

# Virginians at War

## WWII: American Home Front

### Resource Packet

Contains: Glossary, Images, Discussion Questions,  
Additional Resources

**Program Description:** Virginians at War: WWII Home Front tells the stories of the men and women who supported the war effort from the American home front. The film begins with stories of Pearl Harbor, and the reactions of family members of those who signed up to serve. The themes of uncertainty, sacrifice, and love define the memories and stories shared. The film also tells stories of WWII era rationing, entertainment, women entering the workforce, and more.

**Copyright:** Virginia War Memorial Foundation, 2013

**Length:** 19:00

**Streaming link:** <https://vimeo.com/367065423>

#### Featured Speakers:

Pencye Bailey, Richmond  
Eugenia Basnight, Midlothian  
Ersell Brinser, Richmond  
George Brokaw, Midlothian  
Mary Brooks, Roanoke  
Frances Burch, Alexandria  
Charles Coe, Haymarket  
Frances Crawford, Hampton  
Virginia Davis, Richmond  
Helen Duke, Richmond  
Ralph Fields, Richmond  
Bonnie Hatfield, Richmond  
Norene Mahler, Richmond  
Betty Perkins, Morning Sun IA  
Jaquelin Turner, Doswell



# GLOSSARY

## IMPORTANT TERMS

- **Blue Star Service Flag:** a banner that hangs in the window of families with members serving in the Armed Forces during war; each blue star corresponds to a family member actively serving; a gold star represents a family member lost during the war
- **Canning:** a method of preserving fruits and vegetables, used to supplement household food supply during times of rationing
- **Mail censoring:** editing of letters sent between the front lines and the home front to prevent enemies from learning information about U.S. military activity
- **News reels:** short news stories played on screen before movies at the theater
- **Rationing:** the division and distribution of the nation's resources that ensured that every family got their fair share of hard-to-find items; families received ration books and stickers that determined how much of any given item they were allowed to purchase; this also ensured that U.S. troops and citizens of liberated countries could receive a portion of these limited resources
- **Rosie the Riveter:** a media and propaganda icon associated with female defense workers during WWII
- **Scrap drives:** organized efforts made by volunteers at the home front to collect and recycle high-demand materials, such as metal, paper, rubber, and cloth
- **Victory gardens:** family and community gardens that grew fruits and vegetables in order to supplement household food supply during times of rationing

## IMPORTANT TERMS

- **War bonds:** a type of loan from U.S. citizens to the U.S. government; citizens purchased bonds, or stock, in the United States that could be redeemed after the war for more than what they paid
- **Western Union:** an American company that primarily delivered telegrams; during war times, Western Union workers were known for delivering the news that a family member in the Armed Forces had been killed in action

## COMMONLY RATIONED ITEMS

- **Aluminum**
- **Cigarettes**
- **Coal**
- **Coffee**
- **Dairy**
- **Fruit**
- **Gasoline**
- **Lard**
- **Meat**
- **Oil**
- **Rubber**
- **Silk**
- **Steel**
- **Sugar**
- **Tin**
- **Vegetables**
- **Wood**

# TIMELINE

- September 3, 1940- US agrees to give England 50 destroyers in exchange for use of 8 British bases on the Atlantic.
- June 25, 1941- Roosevelt desegregates war industries
- August 28, 1941- Office of price administration is created to oversee rationing and price controls.
- December 7, 1941- Japan bombs Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. US declares war the next day.
- February 19, 1942- President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066. This orders the imprisonment of all Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast.
- January 31, 1942- The War Production Board is created to oversee wartime production of supplies in the US.
- January 31, 1942- National War Labor Board established to oversee pay, hours, and working conditions in wartime industries.
- February 19, 1942- Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 which orders the imprisonment of all Japanese Americans on the West Coast.
- July 22, 1942- Gasoline rationing begins
- Dec. 27, 1942- Food Rationing Program announced
- Feb 1943-. first point rationing books distributed
- January 1944- Japanese Americans are eligible for the draft
- January, June, November- 4th, 5th, and 6th war loans.
- May 8, 1945- VE day
- September 2- VJ day

