



Cincinnati History Museum Gallery Guide for *Cincinnati Goes to War*

This exhibit allows the visitor to explore Greater Cincinnati's contribution to the American effort in World War II. Three sections, *Doing Your Bit*, *Plowshares Into Swords* and *Serving Uncle Sam*, show how the lives of all Cincinnatians were touched by the war. The exhibit begins with a multi-level view of Cincinnati on the eve of America's entry into the war and shows how the city and the nation moved from neutrality to preparations for fighting. Numerous artifacts, including a restored streetcar, tell stories of everyday life during the war for citizens and businesses on the home front as well as for those who served in the military. Visitors may also encounter interpreters who portray Cincinnati civilians and military personnel.

Visitors learn about the active role Cincinnatians took in preparing for war and then working towards an Allied victory, why and how food, gas and other products were rationed by the government, and how people on the home front supported the war effort. They can also learn about the opportunities for military service, the role of the government in financing and running the war effort and about the post-war period.

Doing Your Bit

Themes

- World War II was a "Total War" that impacted every day life for most Americans.
- The war gave civilians of all ages a variety of opportunities to assist in the war effort.
- Citizens bought war bonds in order to help finance the war.

Background Information

World War II was a "total war" in which every member of American society from children to grandparents was affected by the war. There were shortages of rubber, gasoline, manpower, many foodstuffs (meat, sugar, canned goods), building materials and consumer and luxury goods. "Vital materials" including iron and copper went first to the military and war production. Mostly, these shortages were inconveniences, but in some circumstances, they created actual hardships or forced people to change the ways they carried on their daily lives.

While most Americans tried to keep up as much of their normal routine as possible, the war did cause changes and tensions in daily life. When the military or war work sent a family member far away, those who stayed behind had to cope with loneliness and worry for the one who had gone. Men cooked meals and children cared for younger siblings. Women held war jobs—often with irregular hours—and tried to raise families while

husbands were away. The housing shortage meant that many people had to move in with parent, in laws or friends.

Facing these problems in a positive way and cooperating with the government's systems for dealing with shortages was one way that Americans could contribute to the war effort. It was considered patriotic to accept rationing of food, gasoline, tires and clothing (and to refuse to participate in the black-market by paying above government-established price ceilings or buying under-the-table); car-pool or use public transit; work extra hours; learn new recipes for meatless or wheat-less meals; do without amenities such as a new car or stockings and grow a "victory garden."

People on the home front could participate in the war effort even more directly in a number of ways. They could serve in civil defense to prepare for possible enemy attack by "watching for the enemy;" collect war materials including metal, rubber, cooking grease (for making glycerine for explosives), and paper, and buy war bonds or stamps (the latter in smaller denominations that children could afford).

Taxes and the money raised by the sale of war bonds helped the government finance the cost of America's participation in World War II. Over 8,500 volunteer "bondadiers" went door-to-door; Cincinnati public school children bought defense bonds on Tuesdays; workers signed up for payroll deduction plans; and businesses worked "Buy Bonds" reminders into their advertising. By the end of the war, area residents and institutions had purchased over \$1.7 billion worth of war bonds.

Cincinnatians supported American servicemen and women through activities that included volunteering for the United Service Organization (USO) and Red Cross. Created in 1941, the USO took primary responsibility for housing, feeding and entertaining military personnel traveling between home, training camps and assignments. Cincinnati had 10 USO locations; the one at Union Terminal alone served over three million troops by the end of the war. Volunteers for the Red Cross did hospital work, led blood drives, collected clothing and medical supplies, rolled bandages, knitted socks, sweaters and other items, packed Christmas gift boxes and more.

Americans also gave aid to people in Europe whose lives were turned upside down by the war. With either their time or money, they provided support and services to the war refugees from overseas, Japanese American internees from the West Coast, citizens of the Allied nations under attack from the enemy, or the disrupted families of war workers and service men in this community (via the numerous social service agencies supported by War Chest drives).

