

Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas WWII Heritage City

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

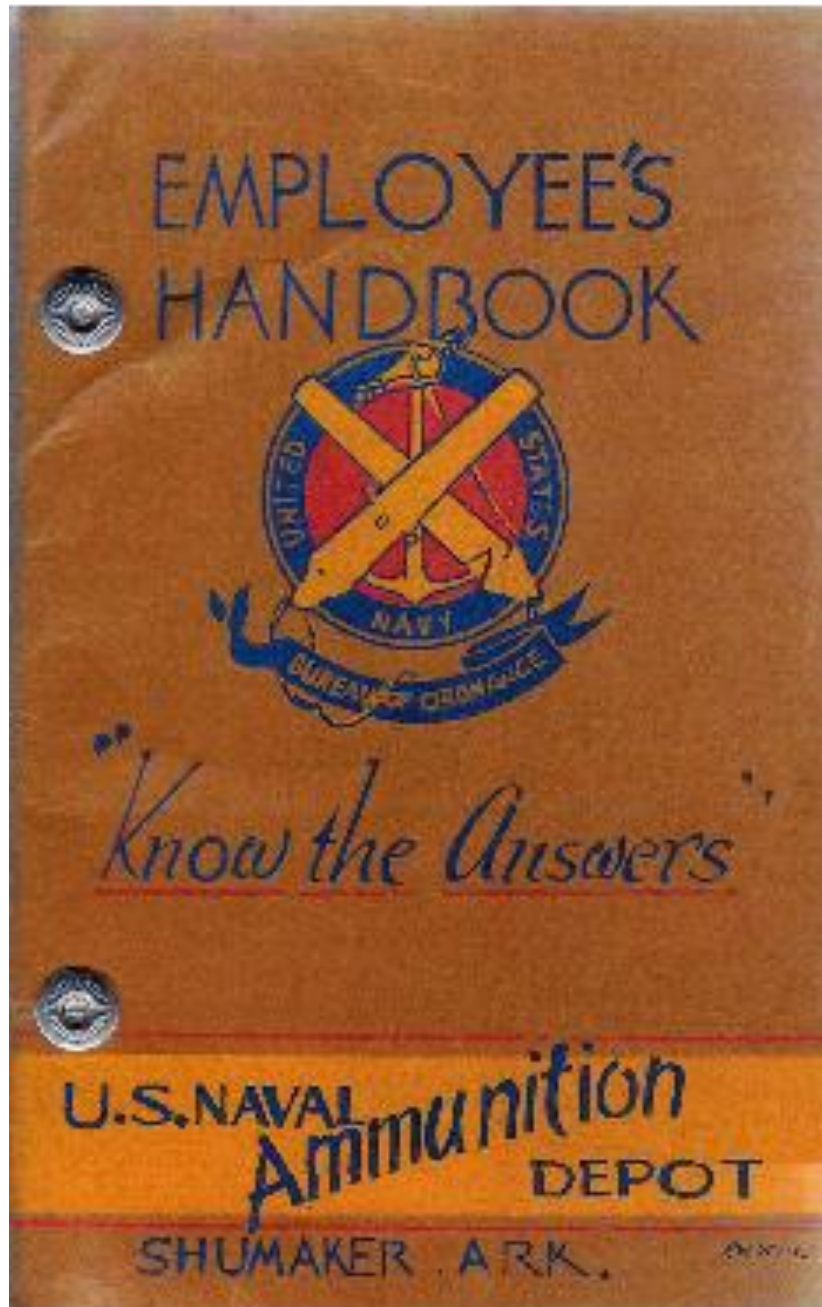


Figure 1: Employee's Handbook cover for workers at the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in Ouachita and Calhoun Counties. The cover says, "Know the Answers." Date unknown. (Courtesy of the Ouachita County Historical Society)

Introduction

The three lessons, and culminating fourth lesson, support the development of understanding the significance of [Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City](#). The first lesson shares the purpose of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot and work of the people there. The second lesson examines how the land was acquired for the depot (through eminent domain), and challenges to construction such as weather and labor shortages. The third lesson details the purpose of Harrell Field in Camden, which served as an Army pilot training site, sharing both the training activities and the hospitality shown by the local community toward the cadets.

