

Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming, WWII Heritage City

A series of lessons from the [World War II Heritage Cities Lesson Collection](#)



Figure 1: Control Tower on Casper Army Air Base with a B-24 Bomber flying overhead. Official photo of the U.S. Army Air Forces. Building sign reads: "Base Flight and Alert Crew." (Credit: Charles "Chuck" Morrison Collection, Casper College Western History Center)

Introduction

The three lessons, and culminating fourth lesson, support the development of understanding the significance of [Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming, World War II Heritage City](#). The first lesson examines Casper Army Air Base and the contributions and training of service members and civilians there. It also contains readings on the local population and economic growth, as well as civilian hospitality efforts for service

members. The second lesson teaches about the contributions of the 377th Aviation Squadron, the African American unit stationed at the air base. The third lesson describes ways in which women contributed to base operations, both in the Women's Army Air Corps (WACs) and civilian workforce. All lessons highlight specific contributions but connect to larger themes and understandings of the U.S. home front during wartime. A mix of primary and secondary sources are used, along with photos and media.

Lessons (with World War II home front topics):

The first three lessons listed can be taught individually or collectively, in any order. The final lesson supports students in summarizing the contributions of Casper and Natrona County and supports a comparison to other World War II home front cities in a culminating activity.

1. [Casper Army Air Base in Casper and Natrona County, World War II Heritage City \(p.7\)](#)

- Armed Forces
- Army Air Force training
- Women service members
- African Americans in service
- Economic and population growth
- Civilian volunteerism and contributions

2. [The 377th Aviation Squadron: African Americans Serving in Casper and Natrona County, World War II Heritage City \(p. 24\)](#)

- African Americans in service
- Army Air Force
- Double V Campaign
- Armed Forces

[3. Women's Contributions at Casper Army Air Base in Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming World War II Heritage City \(p. 40\)](#)

- Women's Army Air Corps (WACs)
- Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs)
- civilian workforce
- Sub-Depot
- social change
- women in the workforce

[4. Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming: Comparing and Connecting WWII Home Front Cities \(p. 54\)](#)

Positioning these Lessons in the Curriculum:

The standards listed beneath the lesson links are a collection of standards covered in the lesson collection. The lessons have been aligned to national standards and topics, as well as to the Wyoming Social Studies standards (as of 2018). Objectives for each lesson, materials, and resources are listed within the lesson.

Time period: World War II

Topics: World War II, women's history, African American history, workforce migration, science and technology

United States History Standards for Grades 5-12

This lesson relates to the following [National Standards for History](#) from the UCLA National Center for History in the Schools:

Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)

Standard 3: The causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

This lesson relates to the following [Curriculum Standards themes for Social Studies](#) from the National Council for the Social Studies:

- Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Theme 8: Science, Technology, and Society
- Theme 9: Global Connections

Relevant Common Core Standards

These lessons relate to the following [Common Core English and Language Arts Standards for History and Social Studies](#) for middle and high school students:

Key Ideas and Details

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.2

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.4

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.9

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.10

Wyoming Social Studies Standards

The lessons align to the following standards defined by the Wyoming Social Studies Standards (as of 2018).

Middle School (6-8)

Culture and Cultural Diversity

- SS8.2.1 Compare and contrast the ways various groups meet human needs and concerns (and contribute to identity, situations, and events).

Time, Continuity, and Change

SS8.4.1 Describe how historical events impact the future (cause and effect) and how change spreads to other places.

SS8.4.4 Identify historical interactions between and among individuals, groups, and/or institutions (e.g., family, neighborhood, political, economic, religious, social, cultural, and workplace).

SS8.4.5 Identify relevant primary (e.g., historical photographs, artifacts, and documents, including treaties) and secondary sources for research. Compare and contrast treatment of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources, which may include oral history and traditional storytelling.

Technology, Literacy, and Global Connections

SS8.6.1 Use and evaluate multiple sources of information in diverse formats and media in order to address a question or solve a problem.

SS8.6.2 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

SS8.6.4 Use accurate, sufficient, and relevant information from primary and secondary sources to support writing

High School (9 – 12)

Culture and Cultural Diversity

SS12.2.1 Analyze and evaluate the ways various groups (e.g., social, political, and cultural) meet human needs and concerns (e.g., individual needs and common good) and contribute to identity (e.g., group, national, and global), situations, and events.

Time, Continuity, and Change

SS12.4.1 Describe patterns of change (cause and effect) and evaluate how past events impacted future events and the modern world.

SS12.4.3 Given a significant current event, critique the actions of the people or groups involved; hypothesize how this event would have played out in another country. SS12.4.4 Describe the historical interactions between and among individuals, groups, and/or institutions (e.g., family, neighborhood, political, economic, religious, social, cultural, and workplace) and their impact on significant historical event.

SS12.4.5 Using primary and secondary sources, apply historical research methods to interpret and evaluate important historical events from multiple perspectives.

Technology, Literacy, and Global Connections

SS12.6.1 Analyze, evaluate, and/or synthesize multiple sources of information in diverse formats and media in order to address a question or solve a problem.

SS12.6.2 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text supports the author's claims.

SS12.6.4 Evaluate and integrate accurate, sufficient, and relevant information from primary and secondary sources to support writing.

The lesson series was written by Sarah Nestor Lane, an educator and consultant with the Cultural Resources Office of Interpretation and Education, funded by the National Council on Public History's cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.

Lesson 1: Casper Army Air Base in Casper and Natrona County, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' background understandings of the purpose of Casper Army Air Base and the service members and civilians who worked and trained there. It also examines the population growth and economic impact of the base, as well as ways local organizations volunteered to support service members' recreation opportunities and morale. An optional extension reading shares ways the railroad had an impact on the home front.

Objectives:

1. Describe the purpose of Casper Army Air Base and the contributions of service members and civilians who worked and trained there.
2. Explain how the Casper Army Air Base contributed to local growth and brought economic benefits to Casper and Natrona County.
3. Identify examples of volunteerism by local Casper organizations to support home front morale for service members.
4. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 2-10 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of Wyoming, with Casper and Natrona County marked
4. *Optional:* Extension Reading

Photos



Figure 2: General Arnold's visit to the Casper Army Air Base, Class of 481 Bomb Squadron, 331 Bomb Group in front of hangar, July 11, 1943. (Credit: Brake, Richard H. Collection, P92-4/12, Wyoming State Archives.)



Figure 3: A Liberator bomber from Casper Army Air base on a training flight flies over Mount Moran and Lake Jackson in Grand Teton National Park (Eric Smith, Casper Tribune-Herald, March 12, 1944)



Figure 4: 1st Sgt., 377th Aviation Squadron, Casper Army Air Base, 1943. (Credit, Brake, Richard H. Collection, P92-4/20, Wyoming State Archives.)



Figure 5: Two soldiers in combat helmets exchanging rifles, airplanes on tarmac behind them, Casper Army Air Base, 1943. (Credit, Brake, Richard H. Collection, P92-4/7, Wyoming State Archives.)

Getting Started: Essential Question

How did the work of civilians and service members at Casper Army Air Base contribute to the success of Allied missions overseas?



By the numbers:

- Over 400 buildings were built as a part of the air base. More than 1,500 residents of Casper supported the development of the base including in areas such as electricity, roadwork, and construction.
- Daily operations at the air base included about 2,250 Army Air Force personnel and 800 civilians. During peak training, crewmen totaled more than 6,000 at one time on base. At least 16,000 service members had trained at Casper Army Air Base over the course of the war.
- There were 90 plane crashes recorded from training between September 1942 and March 1945. Over 140 aviators died. Many crashes were in Wyoming, but others were out of state on longer training missions.
- Between 4,000 to 8,000 cards and letters and 200 to 300 packages were mailed daily from the Casper Army Air Base post office. (From *The Slip Stream* Newspaper, December 23, 1942)



Quotation to consider:

“Out there in Casper they had just a little way from the hangar laying... they had an airplane, had a 24, a plane that had some problems. And so, they took it and brought what was left of it in on some timbers above a puddle of water. And you practiced bailing out of that thing like you were going to ditch or something, you know.

And see how many seconds it took you to get out of your position, you know door, I used to be able to get out of it . . . I got out of mine in something like 12 or 14 seconds. I was able to get out of the turret and hit the deck and grab my chute and be out of the airplane in 12 seconds. . . We practiced that till it got to be routine. . . .

When I was going through flight training out there at Casper we had a lot of old planes... that were getting pretty weary. They flew all the time. We had some kind of hair-raising situations where... Well, one I'll never forget. ...

We were flying in formation this one day. A pretty day, sun out and all that. And I was looking over here, Looking past the pilot's shoulder one time, this way. All of a sudden, I saw a plane over there, I saw a propeller come off like this... (and go over us) When it first came off it took about 6 foot off the tip of the next plane's wing right next to it, see. Anyway, and that guy – he just staggered a little bit, and he left formation and went back. But what they did - All the guys, for kicks, they blew that out of proportion – they said boy, that guy landed with half a wing gone. And he only had about 6 foot gone, see. And that poor guy was embarrassed as heck because it wasn't that bad."

- Jeff Jack Johnson, October 10, 2002, from Veterans History Project, [Jeff Jack Johnson Collection](#)



Read to Connect

Reading 1: Background Reading

Casper Army Air Base

By Sarah Nestor Lane

On April 19, 1942, the U.S. Army announced its selection of Casper, Wyoming, as the site for a new air base, the Casper Army Air Base. The location was ideal for the air base because it had both the surrounding Rockies and plains. This provided space for the base and for aviation training. There were mostly clear skies with rare heavy fog, and storms passed quickly. These weather conditions made it easy for pilots to train. The Casper area was primed for construction of the base as it had access to local resources like building materials and companies, and transportation via railroad.

Construction of the base began in the spring of 1942. Local builders were responsible for constructing many structures at the base, like warehouses, shop buildings, and barracks for the soldiers. Contractors built infrastructure such as water lines, electrical connections, railroad spurs, and extended runways to support operations and training activities. The City of Casper itself contributed to needs, such as building the connecting water line from the city to the site. The base was ready for its first group of service members in fall of 1942.

Service Members and Training at Casper Army Air Base

Casper Army Air Base was designed to be a training facility for bomber crews, particularly those flying B-17s and later, B-24 bombers. Casper Army Air Base had a large training area for pilots, gunners, and crew members to learn necessary skills. The first group of military

personnel arrived in September 1942, and by November, the base began training bomber crews. Every 12 weeks, the base would train a new group of bomber crews. After completing their training, the crews would be sent overseas.

The training at the base was rigorous. Soldiers had to pass physical exams and training before arriving at the base. Once in Casper, they practiced flying, learned how to handle their planes in combat situations, and did bombing exercises. There were ranges east of the base where they practiced gunnery skills, and high-altitude bombing missions took place in areas north of Casper. It wasn't just pilots and co-pilots who trained at the base; other crew members, such as gunners and navigators, received specialized training too. The base became one of the most important training centers for bomber crews during the war, preparing thousands of service members for their missions.

Not all service members at the base were part of bomber crews. The 377th Aviation Squadron and the Women's Army Corps (WAC) provided essential maintenance and operational support. Members of the Medical Corps and U.S. Army Nursing Corps were also stationed there.

The 377th Aviation Squadron was an African American unit stationed at the base. The men of the 377th did important work at the base, providing labor and maintenance services, working as military police, staffing the Officer's Club and working in other service areas. The work assigned and separate housing was due to of wrongful racial discrimination and segregation practices in the armed services and Casper at the time.

The WACs comprised an all-female unit, the 768th Women's Army Corps Provision Headquarters Company, that supported aircraft maintenance, flight control, supply management, and administrative duties. They were stationed in a separate area of the base, with their own barracks and mess hall.

Another important aspect of the base was the hospital, staffed by the Army Medical Corps and U.S. Army Nursing Corps. The hospital was essential in caring for soldiers who were injured during training or who became sick while stationed at the base. In addition to regular medical staff, the base had a flight surgeon who gave exams to make sure pilots were fit for duty.

