

# Evansville, Indiana, WWII Heritage City

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



*Figure 1: LST 157 in Evansville, Indiana on October 31, 1942. LST-157 was launched on October 31, 1942, and commissioned on February 10, February 1943. LST 157 participated in operations such as the Sicilian occupation in July 1943 and the invasion of Normandy June 1944, known as D-Day. The ship was decommissioned on December 9, 1944. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)*

## Introduction

The three lessons, and culminating fourth lesson, support the development of understanding the significance of [Evansville, Indiana](#) designated as an American [World War II Heritage City](#). Highlights include contributions to war manufacturing in ship, plane, and munitions production, and volunteerism and contributions made by many civilians, including thousands served at the local Red Cross Canteen. Women and African American contributions are highlighted. The lessons highlight specific contributions but connect to larger themes and understandings of the U.S. home front during wartime.

## 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 is to support students in combining learning across the three lessons, and/or comparison to other World War II home front cities in a culminating activity.

### 1. [Defense Manufacturing in Evansville, Indiana, World War II Heritage City \(p. 5\)](#)

- Social change
- Women in the workforce
- Manufacturing and industry
- Evansville Shipyard
- Chrysler Ordnance plant
- Republic Aviation

### 2. [Civilian Volunteerism and Contributions on the Home Front in Evansville, Indiana World War II Heritage City \(p. 17\)](#)

- American Red Cross Canteen
- Material drives
- War bonds
- USO
- Women volunteerism

### 3. [African American Contributions on the Home Front in Evansville, Indiana World War II Heritage City \(p. 31\)](#)

- Women in the workforce
- Manufacturing and industry

- Labor movements
- Civil Rights
- African American history

#### 4. [Evansville, Indiana: Comparing and Connecting WWII Home Front Cities \(p. 42\)](#)

### Positioning these Lessons in the Curriculum:

The standards listed beneath the lesson links are a collection of standards covered in the lesson collection. 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

*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: Defense Manufacturing in Evansville, Indiana, World War II Heritage City

## About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series teaching about the World War II home front, with [Evansville, Indiana](#) designated as an American [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about the home front contributions of Evansville to defense manufacturing. This includes the Evansville Shipyard, Chrysler Ordnance plant, and Republic Aviation.

## Objectives:

1. Describe the war effort and contributions of Evansville.
2. Explain and reflect on the impact of World War II on the way of life, workforce composition, and industries in Evansville.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 2-8 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3 (and optional extension)
3. *Recommended: Map of Evansville, Indiana*



## Getting Started: Essential Question

How did war manufacturing in Evansville impact the economy and contribute to defense efforts in WWII?

## Photos



Figure 2: Ohio River front in Evansville, Indiana (1945). Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) were launched from the Evansville Shipyard into the Ohio River, then traveling the Mississippi River down to the Gulf of Mexico. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)



Figure 3: Launching of LST 492 from the Evansville Shipyards on September 30, 1943. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)



## By the numbers:

- The Evansville Shipyard employed over 19,000 at its peak. The city produced 165 LSTs and 35 other vessels, like ammunition lighters and oceangoing barges. Each LST built at the shipyard measured 300 feet long by 50 feet wide.
- The Evansville Ordnance Plant produced over 3 billion rounds of .45 caliber ammunition: the equivalent to 96% of the total quantity used by the military and other defense contracts.
- Republic Aviation's Evansville plant produced 6,242 P-47 Thunderbolts (of 15,683 total produced). The company hired 5,000 people, and about 40% of the workers were women, which was an increase from 15% before the war.



## Quotation to consider:

“Thousands (of people working there). About half of them were women and all. We had some good welders – women welders. We built some good ships, too. . . I made a good welder. I wanted to be a good welder, and I did. I wanted to learn a trade that I could learn well and get a job. . . I worked every day I could. I had to, and I wanted to.”

- Herman Eugene Crane, worker at the Evansville Shipyard from 1942 – 1945 as a civilian. [[Interview, Nov. 3, 2003, Veterans History Project](#)]

“During war time I worked in ammunition at Chrysler making bullets running a bullet machine. Yeah, worked in ammunition till they closed the doors. My daughter always thought I worked at an auto shop, and I always said, ‘No Linda, I worked in ammunition.’ She thought that Chrysler made cars.”

- Helen Becker (Helen joined the WAVES in 1945, after working at the ordnance plant.) [[Helen Becker Interview - Oral History Collection](#), University of Southern Indiana]



## Read to Connect

### Reading 1: Newspaper Article

*Background terms:*

- **LST** is an acronym for Landing ship, tank. LSTs were designed to transport and deploy troops, vehicles, and supplies directly on shore, without needing piers or docks. LSTs were used as part of the [Allied invasion of Normandy](#) known as D-Day.

*US LST-325 is the last fully operational LST and is on the list of the US National Register of Historic Places. It was built in the Philadelphia Navy Yard, but is moored as a [memorial](#) in Evansville, Indiana.*

- **Henry Morgenthau Jr** was the Secretary of the Treasury from January 1, 1934 to July 22, 1945, most of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. He played a major role in shaping the New Deal and was the first Jewish person to be in the presidential line of succession.
- **War Bonds** were issued by the government during war to raise money for military needs. When people bought war bonds, they were lending money to the government and, in return, received interest payments. This helped finance weapons, military infrastructure, and support for soldiers, allowing citizens to contribute to their country's war efforts.

## War Loan Over Top, Says Morgenthau in Talk Here

### *Text of Morgenthau Speech*

*Evansville Press, September 30, 1943, p.1 & 11*

Following is the text of Secretary Morgenthau's talk at Evansville Shipyards Thursday:

I am happy today to be in the largest inland shipyard in the United States—perhaps in the world.

Here in Indiana, on the banks of the Ohio River, we are in the midst of corn and wheat fields. Nevertheless, thousands of people are at work here, day and night, building ships—helping to create the largest, most complete, most adept fleet in history; a Navy of eighteen thousand ships.

We are building here what the Navy Department calls the Ohio River Navy, because so many of these new shipyards lie along the shores of the Ohio.

A few minutes after this broadcast, I will participate in launching a large, strange-looking craft known to the Navies of the United Nations as an LST. These LST's or landing ships for tanks, are as large as a destroyer. They can carry tanks and heavy equipment and troops to any beach-head in any part of the world.

LST's are important not only because of the stupendous job they are doing in the war, but they symbolize the initiative of the democracies.

Working with the British, we designed and built them after the start of the war, because a need for them arose. . .

## Program Unequaled

In barely a year and a half you people here, and men and women in other shipyards like this, have brought to a climax one of the most complex construction programs in the history of Naval shipbuilding. Never before has a building program of such scope been attempted in so short a time.

For this, you and all the rest of the people who are building ships are to be congratulated. You have earned the deepest gratitude of your nation.

I am delighted to know also that you are doing a good job of buying the bonds that pay for the ships. Shipyards all across the country have made high bond records. Your record here is very good.

I am glad of that because no American is likely to enjoy ease of conscience or peace of mind unless he meets his bond responsibility in full. He will have done his part only when he really feels pinched, really knows he has given up something.

He can keep faith with his fellow members of our democratic society only if he gives his share of the load, to the limit of his own strength. For a democratic society is founded on the promise that each of its members voluntarily will play his essential part. . .

Our every word or every deed must reaffirm that our armies are in fact the people's armies, that the world of our future will be in fact a world for all the people, all of the time. We know why we are fighting. This war is our passage to the future.

## Questions for Reading 1

1. What two topics does Secretary Morgenthau discuss in his speech? Why would Secretary Morgenthau be speaking on these topics?
2. What was the importance of LSTs, and what role did Evansville play in their production?
3. What reasons did Secretary Morgenthau give for the importance of contributing to war bond efforts?