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 guides students in summarizing the contributions of Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, and leads into a comparison with other World War II home front cities as a culminating activity.

1. [The Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City \(p. 6\)](#)

- Economic and population growth
- Civilian contributions
- War industries
- Defense manufacturing
- Women workers
- Ordnance plants

2. [Eminent Domain and Construction Challenges in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City \(p. 19\)](#)

- Eminent domain
- Federal government
- Ordnance plants
- Challenges to home front development
- Labor and housing shortages

3. [Harrell Field and Military Training in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City \(p. 33\)](#)

- Armed forces
- Military training
- Pilot training
- Army Air Forces
- Civilian workforce
- Volunteerism

4. [Calhoun and Ouachita Counties: Comparing and Connecting WWII Home Front Cities \(p. 46\)](#)

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 Arkansas Social Studies standards (as of 2022). Objectives for each lesson, materials, and resources are listed within the lesson.

Time period: World War II

Topics: World War II, women's 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

Arkansas Social Studies Standards

The lessons align to the following Arkansas Social Studies Standards (as of 2022).

K-12 Disciplinary Standards Overview

History

H.5. Students will understand key historical periods from the Great Depression and World War II, 1929-1945 (Era 8), to the Contemporary United States, 1968 to Present (Era 10). This includes the patterns of social, economic, and political change over time and the ways people view, construct, and interpret the history of the United States.

Examples of Era 8 represented in grade-level standards:

Grades 7/8: Arkansas History

H.1.ARH.11. Investigate social, economic, and political effects of World War II on various segments of the population in Arkansas, including soldiers off to war, war casualties, women at work, Japanese American internment camps, victory, and war production plants.

High School: U.S. History Since 1929

H.5.USH.8. Analyze the social, economic, and political effects of World War II on the American people:

- War efforts at home (e.g., victory gardens, rationing, defense industry towns, contributions of women and minorities)
- Japanese American internment camps and Korematsu vs. United States
- Service member casualties, including prisoners of war, missing and wounded in action

H.5.USH.9. Analyze the impact of advances in science and technology during World War II.

H.5.USH.10. Evaluate the use of media and propaganda to influence the viewpoints and perspectives of the American people during World War II.

[Note: The lessons in this series also align to knowledge and skills outlined in the Grades 6-12 Arkansas Disciplinary Literacy Standards, as of 2016.]

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

Lesson 1: The Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about the purpose and impact of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in munitions production. The readings provide background on its functions and construction and share the background of one woman who worked at the depot.

It is recommended that this lesson is followed by the second lesson in this city series, "[Eminent Domain and Construction Challenges in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City](#)." The second lesson analyzes challenges local families faced such as losing their land through eminent domain for the construction of the depot, along with barriers to construction and hiring.

Objectives:

1. Explain the purpose of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot and its contributions to the Allied forces.
2. Describe the impact of the civilian workforce, including women, in the depot's construction and operations.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives 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 Arkansas with Calhoun and Ouachita Counties marked