Vocabulary:

Total War – war that affected the lives of all Americans whether they were civilians or in the military

Civil defense – civilian volunteer support for defense-related activities

Salvage drive – the collection of scrap metal, rubber, grease and paper in order to expand the country's supplies of war materials.

Rationing – limits imposed by the government on purchases of food, gas, and other consumer goods that were in short supply

War bonds – government bonds sold to individuals, banks and businesses in order to finance the war.

Victory garden – government-sponsored home gardening program to encourage citizens to grow their own food in order to ease shortages

Focus questions:

1. Name two jobs of the Civil Defense.
2. What kinds of materials were collected in salvage drives?
3. What kinds of things were rationed?
4. What were “vital materials?”

Plowshares Into Swords

Themes

- The mobilization of American industry was a principal factor behind the Allied victory in World War II.
- In an industrial center such as Cincinnati, the war effort involved manufacturing, transportation and communications networks.
- War production required new plants, conversion to new products and different roles for women and minorities in the workforces.

Background

Well before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt’s administration began planning and implementing the first phases of preparation for war. To provide the large amounts of equipment, food and munitions that would be needed for global conflict, the United States government had to mobilize, expand and control production facilities, sources of raw materials and labor, and distribution networks. This work was overseen by the Army’s Ordnance Department, the part of the Army that was responsible for testing, approving, maintaining and to a large extent, producing the materiel that would actually be used in the fighting. To make this task manageable, the Ordnance Department divided the country into districts, each of which covered parts of several states. Because of Cincinnati’s diverse industrial base, location and pool of skilled workers, one of the most important districts was the one headquartered in Cincinnati.

By 1938, the Ordnance Department had begun to distribute a growing number of production jobs to privately owned plants. After war was declared in December 1941, the pace of industrial mobilization became even more intense. Many Cincinnati area companies got government contracts to continue making the same kinds of products they made in peacetime. Others had military contracts that required them to produce items that were sometimes very different from what they made previously. In a number of cases, companies produced some of both kinds of products. A large number of Cincinnati companies were often subcontracted to produce a part or small component of a product that was assembled somewhere else. In addition, a few completely new plants were established in the Cincinnati area.

At the peak of war production, more than 180,000 residents of Greater Cincinnati were employed in about 2,000 different manufacturing facilities, ranging from a husband and wife team with one machine tool in their garage to the sprawling Wright Engine Plant with a workforce of 35,000 people.

Cincinnati companies and workers also made contributions in areas besides manufacturing. Communications industries mobilized to help disseminate information and build morale. The transportation industries became an important link in a national and ultimately international network for moving everything from personnel to the smallest sub-contracted nut and bolt to fully assembled tanks, planes and ships.

The mobilization of America's industries was not without problems. Many smaller companies that could not get government contracts, manpower, or raw materials either had to adapt to different product lines or go out of business. Labor relations were often strained for a number of reasons, resulting in strikes and worker dissatisfaction in many plants. Production difficulties or poor quality products often accompanied rapid expansion.

Despite these delays and difficulties, the country's war production effort was, on the whole, remarkably successful. To a great extent, it was American war material and supplies, in the hands of the American armed forces and their allies that defeated the Axis powers. At the same time, the large numbers of government contracts, which amounted to approximately five billion dollars worth of orders in the Greater Cincinnati area alone, significantly bolstered the economies of American communities.

Vocabulary:

Ordnance District – an administrative section of the country created by the Ordnance Department in order to more effectively manage the production of war material.

Mobilization – organization and adaptation of industry the economy in preparation for war.

Focus Questions:

1. Name three companies that converted to wartime production. What products did they make before the war? What did they make during the war?
2. Why were Cincinnati's transportation industries important?
3. What was glycerine used for?

Serving Uncle Sam

Themes

- The federal government needed millions of men and women to wage war on an unparalleled scale.
- People were needed to serve in the armed forces and to staff the numerous agencies of a growing federal bureaucracy.
- Cincinnatians in the military held both combat and support roles.