## Photos



Figure 4: Tank parts stock room at the Evansville Ordnance Plant at the Chrysler plant in Evansville, Indiana, December 4, 1944 (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)



Figure 5 (with slight damage on left side): "Celebration of the billionth repacked cartridge at the Evansville Ordnance Plant at the Chrysler plant at 1625 N. Garvin St. Left to right: B.M. Bickford, Captain W.A. Babcock, Major E.J. Hill, and C.L. Jacobson. Birney M. Bickford (1895-1946) was a manager at the Evansville Chrysler plant and moved to Detroit with Chrysler after the war. Charles L. Jacobson (1896?-1970) was the director of the ordnance plant." (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)



Figure 6: Wire harness assembly at the Evansville Ordnance Plant at the Chrysler plant in Evansville, Indiana, November 29, 1944 (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)

## Reading 2: Oral Histories – War Production in Evansville

### Part 1: Joseph O’Daniel

Excerpt from “[Joseph O’Daniel Interview](#)” (June 13, 1975) -- Oral History Collection – Rice Library Digital Collections by University of Southern Indiana.

When World War II came along, we (Chrysler Corporation) were known as the refrigeration center. At one time we had a Refrigerator Bowl Football game here. This advertised the fact nationally that we were proud of that, because we had more people working in the refrigeration industry than any other city in the country. The industrial make-up of the community by that time was dominated by the light metal trades. Labor was not highly skilled, nothing like the machine tool trades. There were skilled people but with moderate skills.

So, when World War II came along, [Serval](#) (they dropped the Electrolux name) had to get into war work and Chrysler Corporation converted its plants to making ammunition, and a new plant was built south of the airport for the purpose of making Republic Aviation Thunderbolts. Serval made the wings for those Thunderbolts. We acquired a boat manufacturing plant for the river front area which helped create a peak employment of sixty-seven thousand industrial jobs in the Evansville area.

The war industries, generally speaking, were highly unionized and there were several unions represented in the shipyards. There were several unions at the Republic Aviation, so the area for the first time became a stronger, organized labor market where previously there was practically no organized labor in industry other than in the trades and crafts. At the conclusion of World War II Evansville was fast becoming a ghost town because of the discontinued war production. We had to get started back in consumer products. Serval, of course, went back to consumer products, as did Chrysler Corporation plants.

## Part 2: Agnes White

*Agnes White worked at a local cigar factory prior to working on munitions production at the Chrysler Ordnance plant in Evansville. Excerpt from “[Agnes White Interview in Evansville, Indiana](#)” (February 4, 1982)-- Oral History Collection – Rice Library Digital Collections by University of Southern Indiana.*

Agnes White (AW): Then I thought my husband was going to war, so I thought that I better find me something that made a little more money, so I went to work out at Chrysler. . . The first time I made bullets. I worked about a year and a half that time. Then they got laid off and the next time I went back I made - they call them grousers. They fitted on tractor's wheels so that they could go in the mud. Next, I helped make firebombs. They were for the war with Japan. I worked there until the day armistice was declared and that about finished it.

Interviewer, Glenda Morrison (GM): Did you quit, or did they cut everything off?

AW: Yeah, as soon as war armistice was declared, why see, they didn't need any. I didn't have enough seniority to make whatever - I don't know what they made at that time, whether they made cars or what. . .

GM: So, you did make better wages by being there?

AW: Much better. Much better. Anyone who has worked at a cigar factory and all of a sudden winds up doing war work will discover that war work is easy compared to piecework. Of course, I'll tell you for one thing, they always saw to it they had plenty of help during wartime - if they could get them. They got them at that time, and we always had

plenty of help. In the cigar factory you never got time off for anything. Boy, at Chrysler you got rest periods and all that stuff. It was nice. Anyone that didn't work, missed a lot. I enjoyed it. One thing, I was on the night shift. My sister and I both worked out there at Chrysler. We both were on the night shift and they'd come out and get us. We'd have refreshments every night. You know, we hadn't been married very long and well, we thought it was a lot of fun. Pretty soon it got stale, though. You had to have some sleep sometime. You got to carpool a little and then our husbands went to bed early.

GM: Was your husband in town then during the war?

AW: He didn't go then. He was supposed to go. The following week he would've went, but that weekend they decided they didn't want anybody over twenty-six. He was already over twenty-six. I don't know if he would have passed anyway. He's got bad eyes. They didn't want him, so he stayed. That was real nice.

. . . Anyway, I worked long enough to buy Wayne a wedding ring, but then I quit. Wait a minute -that's when I quit to go out to Chrysler. That's where I was right before I went to Chrysler. . .

You know, when you have worked in the cigar factory then you go to a place like Chrysler, I made so much more. In fact, I made more than my husband did at that time, but I told him just to be patient because I wasn't going to work forever. Anyhow, during that period we got our house paid for which was something, but it wasn't this one though.

## Questions for Reading 2

1. How does Joseph O'Daniel describe how World War II changed the workforce and labor environment in Evansville?
2. What work did Agnes White do at the Chrysler Ordnance plant? What does she describe as the benefits?
3. What details from White's story give insight on money and how women's jobs changed during the war?

## Photos



Figure 7: Christening a P-47 Thunderbolt in Evansville, Indiana, 1943. “Betty Frasier christened this P-47 Thunderbolt in 1943 as Mayor William Dress and other notables, including businessman Kenneth C. Kent (right) looked on. Republic Aviation broke ground for the facility south of the airport in April 1942....” (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)



Figure 8: Franklin D. Roosevelt visit to Republic Aviation in Evansville, Indiana, April 27, 1943. “President Franklin D. Roosevelt visiting Republic Aviation to watch P-47 Thunderbolt plane demonstrations. While in town FDR also saw the shipyard and ordinance operations. In the front passenger seat sits FDR. The man with the white hat is Republic vice president and general manager George Meyrer, and in front of him with the dark suit is Republic president Ralph Damon. On April 6, 1942, ground was broken on the Republic Aviation plant in Evansville. Over 5,000 men and women manufactured 6,242 P-47 Thunderbolts, 1942-1945. P-47 was principal WWII fighter plane, known for its speed, durability, and reliability.” (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)

## Reading 3: Oral Histories – Republic Aviation in Evansville

*Background: A short text on Republic Aviation can be read within [Places of WWII History in Evansville, IN](#).*

### Ada McClurkin

*Ada McClurkin worked at Republic Aviation from August or September 1942, at the age of 22, until its closing at the end of the war. McClurkin also drove a carpool for other women working at the factory and used her earnings from this to buy war bonds. Excerpt from [“Ada McClurkin Interview in Evansville, Indiana”](#) (September 12, 2015)-- Oral History Collection – Rice Library Digital Collections by University of Southern Indiana. Some editing has been done for readability.*

They (Republic Aviation) hired us and then we went to a school to learn the things we would need to know in the factory. . . They taught us to read blueprints and to handle a drill. They said we'd be there about 3 weeks, but we didn't stay that long. They told us one day to pack. . . The next day we were going out to the factory. And they didn't tell us what department. I don't think they knew what department we were going to, but we went out to the factory. . . I was there till the end of the war.

There was quite a few people (in the class) and a lot of us were women because we knew we were going to have to do men's jobs and they told us to read blueprints, which I didn't think I'd ever have to do. And they showed us drills and other pieces of equipment that we would probably have to use in the factory. . .

The pieces that we used (in the factory) were air guns to drive our rivets. Sometimes we had to make the hole the rivets went into. Especially the week or two we had the machine – we had a big machine for about two weeks one time. We drilled the holes. They had a tiny little hole in it that showed us where to drill. And we drilled the hole. We had to drive a special rivet in that because it had to be flush with the material that we drilled into. And we didn't drill those holes until we were ready to drive the rivet into it. And I used that machine for the two weeks it was there. It was a big machine and operated by the foot. . .

The rivet had to be smooth. Part of it fitted against the fuselage, and it was flat against that, and then the rest of that curved and went out over the wing and that had to be many rivets that would fit into that for the edges and so on. It had to be smooth because it would cause friction. Even if there was the tiniest bubble there, that was always a thing we had to watch. And that was one of the things they inspected most of the time was if those were flush and if they weren't then we had to drill them out and do them over.

The department my sister worked in, that's what she did. She had a stamp, but it was metal, and she had to put her initial on every piece that she inspected. And so, you had to be very careful and be sure it was right before they put their initials on them . . .

In the summertime they would have those overhead doors open, and about sunset the pilots – the test pilots -- would start coming in, and you'd see one fly, then another one, and then another one. There would be five or six of them. And they were all spaced as they flew in. It did something to me. It was just so even. And so, to think I've worked on that, I've done that. And it was just something that you couldn't express your feelings, but . . . I don't know if anybody else ever felt that way about it, but I sure did.