Photos

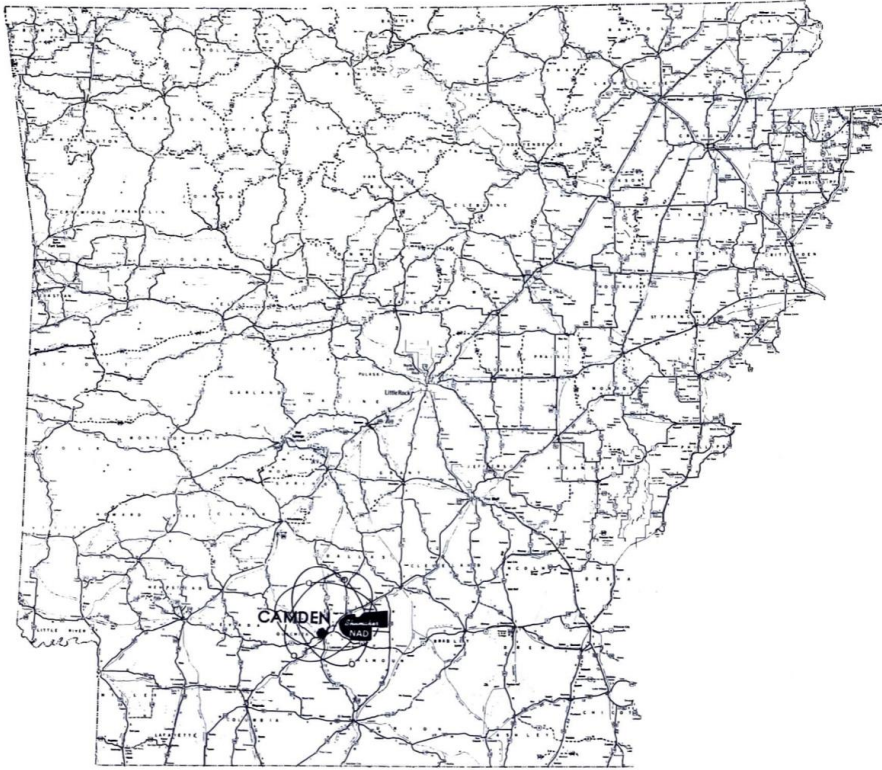


Figure 2: Map of Arkansas with Camden, Arkansas and the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot marked. The map was featured in a Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot report from 1957. (Courtesy of Public Library of Camden, Ouachita County)



Figure 3: A photo of construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, in a 1950s publication by the depot: "NAD Yesterday and Today." (Courtesy of Public Library of Camden, Ouachita County)



**The U.S. Navy Operations building at the Shumaker of 1945. It is now the administration building at
Navy Ammunition Depot as it appeared in January Southern Arkansas University Tech.**

Figure 4: U.S. Navy Operations building at the depot, now part of Southern Arkansas University Tech, pictured in January 1945. (Courtesy of the Ouachita County Historical Society)



Figure 5: The Bill Kitts Housing development was built for the workers of the depot. Date unknown. (Courtesy of the Ouachita County Historical Society)



Figure 6: Munitions workers at Shumaker Naval Ammunitions Depot during the war. Date unknown. (Courtesy of Highlands Industrial Park)



Getting Started: Essential Question

How did the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot and the people who worked there contribute to the war effort during World War II?



By the numbers: Construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot

- The U.S. Navy made accommodations for 14,000 construction workers. Facilities at Harrell Field, previously home to Army Air Force training, were temporarily used to house the large number of workers.
- At its peak, 20,000 were hired in construction for the depot. For context, the entire combined population of Ouachita and Calhoun counties in 1940 was 18,611.

- Starting wages were \$0.65 per hour (worth about \$11.70 today). To compare, the federal minimum wage from October 1939 – October 1945 was \$0.30 per hour. This was raised to \$0.40 in October 1945.
- At first it was announced the costs for the construction of the depot would total about \$60 million, but the final cost for the facility was approximately \$200 million. With inflation, that is worth nearly \$36 billion.



Quotation to consider:

“The War Manpower Commission conference held at Little Rock paid the Shumaker Naval Ordnance project a visit Sunday en masse. Thirty seven delegates representing some twenty-eight districts in Arkansas, toured the project. . . In a caravan of Navy Command cars the visitors were given a bird’s-eye-view of the various phases of construction work going ahead according to schedule. At noon, the officials had a chance at first-hand information to the quality of food served the work men. They were guests at the Mess Hall and were impressed by the quantity and high caliber food served. From there they inspected the barracks and housing units. . .

As a special feature, a Navy film on the use and necessity of rockets was shown at the Officers Quarters. Commander V. Bertleson personally expressed the gratitude of the Navy for the cooperation extended the project.”

- “WMC Officials Tour Navy Plant,” *The Camden News*, April 2, 1945



Read to Connect

Background: On September 25, 1944, Senator John McClellan and Representative Oren Harris announced plans to build a Navy ordnance plant in Ouachita and Camden counties in Arkansas. The location was chosen for its isolation from possible attacks and access to utilities and transportation routes.

The plant served as a national rocket loading, assembly, and storage site. The depot had ammunition storage areas, an eight-mile-long rocket testing range, and production facilities. There was a 260-unit housing development along with recreational facilities for workers, such as a swimming pool. Flooding caused delays during construction, but the first rockets were completed on April 24, 1945.

