

Huron Designated As Danger Area By A.D.C

The following article from the August 1953 Erie County Reporter tells of Huron's part in the Cold War that began in 1947 with communist countries especially the Soviet Union. There was a belief that the Korean War, 1950-1953, served as a precursor to a possible Soviet attack. Operation Sky Watch was initiated nationwide on July 14, 1952. Eventually over 800,000 volunteers worked alternating shifts at 16,000 observation posts reporting air traffic that might be missed because of gaps in the radar system. Although the Cold War continued until 1991, the Ground Observers Corp was disestablished July 31, 1959 with the improvement of radar systems.

The United States Air Defense Command has designated Huron as a prime danger zone necessitating the local Ground Observers Corps to report every plane sighted regardless of type. Normally only multi-engine planes and single engine craft in groups are reported to the Air Corps-Filter Center in Columbus.

A recent mock raid on New York was a successful "enemy" venture. Seventy per cent of the invading bombers penetrated the defense screens without detection. Due to the fact that radar cannot pick up low flying craft, it remains for civilian air watchers to serve as the sole means of detection.

The Great Lakes area constitutes our most vulnerable borderland. Invasion from the north would be most logical and penetration of our defense at this point could be a deathblow to our largest centers of manufacturing. War production, our greatest asset, might well be crippled to the extent of expediting our defeat by a less powerful enemy. The importance of vigilance and efficient interception in this vicinity cannot be over-emphasized.

Hal Fowler has been designated Co-Chief Observer, aiding Chief Observer Mrs. John Cockrell. Miss Carol Hasel is secretary of the Huron GCO unit.

The observation post for the local sky-watch unit has been completed. Telephone and lights will be installed immediately and full 24-hour maintenance by local volunteers will start within ten days.

Additional Information

Exactly when the G.O.C began in Huron is unknown. Huron's Ground Observers Corps observation tower was located just east of the river on land donated by Wright Stein. Built on stilts, it resembled a fire watch tower found in many western states. Built for \$800 by local citizens, the tower was supposed to be manned night and day by volunteers who worked two-hour shifts per week. Prior to the completion of the tower in September 1953, the GOC used the roof of the high school (McCormick School today) for an observation deck. Initially 140 adults volunteered to man the tower. The youngsters of Huron formed a Junior G. O. C. and manned the station between the hours of 4 to 8 pm and were in charge of the observation post during daylight hours on Saturdays and Sundays. Junior members were awarded the U. S. Army Corps wings for their service when they had served 12 hours. Jim Fekete, Carol Hasel, and Jimmy Hartley were the first to receive their wings. Periodically, the newspaper published a list of the dedicated volunteers and hours served. It is not known when the G. O. C. ended and when the tower came down.