### Questions for Reading 3

1. What training did Ada McClurkin receive, and how was it used in her job at Republic Aviation?
2. What was the importance of McClurkin's sister's work at the factory?
3. How did the sight of the test pilots flying overhead affect McClurkin?
4. McClurkin and other women worked in wartime jobs that had usually been done by men. How may their work have impacted how people think about equality and what jobs women can do?

### Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did war manufacturing in Evansville impact the economy and contribute to defense efforts in WWII?

# Lesson 2: Civilian Volunteerism and Contributions on the Home Front in Evansville, Indiana, World War II Heritage City

## About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series teaching about the World War II home front, with [Evansville, Indiana](#) designated as an American [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about the ways civilians contributed to home front efforts. These efforts included the Evansville Red Cross Canteen, participating in [material drives](#), war bonds, the USO, and more.

## Objectives:

1. Identify examples of ways civilians volunteered on the home front in Evansville, Indiana.
2. Describe how volunteer efforts in Evansville contributed to the war efforts.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 9-15 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3 (and optional extensions)
3. *Recommended: Map of Evansville, Indiana, or state map*



## Getting Started: Essential Question

How did civilians in Evansville, Indiana contribute to home front war efforts, and why were their contributions significant?

## Photos



Figure 9: The Red Cross Canteen in Evansville, Indiana, across from the Union Depot, in 1942. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)



Figure 10: The Evansville Red Cross Canteen workers greeting and serving service members. (Picture from "Canteen to Celebrate Birthday; 400,000 Soldiers Served," *The Evansville Courier*, June 6, 1943, p. 16)

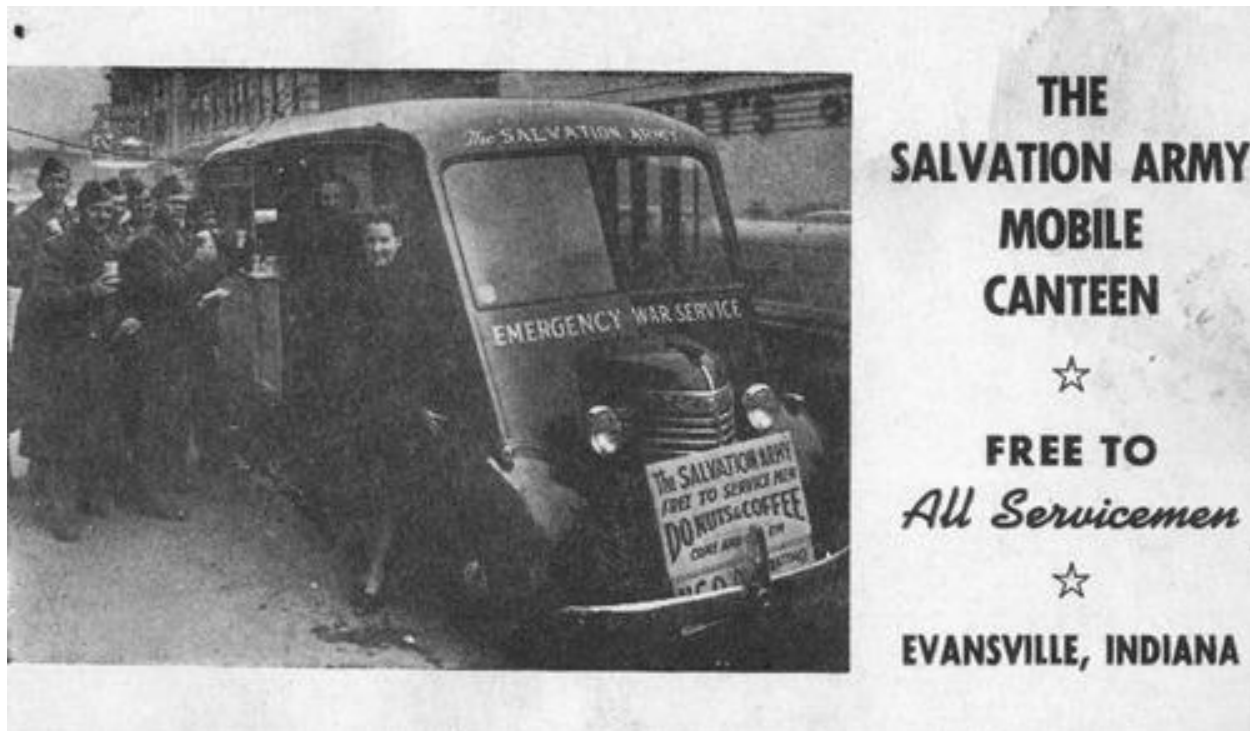


Figure 11: The Salvation Army Mobile Canteen Equipment donated by Chrysler C.I.O. Auto Workers Union No. 705 Donuts and coffee were free to servicemen. The Salvation Army set up their Mobile Canteen at Fifth and Main Streets in November, 1942. One month later the former CandEI RR Depot became the Main Street USO. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)



### By the numbers:

The Evansville Red Cross Canteen, across from the Union Depot, was opened in June 1942. Within one year:

- Over 400,000 armed forces members were served free meals.
  - Over 120,000 pounds of meat, 1,200 gallons of ice cream, 2,300 cakes were donated and served.
  - The Canteen served on average 1,000 service members a day, and some days as many as 3,500.
  - 44,760 volunteer hours were contributed.
- From "Canteen to Celebrate Birthday; 400,000 Soldiers Served," *The Evansville Courier*, June 6, 1943, p. 16



## Quotation to consider:

“We men in the army realize that wars are won at home as well as on the battle line. . . The greatness of America lies in the fact that Indiana people welcome American soldiers of any faith or appearance from any of our states. I shared the feeling of many of the boys that Evansville is a swell American town and I hope I may revisit you in peacetime. Believe me, we appreciate your spirit and will long remember your great city.”

- James C. Kellogg, soldier quoted in “Canteen Sends 55 Draft Men Cheerfully on Way,” *The Evansville Courier*, August 28, 1942



## Read to Connect

### Reading 1: Newspaper Article

*Background: The Evansville Red Cross Canteen was opened in June 1942 across from the Union Depot, where thousands of service members arrived and departed by train daily. Service members could visit the canteen for free meals and service.*

#### “Canteen’s Regular Donors Praised by Day Captain”

*Mrs. Ed J. Fehn Credits ‘The Ones Who Give Every Thursday’  
The Evansville Courier, December 5, 1942, p. 11.*

“The regular contributors are really the ones who deserve credit for keeping the canteen going,” Mrs. Ed J. Fehn, day captain yesterday at the Red Cross canteen, declared.

Mrs. Fehn listed a number-- ‘the ones who give every Thursday’-- including the following: Evansville newspaper employees, hams baked without charge each week by the Eades bakery; St. Lucas Ladies’ Aid society; Serval, Inc., employees, cash gifts; Ebmeier’s restaurant, pies; women of St. John’s Evangelical church, baked goods; Mrs. Minerva Hale, sugar, coffee and canned goods; De-Jong’s Cigaret club, cigarettes; Women’s forum, Boonville, cookies and other baked goods.

Weil Packing company, meats; Women of the Moose, cookies; Clarence W. Irvin, Cannelton, all kinds of foods given by himself and other residents of Cannelton and Tell City; St. Paul’s Ladies’ Aid society (Mrs. G.H. Waltz), baked and canned goods; Reitz high school, prepared foods; Dixie Bee lodge No. 303, Ladies’ Society of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers.

‘But as important as the food contributions are they are not the only valuable contribution of the canteen to the service men,’ Mrs. Fehn said. ‘Our workers contribute a great deal in service and friendliness—the kind so many have missed so much ever since leaving their homes and families to enter the service.’

### Comment on Canteen

Here are a few comments on the service and hospitality heard at the canteen yesterday:

A soldier, one of 91 in an early breakfast group said: ‘We are so appreciative of the hospitality, Heard about it way down in Alabama, but it is more overwhelming than the boys described it.’

Another soldier, in a second group of 72 who had breakfast, said: ‘This breakfast with coffee will certainly help us out until the train’s diner opens.’ . . .

A group on arrival at the station: ‘Canteen? Oh, we’ll just have a sandwich and something to drink.’