Civilian Workers

There were also civilian personnel working to keep the base functioning, such as those who worked at the 348th Sub-Depot. The Sub-Depot was responsible for maintaining and repairing the aircraft used for training. It was staffed mainly by trained civilian workers under military supervision, and it reported to Ogden Air Depot in Ogden, Utah. In 1943, around 400 civilians worked in the Sub-Depot, including many women. The workers

performed field repairs, replaced parts, and did other maintenance tasks to keep the bombers ready for training. Skilled workers included aircraft electricians, mechanics, painters, welders, and machinists. Women also filled roles as clerks, stenographers, and truck drivers in the motor pool. These civilians helped to keep the base's planes running smoothly in good condition.

Recreation

Casper Army Air base had many recreational opportunities. There was a recreation hall and gymnasium with reading materials, games, and sports competitions. The hall also housed an American Red Cross office that assisted soldiers with family communication when there was illness or death in their family. Base personnel helped organize competitive sports teams that played against other Army installations. There was also a War Department theater and bowling alley.

Service members also came into Casper or visited the surrounding areas to attend shows and movies, find entertainment, or go to the Casper Servicemen's Club. This enlisted men's club was a place for soldiers to relax. It had a lounge, a telephone bank, and a canteen. It was home to a series of colorful murals created by service members stationed at the base. These murals, painted between 1943 and 1944, depicted scenes from Wyoming's history. There was also an Officer's Club in the basement of Casper's Townsend Hotel. There was a separate, segregated servicemen's club for the men of the 377th Aviation Squadron.

The Legacy of Casper Army Air Base

The Casper Army Air Base closed in 1945. The air base's home front impact was critical for success abroad. It had trained thousands of bomber crew members during the war and was a hub for the local contributions of Casper and Natrona County to the war effort.

After the war, the base transferred to civilian control and became a regional airport. The Enlisted Men's Service Club building is used today as part of the Wyoming Veterans Memorial Museum. The murals inside are now the only remaining example of the art created at the base.

Questions for Reading 1 and Quotation to Consider

1. What made Casper ideal for a base location?
2. What types of training was provided at Casper Army Air Base? How would this have contributed to successes of the Allies in the war?
3. How did WACs and the 377th Aviation Squadron contribute to base operations?
(Learn more in [Lesson 2](#) and [Lesson 3](#).)
4. How did civilian workers support maintenance and operations?

5. What recreation opportunities were available for service members on and off the base?
6. *Quotation to consider:* What does Jeff Johnson's recollections show about dangers faced by trainees at the base? How might these experiences have helped them build necessary skills?

Photos

Doing a Vital Job on the Home Front
And a job we were privileged to do for America—providing Electric Light and Power facilities for the Army Air Base approximating 1000 KW capacity!

When the word came to us . . . it seemed like it was well nigh impossible of fulfilment and then we remembered something we had once heard: "The difficult we do immediately . . . the impossible takes just a little longer."

Speed was the essence of the job. We were given to understand that that was foremost and uppermost . . . SPEED . . . even comparable to lightning.

To build seven and one-half miles of power line to make 1,000 kilowatt capacity available to the Air Base in ten days . . . to build sub-stations to receive and distribute this volume of current . . . was a tremendous undertaking but the job was done in the time requested.

To do this for Uncle Sam's base, we had to enlist the services of skilled workmen from over our entire Wyoming system and commandeer the necessary equipment from the same area. Both men and equipment were brought in to do a speedy job in record time.

We are proud to have been able to fulfill such an assignment.

Speed . . . speed . . . speed—more ships, more planes, more guns. Our battle fronts are scattered over the four corners of the earth. Working together, our united forces are fighting gallantly for all those things which we cherish. All the tremendous industrial resources of the United Nations stand staunchly behind our fighting men to speed the day of triumph and peace. Naturally, we take pride in the service of our organization which have been enlisted in the common cause of freedom.

Mountain States Power Company

Buy WAR BONDS and STAMPS

Figure 6: "Doing a Vital Job on the Home Front: And a job we were privileged to do for America – providing Electric Light and Power facilities for the Army Air Base approximating 1000 KW capacity!" an ad from Mountain States Power Company (The Casper Tribune – Herald, October 18, 1942)

Figure 6 Transcription:

When the word came to us... it seemed like it was well nigh impossible of fulfilment and then we remembered something we had once heard: 'The difficult we do immediately... the impossible takes just a little longer.' Speed was the essence of the job. We were given to understand that that was foremost and uppermost...SPEED...even comparable to lightning. To build seven and one-half miles of power line to make 1,000 kilowatt capacity available to the Air Base in ten days ... to build sub-stations to receive and distribute this volume of

current... was a tremendous undertaking but the job was done in the time requested. To do this for Uncle Sam's base, we had to enlist the services of skilled workmen from over our entire Wyoming system and commandeer the necessary equipment from the same area. Both men and equipment were brought in to do a speedy job in record time. We are proud to have been able to fulfill such an assignment.



Figure 7: Marie L. Bishop, one of the civilian truck drivers at the Casper Air Base. This truck was one of the largest motorized units at the base. The caption included "The officers at the base stated the women are good truck drivers." (The Casper Tribune - Herald, October 18, 1942)



Figure 8: "Bomber crew has its final briefing before taking off from the Casper Army Air base on a training mission" (Official Army Air force photo published in the Casper Tribune-Herald, March 12, 1944)



Figure 9: Mess Hall, Civilian Employees Going to Lunch, Casper Army Air Base, 1943. (Credit: Brake, Richard H. Collection, P92-4/13, Wyoming State Archives.)

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

Economic Benefits Conferred on Casper by Base Establishment

Conditions Reversed Since Building Started, Bank resources Hit Record

Casper Tribune-Herald, October 18, 1942

The population of Casper has increased, employment is being maintained at a high level, housing facilities are taxed, manufacturing and service industries are operating steadily, public utilities are serving larger demands, business is good for those whose stock in trade has not been reduced by the war emergency, and the deposits and resources of the city's banking institutions stand at an all-time high.

These conditions highlight developments recorded since late spring, when Casper Army Air Base, and to the construction activity that followed must be credited the sharp improvement that has resulted. The expenditure of millions of dollars through local and outside contractors has stimulated activities in general, and has made it possible for Casper to take a much larger part in the victory effort than would have been possible had the war program not been extended to central Wyoming.

Another factor has contributed heavily to the record bank deposits and resources. Larger returns to the livestock industry from wool, lambs and cattle have helped boost financial resources toward the 14-million-dollar mark. As the center of one of the largest wool producing regions of the country and in a state which ranks second in the nation in producing this vital product needed to clothe the armed forces, Casper benefits from the first real prosperity enjoyed by this industry in many years.

Conditions Reversed By Base Construction

Conditions otherwise have been reversed by establishment, construction and activation of the base.

At the time of the designation, Casper had lost and was still losing population steadily. In addition to the exodus of young men going to the armed forces, workers were leaving to seek jobs in war industries and in war construction work. Many were taking their families with them.

The situation was changed upon authorization of the air base, which was followed immediately by construction work. The project provided jobs for hundreds of skilled and semi-skilled workers in addition to common labor and the many technicians employed. Housing accommodations were all but exhausted, and numerous transients have made their homes in trailer houses. The influx made up for a sharp decline in the tourist industry

in general business activity, but that section of the business public engage in the automotive trade and dealing in other products curtailed by war priorities has continued to feel the effects of war conditions.

Reverses which Casper might have suffered if the city had not been favored by the establishment of an Army Air Base can only be estimated, but speculation accents the economic value to the city of developments that have transpired. This change and improvement today provide the basis for much of the city's cooperation in the war financing program and enable a considerable share of the population to carry on.

Benefits that have accrued to individuals include the work provided to scores of college students at good wages in making the most of their vacations. Substantial sums were earned to help them advance their studies during the current school year or until such a time as many of them will be called into service.

Activization of the base and the full utilization of facilities that have been provided promise the maintenance of favorable conditions. Many civilians are employed at the base and a call has been issued within the last week for skilled labor to operate the sub-depot, which will service the war planes. Base operations and the training program for the flying forces should also compensate for reductions in any other activities on which the city normally depends.

Questions for Reading 2

1. What industries in Casper benefited from the construction of Casper Army Air Base?
2. How did the base impact the local population trends?
3. Describe how the activation of the air base helped Casper contribute to the war effort.

Reading 3: Newspaper Article

Casper Offers Western Hospitality to Men Stationed at Army Air Base

Service Men's Center Provides Opportunity for Recreation; Many Organizations Join in Extending Welcome

Casper Tribune-Herald, October 18, 1942 [Excerpts]

An extensive survey of the possibilities in the way of recreation and entertainment facilities in Casper, which may be made available to the soldiers from the Casper Army Air Base, shows a wide choice from which they may select the type of activity or entertainment best suited to their needs and leisure time. An intense and widespread interest in the project

has been shown by the citizens of Casper from the start, and it is only a matter of showing them the way. As a city, through clubs and church organizations, fraternal orders and business houses as well as individuals, invitations go out to the men of the armed forces stationed here, or visiting in Casper, to enjoy the hospitality it is the pleasure of our citizens to offer. . . .

More Features to Be Added

Malcolm LeBeuer has been chosen as director of the center, and is achieving notable success. Many additional features are to be added to the center, including such comforts as beds where soldiers may get needed rest; laundry and tailoring facilities and shoe shining. A library of recordings will be available; also a recording machine, so that a record may be sent home, a registration book will be kept, with home addresses, and perhaps a register of citizens from other parts of the country, so that 'home folks' can get together. The present quarters will be extended, so that there will be room for the increased numbers to come. Game tables of all kinds are supplied, and an orchestra plays for dancing twice a week.

Mayor Earle, his committees and the people of Casper who have made this possible feel well repaid and very much gratified when they hear reports that the soldiers like the center, and find that it answers their need.

A number of organizations have already made contributions in response to requests by the committee. At the present time, the women of Casper are keeping the cookie jars filled: usually through their clubs or church societies, as they take their turn. Books are being collected constantly.

Among organizations now actively contributing or in process of formulating plans are the Newcomers, who collect books, and bake cookies. They are active in calling on wives of men stationed here and welcoming them into their club, according to Mrs. Maurice Tixier, president.

Business and professional women baked 135 dozen cookies last week, reports their president, Mrs. Flora Johnson. They offer their services for any sort of program or need.

KDFN, the radio station, is happy to have a program by the boys on Monday evenings, said Don Hathaway, proprietor of the station. . . .

Casper Country club has entertained officers and their ladies at a dance, and another is planned. Officers were guests of the club at a stag Thursday evening. The community Golf Club will be open until November at least, and plans are going ahead for the winter, and it is believed that guest cards will be furnished for soldiers interested in golf, skating or any

other activity of this club, according to Mayor Early and Nick Leik, councilman board member. This club is within walking distance, but offers the men a chance to get away from town and camp into the open. Golf is very nearly a year round game here.

Mrs. Don Hathaway of Fine Arts club stated that members have submitted for magazines, baked cookies, and are ready for any service. The Fine Arts club was organized to give its members and the community a more intensive study of the fine arts. It is hoped by the members that the soldiers will find programs from the departments: poetry, art, drama and music to both entertain and interest them. Several coming programs have been planned with the soldiers in mind. . . .

All branches of the American Legion are expanding their activities to include army men and their families who are living in Casper.

In line with the other clubs the Casper Woman's club is already organized to take its place in the cookie supply group, and members offer as a club and individually, any service which will be useful. D.A.R. members follow their tradition and are working in every way to further the war effort, and stand ready to share in any program, as may be required of them, said Mrs. I.E. Clark, officer of the organization.

All church organizations are working in some way for the war effort, and offer their hospitality and friendship to the soldiers and their families, who may be in Casper. Members of the men's service clubs have been busy since the instigation of the air base and continue to find useful duties to fulfill.

The Casper Mountain Ski club plans a very active winter season: they have two tows and several fine courses, both downhill and slalom, with plenty of cross country. They had a membership of over 200 last year, and while many of their members are in the army now, they still have an enthusiastic group, ready to welcome the soldiers to fun on Casper mountain. Tentative plans are under way to secure a ski rental service for the soldiers, it was stated by a club official. The Junior Chamber of Commerce has been active in forwarding much of the program in connection with helping to make the soldiers welcome in Casper.

Among the outstanding facilities offered is the Officers' club in the Hotel Townsend, attractively furnished and well equipped, which was opened recently with a buffet dinner and dance.

