

The following is a letter written to me by Loretta Weeast, dated December 1, 1994:

I thought that you might be interested in this small input. Glancing at this book (reference to a book she bought for me on the history of the John A. Roebling plant) brings back a lot of memories.

I don't believe that you know that most of our family worked at the Roebling plant during World War II. Of course, your father worked there before the war, about 1938 at the time the union was trying to organize a union in the plant. During this time the men were picketing outside of the mill. Your father and some other men, once they got into the mill, didn't come out for days. They wanted to work and knew if they did come out, they would have been killed. You know they had a name for people like your father. He thought this was great fun and would be the one to stay inside. Also, he was making a lot of money.

Your grandmother (complete in her blue coveralls, something they had to wear) worked in the Copper Mill. This copper used there was drawn on machines, to a very fine size and had to be run on spools for shipment. I believe your grandmother was what you would call a spooler.

Your Aunt Sylvia worked in the Wire Cloth Mill. This is where the steel wire was woven into a wire mesh used for screens, etc. This was done on big looms. Your aunt was a loom operator. There was also one section of this mill where they literally used silver in making a very fine mesh which was used in the war for mending head injuries (such as the brain, using a silver mesh plate). You had to be a very good operator to work in this department. (In the margins Loretta wrote that "they must have run out of silver before they could get to your father's crazy head") Everything that Roebling made during the war was government work.

"Yours Truly" (Loretta) worked in Roebling for 32 years. Started working here in 1942 just at the beginning of the war. I remember when the country was having these big "Bond Drives" at the time and when they came to the Roebling plant, there were always a lot of people volunteering their services for this. I saw Hedy Lamar and Walter Abel (just in case you never heard of them, they are movie stars, a little before your time).

After the war was over in 1945, my family left the Roebling Mill but your Aunt Loretta hung in. My work was more on the clerical side. For many years I worked in payroll and covered the workers in the "hot mills" which included the Rod Mill, Blooming Mill and the Steel Mill. This was quite a responsibility, but they were fun years. After all those years, they finally forced me in semi-retirement by closing the plant in 1974, and that was a sad day. We heard lots of rumors about closing but we never thought it would happen. I went on to work for the great state of New Jersey (Division of Motor Vehicles) for the next 14 years and then finally retired officially in 1990 ending my 50 year career. What can I say?

Love ya,  
Aunt Loretta

Interesting note:

I failed to mention this but during the war, one of the mills made grommets (gigantic rings made of very heavy gauge wire used to make submarine nets). Workers in this mill consisted of all draft-dodgers; crooks, gamblers, ex-cons, etc. They even went so far as to padding the payroll.

Hope you find the book interesting. You will see pictures of the mills that I have mentioned. I clipped together the one section written on the Roebling Village. Biggest part of the J.A. Roebling works was in Trenton.

(On the back she wrote "Haven't written a note this long since I used to write your father when he was in the service")