The same group a minute later when they learned soups and prepared foods were waiting for them without charge, remarked: ‘No kiddin’, It’s free. Give me the works. Some joint!’

‘A Ft. Leonard Wood soldier,’ by postal card continued: ‘A short time ago we came through Evansville en route home on furlough and you gave us hot coffee, sandwiches, cake and cigarettes. We certainly appreciated these things and all the friendliness that went with them. Thanks a million.’

### Officer Expresses Thanks

From ‘somewhere in Canada,’ Capt. William A. Garrott wrote: ‘Ladies of the Canteen: About three weeks ago I, in company with several other officers and enlisted men, had occasion to stop in Evansville for breakfast. Some of us were directed to your canteen and those of us who were so fortunate were charmed by your graciousness and generosity. Every one of us commented then and frequently since that none of us had been so wonderfully treated at any time or place since our induction into military service.

‘I feel that you have earned an expression from us of our sincere gratitude for your graciousness and kindness to us.’

. . . ‘Nationwide publicity is due the canteen at Evansville,’ said Miss Elizabeth Harkey, USO regional director from Smyrna, Tenn., a visitor at the canteen. ‘It is a wonderful serve you are rendering here. Things like this you don’t forget.’ . . .

### Gives Bread

John Libbs, manager of the A and P grocery store, Fourth and Chestnut streets, phoned and asked if Mrs. Fehn could use some bread. After receiving a favorable reply, he contributed 72 loaves of bread, 44 dozen doughnuts and 42 coffee cakes.

A Negro soldier reported at the canteen a friend of his on the train had such a bad cough he wondered if some medicine was available. Workers found some cough medicine in their first aid supplies and asked the soldier if he did not want some of it. The cough at least temporarily relieved, the soldier was served some light food . . .

Generous out-of-town donations also were numerous. Mrs. H. Brill, rural route 5, sent a quart of potato salad, a quart of grape juice and a ginger spice cake. . . Clarence W. Irvin of Cannelton, donor of a bushel of potatoes, also delivered the following contributors on his route: Mrs. Hilda Hawhee, two cans beans; Miss Mary I. Conway, two cans peas and carrots; Mrs. M.C. Conway, six candy bars; Friday group of the Red Cross, 14 candy bars. . .

### Questions for Reading 1 and Photos

1. Reading 1 shows many examples of group and individual donations to the canteen. Why do you think so many people and organizations decided to give what they could?
2. Based on the comments from soldiers, how does the canteen's service impact their travel?
3. What does the letter from Captain Garrott and the quotation from Miss Elizabeth Harkey reveal about the recognition of the canteen's efforts beyond Evansville?

## Photos



Figure 12: Scrap metal drive in Evansville, Indiana (1944), "Men load scrap metal onto railroad cars. There's a J. Trockman and Sons truck in the middle ground. This location is the Southern Railroad Freight Depot on Division St." (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)

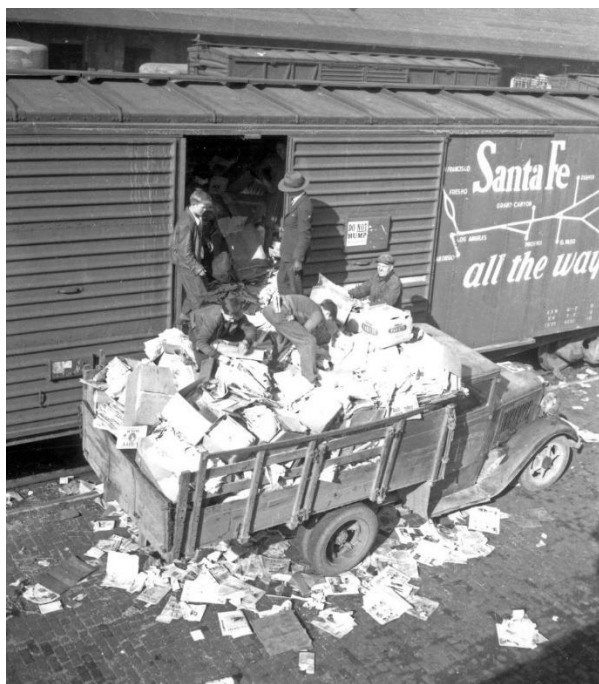


Figure 13: "Men pile newspapers into a train car for the war effort. Paper and newspapers were some of the many materials that were collected for recycling during WWII." (1945) (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)

## Reading 2: Newspaper Article

### Nearly Five Cars Filled with Scrap

*Heavy Response in First Campaign Held Cause of Small Return*

*The Evansville Courier*, May 28, 1943, p. 1

Evansvillians raked and scraped from attic to cellar but all they could get together for yesterday's scrap drive was four and two-thirds railway carloads of metal, rags, and rubber.

The scrap harvest estimate ranges from 150,000 to 200,000 pounds, or about one-fifth the amount gathered in September.

Jim Newcom, Office of Civilian Defense (OCD) conservator, and George Van Horn, transportation chairman for the drive, both had the same answer. Citizens cleaned up so well in September that they have been unable to accumulate much since.

Industrial scrap, a large part of the September harvest, is now being sold regularly.

### Boys Put in Hard Day

One thousand Victory Corps boys who manned the trucks in yesterday's canvass were a tired bunch of workers last night.

Officials of the drive had lots of praise for the youngsters who loaded and unloaded throughout the day.

Sixty trucks worked yesterday, following an orderly plan of collection, with the result that everything was well cleaned up by 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Two carloads stood ready to move in the Southern railway yards and at the C. & E.I. yards there were two and two-thirds more cars. Officials hope to obtain sufficient industrial scrap to fill out the carload.

It was estimated last night that the scrap harvest yield included some 25,000 pounds of rags. Metal was the next largest part of the harvest, with rubber running third.

### Auto Tag Return Small

The percentages of auto tags was disappointing. Plans were announced by Mr. Newcom and Mr. Van Horn, through cooperation with Fire Chief Ed Senmeier, for collection at fire stations.

Motorists are being urged to remove their front plates and leave them at the nearest hose house. Clarence Jackson, state OCD director, yesterday issued the statement that any

Indiana motorists driving with a front plate after Saturday would be considered unpatriotic. The plates are needed to manufacture next year's license tags. . .

On duty throughout the day at the Park Board office taking calls, there were few complaints of scrap being missed, which was due, officials said, to a well organized canvas.

One Victory Corps boy found himself in a predicament as the result of his zeal. He is Lawrence Hall, 12, a student of Emma Roche School, who borrowed A wheelbarrow from a neighbor, Mary Francis. He wheeled the scrap to his school for collection. Some misguided collector dumped in wheelbarrow and all. Now Lawrence is trying to find that wheelbarrow.

...

## Questions for Reading 2

1. According to Jim Newcom and George Van Horn, why was there a lower amount of scrap collected compared to the previous drive in September?
2. What were some of the types of scrap collected in this drive? Why were there scrap drives on the home front during the war?
3. How did children contribute to the scrap drive?

## Photo



Figure 14: World War II food rationing books, tokens, and stamps in Evansville, Indiana, belonging to Florita Eichel (1892-1983) and her brother, Samuel (1874-1944) (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)

## Reading 3: Oral Histories

The following are two excerpts from oral history interviews from civilians that worked in or were from Evansville, Indiana. They reflect on volunteerism and life on the home front in Evansville.

### Part 1: D. Bailey Merrill

Excerpt from “[D. Bailey Merrill Interview in Evansville, Indiana](#)” (June 15, 23 and July 28, 1974)-- Oral History Collection – Rice Library Digital Collections by University of Southern Indiana.

“You didn’t have to be in Evansville to know about Evansville. We had here in Evansville, we’ve always had, tremendous spirit. I don’t know; I won’t try to describe it. But before the war started a division came through here when they mobilized the National Guard. They stopped over a night at the Court House, the whole division of the National Guard. The town just took them in. The kids were out on the town, and everybody went out and invited them into their homes or brought them drinks. And just took care of those kids in a wonderful way. That was one thing. That was an experience for those kids on their way down, you know scared and lonesome and all that. The town just took hold of them.