Background

The war effort required large numbers of Americans from every community across the country to enter directly into federal service. Cincinnati was no exception. Many people from this area served in federal agencies, the diplomatic corps, or in some other capacity in the growing national government. Some Cincinnatians were employed in federally owned research and production facilities engaged in defense projects. Others were in

the Merchant Marine, working on ships leased by the government to carry supplies and troops. Nearly 100,000 Greater Cincinnatians served in the armed forces during the war.

These people had a wide range of jobs, some of which kept them close to home, while others necessitated traveling to other parts of the country or the world. Those who went into federal service went through a variety of experiences. The type of service the person went into, the particular jobs they were assigned, where they were sent and their own personal background, determined the nature of these experiences.

Cincinnatians in Federal Agencies and Departments

America's involvement in World War II necessitated an expansion of the federal government and the employment of many additional people to carry out its activities. Federal agencies and departments—some of which were newly created because of a particular wartime situation—addressed many different concerns. These included labor and material supply problems, organizing war production and transportation, propaganda, security and intelligence, housing and childcare for war worker families and many other matters related to the war effort. The ranks of these agencies were filled with Americans drawn from all over the country, including the Cincinnati area.

Some of the Cincinnatians who participated in the national government's attempts to address wartime problems were "dollar-a-year men." These were businessmen who took a temporary federal post for an annual salary of one dollar, while still receiving their regular paycheck from their peacetime employer. Other individuals, including Charles Taft II and Theodore Berry from this area, who had a political or legal background were also called upon to serve the wartime government. Cincinnati city councilman Charles P. Taft II was in Washington, D.C. from 1941 through 1946. He held posts in various agencies that helped communities coordinate community services such as water, health care and welfare. Providing childcare for war workers was a particular concern for Taft. Theodore M. Berry, a lawyer, served briefly as Liaison Officer for the Office of Facts and Figures, the federal agency that used speeches, articles and newsreels to explain the government's war aims and goals to the American public.

In addition to the people who went to Washington to work for an agency or department, Cincinnatians were hired to work in different parts of the country or "in the field." One of those who did so was Dick Guggenheim, who worked in the Mid-West for the Department of Justice as a special agent investigating the activities of pro-Nazi and communist aliens.

U.S. Army

The service branch with largest personnel requirements was the U.S Army, which included the U.S Army Air Force. Almost 70,000 Greater Cincinnati men—including the bulk of those who were drafted—and about 4,000 women served in these parts of the armed forces.

By late 1941, Selective Service and the mobilization the National Guard had expanded the Army from a peacetime force of several hundred thousand men to a force of over 1.6 million. After the United States declared war, the Army's growth accelerated. By early 1945, some eight million men and women were serving in the Army.

Army air and ground units fought from the Aleutian Islands off Alaska to Europe and North Africa, and from Asia to islands in the Pacific. Among the Cincinnatians who saw

combat in Europe and North Africa were Ted Combs and Bill Doepke. They were members of a tank crew with the Third Army, commanded by General George Patton. Combs, who had been Patton's driver before the war, was seriously wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. Another Cincinnati resident, Bill Nimmo, worked his way up to Second Lieutenant in the First Infantry Division—the "Big Red One"—and went overseas in 1942. The First Division took part in the invasion of North Africa; Nimmo was wounded by an enemy mortar round while commanding machine gun troops during a German attack.

The American military assigned members of minority groups to segregated units. African Americans and Japanese Americans served in such units in both combat and support roles. All-black units were present in every theater of the war; all Japanese-American units fought mainly in Italy and Europe. Cincinnati William Jones, who was in the Pacific with the all-black 93rd division, later commented that his men often had to fight the members of an all-white division from the South as well as the Japanese.

About 4,000 women from the Cincinnati area were recruited as members of the Women's Army Corps (WACs). They were given support roles in order to free men for combat assignments. Some, like Ruth Boenke, who was a link trainer instructor at an airbase in Florida, served stateside. Others, like Eileen Lutz, went further afield. After enlisting as in the WAC in 1943, Lutz worked as a payroll and finance clerk in Washington, D.C., then volunteered for overseas duty. She spent much of 1944 and early 1945 performing clerical duties at the army base in Finschhafen, New Guinea.

