

# Women in the War



Life on the Home Front and Overseas

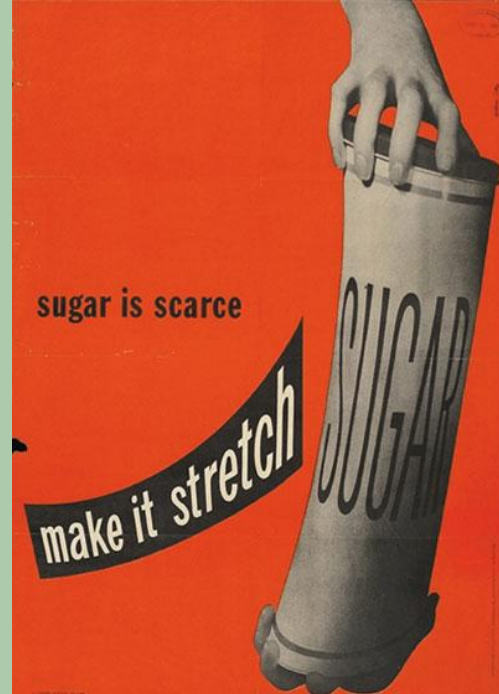
# Women and the war effort

- Because of labor shortages, women were needed to work in defense industries, civil service, and the Armed Forces
- Govt. campaigns targeted women who had never before worked
  - Made working women appear glamorous.
  - Said that a woman's femininity would not be sacrificed by working.



# Messages for women:

- Encouraged women to support the war effort by:
  - Enlisting in the military
  - Working in defense industries or other available jobs
  - Following rationing rules
  - Conserving food
  - Buying war bonds



# Rosie the Riveter

- *Who is Rosie the Riveter?*


- Rosie was a fictional young woman who worked in a defense plant during the war and supported her boyfriend, Charlie, who was serving in the Marines.
- She was first called Rosie by Norman Rockwell on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in May of 1943.
- Rosie posters urged women into the workplace.



- Before the war:

- Most women who worked were single and young. Society disapproved of married women working, even in Depression times.
- Women's role had traditionally been in the home, taking care of the children.
- Most people, husbands included, didn't believe that women were smart enough or strong enough to hold down a real job.



A woman with a dark headscarf and a blue work shirt is smiling while operating a large industrial machine. The machine has a prominent lamp and various rollers. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“I’ve found the job  
where I fit best!”

**FIND YOUR WAR JOB**  
**In Industry – Agriculture – Business**

**VICTORY WAITS  
ON YOUR FINGERS—**



**KEEP 'EM FLYING, MISS U.S.A.**

UNCLE SAM NEEDS STENOGRAPHERS! • GET CIVIL SERVICE INFORMATION AT YOUR LOCAL POST OFFICE  
U.S. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Save his life...  
and find  
your own**



**BE A NURSE**

**WRITE TO STUDENT NURSES, 1790 BROADWAY, N. Y. C.**

OWI Form No. 41. Additional copies may be obtained upon request from the Director of Public Inquiries, Office of War Information, Washington, D.C.

# Wartime Job Opportunities

- As men were drafted into the war, many factory jobs opened up.
  - News of good-paying jobs brought women who already worked in traditional “women’s” jobs (clerks, secretaries, and household servants) into these new higher-paying factory jobs.
  - These women weren’t enough to fill the number of jobs available so:
    - The Office of War Information launched a campaign to fill the rest of the positions with married and older women.
    - Govt recruited women to the workforce, drawing them from their homes, telling them it was their patriotic duty to serve.





# Wartime Work Experience

- The job boom was *welcomed by women*. The Depression left many families financially devastated. For those families that were hit hardest during the Depression, *the chance for a wife to earn a paycheck while her husband was getting his overseas pay was a lucky break*.
- On the whole, women found many perks to working:
  - *Money* they earned allowed them to save for after the war, etc.
  - Many found *the work more exciting* than what they were doing before
  - Others felt they were making an important contribution to the war effort – *doing their patriotic duty*





By 1944, nearly 19.4 million women were working.



