Utah's role during World War II

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 brought the United States into World War II. The U.S. military needed to quickly expand its installations to meet the demands of fighting in both the European and Pacific theaters. The government saw northern Utah as a prime location because its inland location made it less vulnerable to attacks. Moreover, there was plenty of open space, allowing for the expansion of existing bases such as Hill Field (now Hill Air Force Base) and the construction of new installations such as Kearns and Tooele Army depots. Northern Utah is also located equidistant to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, therefore, its installations could easily transport goods to the Pacific coast through highways and railroad systems throughout the West.

Utah’s military installations during the war included the Ogden Arsenal, Hill Field, Clearfield Naval Supply Depot, Utah General Depot, Tooele Army Depot, and Kearns Army Base and Depot. During World War II, Hill Field became the state’s largest employer. It helped to revitalize Utah’s economy after the Great Depression. Increased demand for military supplies eventually led to worker shortages at Utah’s installations. As more men left to fight in the war, the U.S. War Department began to hire women for positions that were traditionally considered men’s work.

Utah’s Rosies

The World War II home front drastically changed women’s labor as this was the first time many women worked outside of the home. Women who performed industrial labor were generally referred to as “Rosies,” named after the government’s “Rosie the Riveter” campaign to recruit women to work in factories and military installations. Utah women were eager to do their part as they felt it was their patriotic duty as Americans. Industrial wartime work paid higher wages which helped women support their families and increased the standard of living in rural communities.

Utah women held jobs as typists, receptionists, armed guards, drivers, ammunition inspectors, aircraft maintenance and repair, safety specialists,
welders, and parachute and clothing manufacturers. By 1944, women made up thirty-seven percent of the Utah workforce.

There was public concern about women entering the workforce. People were worried about how women working would affect their femininity and potentially destabilize male patriarchal structures both in and outside of the home. Men were considered the breadwinners of their families and women working might disrupt traditional gender roles. Men also feared that women might not want leave their jobs when the war ended. Both men and women were concerned with how women working might negatively impact home life. Women had to juggle childcare and domestic work along with their new jobs. Communities worried about children being neglected and women putting work before domestic responsibilities.

Women learned to balance their work and home lives as they still had the same domestic responsibilities. Although the War Production Board asked women to fill much needed jobs, it also constantly reminded them not to sacrifice their home life in its monthly newsletters. Many women would trade off caring for each other’s children while others were at work.

As the government recruited women for wartime jobs, it compared industrial work to domestic work. Jobs like sewing parachutes and pilot jackets were easy to associate with domesticity. Military installations also held dances, parades, and beauty contests such as “Sweethearts of the Depot” to promote femininity in the workforce.

Men who worked with women were surprised that they were better workers than they had initially expected. Some commented that women “had greater dexterity, were more patient, had greater enthusiasm and personal responsibility for their work, and were patriotic without cynicism.” Women, however, still dealt with discrimination in the workplace. They were rarely promoted from entry level positions and had to fend off sexual harassment from male workers.

In addition to the military, private companies created new employment opportunities in rural communities which helped families recover from the Great Depression. The C.F Fauntleroy Parachute Company in Manti employed women from ages sixteen to forty years old to produce and repair individual, cargo, and bomb parachutes. Women over forty or who had physical disabilities organized the Independent Parachute Company of Utah as they wanted to do their part in the war effort. The Parachute Company would not hire older women because of potential insurance costs. The Independent Parachute Company worked in conjunction with the other plant, cutting and waxing the webbing of parachute packs. Women in rural communities were motivated to work mainly for the pay and patriotism. Work was also a cure for loneliness when their husbands, sons, nephews, and friends left to fight in the war. Many women put notes in the parachutes, writing their names, where they were from, and saying that they made the parachute for soldiers to arrive safely to their destinations.