Added to this partial list of organizations, is the wholehearted hospitality of the people of Casper, who open their homes to the members of the armed forces, and make every effort to give them good times when they have "time off" from their arduous duties.

Questions for Reading 3

1. What recreational and entertainment opportunities were available to service members in Casper?
2. Identify ways in which women of Casper supported the local service members.
3. How did local organizations work together to boost morale of soldiers and their families?
4. *Optional:* Compare hospitality efforts made by Casper's citizens with those in other cities hosting military bases during the war. How might these efforts reflect broader societal attitudes of the time? (You may wish to expand on this comparison in [Lesson 4.](#))

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did the work of civilians and service members at Casper Army Air Base contribute to the success of Allied missions overseas?

Also, consider:

How did the Casper Army Air Base contribute to local population growth and bring economic benefits to Casper and Natrona County?

What are examples of volunteerism by local Casper organizations to support home front morale for service members?

Extension

Railroads on the Home Front

Civilians also played an important role in operating railroads. Burlington Lines had a stop in Casper, Wyoming, supporting the movement of service members and materials to and from the area. Use this short newspaper ad and images by Burlington Lines to consider the role of the railroad on the home front. This was published in the *Casper Tribune-Herald* on October 18, 1942.



WE'RE ON ACTIVE DUTY ON AN 11,000 MILE FRONT

TO LOOK at us, you'd never think of us as soldiers. We're not dressed according to Army regulations. Certainly our weapons aren't regular military equipment. A lot of us are too old or too heavy or too something or other, according to military standards. Still, we're an army—35,000 strong.

The fighting front of Burlington Lines is 11,000 miles of railroad in thirteen states. Our weapons are locomotives and ledgers, freight cars and flares, switchyards and semaphores, diesels and drawbars, ties and timetables, passenger cars and pencils, typewriters and tickets.

Our job is to make sure that both

military men and materiel get prompt, efficient transportation in our sector—at the same time see that essential civilian travel is well protected. It's a big job, and we're using our fine fleet of passenger trains headed by 14 diesel-powered Zephyrs, and our scores of fast freights to maintain dependable and efficient service where it counts most.

Burlington's army and all the other railroad armies the country over are inspired by one vital fact—*America's fighting and production fronts can be no better than its transportation front.* Could there be a stronger incentive to do our job well?



Figure 10: The ad includes an illustration of the “faces” of the railroad lines – civilian men and women - and a picture of a map of service. The boxes indicate Glacier National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Black Hills. Casper is marked between Yellowstone National Park and Rocky Mountain National Park.

We're on Active Duty on an 11,000 Mile Front

To look at us, you'd never think of us as soldiers. We're not dressed according to Army regulations. Certainly our weapons aren't regular military equipment. A lot of us are too old or too heavy or too something or other, according to military standards. Still, we're an army – 35,000 strong.

The fighting front of Burlington Lines is 11,000 miles of railroad in thirteen states. Our weapons are locomotives and ledgers, freight cars and flares, switchyards and semaphores, diesels and drawbars, ties and time-tables, passenger cars and pencils, typewriters and tickets.

Our job is to make sure that both military men and material get prompt, efficient transportation in our sector – at the same time see that essential civilian travel is well protected. It's a big job, and we're using our fine fleet of passenger trains headed by 14 diesel-powered Zephyrs, and our scores of fast freights to maintain dependable and efficient service where it counts most.

Burlington's army and all the other railroad armies the country over are inspired by one vital fact – America's fighting and production fronts can be no better than its transportation front. Could there be a stronger incentive to do our job well?

Reflection Questions

1. How does the text describe the role of the Burlington Lines in supporting the war effort on the home front?
2. Why may the company compare their work to the military, such as describing their "weapons?"
3. One of the Burlington Lines stops was in Casper. How would this have helped develop and support the Casper Army Air Base?

Additional Resources

[Aerials to Zephyrs: A Brief History of the Casper Army Air Base](#) by the Wyoming Historical Society

Lesson 2: The 377th Aviation Squadron: African Americans Serving in Casper and Natrona County, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson includes readings and photos to help students understand the contributions of African American service members in the 377th Aviation Squadron at Casper Army Air Base. These soldiers supported air base operations and the safety of the local community. Despite facing unjust discrimination, the squadron members contributed to the mission of the [Double V Campaign](#) as they served their country and supported the fight for equality.

Objectives:

1. Describe the home front contributions and responsibilities of the 377th Aviation Squadron at Casper Army Air Base.
2. Examine how discrimination and segregation during World War II affected the roles and opportunities available to African American service members.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes, such as the Double V Campaign.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 11-19 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3 and optional extension reading
3. *Recommended:* Map of Wyoming, with Casper and Natrona County marked
4. Optional extension readings

Photos

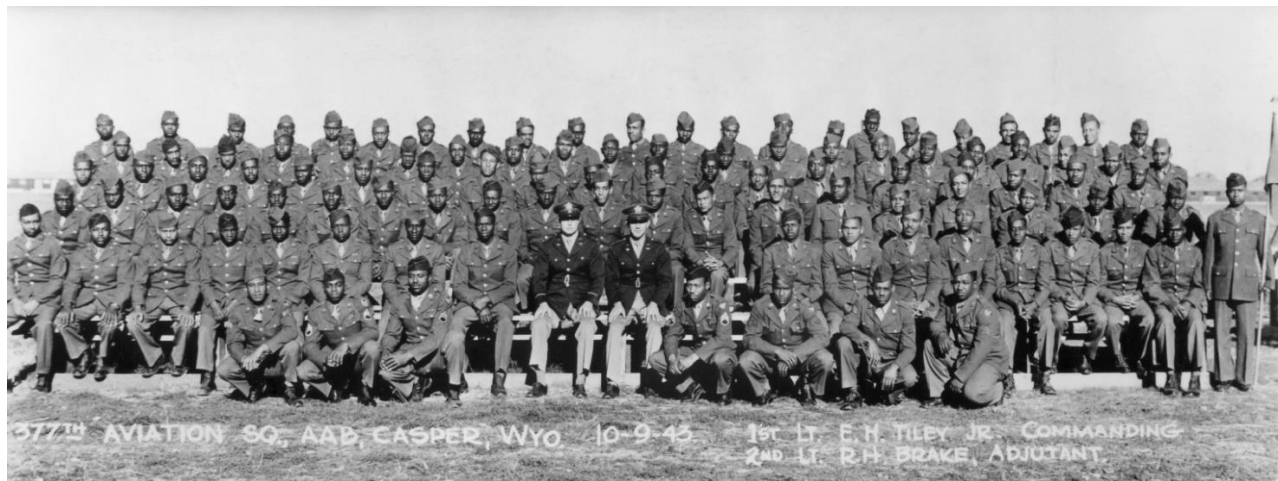


Figure 11: 377th Aviation Squadron, Casper Army Air Base, October 9, 1943. Due to segregation and discriminatory practices at the time, the squadron was commanded by two white officers, pictured in center. (Credit: Brake, Richard H. Collection, P92-4/3, Wyoming State Archives.)



Figure 12: Jazz band with members of the 377th Aviation Squadron (Courtesy of the Western History Center at Casper College)

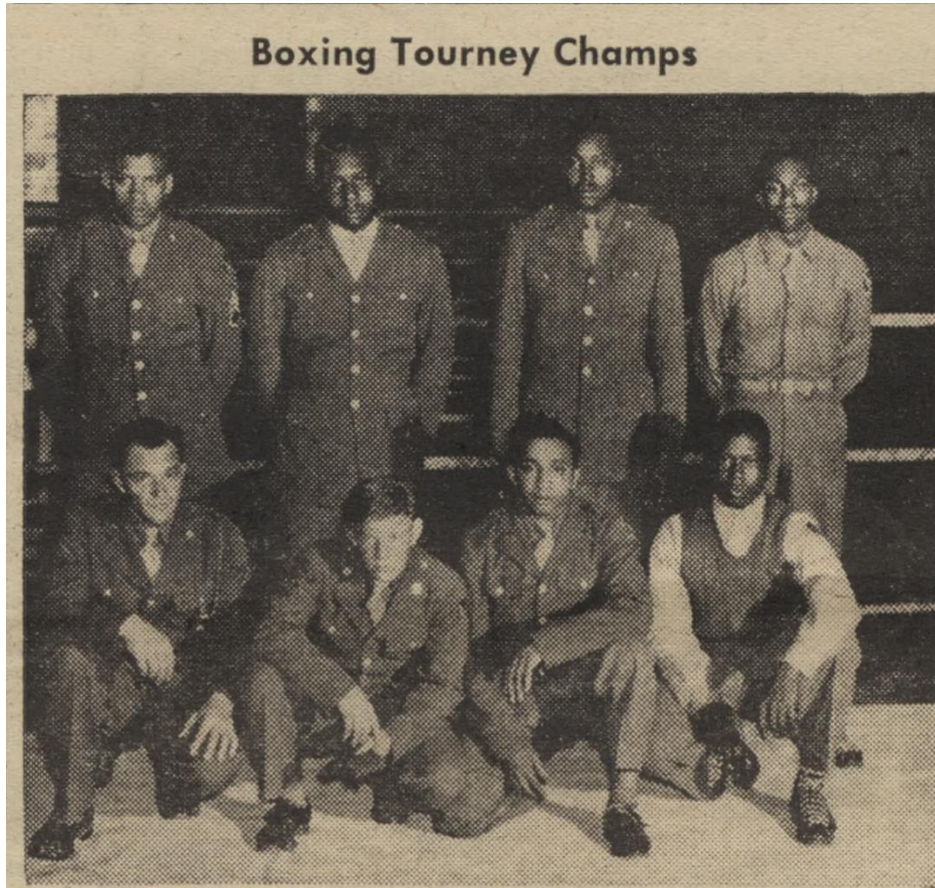


Figure 13: Winners in the finals of the air base's first boxing tournament. Cpl. Nichols, Pvt. Barteet, Pvt. Irvin, Pvt. Geaters. Back: S/Sgt. Welch, Pct. Sindoni, Pfc. Collier, Pvt. Francis (Air Force photo, *The Slip Stream*, April 28, 1943)

Getting Started: Essential Question

How did the contributions of the 377th Aviation Squadron support the war effort and help push forward the fight for equality?



By the numbers:

- Casper Army Air Base typically housed around 5,000 military and civilian personnel at a time.
- In March 1944, the 377th Squadron reached its peak strength of 399 enlisted men and two officers. The average size of the squadron was usually closer to 350.



Quotations to consider:

“The truth is that we have not carried the war to a place where it really hurts. We can give up sugar, but we cannot give up segregation. We are willing to ration our gasoline, but we do not want to insist that colored labor shall have equal rights with white. We can consent to the heaviest taxes for military welfare, but we are not willing to treat the Chinese as we treat the British.

Never in human history have issues been so clearly defined. People all over the world have but one thought in mind – freedom. And the only way that we can establish freedom on earth is to determine that men are indeed brothers, that all are to be treated alike, without regard to color or class.”

- “Challenge to Amity,” by R.J. Weinstein, *Casper Star-Tribune* (Casper, Wyoming), March 17, 1943

“Gratifying news came from the Orderly room last Friday – information that the 1st of the month was not passing by without promotions coming to some of the men... and now, as they wear their new stripes with varying degrees of pride, we’ll be watching with interest... a kindly interest founded, perhaps, upon the realization that our common welfare is affected, even if to only a tiny degree, by each new stripe placed upon the arms of any of us.”

- “Under the Double V,” by Cpl. Atlee D. Washington, *The Slip Stream*, October 6, 1943



Read to Connect

Reading 1: Background Reading

The 377th Squadron at Casper Army Air Base

By Sarah Nestor Lane

During World War II, the United States military enforced segregation. African American soldiers experienced both formal discrimination in the Army and informal prejudice in the towns near military bases. Discrimination of both types limited the roles and training available. This restricted opportunities for advancement.

The 377th Aviation Squadron was an African American unit that served at Casper Army Air Base in Wyoming from 1943 to 1945. Despite facing discrimination, the 377th Aviation Squadron made significant contributions to the war effort on the home front.

