

Section 4

North Carolina Again Helps Win the World War

This section will help you meet the following objectives:

8.6.02 Describe major events and military engagements of World War II and evaluate the impact of the war on North Carolina.

8.6.03 Examine the significance of key ideas and individuals associated with World War II.

8.6.04 Assess the impact of World War II on the roles of different groups in North Carolina.

As you read, look for:

- the contributions North Carolina made toward the war effort
- the impact of World War II on North Carolina
- vocabulary term **rationing**

In 1940, a whole generation of North Carolinians had grown up and made lives with industry, segregation, graded schools, and automobiles as normal. Hundreds of women, for example, took jobs in downtown stores and kept them for decades. Miss Julia Wheeler had been working



for a bank in Hickory for fifty years. In her spare time, “she had taught Hickory to type,” said her boss. College graduates often held the same office job for all of their work lives. Life seemed more stable. For example, while a flood had devastated the Catawba River valley in 1916, a similar flood was kept in check by the chain of Duke Power dams. Where towns were flooded, city governments responded quickly. Tax money seemed more wisely spent, once the Great Depression had lifted. That made state residents more in tune with international events. When their industrially based way of life was threatened, these North Carolinians were quick to do their patriotic duty: to sacrifice and fight for what they had.

Going To War, Again

World War II in some ways continued the issues of the first world war. The main contenders were still the European countries—Great Britain and Germany. France and Russia were still involved. Russia, now known as the Soviet Union, switched sides during the war.

What was new was the bigger role played by Japan, which wanted more influence over the countries of Asia and their natural resources. What was also new was the determination of President Roosevelt and his allies to have the United States play a more decisive role in the outcome of the war. Roosevelt particularly used federal money to produce industrial goods needed by the British and their French allies in fighting the Germans.

Once the war started, Congress also took two actions that immediately impacted North Carolinians. First, it started another military draft, which put more of the state’s young men in the armed services. Second, Congress extended the income tax to most Americans, in order to pay for increased federal spending. In 1940, for the first time, most North Carolinians had to pay income taxes.

North Carolina’s Mobilization

World War II officially began in Europe in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. President Roosevelt declared that the United States would remain neutral, but he looked for ways to help the Allies. Meanwhile, relations between the United States and Japan worsened. After Japan invaded French Indochina (today’s Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) in 1941, President Roosevelt seized all Japanese property in the United States.



Opposite page: Adolf Hitler returned to Germany in triumph after France fell to the German army in June 1940. Many Germans believed Hitler would restore the power and prestige they had lost after World War I. **Above:** These German troops were sightseeing in Paris.



Above: On December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes launched from carriers attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

North Carolinians were as shocked as anyone in America when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. Hundreds of North Carolinians were on the ships that were sunk. On December 8, the United States declared war on Japan and entered the war. A few days later, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

The United States armed itself and fought a war in both Europe and Asia. North Carolinians quickly felt the brunt of the war. German submarines ambushed hundreds of ships off Cape Hatteras. Thousands of sailors joined the long tradition of being shipwrecked on the Outer Banks. The injured were treated at hospitals in Morehead City and New Bern.