**Utah Minute Women**

Thousands of women across the state participated in the Utah Minute Women program. They were part of a nationwide effort coordinated by the U.S. War Production Board. Minute Women collected paper, cans, hosiery, scrap metal, rubber, and household grease to be used in the war effort. Utah women used existing organizations such as the PTA, women’s clubs, and church groups to structure these programs. They also went door to door, made
Minute Women used quantifiable examples of how rationing and salvaging directly helped soldiers fighting in the war. For example, they advertised that 3 tin cans equaled 1 grenade, one can equaled a pair of binoculars, a week’s worth of cans equaled a portable flame thrower, and a month of household cans equaled to 3 machine guns. There were a total 32 county directors, 333 city chairwomen, and 8,000 Utah Minute Women who participated in the program from 1942 to 1945. Minute Women also commissioned 5,000 Boy and Girl Scout troops to volunteer as Paper Troopers to help collect paper in their neighborhoods for salvage drives.

**Bushnell Hospital**

The Bushnell Military Hospital opened in Brigham City in 1942 as a regional facility for wounded soldiers. Bushnell’s staff specialized in amputations and facial reconstruction. The hospital had a psychiatric center to help soldiers cope with the trauma of being severely injured. Many women worked at Bushnell as nurses and aids. In addition, women served as hospital volunteers Ogden’s Dee Hospital came by bus once a week. Nurses from Salt Lake City, Provo, and Cedar City volunteered to work at Bushnell between 1942 and 1946. Older Red Cross women, known as the Red Cross Gray Ladies, mended patients’ clothes, helped write letters home, read aloud, and went on shopping errands. They also prepared soldiers for life after the military by helping them earn high school diplomas, apply for college, or earn college credit.

Overall, socializing with patients was the most important way for volunteers to help at the hospital in keeping soldiers’ morale up. Women from surrounding towns also volunteered their time to visit patients. The hospital staff would often hold social activities including dances and holiday celebrations to lift patients’ spirits. Women from local LDS stakes would go to the dances and also held musical performances. Some would play cards and board games. The most important aspect of the community’s volunteer work was to treat patients like normal people. Some women developed friendships or dated patients, had them over for dinner, invited them on family picnics, and a few couples even married.

**Life After the War**

World War II dramatically changed women’s lives in Utah as it exposed them to the diverse groups of people who worked at military installations, factories, and the Bushnell hospital. Most women returned to domestic work because men needed jobs when they returned from war. After the war, local politicians and church leaders urged women to return home. Many were relieved to quit their jobs because they no longer had to juggle domestic and occupational work. Overall, men resumed working at Utah’s military installations and manufacturing companies, however, some women remained in the workforce as typists, secretaries, and in sewing factories.

**Sources**


Carter, Andrea Kaye. Bushnell General Military Hospital and the Community of Brigham City, Utah During World War II. Logan: Utah State University, 2008.


The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 brought the United States into World War II. The U.S. needed to quickly expand its military industries to meet the demands of fighting in both Europe and the Pacific. Northern Utah was a prime location because distance from the ocean protected it from attacks. There was plenty of open space in Utah to expand bases and build new ones. Northern Utah is also the same distance to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, so the military could easily transport goods to these cities where they would be shipped overseas. These wartime industries helped to revitalize Utah’s economy after the Great Depression. As men left to fight in the war, the U.S. War Department began to hire women for jobs that were traditionally considered men’s work.

For many women, this was the first time they worked outside of the home. Women who worked in factories and on military bases were called “Rosies,” named after the government’s “Rosie the Riveter” campaign. These jobs paid high wages, which helped women support their families. Work was also a cure for loneliness when their husbands, sons, nephews, and friends left to fight in the war. Utah women held jobs as typists, receptionists, armed guards, drivers, ammunition inspectors, aircraft maintenance and repair, safety specialists, welders, and parachute and clothing manufacturers. By 1944, women made up thirty-seven percent of the Utah workforce.

But many people were worried about women entering the workforce. Men feared that women might not want leave their jobs when the war ended. Both men and women worried about how women working might negatively affect home life. Women had to juggle childcare and domestic work along with their new jobs. Many women would trade off caring for each other’s children while others were at work.

Jobs like sewing parachutes and pilot jackets were easy to associate with domesticity. Men who worked with women were surprised that they were better workers than they expected. Some commented that women “were more patient and had greater enthusiasm and personal responsibility for their work.” Women, however, still dealt with discrimination in the workplace.