The Work of the 377th Aviation Squadron

The Army activated the 377th Aviation Squadron on March 21, 1943, as a unit tasked with providing labor and maintenance services on the base. Early on, their duties included staffing the Officer's Club and Bachelor Officer's Quarters and completing general labor tasks. As their numbers grew, the squadron took on additional responsibilities, such as managing a segregated mess hall, providing clerical support, custodial work, and operating a refueling unit along the flight line. Some members served as military police. Some spouses of 377th service members worked in the mess hall.

The 377th also contributed beyond the base, such as firefighting and performing police duties in the town of Casper. In 1943, 80 soldiers from the squadron helped fight a forest fire in Big Horn National Forest, which burned thousands of acres and was considered the worst fire in the area's history at the time.

The members of the unit had to remain adaptable to new assignments. In December 1943, five men from the guard squadron were placed on military police duty in Casper. Cpl. Atlee Washington wrote in the base newspaper, *The Slip Stream*: "Although some may find difficulty in getting adjusted to this new situation, the present efficient manner in which guard duty is executed (the same troubles had to be overcome in that instance, too) indicates that the process will not be hard nor too long" ("Under the Double V," December 1, 1943).

Housing and Entertainment

Along with facing barriers in work roles and opportunities, members of the 377th also faced segregation in housing and entertainment, further harming morale. The Army's segregation policies meant they lived in separate quarters and had white officers in charge. In the nearby town of Casper, which had a very small African American population (only 0.6% of the city's population in the 1940 U.S. Census), squadron members often faced segregation in or exclusion from businesses.

To combat low morale, squadron officers organized special activities. They hosted monthly visits from an African American chaplain, planned trips to Denver, and supported local entertainment. A volunteer jazz swing band comprised of 377th service members performed at base events. The squadron also had a United Service Organizations (USO) center that became so popular it was expanded in late 1943. There were social clubs, such as a non-commissioned officer (non coms) club and a soldiers' wives club.

The squadron participated in sports tournaments, too. In one base newspaper, a picture showed members of the 377th winning in the base's boxing competitions (see image #).

To share news and build morale, the squadron had a special newspaper column called “Under the Double V” in *The Slip Stream*. The column’s title referenced the [Double V Campaign](#), a World War II-era national movement where African Americans fought for victory on two fronts: against the Axis powers and against racial discrimination at home. The newspaper column highlighted promotions, entertainment, and squadron news, sometimes even including updates on personal matters like relationships, rodeo trips, and hospital stays.

Legacy of the 377th Squadron

Although widely known as the 377th, the unit underwent restructuring at the Casper Army Air Base. In December 1943, the Army renamed it the Aviation Section of the 351st Base Headquarters & Air Base Squadron. Later, it became “C” Section of the 211th Army Air Force Base Unit. The Army deactivated the section in 1945.

African American units like the 377th played vital roles in the war effort, demonstrating their skill and dedication despite facing significant challenges. Change in military segregation came only in 1948, when President Truman issued [Executive Order 9981](#), mandating the desegregation of the armed forces and paving the way for greater equality.

*Note: Research for this text was compiled from US War Department documentation and the Casper Army Air Base’s *The Slip Stream* newspaper (a special, reoccurring insert appearing in the Casper Star-Tribune). Much of the primary source document collection was done by the Wyoming Veterans Memorial Museum (Natrona County, Wyoming) and the Western History Center at Casper College (Casper Wyoming).*

Questions for Reading 1 and Quotations to Consider

1. What types of tasks were initially assigned to the 377th Aviation Squadron, and how did they expand over time?
2. How did members of the 377th contribute beyond the base?
3. Analyze Cpl. Atlee Washington’s comments about adaptability. What does this show about the squadron’s mindset and challenges they faced?
4. Describe some of the strategies used by the squadron officers to boost morale.
5. What did the title "Under the Double V" in *The Slip Stream* refer to?
6. Quotations to Consider: Think about how Weinstein talks about the need for equality in society, and how Cpl. Washington reflects on promotions in the 377th Squadron. What do these quotations show about the difficulties of achieving equality at that time, both in the military and in the country as a whole?

Photos



Figure 14: Two soldiers from the Aviation Squadron fighting the forest fire described in reading 1 and 2. Official Air Force Photo from *The Slip Stream*, August 18, 1943.



Figure 15: Picture from the 377th service center, with 377th emblem hanging under the clock at right. (Photo courtesy of Wyoming Veterans Memorial Museum, Natrona County, Wyoming)



Figure 16: Section C party, African American USO, February 24, 1945. On the wall a sign says, “Farewell Section.” (Credit: Carrigen, Thomas G., P86-19/346, Wyoming State Archives.)

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

Teacher Tip: Reading 2 and the excerpts in Reading 3 are from “Under the Double V” that highlight the roles and impact of the Aviation Squadron, as well as some of the personal sentiments of the author, Atlee D. Washington. PFC Atlee D. Washington was a member of the 377th Aviation Squadron. His biography from “The Slip Stream” can be read in the lesson extension readings.

“Under the Double V”

The Slip Stream, August 18, 1943

By PFC Atlee D. Washington

Fire, which had been smoldering for days in the Big Horn mountains around Buffalo, Wyoming, blazed forth in threatening anger last week. The Aviation Squadron - those boys who are called on to do so many diverse jobs – was sent to combat it. Late Monday afternoon, a truck convoy cleared the gate and began its hurried journey.

Work began early the next morning. Living slipped easily and naturally into a program of food, fighting, fire, and sleep. Food was the regular field rations... fire-fighting was a conglomerate all-day activity: climbing, sliding, hauling up pumps... felling trees, digging trenches... beating out small fires with whatever equipment was at hand... Until as day

passed to day, so I am told, it seemed that no other existence had ever been known... No existence which was not of red heat and cracking timber... and brooding smoke slowly climbing, rung by rung, an invisible Jacob's ladder of thinning air. Sleep overtook them quickly when they lay down, fully clothed, in the tents under a chilly wind and friendly stars.

Once a group became isolated and was feared lost, but teamwork and good leadership effected a rescue. Chow was unavoidably late the first day, and the night was cold. Food, extra clothing, and additional bedding had to be brought in from the base – a business which was capably handled by Acting First Sgt. Allen.

Saturday noon, when their efforts had reduced the menace of fire to such a degree that everyone knew they'd be coming home by nightfall, Lt. Tiley looked on his men – and they tell me that pride and gratitude emanated from him. Later, in reviewing the happenings, he said, "I want to express my appreciation to the non-coms and to all the men for their splendid work and cooperation. No one could wish for better soldiers under fire."

Many comments have been given concerning the friendliness of the townspeople of Buffalo. Perhaps everyone wouldn't know, but one of the greatest morale builders is the feeling that you are not an alien in your land... to be marching, or moving in a truck or train and to be greeted with a spontaneous smile or a wave of the hand. Too many of us have remembrances of passing through places where the populace only gazed in stony silence or disdainful unconcern, even while we moved on our way to complete this business which is theirs no less than ours.

. . . Altogether, no one was badly hurt or burned. Here are the reflections of some of the men, 'We were surprised to see how easily everyone fell in and did his part.' -- 'The fire was hell, and we're glad to be home.' -- 'No, I'm not sorry I went. I'll be able to tell the folks back in Detroit that I fought a fire in the Big Horns.'

A few of the boys came in Friday, but the bulk remained another day. They came in late Saturday night, tired and triumphant men... covered with smoke and soot and dirt... many with scorched lips and singed eyebrows. They came in under the darkness rather quietly, but smiling all... and no one has been heard regretting his participation in the effort. It's a fair guess that everyone feels that a little worthwhile experience has been added to his life.

Secretly, most of the men who remained behind at the base are wishing they could have gone. With so little of the Squadron strength available, the regular routine was somewhat altered – a more or less pleasant thing... but shining shoes and cleaning barracks for Saturday morning inspection was another matter.

The school which was intended to begin last Wednesday, had to be put off a week. Classes start tonight.

Despite the fire, some of the boys contrived to get back in time for the Saturday night jamboree at the Servicemen's Center, where Pop Pop Pierce and his associate constituted a two-man band which somehow managed to make a lot of music and send the gay-cats flying. An event of the evening took place when, without fore-planning or intention, a jitterbug contest came about between Pfc. Harry Hart with Maxine Crutcher and Pvt. James Jackson with Sharon Duncan as partners. Consensus of spectator opinion was that it ended in a dead heat... the participants agreed that they were dead tired.

Which brings us to our closing thought: those who fought the fire were doing their bit... as are all of us, from the lowliest private in a labor squadron... on up through those who make and those who man the guns... and so through to the top – when we see our job and do it well, lifting life out of ourselves for the moment, we are all hastening the great day which must surely break.

Questions for Reading 2

1. What were the Squadron's responsibilities and challenges to fighting the fire?
2. What is the irony in the statement, "No one could wish for better soldiers under fire?" Consider the traditional use of "under fire" during wartime.
3. How does the welcome the squadron received in Buffalo contrast with the discrimination the soldiers often faced?
4. Reflect on Washington's closing thought. How do the contributions of the squadron connect to the idea of the Double V Campaign? Consider their role in the war effort ("doing their bit") and the fight for racial equality.

Reading 3: Newspaper Excerpts

Teacher Tip: Both excerpts are by the same author as Reading 2, Atlee D. Washington of the 377th Aviation Squadron. Atlee was promoted from Private First Class to Corporal between the two writings. He ended his career as a Lieutenant and was an instructor at the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University).

You can choose to share one or both excerpts with students. Alternatively, divide them into pairs to read either Excerpt A or Excerpt B and then share their thoughts with each other.

Excerpt A: "Under the Double V"

The Slip Stream, September 1, 1943

by PFC Atlee D. Washington

. . . Things have moved at a quiet tempo these last few days, perhaps not for individuals, but for the squadron as a unit... Some of the details have been hauling topsoil to the various areas of the base – the fertile-seeming black looks odd against remembered vistas of grey-white sand and gravel . . .

Notes: Back in basic training days, we read that the war would prove to be the greatest experience in our lives – a statement with which we are inclined to agree. So much is occurring in these strenuous times... so many things of which our parents' generation could never have conceived in its youth: the speed and grandeur of our communications and transportation... the infinite, endless mingling and mixture of peoples...the magnitude of our battles... the colossal insolence and depravity of our enemies and their ideologies... these things and many more on a scale far greater than our human race has ever experienced before.

Many a saga of courage and strength has been written in indelible ink on the pages chronicling our times: Wake Island... the Coral Sea... Stalingrad... and Sicily: many a tragic record is there too: Pearl Harbor... Batan... Singapore.

These battles were each our own, insofar as we are each a unit in the war – a war which has quickened the pulses and the thoughts of men... and to the degree that we overcome the enemy not only in combat, but within ourselves as well, relinquishing prejudices, reactionary tendencies, and selfishness... to the degree that we work not so much for four freedoms, but for one freedom – full and complete – for all men, even to that degree do we come into our heritage...

Congratulations to the Army Air Base of Casper on the first anniversary of its birth...and may it never know another – for we hope that before another September comes around, the need for this will have ceased to be.

Excerpt B: “Under the Double V”

The Slip Stream, October 13, 1943

By Cpl. Atlee D. Washington

Howdy, Rowdy! Somehow, we can't write the big story – restrictions of space and human limitations don't allow . . . but if something of the inner life of our men – thoughts and fancies, dreams and shades of feeling – could be gotten and crystallized... there would be a story! We have often thought of attempting such a piece and call it the “Heart of the

Aviation Squadron,” for the group does have a heart not unlike that of any other... one distinctive because of its human quality.

Among functions soon to be shared by some of our men is guard duty... when you see the large detail on its way up or down “D” street, you may know that here are some of the future guards going about the business of attending proficiency in the task assigned.

. . . In answer to your questions: Members of our squadron are engaged in the following squadron are engaged in the following activities, among others: Operation of the Officers’ Mess and Quarters... janitors around Base Headquarters... maintenance and beautification details... some serve in clerical capacities at Headquarters... one as Dental Technician in the hospital... we are represented at QM, at the chapel in the Base Exchanges... when next you see a movie at the War Department Theater, it may well be that one of our number is handling the projector... These among others...”

Questions for Reading 3

Excerpt A

1. Washington wrote about the squadron moving topsoil and mentions important battles of the war. How did discrimination and segregation limit the roles and opportunities of the squadron?
2. How did Washington link the work of the Aviation Squadron to the broader struggle for equality during the war?
3. Why did Washington wish for the first anniversary of the air base to be its last?