The company operated the plant until the contract ended on December 31, 1945, when the Navy took over and turned it into a naval ammunition depot. (For the purpose of long-term

naming conventions, this lesson refers to it as a depot.) By 1959, the Navy declared the depot surplus, and in 1961 the land was sold to private businesses.

(More readings and background information can be found in the lesson's additional resources.)

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

Camden Plant, Officials Say, Must Be in Operation March 1

Southwest American (Fort Smith, Arkansas), October 10, 1944

Camden, Ark. - (AP) - The new navy ordnance plant here, to be named 'Schumacher Station' in honor of a navy captain who gave his life in World War II, must be in operation by March 1, 1945, Rear Admiral W.A. Kitts, assistant chief of the navy's Bureau of Ordnance, told Camden business men at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon here Monday.

The product to be manufactured at the \$60,000,000 plant is needed badly by both the navy and the army, the admiral said, and although construction of the plant in its entirety may require at least a year, production is expected to begin in March.

Admiral Kitts said the plant, to be built by the navy and operated by the National Fireworks company, will employ 6,000 men in construction work and 4,000 employees, half women, when operating. The station will be used as a storage depot, employing several hundred persons, after the war, he said.

The station is to be named in honor of Captain Samuel R. Schumacher [sic], navy man who Kitts said contributed much to naval ordnance progress before he was killed in the Pacific in this war after 33 years of service.

The navy the admiral said, is vitally interested in navigation on the Ouachita River and much of the ammunition and weapons made at the plant would eventually be moved by barge, especially in peacetime. A deeper channel would be advocated, he said. Already plans to build a new and stronger bridge over the river, on the direct route to the plant, are underway, Kitts said.

A staff of 50 naval officers will be in charge of plant operations.

Captain M. A. Sawyer, chief of the ammunition section of the Bureau of Ordnance, told the business men it would require a 'miracle' for the plant to be in operation by the March deadline and that 'Camden people have a job on their hands.'

Commander J. M. Lewis, who will be in charge of Schumacher Station, and several other naval officers spoke. Governor-nominee Ben Laney was among other speakers.

Questions for Reading 1, By the Numbers, and Photos

1. What was the purpose of Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot?
2. Whom was the plant named after? How does the name reflect values or traditions?
3. How did the Navy plan to use the Ouachita River to support the depot's operations?
4. Describe why you think Captain Sawyer said, "Camden people have a job on their hands."

Questions for By the Numbers

5. Compare the final construction costs and employment numbers to the estimates in Reading 1. Did these end up being accurate? Why do you think there was a change?
6. How might the movement of workers to the area have affected the local economy and community?

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

From "Al's Alfalfa"

By Al Rose, *The Camden News*, January 30, 1945

. . . Sunday ye scribe along with other Arkansas journalists visited the Camden Naval Ordnance project at Shumaker and saw this vast construction panorama at first hand. We wish it was possible for every Camden citizen to make this tour. We wish the mothers and fathers, wives, sisters, brothers and sweethearts of servicemen could see this project. Of course that cannot be for more reasons than one, but the newspaper folk who saw it will always be goodwill ambassadors for this huge rocket building program.

Sunday was the day's worst time to view the project for a goodwill tourists angle but the best to realize what hardships and what trials the workmen and contractors have to put up with. It was cold and dreary, a slight drizzle fell all afternoon, and it had rained all day Saturday. Roads were quagmires and there was ware and mud everywhere, but nobody seemed to mind. No workmen slowed up not shirked in task. The newspaper people rode in five company cars, the Army style command car and they were high dry except when they unloaded to except when they unloaded to inspect various units in the field. Those cars had four wheel drive and huge mud gripping tires. If not then we'd never had made it. Never again will anyone who saw this job, say that these construction workers do not earn their wages. Brother, they can have all the praise we can think up. Talk about rugged, that job is

rugged and for once we saw terrain and roads that resembled war torn battlefronts minus the shells and bombs.

Road scrapers were at work smoothing over freshly dumped rocks and chat, as huge bulldozers cut level spots, caterpillars pulled big machines and rollers out of the mud. Roads were being used as they were being built. New bridges had to be built to hold up this huge machinery. Ditch-digging machines were busy cutting long lanes so standing water could run off. Drainage tile was being put down, railroad spurs were being laid, thousands of frame huts were being put up to house tools, equipment, and offices. Time offices were scattered all over the area which includes 70,000 acres and 100 square miles. All this is being done at once and in addition, concrete is being poured, steel is being put up and buildings are being rushed to completion on the first unit. It is an immense thing and within the past five days, this building has taken shape from the first unit. It is an immense thing and within the past five days, this building has taken shape from the first wooden form, to the finished concrete. Igloos have been built and are scattered all around.

