walls and stucco exterior. The units were either too cold or too hot depending on the season, making them barely livable. Lindenville quickly became a small city within a city having a recreation building, nine barracks serving as an elementary school, a baseball field, and a laundromat. And so many babies were born that a childcare center had to be built.

With such a diverse population, Lindenville became the police department's biggest headache, especially during the post-war years. Many SSF police officers referred to Lindenville as "the Hell Hole of creation". As one officer put it, "when we got a call there, every available unit responded." The place took 80% of our time with family beefs, shootings, knifings, everything." (*SSFPD 1892-2003*)

In addition to Lindenville, the federal government built three smaller housing sites: Cape Esperance, Palau Village, and Industrial Village, which was designated as low-income housing.

The government in conjunction with the SSF Housing Authority ran Lindenville until 1955 when it was turned over to the city. It was demolished in 1958 with the completion of multiple subdivisions west of El Camino Real.