Thousands of women across the state also participated in the Utah Minute Women program. Minute Women collected paper, cans, hosiery, scrap metal, rubber, and household grease to be used in the war effort. Minute Women showed how rationing and salvaging (recycling) helped soldiers fighting in the war: 3 recycled tin cans could make 1 grenade and a month of household cans could make to 3 machine guns.

Women worked at the Bushnell military hospital in Brigham City as nurses and aids. Women from surrounding towns such as Logan and Ogden visited patients to play cards and board games. The most important part of their volunteer work was to treat the patients like normal people.

After the war, most women returned to domestic work because men needed jobs when they returned from war. Many were relieved to quit their jobs because they no longer had to juggle domestic and occupational work. Men took over most of the industrial and manufacturing jobs in Utah. Some women remained in the workforce as typists, secretaries, and in sewing factories.
OUR PAST, THEIR PRESENT

Utah’s WWII Military Installations
- Hill Air Force Base
- Ogden Arsenal
- Ogden Defense Depot
- Clearfield Naval Supply Depot
- Kearns Army Air Base
- Tooele Army Depot

Map: Utah Military Installations 1858-1966

This map shows the military industries in Utah from 1858 to 1966.

- Where are the military industries that were in used during World War II?
- Why do you think they were built there?
Photograph: Hill Field, ca. 1940-1945

https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=454575

Women mechanics applying de-icer for WWII bomber planes. For many women jobs at Hill Field were their first outside of the home.
Photograph: Women Worker at Hill Field, ca. 1940-1945


Women sewing United States Air Force coats at Hill Field during World War II. Many women were experienced at sewing from making clothing and linens at home.
Photograph: Women Airplane mechanics Hill Field, ca. 1940-1945


Women repairing an airplane engine at field.

- How do you think women felt about doing this kind of industrial work?
- Do you think they dressed differently for work than at home?
Photograph: Secretary and Soldiers from Kearns Army Air Base, ca. 1944


Women secretaries prepared documents for soldiers to be deployed from Kearns Air Force and Depot. This photograph was taken at a local parade.

- What do you think it was like for women working with mostly men?
- What do you think “I am Releasing a Man for Combat” means?
Photograph: Women Workers Sewing Parachutes at Kearns Army Depot, ca. 1944


Women repairing damaged parachutes at Kearns Army Depot.
Photograph: Women Workers at Tooele Army Depot, ca. 1942-1945


Women workers defusing ammunition in an assembly line workshop at Tooele Army Depot.
Photograph: Women Workers at the C.F Fauntleroy Parachute Company in Manti ca. 1942-1945


Women workers stretching parachutes at the C.F Fauntleroy Parachute Company. Unlike the military installations in northern Utah, the parachute company employed mainly women.
Photograph: Women Workers at the C.F Fauntleroy Parachute Company in Manti ca. 1942-1945


Women wrapping parachutes to be shipped from the Parachute Company of Utah factory in Manti.
Photograph: Women Workers at the C.F Fauntleroy Parachute Company in Manti ca. 1942-1945

Source: “Parachute Making P.4 #4402,” Utah State Historical Society, Textile Industry Collection

Women workers packaging parachutes to be shipped.
Photograph: Volunteers Harvesting World War II Victory Gardens, August 1943


The Salt Lake Tribune published an article in August 1943 about how Victory Gardens contributed to the war effort. Utah women planted large gardens to help feed their communities when food was rationed during the war. This photograph shows women and men volunteering at a victory garden.

- What kinds of people are helping with the garden?
- Why do you think older people helped with the gardens?
- What kind of food do you think they grew?
Photograph: Women Canning the Harvest from World War II Victory Gardens, August 1943


Women held canning and preserving events after they harvested their Victory Gardens. They would then distribute food throughout their communities.
Photograph: Women Canning the Harvest from World War II Victory Gardens, August 1943

Minute Women leaders received salvage (recycling) cards and stickers as credentials from the War Production Board.

- Look at the illustrations on the sticker and salvage card. How did the War Department make women feel like they were part of the war effort?

Our Past, Their Present

Scrap Iron, Steel and Rubber Salvage Programs


Women salvaged scrap iron, steel, and rubber that was used to make weapons and ammunition during the war.