# NEW ROLES FOR WOMEN

- **Army Nurse Corps:** registered nurses joined the ANC to serve wounded soldiers on the front lines in field and evacuation hospitals
- **Factory jobs:** when men were called away to serve in the Armed Forces, women were encouraged to work at defense plants, welding jobs
- **Transportation services:** for the first time, women took on jobs for railroads, streetcars, and other transportation jobs
- **Volunteer service:** during the war, women organized and volunteered for scrap drives, blood drives, and other efforts to support U.S. troops and their Allies
- **Women's Army Corps:** women joined the WAC and served in the Army's clerical positions, drove trucks, worked as technicians, operated radios, flew aircraft, repaired equipment, and worked in intelligence in order to free up the men who held those positions to fight on the front lines



(National Archives)

# NEW ROLES FOR MINORITIES

- **Armed Forces:** while the Armed Forces remained segregated throughout WWII, African-American troops and nurses served abroad and at home, making many important contributions and serving with distinction; Black nurses were eventually integrated due to shortages of Army Nurses; distinguished service units include the Tuskegee Airmen and the 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion; due to their distinguished service and pressure on the home front from the "Double V" campaign, the Armed Forces were officially desegregated in 1948
- **Factory jobs:** minority communities, such as Black Americans and immigrants, moved en masse from rural areas to cities to work factory jobs to support their country; African-American communities supported the "Double V campaign" for "Victory over fascism abroad, and victory over discrimination at home" as they fought for the right to work in professions that had previously only been held by white men



Welders working on SS George Washington Carver

(National Archives)



“Double V Victory” Campaign Logo

(Pittsburgh Courier Archives)



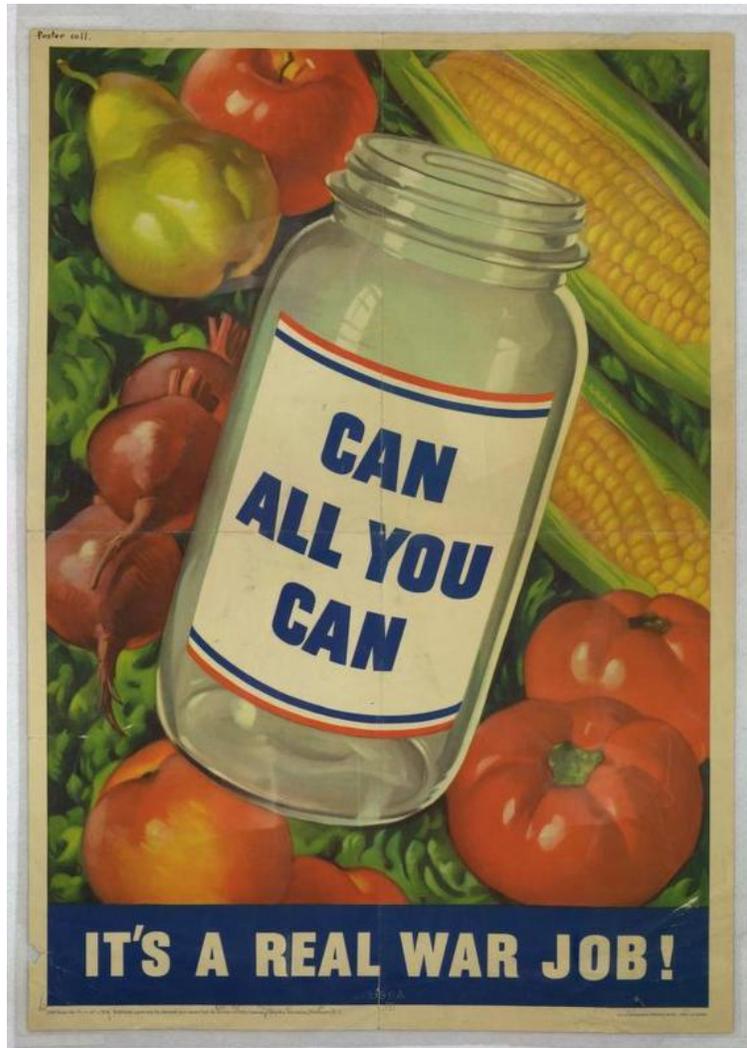


Propaganda poster displaying a Blue Star Service Flag, encouraging citizens to save gasoline and rubber tires for the Armed Forces

(National Museum of the U.S. Air Force)



War Bond poster inviting citizens to buy bonds in order to replace the USS *Helena*, which was sunk in July, 1943 (U.S. Department of the Treasury)