Thousands of men and women (about 17,000 in all) are doing something. There is bustle and hustle but it all fits into one pattern. Folks that deadline is going to be met. You can see it in all the workers' faces and the officials know the score. What seemed like a madhouse at Harrell Field is all smooth going out in the field. It takes thousands of trucks, cars, bulldozers, caterpillars, and other forms of motor vehicles to get this job done. Huge busses transport men to the project about eight to ten miles in the field down the old Woodberry road. They take them there and bring them back. It takes much gasoline and oil to run this project. There are experienced mechanics who are on the job within a few minutes if there is a breakdown. They swarm all over the truck or bulldozer and have it going within a short time. There is system and plenty of system. Engineers who helped build the Alcan highway and other huge construction projects are here on this job. That goes for the mess hall superintendents and the like. More about them later. One engineer is supervising 26 big construction projects at once. He never looks back and all 26 are going along smoothly.

Camden and all of Arkansas should be proud of this project. It is the greatest thing of its kind in the nation and the number one construction project for the Army and Navy. All the little inconveniences and headaches of local people should be shunted aside and remember this is your war as well as the Navy's and those men working in mud and water and cold 24 hours a day. Take pride in that Camden and Arkansas have the Nation's Number one war project. All eyes are on us now. It is great to know that we can have a hand in helping to end this war. Get civic pride in this project and quit bellyaching about a little crowd and a little congestion. Arkansas newspapers were praised for their help in recruiting

labor for this job. We were glad these newspaper folk didn't get to see some of our prized gripers who don't give a d--- whether the war is won or not, if it interferes with their personal pleasures. We know it's tough but it's a lot tougher working out in that mud and water and cold from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn.

Now for the mess hall. We saw two of them and ate in Mess Hall No. 1 which can handle 3,000 to 5,000 men. This scribe loves good food and brother, we're tempted to sign up for that job just to get some of that food. We ate the same meal the workers ate. No fancy trimmings, no extra service, just sat down in the mess hall at spotless clean tables where just a short time before hundreds of men had been. It was well cooked and steaming hot. It was delicious and in fact, the best meal we'd had in a long, long time. The workers get three squares a day, plus sandwiches in box lunches, and a comfortable clean bed for \$1 per day. The contractors do that at a loss but they must take it and like it. Folks that plant is something to rave about.

Questions for Reading 2 and Quotation to Consider

1. Who visited the Camden Naval Ordnance project and wrote about it?
2. What challenges did weather and terrain create for construction workers?
3. What evidence does the article give to show how complex the project was?
4. Why do you think the author compared the project to a "war-torn battlefield?"
5. If you were a local resident reading this article in 1944, how might it influence your view of the project? What language did the author use that were the most persuasive to you?
6. *Connecting to the quotation to consider:* How does the tone and purpose of the War Manpower Commission's visit compare to the journalist's account?

Photos



Figure 7: The Parsons family. Three daughters worked in munitions plants, and two sons served in the armed forces. (Courtesy of Glenda Gail Parker)

Reading 3: Article

Teacher Tip: The following are summarized recollections gathered from an interview with Glenda Gail Parker, daughter of Mary Bell (Parsons) Davis, conducted on October 5, 2025 by Sarah Nestor Lane. Support students in understanding that not all information has full clarity due to the passing of information and time.

Mary Bell (Parsons) Davis: Worker at Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot

Mary Bell (Parsons) Davis was born on November 2, 1924, in Howard County, Arkansas. She grew up as one of eleven children (five brothers and five sisters), all of whom lived through and survived World War II.

After graduating from high school in 1942, Davis began working in wartime industries. From 1942 to 1945, she worked in munitions production. She first took a job at the Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant west of Texarkana, Texas, and later (around 1945) moved closer to home to work at the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in Camden, Arkansas.