- Look at the illustration above. How does it connect Minute Women’s work to the battlefield?
Salvaging Household Fats


Women were instructed to save a tablespoon a day. Fats were used for explosives, military medicines, and military supplies.
Fats for Victory


Women salvaged household fats that were used to make explosives during the War.

- Read through the fat projects and look at the illustrations. What kinds of fat did Utah women donate?
- How did women use them at home?
- How were fats used for the war effort?
Salvaging Tin Cans


Tin cans that were recycled to make weapons during the war.

- Look at the illustration. Is this how cans are recycled today?
Salvaging Paper


Women salvaged paper that was used as packaging to transport goods during the war.

- Look at the illustration above. How was paper collected and prepared for recycling?
- How was paper used in the war effort?
Tabulation of Utah’s Salvage Reports

All salvage programs were conducted under the direction of the Men’s Salvage Division. However, as the war continued and manpower became critical, Minute Women were assigned many salvage programs—collections and shipping as well as direction of campaigns and disseminating of educational information concerning salvage programs. Minute Women followed through on collections of household fats, tin cans, rags, old clothing, silk and nylon hosiery, as well as waste paper starting in 1944-45.

The following report shows, on a yearly basis, the results of the salvage activities in Utah:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1942</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1945 (6 mos.)</th>
<th>Total Materials Collected in all four years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scrap Iron &amp; Steel</td>
<td>84,000,000 lbs.</td>
<td>64,999,929 lbs.</td>
<td>68,666,344 lbs.</td>
<td>24,542,700 lbs.</td>
<td>242,008,973 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-ferrous Metals</td>
<td>2,300,000 lbs.</td>
<td>2,259,955 lbs.</td>
<td>5,020,199 lbs.</td>
<td>3,234,000 lbs.</td>
<td>12,810,194 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste Paper</td>
<td>7,500,000 lbs.</td>
<td>696,194 lbs.</td>
<td>20,228,000 lbs.</td>
<td>16,024,000 lbs.</td>
<td>46,576,194 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin Cans</td>
<td>200,000 lbs.</td>
<td>2,000,005 lbs.</td>
<td>2,707,091 lbs.</td>
<td>1,997,000 lbs.</td>
<td>6,597,096 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Fats</td>
<td>114,836 lbs.</td>
<td>714,195 lbs.</td>
<td>865,130 lbs.</td>
<td>568,379 lbs.</td>
<td>2,262,538 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>13,004,000 lbs.</td>
<td>40,451 lbs.</td>
<td>36,000 lbs.</td>
<td>36,000 lbs.</td>
<td>13,104,451 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>78,247 lbs.</td>
<td>47,095 lbs.</td>
<td>30,000 lbs.</td>
<td>30,000 lbs.</td>
<td>202,342 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Clothing</td>
<td>83,310 lbs.</td>
<td>83,310 lbs.</td>
<td>83,310 lbs.</td>
<td>83,310 lbs.</td>
<td>333,240 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>2,500 lbs.</td>
<td>2,500 lbs.</td>
<td>2,500 lbs.</td>
<td>2,500 lbs.</td>
<td>10,000 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk and Nylon Hosiery</td>
<td>19,527 lbs.</td>
<td>19,527 lbs.</td>
<td>19,527 lbs.</td>
<td>19,527 lbs.</td>
<td>78,098 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collapsible Tin Tubes</td>
<td>12,057 lbs.</td>
<td>12,057 lbs.</td>
<td>12,057 lbs.</td>
<td>12,057 lbs.</td>
<td>48,228 lbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This report shows the goods that Utah Minute Women salvaged each year.

- Look closely at the report. What types of goods were salvaged?
- Do people recycle these items today?
Oral History: Althea Andelin Roberts describes her experience as a volunteer at Bushnell Hospital


Bushnell was the name of a government hospital during WWII hastily built for wounded soldiers, mostly amputee cases. The hospital also housed some psychiatric units for those who had serious battle fatigue or shell-shock, if there is a such a condition.

The hospital itself, was a series of many yellow buildings looking like barracks. It was located on the far southeast side of Brigham City, Utah on the corner where highway 89 going to Logan intersects the road on the south end of town coming in from Willard. Some of the buildings are still standing in disrepair. Many buildings have been removed. It is now a ghost of a place with withered boards and cracked steps. Not many empty buildings remain but house slivers of memories of those who had anything to do with it.