For every fighting soldier, the Army employed about five people in support roles, which meant that only about half of the men who were trained to fight ever actually saw combat. Others, like Sid Well, who was drafted late in the war, were never called on to fight because by the time they completed their training and arrived in Europe, Germany had surrendered.

Army support troops, including administrative, medical, supply, engineering, intelligence, training and transport units, were likewise assigned to duties both at home and around the world. Cincinnati Sam Ward worked as a clerk-typist at air bases in four different states from 1942 to 1945. Catharine Girmann served as a medical/surgical technician at an Army Air Force hospital in California, until over-staffing of AAF medical facilities led to her being reassigned as a teletype operator. William Theobald worked on psychological units at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri and Ft. Thomas, Kentucky, aiding patients suffering from battle fatigue. Oscar Schmidt served in the Ordnance Department, helping solve problems with artillery pieces in North Africa and Italy.

Caring for the sick and wounded was a particularly specialized type of support job in the army. More than 300 Cincinnati doctors and several hundred nurses and medical technicians from this area served in army medical facilities in both theatres of the war. Nurses and doctors from Cincinnati General Hospital made up the bulk of the staff of the 25th General field Hospital. Dr. Albert King spent 28 months as a surgeon on New Caledonia and also served as the chief medical officer for General Alexander Patch.

Some medical personnel found themselves very close to, or sometimes on, the front lines. Herb Pastor, for example, trained as a cook but was assigned to an ambulance unit. When his unit was sent to Europe, he found himself both cooking and helping carry stretchers during the fighting in Normandy and across France.

U.S. Army Air Force

The U.S. Army Air Force was not an independent branch during World War II, but its members had a very distinct identity and a sense that they had a special role in the war. Many Army Air Force pilots, crewmen and support personnel were recruited in the Cincinnati area because the universities, Civilian Pilot Training Program, vocational schools and machine shops had created a pool of individuals with the skills needed by the AAF.

The AAF did a variety of jobs and flew many types of planes—transport, observation, bombers and fighters, to name a few. Transport planes dropped airborne troops and carried personnel and supplies to where they were needed. Bombers struck Axis cities, factories, transportation lines and fortifications. Observation and weather planes gathered information needed to plan missions. Fighters like the P-51 supported ground troops and protected Allied supply lines and bombers on missions.

One of the most important functions of airpower during World War II was disrupting Axis supply systems. Cincinnatians flew in combat both as pilots and aircrew. Herbert Grote was a member of the 38th Bombardment group that struck at enemy shipping and bases in the Pacific. Jim Geier, a member of the family that founded the Cincinnati Milling Machine Company, flew as a crewman in the Pacific. Tom Harris, another Cincinnati, was shot down over Yugoslavia while serving as a bombardier in a B-24 and was a German POW until the US Third Army liberated his camp in 1945.

Many AAF fliers—including a number of men and women from the Cincinnati area—had vital non-combatant roles. Former University of Cincinnati engineering student Robert Whitehead, made courier flights and was also a test pilot. Another Cincinnati resident, Helene Schwarberg, was one of the women who flew in the Air Transport Command, delivering newly completed aircraft to their bases.

A number of the pilots recruited in Cincinnati were African Americans, and consequently were assigned to the all-black aviation program at Tuskegee Institute. John Lehr, a University of Cincinnati student with a strong interest in aviation, applied to the pilot training program at the Tuskegee Institute. Despite a hard program and difficult circumstances—racism and discrimination were prevalent in the army at that time—Lehr received his commission and became a fighter pilot in an all-black unit. As part of the 332nd fighter group, he flew combat missions over Italy, Germany and Austria throughout 1944.

Army Air Force personnel also worked on the ground to maintain and prepare the aircraft for their missions. Many Cincinnatians, such as Art Baumann and Charlie Schmidt, were assigned to such roles because of a background in engineering gained in local schools or experience with machining.