More than half of all American women worked at some point during the war.

THE SATURDAY EVENING  
**POST**  
SEPTEMBER 4, 1948 10¢



Examine the Norman Rockwell painting. The image is titled “Rosie to the Rescue.”

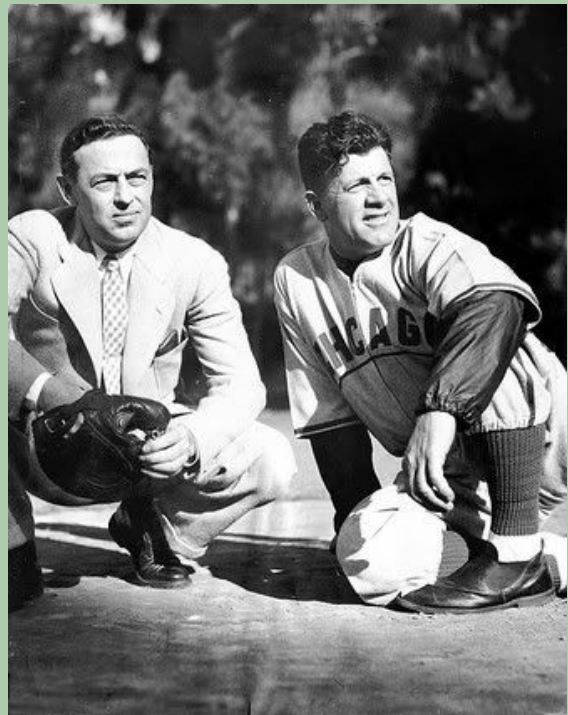
What do you think is the artist’s meaning? How is she coming to the rescue?



# All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League



- By 1942 many minor league teams had disbanded because their male players had left to fight in WWII. Major League Baseball Parks had nobody to play.
- Philip K. Wrigley, (the chewing gum mogul) who had inherited the Chicago Cubs franchise from his father, came up with a solution. Wrigley suggested that they create a women's softball league.
- The league started in the spring of 1943.





- Girls were expected to be highly skilled players *and* comply with high moral standards and rules of conduct
- High priority was placed on maintaining femininity
- Uniforms: one-piece short-skirt flared dress (designed after figure skating costumes), satin tights, knee-high baseball socks, and baseball hat – each city had its own patch on front of uniform
- Women were required to attend night classes after practice where they were taught proper etiquette for all situations, personal hygiene, manners/social skills, dress code, and how to select clothes, sit, walk, speak, apply makeup





# Rules of Conduct...a few examples...

- ALWAYS appear in **feminine attire** when not actively engaged in practice or playing ball. This regulation continues through the playoffs for all, even though your team is not participating. **AT NO TIME MAY A PLAYER APPEAR IN THE STANDS IN HER UNIFORM, OR WEAR SLACKS OR SHORTS IN PUBLIC.**
- **Boyish bobs are not permissible** and in general your hair should be well groomed at all times with longer hair preferable to **short hair cuts**. Lipstick should always be on.
- All social engagements, eating quarters, and living spaces must be approved by **chaperone**. Legitimate requests for dates can be allowed by chaperones.
- Players will not be allowed to drive their **cars past their city's limits** without the special permission of their manager. Each team will travel as a unit via method of travel provided for the league.
- **FINES OF FIVE DOLLARS FOR FIRST OFFENSE, TEN DOLLARS FOR SECOND, AND SUSPENSION FOR THIRD, WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE IMPOSED FOR BREAKING ANY OF THE ABOVE RULES.**

- Image of women changed was by the war - Rosie the Riveter cultivated an image of strength & femininity.
- Rationing, lack of available luxury items forced people to spend time close to home – baseball was a popular form of entertainment.
- The AAGPBL capitalized on patriotism – promoted the idea of the “All American Girl” (symbol of girl next door in spikes)
  - Girls formed a V for victory before each game down baselines after Star Spangled Banner played.
  - Visited wounded veterans in Army Hospitals.
  - Played exhibition games to support the Red Cross & armed forces.