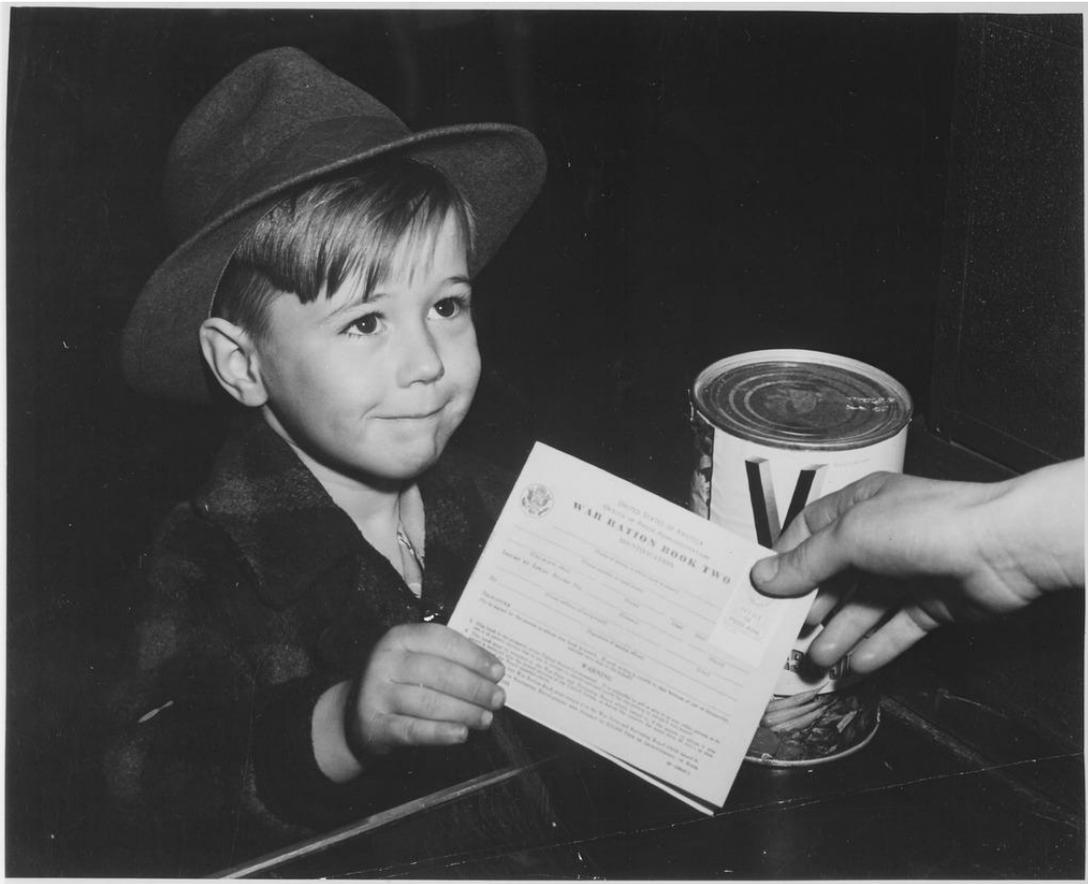


Propaganda poster encouraging citizens on the home front to can their fruits and vegetables, 1945 (U.S. Army Center of Military History)



Women welders working in a Mississippi shipyard, 1943

(National Archives)



Child buying a can of V8 using his WWII ration book  
(National Archives)



Woman watering a victory garden, 1945  
(Getty Images)

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was the American home front the United States' secret weapon to defeating the Axis powers?
2. What were some of the steps taken to ensure that the US had enough supplies to supply the war effort?
3. In what ways did the war change the lives of women in the US compared to pre-war?
4. How did the war impact the people at home and the veterans who made it back home? How did it change their day to day lives?
5. Why were Americans so willing to give up their old lifestyles and adopt new ones to support the war effort?
6. Do you think that Americans today would react the same way to a situation like World War II as they did in the 1940s? Why or why not? How would the response differ? What would you do?

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about the experiences of Virginians in World War II, view *Virginians at War: WWII Nurses* and other films at [vawarmemorial.org](http://vawarmemorial.org). Looking to do more research? Check out the links below.

- [Blue Star Mothers service flag](#)
- [Canning to preserve food during WWII](#)
- [Rosie the Riveter](#)
- [The WWII homefront by the National Park service](#)
- [Recycling scrap metal during WWII](#)
- [WWII homefront lesson plan from the Smithsonian](#)
- [Civil rights in WWII](#)