Figure 8: Mary Bell Parsons Davis
(Courtesy of Glenda Gail Parker)

Several of Davis's siblings also took part in the war. Her sisters, Florene (Parsons) Thompson and Hazel (Parsons) Ward, worked at the Lone Star plant, producing items such as bullets and shell casings. Two of her brothers served in the armed forces.

At Shumaker, Davis lived in the workers' housing barracks. Each day, their supervisor transported employees from the barracks to the plant. Like most Americans at the time, those at the barracks also lived with strict rationing of food and materials. Davis's daughter, Gail Glenda Parker, recalled her mother's story of how women would paint seams on their legs to make it look like they were wearing nylons. Nylon stockings were hard to find during the war because of material shortages due to war production.

Davis loved her work and took great pride in it. She advanced to positions as an inspector and supervisor, ensuring that the munitions were safe and met quality standards. With siblings serving overseas, she felt a personal duty to make sure that nothing defective reached the front lines. She once caught faulty grenades during production and worked to improve production procedures.

One story that Parker remembered her mother telling involved a tragic explosion at one of the plants. The plant used a conveyor belt system to move grenades, and workers were trained to grab any live grenade that lost its pin, throw it into a barricaded disposal bin, and shout a warning for everyone to take cover. A 15-year-old girl (one of a mother-daughter pair working there) followed that protocol during an accident, saving others but losing her own life in the explosion. Although she was too young to work legally, she had been allowed to work to help support her family. Newspapers later listed her as older than she was to protect the family and the plant. The production line was shut down four days after the incident.

When the war ended, Davis left her job at Shumaker. Her daughter recalled that Davis said she stopped working because "the war was over," though it's likely that returning servicemen were also reclaiming industrial jobs at the time. Davis later married and had four children.

Seventy-nine years later, Davis was officially recognized as one of America's "Rosie the Riveters." Her family gathered documentation of her and her sisters' wartime work, and just months before her 100th birthday, in August 2024, she was honored with a bronze replica

of the Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal. The award was presented by Camden, Arkansas mayor, Charlotte Young. The children of Florene (Parsons) Thompson and Hazel (Parsons) Ward received the same recognition on behalf of their mothers, posthumously.

Questions for Reading 3

1. Where did Mary Bell Davis work during the war, and what type of work did she do?
2. Why did women paint “seams” on their legs instead of wearing nylon stockings?
3. What types of dangers did employees face by working in the munitions plants and depots?
4. How did Davis’s sense of responsibility toward her siblings in the armed forces influence the way she approached her job?
5. The Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal was first awarded in 2020, seventy-five years after the end of World War II. Why might this recognition have taken so long? (*Tip: Try researching this question. What news stories do you find? [Mae Krier](#) can be a starting point. Krier was one “Rosie” who advocated for 40 years for the recognition of the Rosie the Riveters.*)

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot and the people who worked there contribute to the war effort during World War II?

Extension: Connecting Past to Present

On April 24, 1945, the first rockets were produced at the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot. Just a few months later, on September 2, 1945, Victory over Japan Day (V-J Day) marked the official end of World War II. Given this short window of wartime production, it may be surprising to see how much money and effort were invested in building and operating the depot.

Based on what you’ve learned so far, do you think this was a worthwhile investment for the federal government at the time? Why or why not?

Next, read [Shumaker \(Ouachita County\)](#) from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas to learn about the depot’s postwar impact on the region and long-term use, including the use of the site today. Does this information confirm or change your opinion? Explain your reasoning.

Additional Resources

[Camden \(Ouachita County\)](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[Calhoun County](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[Ouachita County Historical Society](#)

[Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot Laundry Building](#) from Arkansas Heritage

[Shumaker \(Ouachita County\)](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[World War II Ordnance Plants](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Lesson 2: Eminent Domain and Construction Challenges in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about the role of government wartime policies and production demands on individuals and the community. The first reading, a personal reflection, provides background on how local families lost their land through eminent domain for the construction of the depot. The second and third readings, a poem and newspaper article, share about flooding, labor, and construction issues.