U.S. Navy

Next to the Army, the Navy received the largest number of servicemen from the Cincinnati area. The Navy worked in all theatres of the war moving supplies and troops, taking part in assaults, bombarding enemy positions, sending planes from carriers to attack land and sea targets, guarding convoys, fighting enemy warships and disrupting enemy shipping.

After joining the Navy, men trained for duty on vessels ranging from massive carriers and battleships to small torpedo boats. Cincinnati Russell Schuster served as the executive officer on a PT boat that guarded American landing craft during the Normandy invasion and later captained his own boat in the South Pacific. Jim Coomer, a young East End resident who talked his parents into letting him join the Navy at age 16, was on a ship that coordinated communications during island assaults. When his ship was in battle, however, he saw little of it because his situation was far down in the hull. Bob Cunningham left Mt. Adams to serve on transports and LCT's in the Pacific, the Mediterranean, and the Indian Ocean.

Early in the war, service opportunities for minorities and women were extremely limited. At first, black men were restricted to support work as cooks and stewards. As Navy manpower needs increased opportunities for African American men increased and enabled them to become officers. Wilbur Jones, who became an officer on the USS *Baltimore* in the Pacific during the latter part of the war, was one Cincinnati who was able to take advantage of the new opportunities. Female Navy personnel (WAVEs) performed clerical and administrative support duties.

U.S. Marines

The Marine Corps had a major role in land combat in the Pacific as the Allies attacked and re-took Japanese-held islands. Units saw hard fighting and often suffered high casualty rates in the campaigns for the Solomon and Marshall Islands, Guam, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The Marines mounted amphibious assaults and, with the Navy, supplied fliers for the Pacific theater. Cincinnati Charles Lenzer, Herbert Lipps and Arthur Spiegel serviced as Marine infantrymen; Spiegel went on to fly observation and scout planes.

U.S. Coast Guard

Although the Navy carried out most of the US military activity at sea during World War II, the Coast Guard also played an important role. Coast Guard cutters patrolled the East coast to protect Allied shipping from German U-boats; its pilots guided new warships from inland shipyards to the ocean. Guardsmen on active duty could be assigned to duties, such as helping man landing craft during amphibious landings, which exposed them to enemy fire.

The Coast Guard used no draftees and usually took volunteers only if they had some useful background or skill. Robert Schletker of Ludlow, Kentucky, was accepted because he had experience working on the Ohio River and was recommended by his father, a long-time member of the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard also accepted women to serve in an auxiliary service (SPARs) to perform administrative jobs and free men for other duties.

U.S. Merchant Marine

The federal government leased private merchant vessels to assist the Navy with the job of transporting all the food, fuel, weapons, vehicles, planes and other supplies needed overseas. The U.S. Maritime Administration helped recruit and train civilian seamen to handle these ships.

Serving in the Merchant Marine was a crucial and often dangerous job, as convoys were targets for enemy submarines and warplanes. Freighters frequently transported ammunition and explosives for the battlefronts. Francis Apple, a Cincinnati resident,

regularly sailed on tankers loaded with airplane fuel. If a torpedo or bomb hit a vessel with such a load, explosions and fire would likely kill most of the crew.

Once Japan surrendered, America's 12 million military personnel did not all come home at once. The military had post-war duties so each soldier needed to accumulate the right number of "points" to be eligible for discharge. Each individual received points based on time spent in the service and whether or not he had a spouse and children back home. To accumulate enough points, some soldiers remained in the military for several months or even years after the fighting ended.

Some area veterans ended their trip home at the bus depot, Lunken Airport, or even the new Greater Cincinnati Airport. For most, the journey ended where it had begun—at Union Terminal.

Vocabulary:

Dollar-a-year man – businessman who temporarily worked for the federal government for a salary of one dollar a year while also receiving a salary from his employer.

Theatre – an area of the world where fighting was taking place.

Support personnel – people assigned to jobs that did not involve fighting.

Focus Questions:

1. How many branches of military service did the United States have during World War II?
2. What was the Merchant Marine?
3. What did Marines do?
4. Name two Cincinnatians who worked in Federal agencies during the war.