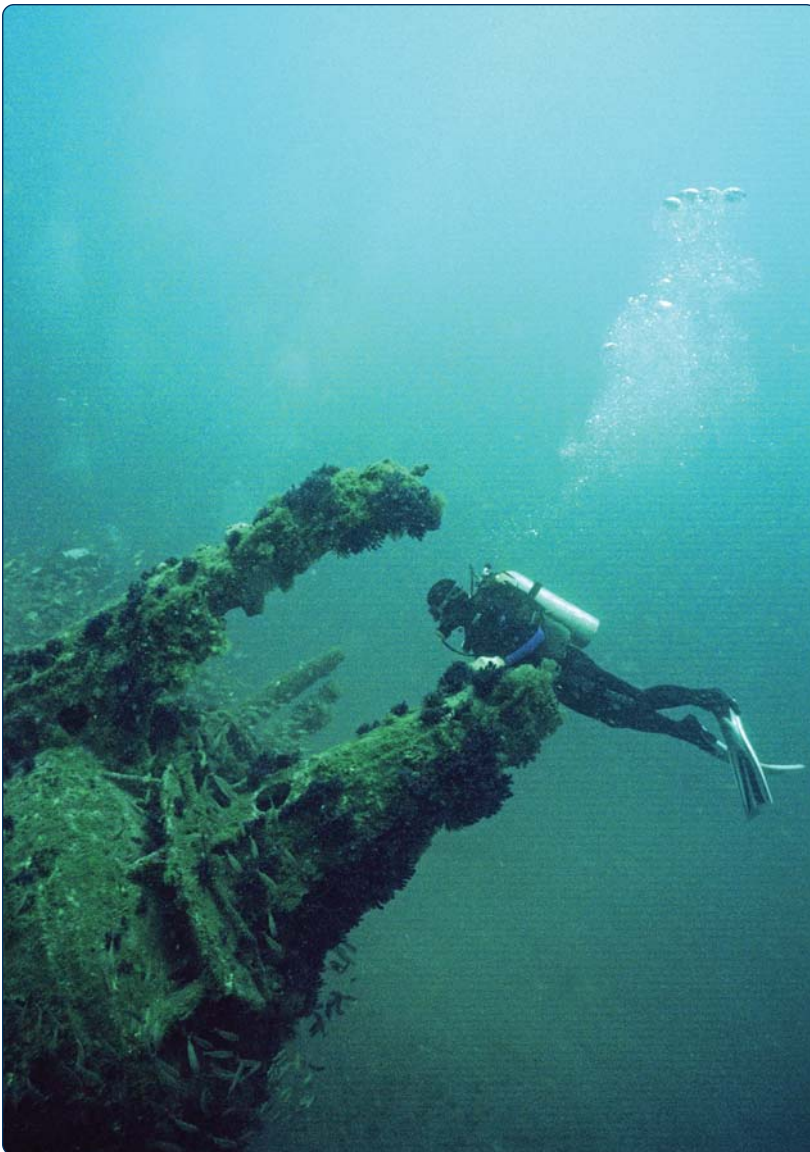
More than three hundred thousand North Carolinians—whites and blacks, men and women—served in the armed services during World War II. Unlike the Civil War, where neighborhoods sent companies to the war, individual North Carolinians were put into military units with people from around the country. Thus, North Carolinians ended up fighting in every place the war was fought, from the Burma Road that crossed the Asian mountains to the Normandy invasion of the coast of France.

Some Tar Heels, like Colonel Charles M. McCorkle, whose ancestors had fought at Kings Mountain, became heroes. McCorkle, an Army Air Force flyer, shot down five enemy planes in a week. The Newton native chased a German plane forty miles behind enemy lines because it had

acquired valuable intelligence. McCorkle shot it down and made it back to his base, despite having the cooling system shot out of his engine.

Just over seven thousand North Carolinians died while serving, about one in forty. This was much lower than the one-in-three ratio of deaths from the Civil War. Thousands more were wounded. The deaths and wounds touched every place in the state. As one state official noted, "No North Carolina city, no town, no rural area escaped."

North Carolina became an important military training center during the war.



Above: After some German submarines were sunk, the crews were captured and imprisoned in North Carolina. These German prisoners of war worked at Fort Bragg. Prisoners of war were paid 80 cents a day for work where labor shortages existed. **Left:** A scuba diver examines the wreck of the conning tower of U-352, a German submarine sunk off the Outer Banks on May 9, 1942.

Did You Know?

So many ships were sunk off Cape Hatteras that it was called "Torpedo Junction."



Above: U.S. Marines at Camp Lejeune practiced going over the side of a ship into a landing craft.

Below: The state's industries helped produce war materials. The Wilmington shipyard built over 300 ships for the war effort. Note the name on the ship in the foreground.

Did You Know?

Eventually, North Carolinians used local lumber to build more than 3,000 buildings at Fort Bragg.

The size of Fort Bragg swelled from 5,000 to 100,000. The artillery training ground was expanded for miles into the Sandhills and became the most comprehensive training ground in the country. A new type of fighter, the soldier who arrived by parachute, was trained at nearby Camp Mackall in Scotland County. The 82nd Airborne, which after the war moved to Fort Bragg, first jumped there. To train Marines on the ground, the federal government opened Camp Lejeune in Onslow County in 1942; to prepare Marine airmen, it established Cherry Point near New Bern. Camp Butner, north of Durham, became a large infantry training ground.

North Carolinians also had a key role in producing the materials used to fight the war. In particular, the textile mills made most of the fabric



used by the armed services, from sheets and blankets to parachutes and tire cords. A plant at Kure Beach, just south of Wilmington, made the lead ingredient needed for gasoline for army trucks. The mica mines near Spruce Pine supplied thin sheets of the mineral needed for electrical wires. A shipbuilding company in Wilmington made almost four hundred ships for the war effort. Trees across the state were cut down to be used in the war. North Carolina cigarettes by the millions were put into ration kits for soldiers at the battlefield.

