Rationing, Victory Gardens, Women in the Workforce

5.56 With supporting facts and details provide reasons for rationing, victory gardens, the design of The Rosie the Riveter ideal (Avco jobs for Tennessee women) and the Women Airforce Service Pilots-Cornelia Fort. (C, E, H, TN)

Examples of Ration Books, Stamps, and Cards

Rationing for the War Effort

Ask anyone who remembers life on the Home Front during WWII about their strongest memories and chances are they will tell you about rationing. You see, the war caused shortages of all sorts of things: rubber, metal, clothing, etc. But it was the shortages of various types of food that effected just about everyone on a daily basis.

Food was in short supply for a variety of reasons: much of the processed and canned foods was reserved for shipping overseas to our military and our Allies; transportation of fresh foods was limited due to gasoline and tire rationing and the priority of transporting soldiers and war supplies instead of food; imported foods, like coffee and sugar, was limited due to restrictions on importing.

Because of these shortages, the U.S. government’s Office of Price Administration established a system of rationing that would more fairly distribute foods that were in short supply. Every American was issued a series of ration books during the war. The ration books contained removable stamps good for certain rationed items, like sugar, meat, cooking oil, and canned goods. A person could not buy a rationed item without also giving the grocer the right ration stamp. Once a person’s ration stamps were used up for a month, she couldn’t buy any more of that type of food. This meant planning meals carefully, being creative with menus, and not wasting food. More than 8,000 ration boards across the country administered the program.
Fun Facts About Victory Gardens

- During World War II, Victory Gardens were planted by families in the United States (the Home Front) to help prevent a food shortage.
- Planting Victory Gardens helped make sure that there was enough food for our soldiers fighting around the world. Because canned vegetables were rationed, Victory Gardens also helped people stretch their ration coupons (the amount of certain foods they were allowed to buy at the store).
- Because trains and trucks had to be used to transport soldiers, vehicles, and weapons, most Americans ate local produce grown in their own communities.
- Many different types of vegetables were grown—such as tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, beets, and peas. Victory Gardens were responsible for bringing Swiss chard and kohlrabi onto the American dinner table because they were easy to grow.
- At their peak there were more than 20,000,000 Victory Gardens planted across the United States.
- By 1944 Victory Gardens were responsible for producing 40% of all vegetables grown in the United States. More than one million tons of vegetables were grown in Victory Gardens during the war.
- People with no yards planted small Victory Gardens in window boxes and watered them through their windows. Some city dwellers who lived in tall apartment buildings planted rooftop gardens and the whole building pitched in and helped.
- Many schools across the country planted Victory Gardens on their school grounds and used their produce in their school lunches.
- The U.S. government printed recipe books describing how to prepare home grown vegetables to make nutritional and tasty meals. Agricultural companies gave tips on how to make seedlings flourish in different climates.
- Excess food grown in Victory Gardens was canned and used during the winter months to help supplement the amount of food available.
- Growing Victory Gardens gave Americans on the Home Front a feeling that they were doing something helpful to win the war (and they were)!
Women in the Work Force

American women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers during World War II, as widespread male enlistment left gaping holes in the industrial labor force. Between 1940 and 1945, the female percentage of the U.S. workforce increased from 27 percent to nearly 37 percent, and by 1945 nearly one out of every four married women worked outside the home. “Rosie the Riveter,” star of a government campaign aimed at recruiting female workers for the munitions industry, became perhaps the most iconic image of working women during the war.

“ROSIES” IN THE WORK FORCE

While women worked in a variety of positions previously closed to them during World War II, the aviation industry saw the greatest increase in female workers. More than 310,000 women worked in the U.S. aircraft industry in 1943, making up 65 percent of the industry’s total workforce (compared to just 1 percent in the pre-war years). The munitions industry also heavily recruited women workers, as illustrated by the U.S. government’s “Rosie the Riveter” propaganda campaign. Based in small part on a real-life munitions worker, but primarily a fictitious character, the strong, bandanna-clad Rosie became one of the most successful recruitment tools in American history, and the most iconic image of working women in the World War II era.

Though women who entered the workforce during World War II were crucial to the war effort, their pay continued to lag far behind their male counterparts: Female workers rarely earned more than 50 percent of male wages.

In movies, newspapers, posters, photographs and articles, the Rosie the Riveter campaign stressed the patriotic need for women to enter the work force.
In addition to factory work and other home front jobs, some 350,000 women joined the Armed Services, serving at home and abroad. At the urging of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and women’s groups, and impressed by the British use of women in service, General George Marshall supported the idea of introducing a women’s service branch into the Army. In May 1942, Congress instituted the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps, later upgraded to the Women’s Army Corps, which had full military status. Its members, known as WACs, worked in more than 200 non-combatant jobs stateside and in every theater of the war. By 1945, there were more than 100,000 WACs and 6,000 female officers. In the Navy, members of Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) held the same status as naval reservists and provided support stateside. The Coast Guard and Marine Corps soon followed suit, though in smaller numbers.

One of the lesser-known roles women played in the war effort was provided by the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs. These women, each of whom had already obtained their pilot’s license prior to service, became the first women to fly American military aircraft. They ferried planes from factories to bases, transporting cargo and participating in simulation strafing and target missions, accumulating more than 60 million miles in flight distances and freeing thousands of male U.S. pilots for active duty in World War II. More than 1,000 WASPs served, and 38 of them lost their lives during the war. Considered civil service employees and without official military status, these fallen WASPs were granted no military honors or benefits, and it wasn’t until 1977 that the WASPs received full military status.