The other thing, we had a canteen. I say ‘we,’ I didn’t have anything to do with it. We had a lot of troop trains going through Evansville. The town made. . . they kept a canteen down there at the station. They always had cookies and donuts and coffee and pie and cake. Everybody made it and took it down. Whenever a train would go through, see, they’d go through the train and see that everybody got something. So, every kid who ever went through Evansville contacted that canteen. So, I would say this: I know I can’t remember a time, now my career I wasn’t in about mixing generally with a lot of different people. I was always in an artillery outfit in the...my world was usually a battery, and that would be the end of it. I hardly ever even got to bother with a battalion. . . . Wherever I was, generally, I was in a very close knit group of people. But I could remember, I’d never been in a barber shop, you know a big post barber shop or anyplace where there were a lot of different people there, and they’d say, ‘Where you from? And I’d say, ‘Evansville.’ Never had it failed that somebody would speak up and say, “Evansville?” And they would remember.’

### Part 2: Mrs. Aline Cook

Excerpt from “[Allen and Aline Cook Interview in New Harmony, Indiana](#)” (July 19, 1995)– Oral History Collection – Rice Library Digital Collections by University of Southern Indiana.

Interviewer, Jon Carl (JC): What kind of immediate impact did the war have on your life?

Mrs. Aline Cook: I had just graduated from high school in 1941. War started December 7. I was going to Lockyears Business College in Evansville. Several of us were. I planned to go to nurse's training, but you had to be at least eighteen before you could even start nurse's training then. I wasn't until December 9--two days after. I was going to go the next time in the Fall, but I never did because I went to school at Lockyears Business College. I rode with someone from here and finally we got an apartment. When we got out of school, we got jobs. We thought we were paid a lot of money. . . It was in Evansville. I worked as a secretary to the President of Cavalier Garment Corporation which was a plant making khaki trousers [for the military]. I don't know whether they made shirts or not.

JC: Did you stay in Evansville during the war?

Mrs. Cook: Yes. My father was a farmer. I don't recall him having a shortage of gasoline. The war was still going on when I worked in Evansville. I had more shoe stamps than I could ever use. My boss rode with two from this county. Each one of them had a daughter about my age, so I was well taken care of with shoe stamps or whatever else I wanted.

JC: What other kinds of leisure activities do you remember from that time period?

Mrs. Cook: There were the movies. We had the first movie theater here in town. They always had dances here in town. The USO was very popular in Evansville. . . It was down there in that old train station [C, E & I Train Station]. We had to be screened to even go to those things. You couldn't just go. You had to have an application to make sure you were all right. They would take you home. I don't remember if they picked us up, but they must have. They took us home and would see us inside the door.

. . .Well, another thing that I did was I was a Red Cross nurse's aid in a hospital. We took the training. We did a lot. We worked nights and weekends. We had our uniforms that we had to buy ourselves. We had to take this training. That's the only thing I did to help the war effort.

JC: Do you remember any big bond drives in Evansville or any celebrities coming?

Mrs. Cook: I don't remember any celebrities coming, but there surely was. There were constant bond drives. It seems like you bought those stamps, too. I think they called them bond stamps. You saved a few months and when you had enough stamps you got a bond.

JC: Did they have blackouts or drills in New Harmony (IN) or Evansville?

Mrs. Cook: Yes. They certainly did in Evansville. I think they did in New Harmony. You were supposed to cover your windows. They had the air raid sirens in Evansville. They would

sound that. You weren't supposed to go out or turn on the lights outside or even inside any more than you needed to.

JC: Towards the end of the war, how would you say that New Harmony changed overall?

Mrs. Cook: I don't know that it had. There was more money. All of the people who had worked in the defense plants in Evansville made a good deal of money. We had already had that happened to us to when the oil industry came to town in the late Thirties. It was just the compensation that people were being paid for their work. Many people from here did go to work in the oil industry. It was tremendous compared to what people had made. There was Republic Aviation and the shipyards. They made so much money.

JC: You talked about the rationing maybe being part of the propaganda. What kinds of propaganda do either one of you remember from the war? Were there different ads that you remember or were there posters or other kinds of propaganda that tried to get people into supporting the war effort?

Mrs. Cook: I remember the big posters showing not talking about where the troops were going if you knew. Where I worked was involved with the defense because we made the uniforms. They had posters up in there all of the time. I don't think they knew anything. I can't imagine that they would have known anything, but they still had these posters up. The blackouts in Evansville, too. It wasn't very likely that you were going to be bombed, but they did have those blackouts.

### Questions for Reading 3

1. What examples does Merrill provide to describe the hospitality of Evansville during the war?
2. How does Merrill reflect on the lasting impression of Evansville on those who visited?
3. What work did Mrs. Cook do during the war? What posters were at her workplace?
4. How did the war affect Mrs. Cook's life and social activities?

## Lesson Closing

Using details from across the readings, describe some of the different ways civilians contributed to the home front efforts in Evansville.

- Answer the essential question: How did civilians in Evansville, Indiana contribute to home front war efforts, and why were their contributions significant?

## Extensions

### 1) Poem

The following is an excerpt from “Canteen Receives Gifts From Children with Poem,” *The Evansville Courier*, July 30, 1932, p.4:

“Fifteen packages of cigarettes were donated to the canteen yesterday by a group of youngsters, ‘the kiddies of the canteen.’ Accompanying the gift was a poem which read:

‘We don’t know how to cook or knit,

But we want to do our bit;

So we have given up our playtime

And put aside our toys;

Now we are running the kiddie canteen

To help the soldier boys.’

**Activity:** Write a short poem, similar or different to this one, taking the perspective of another volunteer or volunteer group, based on other information on volunteerism in the lesson.

### 2) U.S.O. Clubs of Evansville



Figure 15: USO Club in Evansville, Indiana (1943), Eighth and Main Streets, formerly the Evansville and Terre Haute (E & TH) Railroad depot. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)

The Evansville Red Cross Canteen was not the only place where service members enjoyed free services and hospitality. The Evansville USO club also served this purpose. However, it was segregated. Evansville, African American residents organized a Volunteer Service Club (VSC) at Lincoln Garden. This led to the establishment of an official USO club for African Americans in Evansville.

Read the section “Lincoln USO Club” in [Places of WWII History in Evansville, IN](#) to learn more.

# Lesson 3: African American Contributions on the Home Front in Evansville, Indiana World War II Heritage City

## About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series teaching about the World War II home front, with [Evansville, Indiana](#) designated as an American [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains photographs and readings to contribute to learners' understandings about the experiences and contributions of African Americans on the home front in Evansville. They worked at the railroads, Evansville Shipyard, Chrysler Ordnance plant, and more, contributing to the Allied defense efforts. The lesson also examines discrimination faced and the impacts of this on labor movements. Additional readings on a strike are in the extension.

## Objectives:

1. Describe experiences and contributions of African Americans in Evansville on the home front.
2. Explain how the contributions of African Americans to the war effort helped to challenge racism and discrimination.
3. Compare local and historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 16-18 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of Evansville, Indiana



## Getting Started: Essential Question

How did African Americans in Evansville help with the war efforts at home, and how did their work impact the ongoing fight for civil rights?