Women and the War

More than previous conflicts, World War II took North Carolina women out of the home and put them in the middle of the war mobilization effort. Female students at Lenoir-Rhyne College cut class to pick cotton when there were labor shortages during harvest. Betty Baker, a student at Woman's College, quit school to become one of thousands of North Carolinians who got wartime work at the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Factory in Baltimore, Maryland. After she "saved enough money," she came back and graduated from college. She then joined the Women's Army Corps and served for the duration of the war. More than seven thousand women from the state served in the military. Mary Webb Nicholson of Greensboro became one of twenty-seven female pilots in the British Royal Air Force. She was shot down and died in 1943. Even women who stayed home faced new circumstances. Peggy Egerton's family in Goldsboro took in boarders who had moved to town to build the new Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. Some of the boarders were recent immigrants to the United States who did not speak English, let alone understand North Carolina accents. It was a time of adjustment for all concerned.

Minorities and the War

Black North Carolinians served in the same manner as whites in the war, although the draft boards in some counties often shipped off soldiers in segregated buses. One black draftee in Hickory waved farewell and shouted out the bus window that he was "going off to fight for you white folks." Black men who did not go into the military found jobs in Wilmington and Norfolk, Virginia, at the shipyards. Black women moved from the rural neighborhoods to the towns by the thousands, for they could obtain work in the local factories. One, Theodosia Simpson, helped lead a strike for better conditions at the R. J. Reynolds cigarette factory in Winston-Salem.

The constant coming and going of people throughout the war put a strain upon normal behavior in North Carolina. For example, members of the Lumbee community in Robeson County had stuck mostly to themselves.



Above: With over 16 million men and women in the armed forces during World War II, the women left at home moved into the work force, filling jobs formerly held by men.

Did You Know?

North Carolina mica mines supplied one-half of the nation's mica.



Above: Black flyers trained at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama as escorts for Allied bombers. The Tuskegee Airmen flew over 200 missions. The Germans called them the “Black Bird Men.” At least twenty North Carolinians were original members of this group, including Wilson V. Eagleson II of Durham.

During the war, Lumbees often met and married people from elsewhere who had come to train or serve at Fort Bragg. Ressie Sampson, for example, married Wisconsin native Charles Larson in 1944.

Sacrifices on the Home Front

Large numbers of North Carolinians left home during World War II. In addition to the members of the armed services, thousands went out of state to get jobs in cities like Norfolk and Baltimore. Others found work in the state’s busy factories, which for the first time in ten years were operating at full capacity. The members of Paratrooper Terry Sanford’s family moved from Laurinburg to work in the shipyards at Wilmington.

To make use of every resource possible, the federal government imposed strict regulations about the purchase and consumption of goods. In each county, local citizens were put in charge of regulating the market. A parent could not even buy a bicycle for a child without permission, since metal frames and rubber tires were made of scarce commodities. Most groceries were controlled by **rationing**; that is, individual families could buy only so much of any item each month. Families were issued ration books and could only use the coupons inside for buying certain amounts. Prices were controlled by the coupons, and if a family ran out of coupons before the end of the month, they had to make do with what they had. Since gasoline was needed for the war effort, it was strictly limited. People drove only when they had to. One North Carolinian coped by building an electric car to get to work. Its “two V-8 Ford starter motors” were powered by two car batteries. He steered with a lever and sat in a plywood box. Families again were en-

couraged to plant “victory gardens” to raise more of their own food.

The strain of war got worse in western North Carolina in 1944. The crippling disease polio struck hundreds of children in many communities, in Hickory more than any other place. Hickory officials quickly converted an old Boy Scout camp into a hospital for both white and black patients. Doctors and nurses came from all over the nation to perform “the miracle of Hickory,” providing new drugs and physical therapy that saved dozens of lives. One of the children treated at Hickory was Harland Bowles, who would grow up to be state treasurer.

The Celebration at the End

North Carolinians welcomed the end of the war in 1945. When first the Germans (May), then the Japanese surrendered (August), state residents celebrated wherever they happened to be. Traffic clogged the downtowns of every city and town.