Excerpt B

1. How did Washington describe the human qualities and unity within the squadron? Why may this have been important for his readers?
2. What was the importance of the different roles and responsibilities of members of the 377th?

Summary: In what ways do both excerpts reflect the squadron's contributions to the war effort and their desire for a future where equality is achieved?

Extension: Learn about Atlee Washington’s son, Robin Washington, learning of his father’s newspaper column in 2025 in this piece from Wisconsin Public Radio: [“Black history I never knew: My father’s World War II newspaper column rediscovered”](#)

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did the contributions of the 377th Aviation Squadron support the home front war effort and help push forward the fight for equality?

Optional Extension Reading: 377th Biographies

The Casper Army Air Base had a base newspaper called *The Slip Stream*, which was a feature of the *Casper Star-Tribune*. The newspaper frequently shared biographies of service members from across the base; however, rarely were members of the 377th featured. The following are two members of the 377th who were featured. Read their biographies to learn more about personal stories and responsibilities of two service members.

Biography 1: Cpl. Atlee Washington

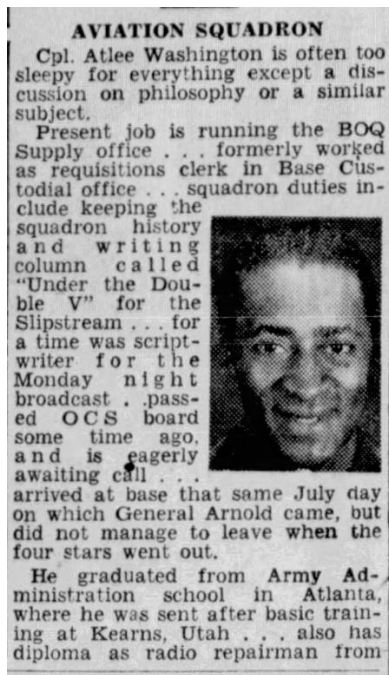


Figure 17: Featured in "Soldiers you work with..." in *The Slip Stream*, December 8, 1943.

Figure 17 Transcription:

Cpl. Atlee Washington is often too sleepy for everything except a discussion on philosophy or a similar subject.

Present job is running the BOQ Supply office . . . formerly worked as requisitions clerk in Base Custodial office . . . squadron duties include keeping the squadron history and writing column called 'Under the Double V' for the Slipstream . . . for a time was scriptwriter for the Monday night broadcast, passed OCS (Officer Candidate School) board some time ago and

is eagerly awaiting call. . . arrived at base that same July day on which General Arnold came, but did not manage to leave when the four stars went out.

He graduated from Army Administration school in Atlanta, where he was sent after basic training at Kearns, Utah. . . also has diploma as radio repairman from Signal Corps, in which branch he originally volunteered . . . entered Enlisted Reserve Corps June 1, 1942 in home-town Chicago – active service at Fort Custer, Michigan on March 9, 1943.

His schooling took place in Chicago . . . completed somewhat more than two years of college work . . . likes to read, to talk, to think . . . writes poetry . . . loves swimming, fencing, hiking, boating, traveling, and people. . . in civilian life was a postal clerk . . . reflects that it's a long war from the Aviation Squadron here back through twenty-eight years to the sleepy town of Northport, Alabama, where he came to life.

Biography 2: Staff Sgt. Curtis Petrel Mayo

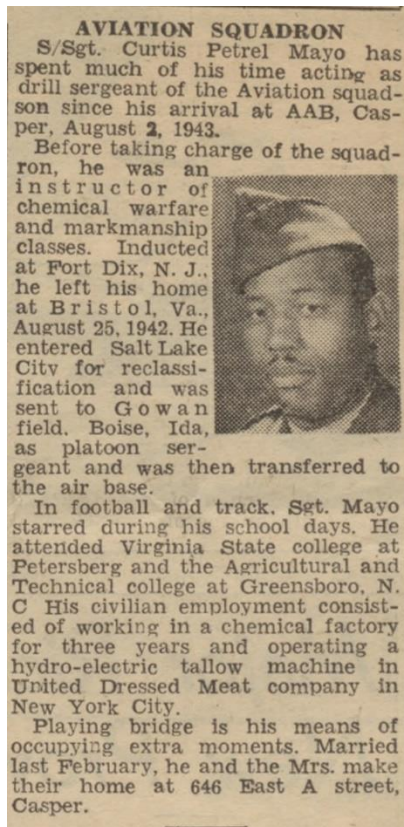


Figure 18: Featured in "Soldiers you work with..." in *The Slip Stream*, October 6, 1943.

Figure 18 Transcription:

S/Sgt. Curtis Petrel Mayo has spent much of his time acting as drill sergeant of the Aviation squadron since his arrival at AAB, Casper, August 2, 1943.

Before taking charge of the squadron, he was an instructor of chemical warfare and marksmanship classes. Inducted at Fort Dix, N.J., he left his home at Bristol, Va., August 25, 1942. He entered Salt Lake City for reclassification and was sent to Gowan Field, Boise, Ida., as platoon sergeant and was then transferred to the air base.

In football and track, Sgt. Mayo starred during his school days. He attended Virginia State college at Petersburg and the Agricultural and Technical college at Greensboro, N.C. His civilian employment consisted of working in a chemical factory for three years and operating a hydro-electric tallow machine in United Dressed Meat company in New York City.

Playing bridge is his means of occupying extra moments. Married last February, he and the Mrs. Make their home at 646 East A Street, Casper.

Biography 3: Pvt. Leroy Fletcher

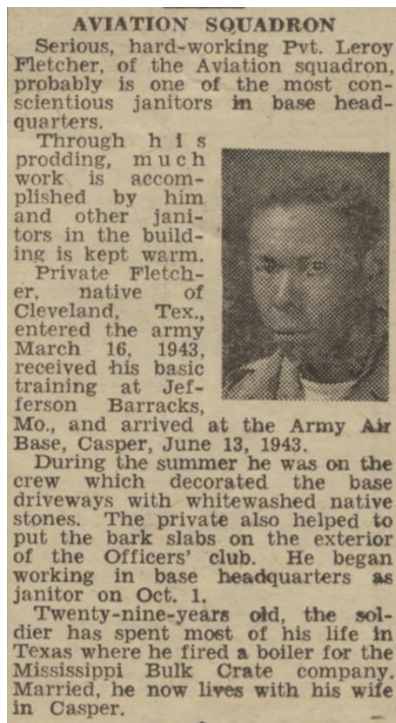


Figure 19: Featured in "Soldiers you work with..." in *The Slip Stream*, December 1, 1943.

Figure 19 Transcription:

Serious, hard-working Pvt. Leroy Fletcher, of the Aviation squadron, probably is one of the most conscientious janitors in base headquarters.

Through his prodding, much work is accomplished by him and other janitors in the building is kept warm.

Private Fletcher, native of Cleveland, Texas, entered the army March 16, 1943, received his basic training at Jefferson barracks, Mo., and arrived at the Army Air Base, Casper, June 13, 1943.

During the summer he was on the crew which decorated the base driveways with whitewashed native stones. The private also helped to put the bark slabs on the exterior of the Officers' club. He began working in base headquarters as janitor on Oct. 1.

Twenty-nine-years old, the soldier has spent most of his life in Texas where he fired a boiler for the Mississippi Bulk Crate company. Married, he now lives with his wife in Casper.

Questions

1. What are some of the different jobs and roles that Washington, Mayo, and Fletcher had in, and prior to, the military?
2. How do you think discrimination and segregation might have influenced their roles or promotions?
3. How did each service member contribute to the success of Casper Army Air Base?

Lesson 3: Women's Contributions at Casper Army Air Base in Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about the contributions of women at Casper Army Air Base. Women served in the [Women's Army Corps](#) (WACs) and civilian women worked at the Sub-Depot. Plane maintenance and air base operations relied on these women. The first two readings connect to the role of WACs at the base, and the third shares the personal story of a local artist working at the Sub-Depot.

Objectives:

1. Explain why women joined the Women's Army Corps (WACs) or worked at the Casper Army Air Base Sub-Depot, and the importance of this to home front efforts.
2. Describe experiences of women service members and civilian workers on the home front at Casper Army Air Base, with details such as types of jobs, challenges, and benefits.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 20-28 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3 (and optional extension)
3. *Recommended:* Map of Wyoming, with Casper and Natrona County marked

Photos



Figure 20: WAACs loading their belongings from the railway station to a truck to be delivered to Casper Army Air Base. arrive at From "WAACs are here," *The Slip Stream* (June 2, 1943)

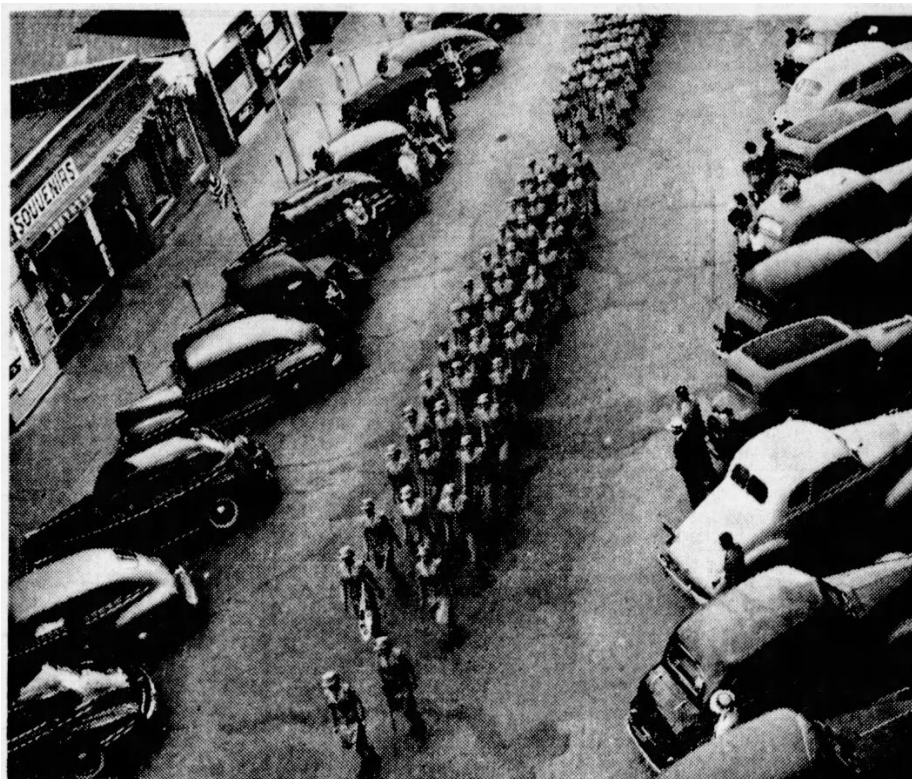


Figure 21: WACs parading through the streets of Casper. "The Wacs train, drill, go to school, work and parade the same as soldiers." (*Casper Star-Tribune*, Sept. 1, 1943)

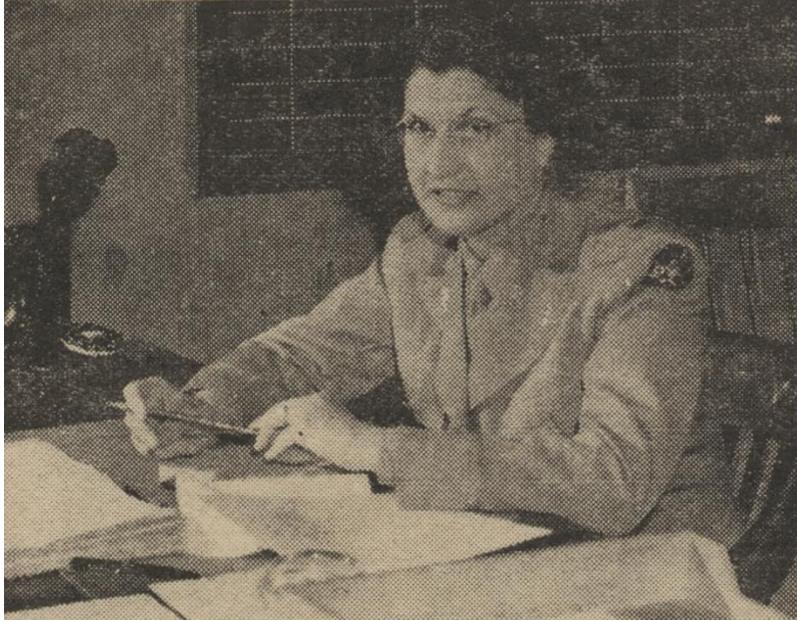


Figure 22: WAAC Lt. Elizabeth J. Healy became assistant base adjutant, becoming the first on base to relieve a male officer for other duties. She said, 'It's just like I expected and it gives a person the feeling of 'doing her part.' (The Slip Stream, June 16, 1943)

Getting Started: Essential Question

How did the home front contributions of women, both as service members and civilians, support the accomplishments of Casper Army Air Base?