## Photos

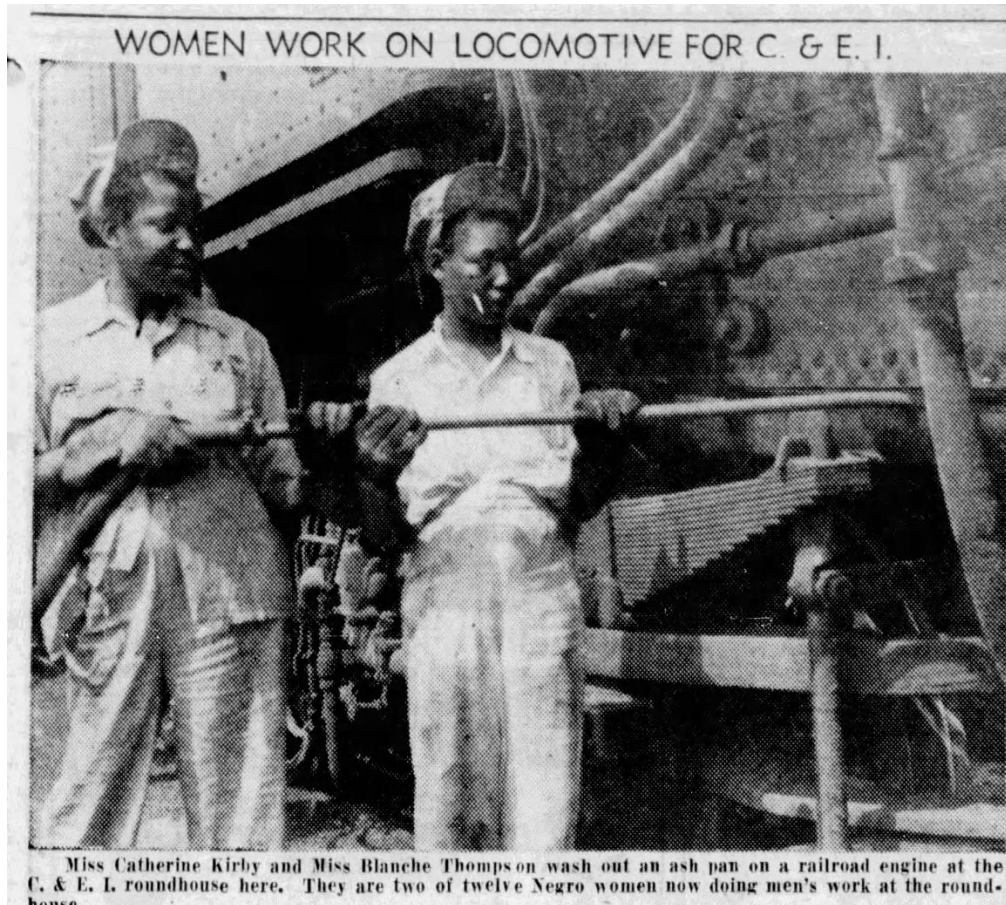


Figure 16: "Women Work on Locomotive for C & E. I." Caption: Miss Catherine Kirby and Miss Blanche Thompson wash out an ash pan on a railroad engine at the C. & E. I. roundhouse here. They are two of twelve Negro women now doing men's work at the roundhouse." They are two of twelve Negro women now doing men's work at the roundhouse." *The Evansville Courier*, September 3, 1943, p.3.



### Quotation to consider:

"Today the people of all races and all colors are fighting together in a war to preserve democratic rights and to emancipate the world from Fascist slavery. But today, right here in America, there are still those who don't believe in democracy, they don't believe in freedom, they don't want to win this war. These people are doing Hitler's work here by playing upon undemocratic race prejudices; by inciting race riots; by provoking strikes in war production plants, as happened in our local Chrysler plant this past week; by spreading dirty lies and rumors about Negroes, or Jews; by starting trouble and provoking fights between people of different color. They must be stopped!

Hitler looks hopefully to other war centers . . . yes, cities like Evansville . . . where the people might fall into the trap of race hatreds . . . where a minor street car dispute might flare into a riot . . . where a dirty look or remark in the shop might also flare into a riot.”

- "Union Hits at Race Prejudice," *The Evansville Press*, September 30, 1943, p.6

*Teacher Tip: Consider connecting this quotation to information from the lesson on [African American Contributions on the Home Front in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania](#).*



## Read to Connect

### Reading 1: Newspaper Article

*Teacher Tip:* The readings reflect racially insensitive language used at the time; we do not use this language today. Address this with students in advance.

#### Force of 12 at Roundhouse Here Does Variety of Jobs

*Negro Workers Receive Same Pay as Men for Six-Day Week*

By Marguerite Shepard, *The Evansville Courier*, September 3, 1943, p.3

Women are even working on railroad engines now—jobs previously considered ‘too dirty’ for feminine hands.

Twelve Negro women are employed at the Wansford shops, C. & E. I. roundhouse here. They wash out the ash pans under the firebox, water engines, unload coal, dry our engine sand, clean railway cars and cabs, take care of supplies and tools, as well as keep the roundhouse and ground by tracks clean.

In short, they ‘do a little bit of everything,’ according to Forest Selvy, 3414 Carl Avenue, general foreman at the roundhouse.

Women have been employed at the roundhouse here only since July 24, when the exodus of men to defense plants left the railround shop short of labor.

However, two women are required to do the work of one man, Mr. Selvy said. They are paid the same as men, 57 cents an hour, for an eight-hour day, six days a week. . . .

#### It’s Dirty Work

Although the work is very dirty - ‘You can’t stay around a roundhouse and stay clean,’ Mr. Selvy said—the women don’t seem to mind.

Miss Blanche Thompson, 618 High street, left her job packing bullets at the Chrysler plant because the doctor told her she needed outside work. 'Too many colds,' she explained.

'I like this much better, anyway,' she smiled. 'The dirt doesn't bother me.' Before working at Chrysler's, she did housework. Divorced, she has a six-year-old son, whom her mother looks after while she works.

Miss Catherine Kirby, 609 High street, just 'stayed at home' in the two years between leaving her native town of Hopkinsville, Ky., where she was a cook, and taking over a man's job at the roundhouse.

When asked whether she preferred cleaning engines to cleaning houses, Miss Kirby replied, 'The work here is all right, and the pay is much better.'

### Clean Ash Pans

From six to eight engines a day are gone over by the women. To water the engines with the 8,000 gallons they require, the women climb on top of the coal tender and use a long rod to pull over the water crane.

Since the engines have run an average of 450 miles since they were last gone over, the ash pan under the fire box is full of cinders and clinkers. A Negro man in the cab knocks the fire out of the fire box; and the women, one on each side, hose out the pans with a steady stream of water. When the pans are cleaned, the girls operate an electrically-driven hoist which lifts a huge bucket out of the cinder pit up a steel incline and dumps the cinders into a coal car on an adjacent track.

The girls also clean out the pits in the roundhouse. They scatter wood shavings to soak up the oil on the concrete floors before going over them with a broom and mop.

### Have Own Quarters

A building all their own has been put up for the women workers. In it they change from their street clothes to garments more suited to climbing over engines; and there they shower after a day's work to take off the accumulation of grime and soot. Two cots are also available if they need a rest, as well as chairs, tables, and a refrigerator for lunches and cold drinks.

The women have half an hour for lunch and 15 minutes off in the morning and afternoon each if they want it, 'But if there's a lot of work to be done, they don't usually take the rest period,' Foreman Selvy declared.

'Of course, they're not used to it, but they do good work,' Mr. Selvy said, adding that he wanted two more for a late shift.

'I can get them if we can solve the transportation problem out here,' he said.

## Questions for Reading 1 and Photos

1. Where did Miss Thompson and Miss Kirby work prior to the roundhouse?
2. What factors might have influenced women like Miss Thompson and Miss Kirby to transition into traditionally male-dominated work roles?
3. Consider Mr. Selvy's description of the women's work, such as their pay, the requirements, and their rest periods. What were some of the benefits and challenges women faced in working at the round house?

## Reading 2: Oral History

### Samuel McBride

*Excerpt from "[Samuel McBride Interview](#)" (June 26, 1974) -- Oral History Collection – Rice Library Digital Collections by University of Southern Indiana.*

(I was at) what they called at that time Sunbeam Plant No. 2. Now, of course, they call it Whirlpool out on Morgan Avenue and Reed. So, I went out there. I was the first Negro in the plant. They had never hired one before. Well, I worked there a while at this place, and they began to hire more Negroes; they were sweepers. And I was a janitor there. . .

So while I was there, I had a boss by the name of Smitty, and I told Smitty how I had gone to technical school here in the city, and I'd learned how to weld, electrical welding. And well, they had the class for a while out here at Lincoln High School. So I told my foreman; I asked him if he could use a welder. Well, they did use welders there in the plant, but he said they didn't need any.

So, I told him, "Smitty, I'm going to go over to the shipyard. They 're wanting people after night over here at the shipyard, and I'm going to take a Navy test for welding. I thought I'd tell you, because if I pass I'm going to quit." He said, "You can't quit."

I said, "What do you mean I can't quit?" He said, "Well, we won't release you." I laughed at him. I said, "I don't need the release. I'm going to quit. You can't hold me here and work me for cheap wages when I can go somewhere else and make more money."