Betty Ross Austin of Peachland in Union County went with her new boyfriend, Dominick Bruno of New York City, to the victory celebration in the square in Charlotte. They had met briefly while Bruno had trained near Monroe. He wrote Betty Ross from all over Europe and got back in time for the celebration. When he swept Betty Ross off her feet and kissed her for the first time, in public, a photographer captured the moment for North Carolinians. In 2005, Betty and Dominick celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary.

When the war finally ended, many changes faced North Carolina and the nation. The war particularly changed the role of women and helped attack prejudice and discrimination.

Figure 27 **Social Effects of World War II**

- **In 1943, Congress imposed a withholding system on taxpayers. Federal income tax was withheld from workers’ pay and sent directly to the U.S. Treasury. The number of taxpayers jumped from 4 million in 1939 to 42.7 million in 1945.**
- **In 1944, Congress passed the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act. The G.I. Bill, as it was called, made low-cost loans to veterans who wanted to buy homes or start businesses.**
- **The G.I. Bill also gave all returning soldiers an opportunity for a college education, which, in turn, changed job availability and heralded a new working middle class.**
- **Racial segregation was no longer acceptable to returning African American soldiers.**
- **Women who had experienced a new sense of freedom and independence were not ready to leave the workplace and return to the homemaker roles that had been their only option before the war. And, new inventions were releasing women from many of the time-consuming “homemaking” responsibilities.**

It’s Your Turn

1. **What event finally led the United States to enter the war?**
2. **What was “Torpedo Junction”?**
2. **Name two contributions North Carolina made toward the war effort.**

CAROLINA CELEBRITIES

Billy Graham

One thing is very clear about Billy Graham. During the second half of the twentieth century, he traveled to more places in the world and met more people than any other North Carolinian in history. With each person, Graham witnessed the Christian gospel. He did it before leaders of nations, to both the wealthy and the poor, and for people of every ethnic background. More than a million people made a religious decision about their lives because of him. He is the most famous preacher the world has known in the last thousand years.

At the same time, Rev. Graham is the typical North Carolinian. The Mecklenburg County native carried with him the traditional values of trust, kindness, and sincerity wherever he went. Like many North Carolinians, he kept coming home, choosing to live in the North Carolina mountains almost all his adult life. He and wife Ruth have lived in Montreat, at the foot of the Black Mountains, for more than fifty years.

While Billy was growing up in the 1920s, the Graham family ran a dairy farm just south of Charlotte. In 1934, at the age of sixteen, Billy and a friend went to a tent revival, a popular form of public preaching. These revivals were intended to make everyone decide to lead a better Christian life. The climax of the service was the “altar call,” when members of the audience were asked to come forward to commit to a more religious outlook. That night, Billy came forward. He dedicated himself to doing the same thing: preaching and changing lives. Soon, he was seen preaching on the street corners of downtown Charlotte.

After graduating from Wheaton College in Illinois, Billy married Ruth and began preaching around the country. His 1949 message electrified the city of Los Angeles. Originally scheduled for three weeks, Graham preached every day for eight straight weeks. The publicity from the huge revival rocketed Graham into national celebrity. Much of the fame stemmed from Graham’s warm personality and his earnest attempts to have people change their minds

and their habits. As even one skeptical American observed, Graham was “as good a man, basically,” as he had ever “been in the presence of.”

During the 1950s and 1960s, Graham drew thousands of people a night to religious services held in football stadiums, indoor arenas, and concert halls. Just as had been the custom in North Carolina, the service began with prayer and singing, then a sermon. Unlike other revivalists, Graham spoke softly and he courteously asked people to make a commitment.

Because of his national reputation as a religious leader, Graham was often asked to meet with presidents and other political leaders. He became particularly close to President Richard Nixon, who had graduated from Duke University Law School. He was embarrassed when Nixon was forced to resign in the 1970s because of the Watergate scandal. Graham was also a religious advisor to George W. Bush when the Texan was having drug and alcohol problems. Graham’s counsel helped the son of a president change his habits and move forward to become president himself.

When he returned to Charlotte to a homecoming service in 1996, he told North Carolinians then, just like he always told everyone at the end of thousands of sermons, “You come now, it is important that you come.” Toward the latter years of his ministry, Graham worked hard to remind the world that everyone had to be part of the process of speech. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Graham was part of the service held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

Opposite page: One of the nation’s most honored religious leaders is the Reverend Billy Graham of Charlotte and Montreat. One of North Carolina’s most famous photographers, Hugh M. Morton, took this picture of his friend soon after the famous Los Angeles revival in 1949.