By the numbers:

- 768th Women's Army Corps Provision Headquarters Company: The advance cadre to arrive at Casper Army Air Base consisted of 12 women. This grew to the eventual complete unit size of no more than 156 members.
- The 348th Sub-Depot: In 1943 approximately 400 civilians, mostly female, were employed there. (The Sub-Depot at Casper Army Air Base as a sub-depot to Ogden Air Depot in Utah.)



Quotation to consider:

"This is when so many of the boys had gone to (the) Service so they were going to train the women to be able take over the wartime activity, so they started a pilot program in Casper and they're all graduates. . . I was a sheet metal worker. We went to the school that had . . .

welding and sheet metal and a shop where you (did) metal work. . . . I was a general mechanic helper. I liked it because it was probably my first paycheck and I thought that was great, getting \$125 a month.

Well, we had to just learn how to do these things and then after we'd had six weeks of training at the CNYA school and then we had to work at the air base. We had to be there just like a job, you know. You were picked up, you went to work, you worked eight hours and then you went home. And it was shift work. You worked one of the three shifts. Well, you worked eight to four, then from four to midnight, then midnight to eight.

I was smaller than most of the girls there. I always had to get up in the airplane wings (of B-24s, B-17s). They had what they call the bucking bar -- put these rivets in and put it up. They would go up there and the rivet girl would go up there, rivet it up, put the gun on it and shoot it and then you'd have to sit on this side of the bucking bar and flatten it out to hold it, keep the metal on that you put on it. You know, with all these cross members and things around in there, you had to get up in there; if there's a hole in it, you'd have to repair it.

- Dorothy Jeannette Mobley, Casper Army Air Base Sub-Depot worker (*This quotation is a compilation and adaptation from transcripts from the Library of Congress Veterans History Project, [Dorothy Jeannette Mobley Collection.](#)*)



Read to Connect

Background: During World War II, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs) was created in 1942 to allow women to serve in non-combat roles. In 1943, it transitioned to be the [Women's Army Corps \(WACs\)](#). (The text below originally wrote WACs as "Wacs.")

The Casper Army Air Base was home to the 768th Women's Army Corps Provision Headquarters Company. The WACs served in support roles across the base such as maintenance, operations, and supplies, along with for the base newspaper, mess hall, and more. They were housed in a separate area near the Main Gate which included barracks, a mess hall, and other facilities. (Other women on base were Army nurses, or civilian workers, such as those working at the Sub-Depot.)

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

WACs Assume Many Jobs Formerly Held By Soldiers at Base

Casper Star-Tribune, September 1, 1943

Since the arrival of the Wacs, a milestone in the history of the Army Air Base, Casper, many jobs formerly held by soldiers are being done by feminine hands and brains.

All the work done by the Wacs is necessary and would otherwise be done by soldiers, thereby increasing the available army draft on the manpower of the nation. Jobs taken over by the Wacs include: file clerks, stenographers, typists, photography laboratory technicians, aircraft dispatchers, communication code instructors, and weather observers.

With their gaiety, their singing voices as they march to and from work, and their presence among soldiers, much of the harshness has been taken out of the army.

Although they have become proficient in many routine jobs on the base, Lt. Florence J. McDermott, commanding officer of the Wacs, said that 'they will not replace soldiers in tactical units, but will work in the offices of the headquarters squadron. More girls are expected to arrive here in the near future to complete the strength of the company and release other soldiers for combat duty.'

Most of the Wacs working in base headquarters have had previous training at army administration schools which have fitted them to do various jobs handled previously by soldiers.

In the base personnel section are a number of well-trained clerks who properly fill out hundreds of sundry forms and keep them up to date. Other Wacs place entries in the service records of the base personnel and keep close check on the final endorsement when transfers are made. When the morning reports arrive from the various squadrons, the girls see that the entries are checked. Details of payroll are capably handled by Wacs in the finance office.

The filing room now has a woman's touch and is staffed with a number of Wacs who have received training in the Dewey Decimal filing system similar to the system used in public libraries.

Legal boards and claims has found a Wac who is familiar with court martial and other legal proceedings. She takes notes on all army hearings which take place here.

Along with all these other duties, there are Wacs working at the base theater, in the post exchange, the library and special services as well as the base post office. They help in the handling and distribution of mail, and one is employed in the base public relations office. Several are working in the hospital as nurses' assistants. The Wacs operate their own company and maintain their own supply room and mess hall. The mess hall is operated entirely by girls who have been graduated from the army's cooks and bakers school.

Most of the Wacs are known as administration specialists and have been assigned to jobs according to the specialty for which they were best suited, according to the army's needs.

Of the other Wacs on the base, several have been assigned to the photography laboratory to learn the technique of that work. Others are receiving training here and will eventually become weather observers, while another is acting as an aircraft dispatcher and still others are working as communications code instructors.

When the full strength of the company arrives at the base other soldiers will be released from their jobs and their vacancies will be filled by these very willing workers.

Questions for Reading 1, By the Numbers, and Quotation to Consider

1. What opportunities were available to women, both as civilians and service members, at the Casper Army Air Base?
2. What kinds of jobs did the WACs perform, and what needs did they help fulfill?
3. How did the WACs impact the base's administrative capabilities?
4. What types of training did women engage in prior to starting in the WACs or at the Sub-Depot?
5. What work did Dorothy Jeannette Mobley engage in at the Sub-Depot?

Photos



Figure 23: Casper Air Base WACs hosted a Christmas party with gifts, treats, and a show for children of the Wyoming State Children's home in December 1943. This picture shows Cpl. Eva Clark, arranger of the party, giving a gift to child Karen Crouse. (Casper Star-Tribune, December 26, 1943)

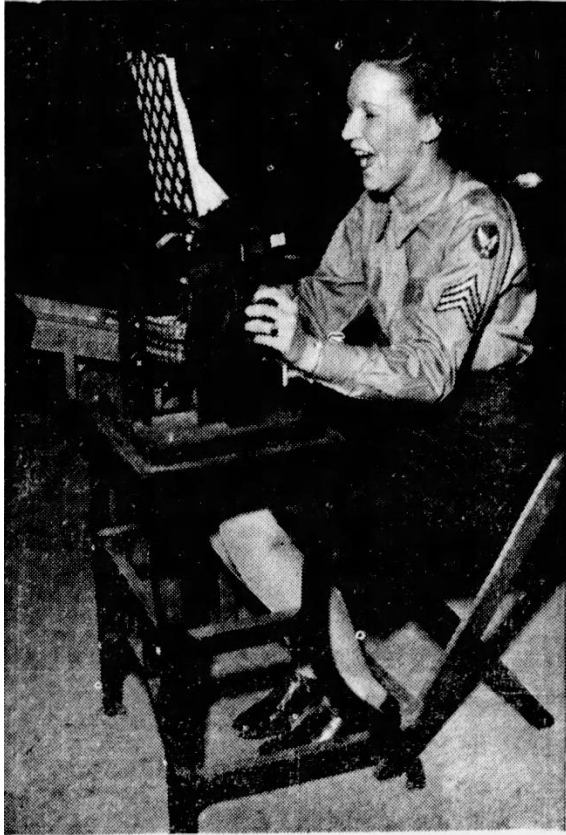


Figure 24: "Replacing an enlisted man for combat duty, Sgt. Adelene Featsent, Wac, happily does her work in the personnel section of base headquarters. Sergeant Featsent also has a brother in the armed forces." (*The Slip Stream, Casper Star-Tribune, October 13, 1943*)

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

WAC at Air Base Finds Work Exciting; Urges Girls to Join

The Slip Stream, part of the *Casper Star-Tribune*, October 13, 1943

Working in base headquarters where she has replaced an enlisted man for combat duty, Sgt. Adelene Jupe Featsent, Wac of the Air Base is setting a precedent for the hundreds of girls who are expected to be recruited in the present Woman's Army Corps drive.

Each recruit now will replace an enlisted man from her own state who has been killed in action. The drive opened September 27 and will close December 7.

Sergeant Featsent, a Wac since March 2, 1943, is in charge of the service records for the enlisted personnel at the base. Her work which she finds most fascinating, and not too different from a civilian secretarial job, includes recording bonds, insurances and pay

received each month, as well as transfers, promotions and medical records for each soldier. She also guides and instructs any new helpers who venture into her department.

Addie, as she is called by her fellow Wacs attended the basic training center at Fort Oglethorpe, GA. She was among the lucky girls selected to study at the adjutant general's Administration School in Commerce, Tex. After being graduated as an administrative specialist, Sergeant Featsent and many other girl soldiers were assigned to the air base.

Addie and the other Wacs at the base have contributed toward winning the war in an outstanding fashion by taking part as regular members of the armed forces. Other members are now being sought in the greatest nationwide Wac enlistment campaign which has occurred since the corps was started.

An appeal to enlist as many Wyoming women as possible into a Wyoming Wac company has been underway since September 27. These girls will replace men who have served and died for their country. The Wyoming contingent will be allowed to wear a special identification patch on uniforms, will retain their identity as the Wyoming division and will carry the Wyoming State Flag along with Old Glory, throughout their basic training.

Sergeant Featsent is having the time of her life in the Wac, meeting women from every part of the country and all kinds of homes, former businesswomen from large cities, teachers, college girls, farm girls and office girls --- a picked group because each Wac must pass strict entrance tests before being admitted to the corps.

Living and work together, eating the same meals, wearing the same clothes, attending the same classes, makes these girl-soldiers great friends. They enjoy being together and after an eight-hour working day, often prefer an evening in the attractive day room talking things over, to a trip to town.

Dental, medical and surgical care are provided, as well as hospitalization, if needed. A simple, regular life which is the best kind for building sound bodies and steady nerves make up the Wac's program. Sergeant Featsent spends part of her leisure time playing tennis down at the Wac area, going roller skating or horseback riding in the mountains. She takes time out to read whenever possible and is an excellent hair dresser.

Before entering the Wac, Addie worked as a stenographer and secretary to a doctor in her hometown, Youngstown, Ohio. Her 21-year-old brother helped this patriotic miss to decide to enter the service. Cpl. Alben Featsent has been in the army for three years and is a paratrooper, located on the Bermuda Islands.

More Wacs are needed for dozens of air force jobs. Important radio jobs, clerical workers, technicians in army hospitals or dental clinics, supply clerks, communications, weather

reporters, dietitians, mess sergeants, motor transport service women, chauffeurs, as well as high ranking army officers' jobs are now open.

It is hoped that the women of Wyoming will meet their country's demand by responding generously, married or single women between the ages of 20 and 50.

Questions for Reading 2

1. What campaign was Wyoming participating in? What was the motivation behind the campaign?
2. Why might women from different backgrounds have been motivated to join the WACs? Use details from the text and Addie's story as an example.
3. How might leisure activities like Addie enjoyed support morale and effectiveness of the WACs?
4. How do you think the involvement of women in military service during World War II impacted the future of gender equality in the armed forces?