Even though it was a government hospital, I do not recall many strict rule observances when we visited. We often visited with church groups who sponsored young girls form the Ogden area to travel up in busses and visit the boys who were suffering. They always met in a large recreation room where tables had been placed around the sides. Two boys sat at each table, leaving two empty seats, and the girls sifted through until they found where they wanted to sit, and sat down and talked to the guys. Sometimes there were dances but I don’t recall dancing since most of the patients were amputees. There was always a program that went on and some music. It proved to be a great morale builder.

I met several young men who came into the Ogden area and visited my home. One boy was named Alvin Schultz. I do not recall his injuries or if it was psychosomatic. He never did tell me, however, he had been in battle in Japan and brought home a large Japanese flag with the sun and rays on it. He noticed that our piano bench stool was very worn and he made a cover for it. He brought it for a present. He made it in the rehab craft area. I have used the cover for over sixty years and it is still in pretty good shape. I do not recall where Alvin was from or anything much about him except he was not here long. He came to our house several times over about a period of a couple months.

Another young man had lost a large portion of his skull. He had a metal plate in his head. He showed me the area of cuts and how the plate was inserted. He was a quiet young man and came to our house for Sunday dinner a couple of times.
Oral History: Interview with Stella Underman Geary Guymon


*Stella Underman Geary Guymon recalls her experience as a young women growing up the small town of Huntington, Utah during World War II.*

Dottie: Do you remember understanding what the war was all about? The Nazis? What was going on in Germany and Japan?

Stella: Oh yes. We were real concerned, and we were losing these boys and everything. I think it was a real stressful time for all of us, and with the rationing and all. I remember we were at a party at one of my friends' homes when we heard about V.J. Day and how excited we were. We went up and down the streets honking our horns. I remember we had a little celebration on V.E. Day and I remember some friends said “We didn’t get in our car and didn’t parade up and down the street. We went to town and visited with Myron and Rena Grange because their boy had been killed.” I thought that was such a sweet thoughtful thing to do. The rest of us were celebrating.

Dottie: Who did you know that was killed in the war?

Stella: Pete Grange, and Marie’s husband were killed. She had one child when he left and a baby while he was gone. So when he was killed, she was left with two children. It was a terrible tragedy here in our community.

Dottie: Do you remember if there were any changes when the war began. Were there any changes in your life?

Stella: Yes. The rationing. If your job demanded that you had to drive, then you got more gasoline, and of course, you were very careful with sugar. I don’t remember any of the other things that we had to be careful with.

Dottie: People have told us meat was rationed, and there was no butter. Did you raise your own animals?

Stella: We never had to worry about that. We had our own animals, and churned our own butter, so we didn’t have that to worry about.

Shirley: Do you remember gathering milk-weed pods as part of the war effort?

Stella: No. I remember making bandages. Maureen Nielson was our County Health Nurse, and I remember we made bandages, and we had to send them somewhere. I remember doing that.

Shirley: Do you remember anything else with the Red Cross? Classes or anything?
Stella: We had first aid classes with the Red Cross. I took home nursing from Maureen Nielson and first aid under a mortician. The mortician there in Castle Dale taught a first aid class.

Shirley: Do you remember the Relief Societies? Do you remember any projects for the war effort with the Relief Society?

Stella: I remember under the County Health Nurse, making those bandages.

Dottie: Did you have any German or Japanese people around you? Do you remember how you felt about them? Were they just the enemy or how did you feel about them?

Stella: I guess we thought toward them hatefully. I don’t remember. I think we felt more resentful toward the Germans. I remember feeling ill toward them and I guess we did toward the Japanese too.

Shirley: Do you remember anything about the internment camps like Topaz?

Stella: We were aware of them. Then after the war was over, we found out what they had been through and all. That was awful but I guess they thought they had to do it.

Dottie: Do you remember how you felt when the atom bomb was dropped?

Stella: Yeah. I guess we were upset over it. I thought it was so terrible that so many innocent people were killed from them. We didn’t get the feedback from T.V. in those days like we do now. Gosh, we live the war every day, and we didn’t have that feedback in those days.