

Wartime Employment, Production, and Conservation

See a lesson plan related to this material on the Wisconsin Historical Society website.

Wisconsin World War II Stories: The Home Front

Wartime Work Questions



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Study the following questions in preparation for your research. Read all the questions, to locate questions and resources that fit your specific project. You should add your own questions as you learn more about your subject.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIES

1. What was produced in your business or industry?
2. How did it contribute to the war effort?
3. Did wartime production require re-tooling from a previous consumer-oriented production or was this a new business?
4. Did this business win any awards?

Web site resources:

- Background information and primary source documents on WW II home front businesses
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-038/?action=more_essay
- Wisconsin Maritime Museum at Manitowoc
<http://www.wimaritimemuseum.org/sub.htm>
- National Park Service site on the USS Cobia
http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/butowsky1/cobia.htm
- Women who worked in defense industry
<http://www.redstone.army.mil/history/women/welcome.html>
- The history of Badger Ordnance Works with photographs
http://www.uwalumni.com/onwisconsin/2004_summer/pdf/ReclaimingBadger.pdf

WORKERS: RACE, GENDER, AGE

1. Who worked in this business (males/females; people of color; age range; marital status; number of employees)?
2. What opportunities arose for people previously excluded from this workforce?
3. What kinds of discrimination continued despite the wartime changes?
4. What new race or gender issues emerged as a result of demands for wartime employment?

Web site resources:

- “Rosie the Riveters of the B-17”
<http://www.b17.org/history/rosieriveter.asp>
- “Equal Pay for Equal Work: The War Labor Board on Gender Inequality” text
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5144>
- National D-Day Museum, Student Fact Sheet on Women in WWII
http://www.ddaymuseum.org/education/factsheets_women.html
- “The War Labor Board Insists on Equal Pay for Black Workers” text
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5145>
- Rosie the Riveter photos and images from the Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/126_rosi.html
- Executive Order 8802: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry, 1941
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=72&page=transcript>

- “Rosie the Riveter: Real Women Workers in World War II” by Sheridan Harvey
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/journey/rosie-transcript.html>
- View photographs and read captions for #233-260
http://www.archives.gov/research_room/research_topics/african_americans_during_wwii/african_americans_during_world_war_2.html#home
- “American Women in a World at War,” (pages 7-12) “African Americans and World War II,” (pages 13-17), and “Rosie the Riveter Remembers” (pages 25-29)
<http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/ww2homefront/ww2homefront.pdf>
- Excerpts from *Voices of the Wisconsin Past: Women Remember the War 1941-1945*
http://wisconsinhistory.org/publications/oss/wmn_remember.asp

WORKERS: PAY AND UNION ACTIVITIES

1. What was the rate of pay?
2. How did it compare with pre-war years?
3. What hours were typical?
4. Was there overtime (voluntary or required)?
5. Did the employees form a union? If so, were there conflicts between management and employees?
6. How were issues of hours and working conditions settled?
7. What, if any, wartime regulations affected union activity?
8. How did unionization affect individuals and the community as a whole?

Web site resources:

- “Cartoonists on the Picket Line: The Walt Disney Studio Strike” text
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5161>
- “Roll Hitler Out and Roll the Union In: The No-Strike Pledge” text
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5146>
- “A Square Deal?: The Michigan CIO Debates the No-Strike Pledge” text
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5147>

INDIVIDUALS AND THE COMMUNITY

1. What personal sacrifices were individuals in the community expected to make in order to help the war effort?
2. What items were rationed? Saved? Hoarded?
3. What shortages existed?
4. How did these things affect daily life?
5. What short and long term changes occurred as a result of wartime shortages and rationing?

Web site resources:

- “Aluminum for Defense” text and audio
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5158>
- “Fibber McGee and Molly on Mileage Rationing” text and audio
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5157>

- Background information and primary source documents on rationing
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-038/?action=more_essay
- Posters showing ways in which civilians can help the war effort
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=4762&formatNumber=0202000175>
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=4761&formatNumber=0202000174>
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=4760&formatNumber=0202000173>
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=4745&formatNumber=0202000167>
- Conservation during World War II
<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/conserve.html>
 “Produce for Victory” Posters on the American Home Front
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/victory>
- Specifically listen to the interviews with Nora Watson, Parts 1-7, and Dellie Hahne and Sarah Killingsworth, Parts 1-3, on life during and after World War II
<http://www.studsterkel.org/gwar.php>

See more classroom materials and lesson plans on the Wisconsin Historical Society website.