Photos



Figure 25: Group photo with several women, thought to be trainees and workers at the Casper Air Base Sub-Depot, where Elizabeth "Neal" Forsling also worked. (Credit: Goodstein Foundation Library Western History Center Digital Collections, Casper College)

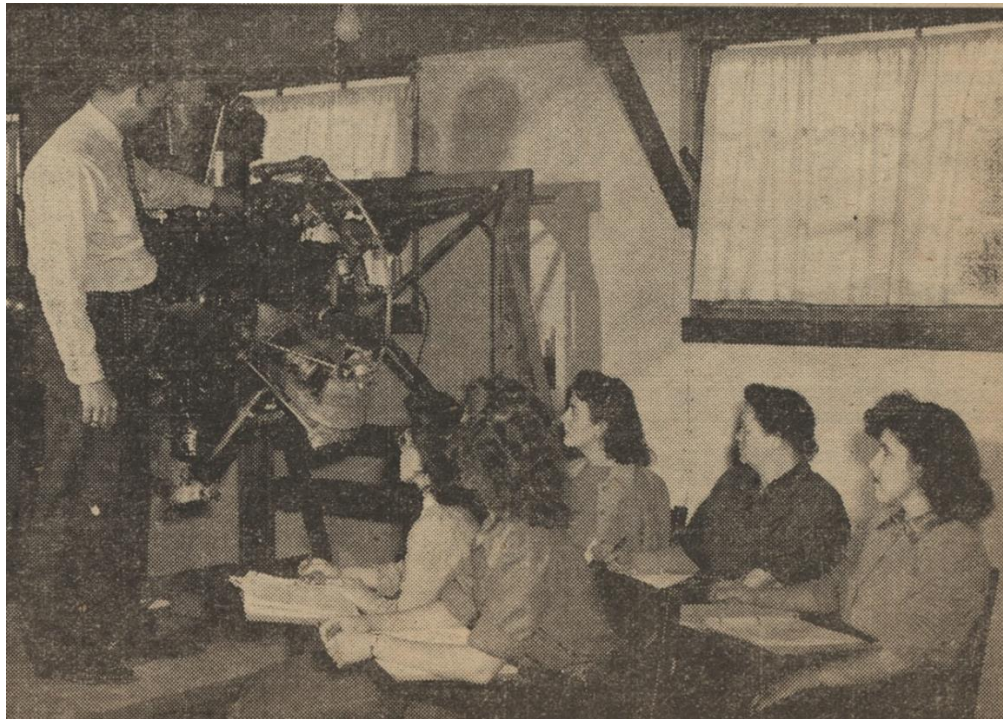


Figure 26: "Mr. Frank Thomas, instructor at Sub-Depot school, instructing prospective group of civilians in airplane engines." (*The Slip Stream*, September 29, 1943)



Figure 27: "Sub-Depot Sheet Metal Shop Needs More Girls." Two women, also described as mothers, Mrs. Applegate and Mrs. Blake, using a rivet gun on a plane at the Casper Air Base Sub-Depot. (*The Slip Stream*, October 13, 1943)



Figure 28: Neal Forsling, shown removing the dome of a Hamilton hydromatic propeller at the 348th Sub-Depot, Casper Air Base. U.S. Army Air Forces from *The Casper Star-Tribune*, Sept. 30, 1943. (Also archived in Elizabeth "Neal" Forsling Newspapers and Jean Gallatin Ogilbee Photo Album, NCA 01.v.2024.08 WyCaC US. Casper College Archives and Special Collections)

Reading 3: Newspaper Article

Background: Elizabeth "Neal" Forsling was a local poet, writer and painter. Neal Forsling's home and inspiration for her creative works, Crimson Dawn, mentioned in the article, is a part of Natrona County Parks (Casper Mountain). It is home to a museum and annual local Midsummer festival.

From Poetry to Propellers is Easy Transition for Talented Casper Writer

Mrs. James Forsling Enjoys Work in Airplane Maintenance at Sub-Depot

The Casper Star-Tribune, September 30, 1943

From poetry to propellers is an amazing change but nevertheless it was the one made by Mrs. James Forsling when she left her mountain home to enter war work as a mechanic learner for the Sub-Depot here at the Casper Air Base. Mrs. Forsling who is known to her co-workers as "Neal" is proof that women are capable of discarding their frills, donning

overalls and going to work at something which formally they regarded as belonging only in a man's world.

That a poetess, writer and painter who was reared by a fine southern family and educated in the most exclusive girls' schools could switch from her artistic pursuits to the assembling of proper domes is almost unbelievable but true. Mrs. Forsling knows her particular job and knows it well according to her shop foreman. She has been employed for six months, part of the time as a "mechanic learner" and part as a "mechanic helper." She has only taken one day sick leave and has not been late once.

"Neal's" enthusiastic enjoyment of her new work is noticeable to all her friends, to the workers in her shop and to employees of the Sub Depot who have met her. When asked if she found the work very wearing she stated 'I never felt better in my life so I know it must agree with me,' and added, 'From the beginning and even yet the minute I enter that huge hangar I get a sense of thrill and a tingle up my spine though I can't put my finger on the reason for it.'

With her blue eyes sparkling as she discussed her work Mrs. Forsling described how she cleans the dirty, greasy domes and then lines them up in the trays where their brilliant lustre remind her of lovely jewels in a jewel's tray. 'They are really beautiful,' she said, 'and give one an aesthetic lift.' She also mentioned that there is a wonderful feeling of comradeship existing among the workers of the Sub-Depot.

"Neal" still goes to her cabin on her day off. 'After 15 years of living up there including nine winters it would be impossible for me to give up that life entirely,' she explained and added. 'In my front yard at Crimson Dawn, which is the name of my mountain home, I look up and wave at the planes as they fly overhead and I think, 'There go my propellers.'

Mrs. Forsling compared her pioneering work on the mountain to the pioneering she is now doing in the field of women mechanics. She plans to write an article on how women will do similar work after the war as she firmly believes that they will continue in such jobs. She explained, "I do not believe women will eliminate men from jobs but they will help just as they are helping now only it will be in the building of the future world rather than the destroying of the enemy. The government tapped an entirely new source of Labor when it trained and employed women to do mechanical work and there will be plenty of use for that labor after the war. It is an immense project beyond anything we can possibly imagine now. I am only one of the many women who are making the adjustment and liking it. Some of us feel that we must be prepared to support families when husbands go to war, others realize that men's lives depend upon our cooperation at home but we are all doing our new jobs cheerfully.'

Mrs. Forsling is a widow, mother of two grown daughters one of which is married to a Navy Lieutenant and the other is teaching Spanish at Kansas University.

Other women are urgently needed by the air service command to help in the maintenance of planes. The United States Civil Service employs these women. Anyone wishing further information may apply to Mrs. Anderson, old-city hall on Center Street between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. A new class is being formed at the present time.

Over half of the employees at the Sub-Depot are now women and more and more men are being called into service. 40 per cent of the Air Service Command's present civilian personnel and the whole United States is female; it is expected to increase to 60 per cent by the end of 1943.

The maintenance has found that women are especially well adapted for precision work. Their touch is finer than a man's which makes them ideal on instrument repair, electrical wiring, and for work in the machine shop where parts are ground to the thousandth of an inch. Women also do most of the parachute repacking. Recently in the Sacramento air depot a P-38, Lockheed Lightning was completely serviced by an all-woman crew. The plane was dubbed "The Powder Puff Special."

The local Sub-Depot particularly needs many more workers and hopes to get most of its new employees from the women.

Questions for Reading 3

1. What job did Forsling do at the Sub-Depot? How does she describe her work?
2. In what way does Forsling's habit of watching the airplanes from her cabin connect to her work at the Sub-Depot?
3. What examples show how women were increasingly recruited and effectively contributing to the home front workforce? (*Note: The text shows how stereotypes were commonly used in descriptions of women's work at the time.*)
4. How does Forsling's story show the impact of World War II on men's and women's roles in the home front workforce?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did the home front contributions of women, both as service members and civilians, support the accomplishments of Casper Army Air Base?

Reflect on Forsling's statement in Reading 3: *"I do not believe women will eliminate men from jobs but they will help just as they are helping now only it will be in the building of the future world rather than the destroying of the enemy."*

Explain how women's involvement in the war effort, both as civilians and in service, might have influenced job opportunities and shifts in the labor market after the war.

Lesson 4: Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming: Comparing and Connecting WWII Home Front Cities

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series teaching about the World War II home front, with [Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains photographs, readings and a culminating project. Optional media extensions include a documentary and exploring sources. The first reading shares highlights of the operations at Casper Army Air Base. The second reading connects the region to the designation of a Heritage City. The culminating project contributes to learners' understandings of the city as a WWII Heritage City, with the opportunity to combine lesson themes from the three other lessons in the Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming lesson [collection](#). This lesson summarizes the city's contributions and encourage connections to the overall U.S. home front efforts.

Objectives:

In a culminating product:

- a. Explain the significance of the Casper Army Air Base in the training of crews and Allied Forces successes
- b. Summarize the contributions of civilians and service members in Casper and Natrona County to home front war efforts
- c. Identify ways in which the Casper Army Air Base impacted the local community's growth and contributions to the war efforts
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Casper and Natrona County and other Heritage city(s) / World War II home front(s).

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 29-35 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2
3. Maps, project materials (as needed)
4. Student graphic organizers (See [Figure 35](#) at end of lesson, for reference)

- Create Comparison Matrices for your students to use. To compare two cities, create a one-page sheet with three columns and four rows. Label the left column Theme/Topic and the other columns City 1 and City 2. For a Comparison Matrix for three cities simply add an additional column.
- Create two Single-Point Rubrics to assist students' self-assessment. One is for assessing proficiency in meeting teacher-selected standards. One is for assessing proficiency in meeting objectives.
- For the rubric on standards, create a one-page sheet with three columns and four rows of content. Label the first column "Areas for Improvement," the second column, "Proficient (Meeting Standard)," and the third column, "Areas of Exceeding Standard." Leave the first and third columns blank. In each row of the second column identify a Standard and indicate a space for noting the evidence for meeting the standard. Include a space at the bottom of the page for assigning points for each column.
- For the rubric on objectives, create a one-page sheet with three columns and four rows of content. Label the first column "Areas for Improving toward Objective," the second column, "Proficient (Meeting Objective)," and the third column, "Areas of Exceeding Objective." Leave the first and third columns blank. In the four rows of the second column identify these four objectives:
 - a. Explain the significance of the Casper Army Air Base in the training of crews and Allied Forces successes
 - b. Summarize the contributions of civilians and service members in Casper and Natrona County to home front war efforts
 - c. Identify ways in which the Casper Army Air Base impacted the local community's growth and contributions to the war efforts
 - d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Casper and Natrona County and other Heritage city(s) / World War II home front(s).

Include a space at the bottom of the page for assigning points for each column. See the last photo of this lesson for reference.



Getting Started: Essential Question

Why was Casper and Natrona County chosen as an American World War II Heritage City, and what are its similarities and differences to other home front cities?

Photos



Figure 29: Gen. Arnold visit, Honor Guard. Casper Army Air Base, 1943. (Credit: Brake, Richard H. Collection, P92-4/5, Wyoming State Archives.)



Figure 30: Many enlisted men from the air base participated in a parade previewing the local 'Boot and Spur' show. The parade was led by the commander of the air base, James A. Moore, and Mayor G.W. Earle. (From *The Slip Stream*, June 16, 1943)



Figure 31: "Cpl. Kay Scola, WAC, who is working in the base weather office where she has replaced an enlisted man for overseas duty, is glad to be 'doing her part' and endorses the WACs for other girls" (*The Slip Stream*, October 20, 1943)



Figure 32: "Many jobs are performed by the WACs at the Casper Army Air field, and among them is that of mechanics. Shown above are a group of WACs learning to install a propeller on an engine as a part of the mechanic course of instruction they are given there." (*Casper Star-Tribune*, Aug. 29, 1944)



Figure 33: Original caption in *The Slip Stream*, 10/27/1943: "Crowded conditions of the Colored Service Men's Center can be noted in the picture taken at last Saturday night's dance. These conditions are being eliminated this week as the center is being enlarged to twice its original size." Photo by the Air Force.

BUY
WAR BONDS
AND
STAMPS!

Working Together
FOR
VICTORY

We Consider It a Great Privilege
to have had a part in preparing the Casper Air Base for the use of
the United States Army.

We Join in Welcoming to Casper
and Wyoming the forces that are writing another glorious chapter
in American history by their heroic sacrifices.

We Congratulate the City of Casper
upon the location here of a base that will contribute heavily to the
preservation of Liberty and all Democratic institutions.

WE SALUTE THE SOLDIERS OF THE CASPER AIR BASE!
LET'S ALL HELP KEEP 'EM FLYING

CHARLES M. SMITH
GENERAL CONTRACTOR
THERMOPOLIS, WYO.