# Legacy of the League

- The League operated from 1943 to 1954.
- Women's professional baseball became popular in the United States in the post-war era.
  - Even after World War II, the league continued to blossom.
  - Soon, the AAGPBL host cities had Junior Leagues for young girls 14 years and older.
  - An estimated 3 thousand people attended each women's baseball game.



*Dottie Green (at right)*



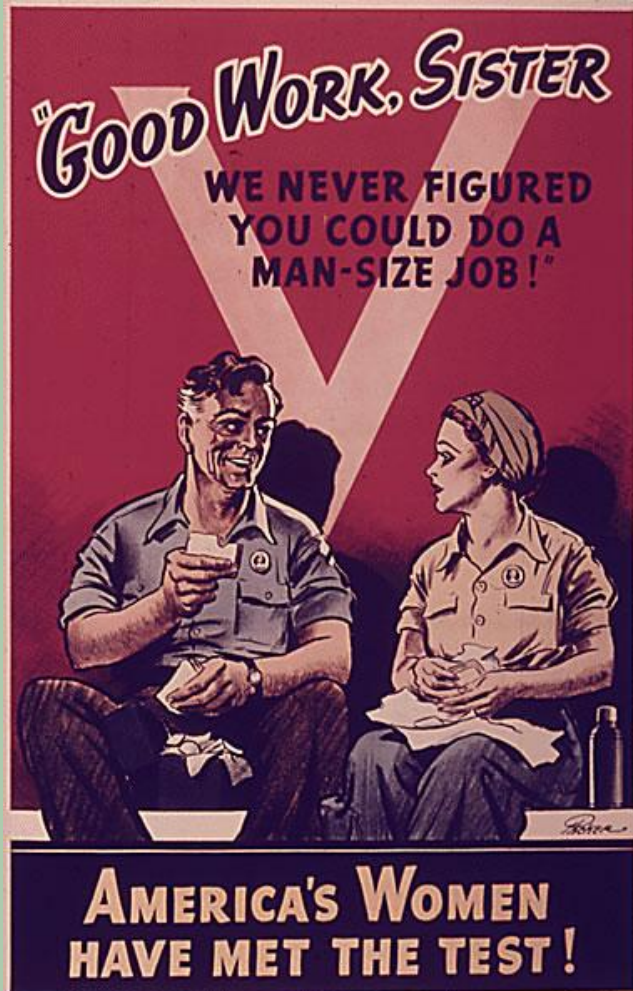
- The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League gave over **600 women athletes** the opportunity to play at the professional level.

# Problems for Working Women

- Many still faced *hostile work environments, particularly in fields dominated by men.*
- *Women of color often faced discrimination in applying for defense jobs (which were better paying).*
- Many *worried about leaving their children.* Child-care was limited at the time, and women were still responsible for the duties at home and caring for the children.
- Women *earned significantly less than men* doing the same jobs. They started at lower positions and advancement was extremely slow.



# After the War: The movement to “Demobilize” Women



- WWII gave women a chance to try hundreds of typically male dominated jobs.
- Once the war was over, the govt. & businesses told women to return to their homes and go back to the “traditional” ways of living.
- Returning GIs wanted their jobs back and felt that they deserved them after fighting in the war. They also wanted to go back to the norm they were used to before the war (wives at home taking care of their children, men off at work.)
- *How did women feel about being sent back to the kitchen?*
  - According to a survey done in Springfield, Massachusetts, 81% of women said they hoped to continue working after the war. Within one week of VJ, every woman had been fired.
  - Similarly, a survey in Detroit found that 72% of women workers who had been laid off after the war wanted to work but couldn't find a job.

# How did women respond?

- Although many of the jobs held by women during WWII were initially returned to men after the war ended, the workforce was never the same again.
- Women discovered a new sense of pride, dignity and independence in their work and their lives.