And well, I went out and took the Navy test over here at the Missouri Iron Company at the shipyard, and I passed the Navy test. And the superintendent out there told me when to report to work. I went back and told my foreman there at Sunbeam and went out to the

shipyard. I worked out at the shipyard 90 days . . . At that time, I got notice from the draft board while I was there and took my examination. I told my foreman - I told my boss out at the shipyard and he said, "Don't worry about that draft card because I've got numerous people; and this is what we need. And I'll see you get a deferment.

Well, he tried for 90 days, and finally one day he called. He said, "I don't know what the world's the matter."

And I said, "What do you mean, sir?"

He said, "Well, I just can't do anything. I can't get you a deferment. Nothing that I can do will get you a deferment." And I said, "Oh, okay. So it looks like I'm going to the Army."

So I took my final exam out at the Armory. And the day that I took it was - the 24th of December, 1942. And after I'd taken it, the doctor patted me on the back and said I had to be ready to leave in the morning from the L&N station. I said, "You've got to be crazy, Doctor." He looked at me. He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Tomorrow's Christmas, I'm not going in the Army on Christmas Day." He said, "Oh, that's right. Then be ready the 20th." And the 26th of December 1942 I left Evansville for Fort Benjamin Harrison as a corporal in charge of a whole host of other men going to the Army.

## Questions for Reading 2 and Photos

1. What was significant about Samuel McBride's job at the plant?
2. What skills did McBride learn at technical school?
3. How did McBride's determination to find a better job show his belief in fair pay and career advancement despite discrimination?
4. What caused McBride to leave his work at the Evansville shipyard?

## Photos



Figure 17: Screening machine at the Evansville Ordnance Plant at the Chrysler plant in Evansville, Indiana, 1945. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, David L. Rice Library)



Figure 18: Unpacking and assembly of metal containers at the Evansville Ordnance Plant at the Chrysler plant in Evansville, Indiana March 8, 1944 (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, David L. Rice Library)

## Reading 3: Chrysler Strike (Newspaper Articles)

*Background: There was a race-based strike at the Chrysler Ordnance plant in September 1943. White workers went on strike to protest integration of the plant.*

*Teacher Tip: There are two readings within Reading 3. The readings are separated by about two years and offer different information and perspectives. This is to support learning about the complexities of the strike and race relations at the Chrysler Ordnance plant over time. It is recommended that teachers divide students into two groups, and one read A, and one group, B. Then students come together to corroborate what they have learned.*

### Reading A

#### More Strike at Chrysler: Protest Against Negro Worker Spreads

*The Evansville Courier, September 26, 1943, p.1*

At 12:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon nearly 2,000 men and women in the Chrysler Ordnance plant were forced to stop war work because of a strike. In the salvage department, officials of the firm announced yesterday.

"For the last three days, the 45 white workers in the salvage department have refused to work because the management transferred into that department 13 colored employees," according to an official statement issued by the firm.

"The strike of these 45 white salvage department workers today, (Saturday), was augmented by a sympathy strike of 200 other employees and the primer mix department, material handling department, and part of the loading department.

"These last three sympathetic striking departments forced the closing down of the entire loading department consisting of nearly 1,800 additional men and women-- making the total nearly 2,000 forced out of work by the original three-day strike in the salvage department of 45 white workers who refused to do their assigned war work.

"This strike is contrary to the promise made by American war workers to the President of the United States not to strike. It is also a violation of the union's contract with the corporation.

"If this strike is not terminated very quickly, it will affect the entire war production of the Chrysler Evansville ordinance plant involving more than 12,000 people."

Pat Ross, president of the United Auto Workers-CIO local, declined last night to issue a statement on the strike.

He told a representative of the Sunday Courier and Press that the union had no information to give out on the strike.

### Questions for Reading A and Quotation to Consider

1. In the “Quotation to Consider,” how does the speaker connect home front prejudices and racial division to harming war efforts?
2. How did the discrimination against the 13 African American employees in the salvage department lead to a larger strike involving nearly 2,000 workers?
3. Why do you think the strike was seen as a violation of the promise made by American war workers to the President of the United States not to strike?
4. How might the strikes impact the war production of the Chrysler Evansville ordinance plant and the overall war effort during World War II?

### Reading B

#### Negro Writer Praises Chrysler: Letter to the Editor

*The Evansville Courier*, August 5, 1945, p. 10, by Robert Anglin

To the Editor of The Courier:

Orchids to Chrysler! This I say because of the treatment of the Negro employees. Speaking with the authority of ten bitter years of experience of trying to secure employment in industry for the Negro, I repeat: Orchids to Chrysler!

Preceding Pearl Harbor, Evansville, industry—not unlike industry in many other cities—systematically precluded the Negro. Perhaps this statement could be modified by saying he was precluded except where the job would keep him ‘in his place.’ We all know ‘his place’ was ‘our janitor’ or ‘our foundryman.’

During this pre-war period we, who attempted to ‘show cause’ why the Negro should be given an opportunity to work, were met with many disheartening and fallacious statements, such as ‘We can’t depend on the Negro.’ or ‘We are too near the South for white and black labor to work side by side.’ And ‘The Negro has no training.’ Also another excuse ‘We will give him a chance if he is a member of the Union.’

We all know well that each of the above quotations was mere subterfuge. Yet, no one statement is wholly unfounded. Let’s say ‘We can’t depend on the Negro,’ Why? Simply because most of them have had to work long hours for sub-standard wages and, therefore, became discouraged to the extent that perhaps he was somewhat irregular. And, too, lack of dependability is not a special characteristic of the Negro. Many workers do not have perfect attendance records. Since America became the arsenal of democracy, and since

expediency caused the Negro to get his chance to earn equal wages, and to work fewer day-hours, check his attendance. Check his dependability. Compare his record with that of other workers and I am sure we can see the dependability myth exploded.

As for the poor excuse of the 'nearness to the South,' industrialists as well as laborers, know that even in the Deep South whites and negroes work side by side. This bunk has been debunked at Chrysler.

The charge 'The Negro has no training' could be accepted as partially true. But why? The only answer can be: he is not given the opportunity. The most shameful, undemocratic, discriminating policy practiced by the local authorities, is that which prevents the Negro from entering 'our' Mechanics Art School. Prior to the war, industry offered him no chance for training. The war has not affected Mechanics Art School, nor has most of Evansville's industry had a change of heart.

Chrysler, in collaboration with Local 705 C.I.O., has satisfactorily trained the Negro on the job. If the Negro is given a chance, he, too, will have training experience. Chrysler gave him his chance. . .

If Chrysler can do these things for the Negro, why can't other War Plants do the same? I am aware of the fact that one or two other industries have—in a much lesser degree—permitted the Negro to do production work. But, I am also cognizant of the fact that it is only at Chrysler that the Negro has served as janitor, millwright, production man, and as supervisor.

. . . I fully admit that Chrysler is run by an organization, and a fine one too. However, I feel that the fair treatment the Negro has received at that plant is not the results of an assimilation of angelic members who go to make up the organization. There are no wings sprouting from their shoulders. Yet, there is definitely an absence of discriminatory practices. . . As I commend the Chrysler organization for its treatment of the Negro, I am not at all unmindful of the magnificent part that has been, and is being, played by Local 705 of the U.A.W. and its efficient staff of officers and members.

### Questions for Reading B and Quotation to Consider

1. In the "Quotation to Consider," how does the speaker connect home front prejudices and racial division to harming war efforts?
2. What barriers in the workplace and society were African Americans facing? Use examples from Anglin.
3. How did Anglin challenge the excuses given by employers for not hiring African Americans before the war?

4. Why did Anglin commend Chrysler for its fair treatment of African American employees? What was Chrysler doing differently than some other wartime workplaces?

## Lesson Closing

Using details from across the readings and lesson, share examples that answer this question.

Answer the essential question: How did African Americans in Evansville help with the war efforts at home, and how did their work impact the ongoing fight for civil rights?

# Lesson 4: Evansville, Indiana: 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 [Evansville, Indiana](#) designated as an American [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains photographs, two readings, optional media activity, and a culminating mastery project. The first reading shares how Evansville was recognized for its contributions during the war, and the second reading connects the region to the designation of a Heritage City. There is an optional review reading and documentaries to learn more about the city during World War II. 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 Evansville lesson collection. This is to summarize the city's contributions and encourage connections to the overall U.S. home front efforts.