Figure 34: A newspaper page, "Working Together for Victory" shows service member and civilian profiles and congratulated Casper for its air base. Featured in the *Casper Star-Tribune* (Oct. 18, 1942) by Charles M. Smith, General Contractor, who contributed to the preparation of the base.

Figure 34 Transcription:

Buy War Bonds and Stamps! Working Together for Victory. We consider it a great privilege to have had a part in preparing the Casper Air Base for the use of the United States Army. We join in welcoming to Casper and Wyoming the forces that are writing another glorious chapter in American history by their heroic sacrifices. We congratulate the City of Casper upon the location here of a base that will contribute heavily to the preservation of Liberty and all Democratic institutions. We salute the soldiers of the Casper Air Base! Let's All Help Keep 'Em Flying. Charles M. Smith, General Contractor, Thermopolis, Wyo.



Quotations to consider:

“Within the space of a few short months there has risen here another of the modern training centers from which the Army Air Force will go to battle for home and country. It is a complete city, equipped with all units and facilities required for operation and flying purposes.

Congratulations go to the engineers and construction forces for erecting the base in record time; to the operations forces that activated it and made it ready for efficient use; and to the flying forces that will utilize it for its primary purpose.

Establishment and operation of this base bring Casper into closer partnership with the war effort, and make possible the collaboration and participation of this city in the victory program that would not have been possible without the economic benefits that have accrued.

Casper is deeply appreciative, accordingly, both to the honor visited on the city and of the opportunity to cooperate. Casper, with more than 1,200 men in the armed services, welcomes the Army Air Base personnel. Casper joins in wishing them “Happy landings” as they play their part in a glorious service to their country and to all mankind.

- “Hats Off to the Army,” *Casper Tribune-Herald*, October 18, 1942

“One of the most essential, patriotic and interesting war jobs a woman can have is that of a mechanic helper in which assistance is given in the maintenance of huge bombers, lightening fighters and all types of airplanes. The government pays mechanic learners while it trains them for this specialized trade.

At the Sub Depot at the Casper Air base an urgent call is being made for more women to apply for these important wartime jobs. A group is first organized from women who have passed the aptitude test which deals solely with aptitude rather than knowledge of

mechanics. They have been passed by women who were formerly in many types of work most of which were remote from anything mechanical.”

- “Opportunity for Enlisted Men's Wives to Help at Army Air Base,” *The Slip Stream*, September 29, 1943



By the numbers:

- In 1940, Natrona County, Wyoming, had a population of 23,858, which grew by over 30% over the next decade, reaching 31,437 by 1950 (U.S. Census).
- An Air Base talent show netted \$50,000 in war bond sales at a talent show by army air base personnel at the Natrona County high school in January 1943. (From *The Slip Stream* Newspaper, January 20, 1943)

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

Teacher Tip: [Reading 1 in Lesson 1](#) can be used to learn about or review the overall purpose, functions, and the roles of service members and civilians at Casper Army Air Base.

Army Air Base Streamlined for Training Work

Casper Star-Tribune, March 12, 1944

By Amy Lawrence

A year of intensive training of bombardment groups and enlargement and improvement of facilities at the Casper Army Air base was climaxed by the streamlining of the group and base organizations into one command.

Four commandants were successively in charge of the base during the past year: Lt. Col. James A. Moore, who was the first commandant; Lt. Col. Tracy Richardson, Col. William Lewis, Jr., and Lt. Col. Marcus A. Mullen who assumed command in February and is the present commandant.

In keeping with a sweeping revision of training programs in the Second Air force, the Casper base program was streamlined under the command of Colonel Lewis last November. With an eye to increased efficiency of the programs and a saving of manpower, the group and base commands were combined into one organization.

Formerly the group organization had had charge of all training activities while the base personnel was engaged in ‘housekeeping’ functions necessary to maintain the base. While

both were under the command of the station commandant, each had separate commanding officers and personnel.

Duplication Eliminated

Under the streamlined set-up, both are welded into one organization directly under the commandant with no overlapping of duplication of work as was formerly the case.

'The prime purpose of this reorganization,' Colonel Lewis said at the time of the change, 'is to conserve manpower and achieve a higher efficiency.'

In keeping with the increased efficiency sought by the base in the streamlining program, was the intensive training programs carried on. Although the exact figures concerning the number of men training are, of course, a military secret, there was seldom a day when the huge bombers did not roar over the city, and the base filled its assigned quota of trained men.

To many, the traditional windy, stormy weather of Wyoming would seem to hinder the training, but apparently such is not the case. No weather data, can, of course, be released from the base, but a yearly summary ending Dec. 31, issued by the United States weather station at Wardwell field, near Casper, states that during the year only a total of 81.9 hours during the year were closed to flying, indicating that weather here did little, if anything, to deter the program.

Also noteworthy was the fact that fewer accidents occurred during the past few months than had previously been noted.

Liberators Brought Here

Among the many changes affected at the base during the year was the change from the Flying Fortresses, B-17's to the B-24's, and the temporary addition of a fighter squadron last October to broaden the training of the combat training crews.

A marked improvement in the appearance of the base was noted as an intensive seeding and landscaping program was begun last September. The purpose of the program was two-fold – to decrease the dust storms and to improve the appearance of the base. Walks, lawns, shrubbery were added, and each of the personnel of barracks pridefully added rocks to line their walks, fences and other improvements, which converted the appearance of the base, from a temporary landing spot to a large, well-kept permanent base.

A large building program, both of new buildings and improvement of the runways was undertaken. Existing buildings were enlarged, new ones built, lights were added to enlarged runways and in general the size and facilities of the base enlarged.

Important recreational additions at the base were the opening of a Service Men's center and a large bowling alley.

Wacs Added Last May

Among the most important additions to the base during the year were the Wacs who arrived on the base May 28. These women, housed in a special area designated to them, soon were filling many jobs on the base, releasing men for other service. The Wac area includes barracks, headquarters, day room and mess hall. How many of these young women are on the base is not known, but in their neat, attractive uniforms they have become a familiar sight in Casper.

Among the many distinguished visitors to visit the base during the year was Gen. H. H. Arnold, commanding general of the Army Air forces, who was here last July on an inspection tour. During his stay he presented decorations to nine fliers stationed at the base, and pronounced the base 'one of the finest in the Army Air forces.'

Other notables to visit the base were Sgt. Autry, cowboy singing star, who presented his weekly broadcast from the base; Capt. Harold F. Watson, participant of the Tokyo raid; the crew of "Jack the Ripper," a famous Flying Fortress; Lt. J. B. Whittaker, pilot of Col. Eddie Rickenbacker's plane at the time of his crash, and Max and Buddy Baer.

For civilian population in Casper and vicinity the year held two high spots so far as the base was concerned – the Open House last March during which a complete tour of the base, and a parade topped by an air show were held, and an open house at the hospital during which the facilities of the base medical detachment were on display.

Many thousands of people attended the open house, the first opportunity for many to see the base, and many hundreds enjoyed the tour of the hospital, seeing the large modern facilities for taking care of ill and wounded at the base.

The platoons of men, the trucks and other vehicles and planes of the base also became a familiar part of all parades in the city, lending a timely military touch to each.

Casper citizens may well point with pride to this base that has grown from the barren prairies to become an important cog in the huge war machine of the nation, and may view with satisfaction the achievements of its men and officers who are even now, writing history in the skies above Fortress Europe, the Pacific, Italy, and the Middle East.

Questions for Reading 1, Photos, and Quotations to Consider

1. What training needs did Casper Army Air Base meet for the Army?
2. In what ways did the addition of the WACs enhance base operations?

3. How did civilians support the base? How did events like the open houses help strengthen the connection between the base and local community?
4. Describe the connection of the meaning of each photo in the lesson gallery to Casper and Natrona County's designation as a Heritage City.
5. How did home front contributions, both by service members and civilians in Casper and Natrona County, support the US and the Allies? Consider both information from this text and from past lessons.

Reading 2: Heritage City Designation

Excerpt from: "[House Report 115-998](#), "To Direct the Secretary of the Interior to Annually Designate at Least One City in The United States as An 'American World War II Heritage City,' and for other purposes" (October 30, 2018)

“ . . .PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of H.R. 6118 is to direct the Secretary of the Interior to annually designate at least one city in the United States as an "American World War II Heritage City".

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

On December 7, 1941, military forces of the Empire of Japan attacked the U.S. Naval Fleet and ground bases at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. On December 8, 1941, one day after what President Roosevelt referred to as, "a date which will live in infamy," the United States declared war against the Empire of Japan. Three days later, on December 11, 1941, Japan's ally, Germany, declared war on the United States. Sixteen million Americans, mostly young working-age men, served in the military during World War II, out of an overall United States population of 113 million.

While an unprecedented number of Americans served in World War II, the country drastically increased its war production on the home front, serving not only the needs of the armed forces of the United States but her allies as well--in what President Franklin Roosevelt called "The Arsenal of Democracy." The combination of millions serving in the military, during a period of necessary and drastic increases in production, led to significant social changes on the American home front.

The World War II period resulted in the largest number of people migrating within the United States in the history of the country. Individuals and families relocated to industrial centers for good paying jobs out of a sense of patriotic duty. Many industrial centers became "boomtowns," growing at phenomenal rates. One example, the City of Richmond, California, grew from a population of under 24,000 to over 100,000 during the war. . . ."

Questions for Reading 1 and 2, Photos

1. What was the purpose of the bill (H.R. 6118) according to the report?
2. What contributed to Casper and Natrona County being a “boomtown?” (For more information, see [Reading 2 in Lesson 1](#))
3. Why do you think Casper and Natrona County was designated as a World War II Heritage City? Connect details from the bill and evidence from the first reading, and/or other readings from the lessons.
4. Are there other cities you think of when considering home front contributions during wartime? Which, and why?

Culminating Activity/Mastery Product

To demonstrate student understanding, support students in creating a final product that meets the following objectives:

- a. Explain the significance of the Casper Army Air Base in the training of crews and Allied Forces successes
- b. Summarize the contributions of civilians and service members in Casper and Natrona County to home front war efforts
- c. Identify ways in which the Casper Army Air Base impacted the local community’s growth and contributions to the war efforts
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Casper and Natrona County and other Heritage city(s) / World War II home front(s).

Mastery products should be:

- . . . **student-led;** Students work as individuals or in collaborative groups.
- . . . **student-directed:** Students are offered a variety of choices for product type.
- . . . **student-organized;** Teacher facilitates by providing students with the comparison matrices and/or resource links from throughout the series of lessons.
- . . . **student-assessed;** Teacher supports student self-assessment and reflection by providing students single-point rubrics to assess for meeting standards and/or lesson objectives.

Note: Depending on time and scope, the comparison of Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming to another WWII Heritage or home front city(s) within the mastery product (objectives) may be omitted. However, comparing cities is recommended, as it connects students to a deeper understanding of the WWII home front.

Examples of mastery product choices include, but are not limited to:

- **Written:** Letter (opinion or informative), essay, poem, narratives, biography, articles, class book or children’s book, speech or debate (then presented orally), blog / website, plaque or historical displays, pamphlets or rack cards
- **Graphic Organizers:** timeline, flowcharts, mind or concept content maps, Venn diagrams, comparison matrices, posters
- **Artistic Expression:** song, dance, theater (ex. skits), 3-D models, dioramas, photo journal, stamp and coin designs, visual art, architecture/building or monument, museum design
- **Media design and creation:** podcast, historical markers, social media content, interactive virtual maps or tours, infographics, video, comic strips or graphics, game design, slideshows, digital scrapbook

Please view the [NPS Heritage cities lesson collection](#) for information and resources on other cities.

Single-Point Rubric

Areas for Improvement	Proficient (Meeting Standard)	Areas of Exceeding Standard
	Standard: _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
	Standard: _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
	Standard: _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
	Standard: _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
Points		

Figure 35: Single-Point Rubric (Standards; Blank) [Teacher selects priority standards for assessment.] Courtesy of Sarah Nestor Lane

Acknowledgment

The lesson series was written by Sarah Nestor Lane, an educator and consultant with the Cultural Resources Office of Interpretation and Education, funded by the National Council on Public History's cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.