## Objectives:

In a culminating product:

- a. Identify important World War II home front locations and organizations in Evansville, Indiana and describe their historical significance
- b. Explain the significance of war manufacturing in Evansville in contributing to the Allied Forces defenses.
- c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of Evansville civilians, making sure to include details on contributions by women and African Americans.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Evansville and other Heritage city(s) / World War II home front(s).

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 19-22 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, & media activity link
3. Maps, project materials (as needed)
4. Student graphic organizers (See Figure 23 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. Identify important World War II home front locations and organizations in Evansville, Indiana and describe their historical significance
  - b. Explain the significance of war manufacturing in Evansville in contributing to the Allied Forces defenses.
  - c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of Evansville civilians, making sure to include details on contributions by women and African Americans.
  - d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Evansville 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 Evansville chosen as an American World War II Heritage City, and what are its similarities and differences to other home front cities?

## Photos



*Figure 19: Sailors and townspeople at the LST shipyard, aboard an LST. Evansville made more LSTs than any other shipyard in the country. In its 3 years of operation, it built 24 ships, 167 LSTs, and 35 other war crafts. A fire swept through the plant in January 1946, and today, nothing remains of this operation. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)*



*Figure 20: Chrysler Corporation in 1950. During the war it had transitioned to the Chrysler Ordnance Plant, producing about 96 percent of all .45-caliber ammunition in the U.S. After, it returned to producing Plymouth until 1959, when the factory closed. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)*



Figure 21: Original Caption- "Evansville got its first view of the Army's Thunderbolt, one of the planes manufactured by Republic Aviation Corporation which is establishing a plant in Evansville, from the cover of Life Magazine a few weeks ago. The picture, reproduced here with permission of Life, shows the big flour bladed prop of P-47 which tows the fighter plane at speeds well over 400 miles an hour." Evansville Press, March 29, 1942.



Figure 22: Women at work in the LST shipyard, aka Rosie the Riveters. In 1942 some 45 acres of riverfront property (approximately where Mead Johnson is now) was made into Evansville Shipyard. At its height, over 19,00 were employed here, and Evansville made more LSTs than any other shipyard in the country. (Credit: University of Southern Indiana, Rice Library Digital Collections)

## Quotations to consider:

“The navy has made a commitment to deliver to our commanders overseas a certain number of LST’s. Your share of this commitment for April and May is a total of 17 LST’s. . . . The local shipyard’s quota is higher than that of any other shipyard building LST’s, it was said. . . . A navy representative declared that ‘since the LST is probably the most urgently needed naval vessel in the present phase of the war, and since this yard is leading in the output of these ships, it should be considered that Evansville’s obligation during April and May is a compliment to the people in this shipyard by being one of the greatest single responsibilities among our country’s shipbuilders.’

- Local Shipyard Quota of 17 LSTs in April And May, Set by Knox, Highest in Nation; *Navy Secretary in Message Warns Against ‘Too Little Too Late,’ Evansville Press*, April 9, 1944, p.1

“I don’t think they really had to motivate the people. We were all motivated. When we went in out there we went in to do a job, and we stood up and did it. That’s just who the people were. Everybody. You didn’t have anybody laying back and not wanting to work. Everybody just did their part.”

- Imogene Sue, worker at Republic Aviation in Evansville for two years as a riveter, selling bonds, and carrying plane parts along the assembly line [[Oral History Interview by University of Southern Indiana](#)]

## Reading 1: Newspaper Excerpt

*Teacher Tip: The event in the article, the naming of a ship, takes place in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin; however, support students in understanding the connection and main idea. The contributions of Evansville as a war production city were known nationwide and recognized by another shipyard during the war.*

### Ship Bearing City’s Name Now Afloat

*USS Evansville Launching at Port in Wisconsin Called ‘Perfect’*

*The Evansville Courier*, November 28, 1943, pp. 1-2

Sturgeon Bay, Wis., Nov. 27 – With as much poise as a rehearsed performer, the sleek 303-foot modern frigate USS Evansville took to the water here at noon today at the yard of the Leathem D. Smith Shipbuilding company. Bow and stern of the vessel entered the water squarely together in a side launching. The vessel heeled over modestly, then quickly righted

herself amid a tumultuous blast of whistles from the shipyard cranes as they acknowledged the launching with traditional salute. . .

### In Freedom's Cause

'To you, a modern man-of-war, I say it is an honor to christen any ship that flies the flag of America,' Mrs. Maybelle Reichert Davis said as she raised the traditional champagne bottle to christen the U.S.S. Evansville.

'But I am especially honored,' she said, 'because you are destined to join our gallant fleet where my husband, Ensign Donald Davis, is now at sea.

'You will sail in the cause of freedom for which the men and women in the uniforms of the United Nations are giving their labor and their lives.

'They will not fail, nor shall we fail them. Here is our proof.'

Just before she struck the ship's bow, Mrs. Davis said: 'In the name of my city and to the honor and valor of my husband and his comrades—on board—in the air—and ashore—I christen the frigate Evansville.

### Reviews City's History

Mrs. Davis' father, Mayor Manson L. Reichert, made a brief talk just prior to the launching. He reviewed the history of Evansville from a river crossing through its woodworking and furniture manufacturing era and later multiple industrialization to its present war work involving the manufacture of LST ships, Thunderbolt fighter planes, shells, ammunition, bridges, landing docks, uniforms and parachutes.

'We in Evansville understand the pride of you, the men and women who have built this fine ship,' he said. 'We share your sense of accomplishment as she goes down the ways . . . when this vessel takes to sea the people of Evansville will share your pride in her. First, because she will strengthen our already powerful fleet, and too, because she bears our name.

'Most important of all, I think, is the fact that the faster we build such splendid ships and other weapons of war, the sooner we will have our boys back home.'

### Burch Makes Response

Comptroller A.V. Burch in a response stressed the common bond between Sturgeon Bay and Evansville in the fact that 'we both build ships and are doing all we can to help win the war,'

'This war was thrust upon us,' he declared, 'and because we value the principles of freedom handed down to us by our forefathers, we are now defending them. I pray it will not end until the light of liberty and justice shines brightly throughout the world.'

He brought to people of Sturgeon Bay 'greetings from 150,000 Evansville people' and congratulated those having a part in building the frigate Evansville.

He concluded: 'May God bless this ship and its crew wherever it sails, and we pray for safe return with work well done.' . . .

### Questions for Reading 1

1. Why is the naming of a ship for Evansville in another city, at another shipyard, significant?
2. What war work in Evansville is described in the text?
3. What does Evansville, Indiana have in common with Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin?
4. How does this text connect to why Evansville is a designated Heritage City?

### 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. Why do you think Evansville, Indiana was designated as a World War II Heritage City? Connect details from the bill and the first reading.
3. Are there other cities you think of when considering home front contributions during wartime? Which, and why?

## Review Activities

### Reading: Places of WWII History in Evansville, IN

To review some of the significant places of history in Evansville, IN from across the lessons, students can read and review [Places of WWII History in Evansville, IN \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/evan/places-of-wwii-history-in-evansville-in).

### Documentaries

To see and hear more about the history of Evansville during the war, including local perspectives, students can watch the following documentaries, made by the “Feel the History” Program at F.J. Reitz High School in Evansville, Indiana.

- [Evansville in WWII](#) (14:17)
- [The History of Republic Aviation](#) (7:47)

## Culminating Activity/Mastery Product

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

- a. Identify important World War II home front locations and organizations in Evansville, Indiana and describe their historical significance

- b. Explain the significance of war manufacturing in Evansville in contributing to the Allied Forces defenses.
- c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of Evansville civilians, making sure to include details on contributions by women and African Americans.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Evansville 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 Evansville 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<br>(Meeting Standard)                      | Areas of Exceeding Standard |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|
|                       | Standard: _____<br>Evidence of meeting standard:<br>• |                             |
|                       | Standard: _____<br>Evidence of meeting standard:<br>• |                             |
|                       | Standard: _____<br>Evidence of meeting standard:<br>• |                             |
|                       | Standard: _____<br>Evidence of meeting standard:<br>• |                             |
| <b>Points</b>         |   |                             |

Figure 23: Single-Point Rubric (Standards; Blank) [Teacher selects priority standards for assessment.] Courtesy of Sarah Nestor Lane

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