Objectives:

1. Analyze different types of writings to identify challenges to the construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot.
2. Evaluate the impact (both opportunities and hardships) of government wartime policies and production demands on individuals and the local community.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on World War II home front experiences to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 9-12 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of Arkansas with Calhoun and Ouachita Counties marked

Photos



Figure 9: A roadway leading to construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, in a 1950s publication by the depot: "NAD Yesterday and Today." (Courtesy of Public Library of Camden, Ouachita County)



Figure 10: A photo of construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, in a 1950s publication by the depot: "NAD Yesterday and Today." (Courtesy of Public Library of Camden, Ouachita County)

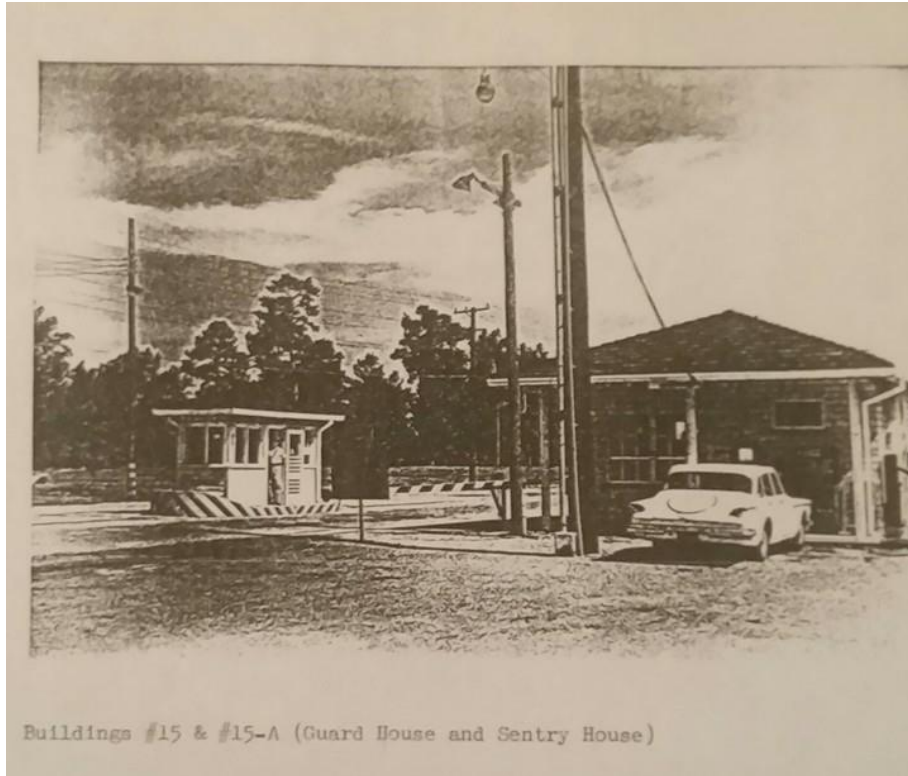


Figure 11: A guard house and sentry house at Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot Date unknown. (Courtesy of the Ouachita County Historical Society)

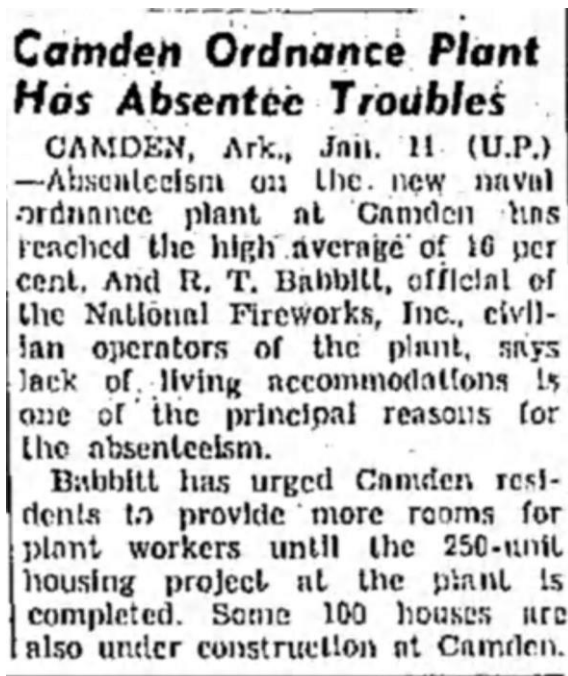


Figure 12: "Camden Ordnance Plant has Absentee Problems," a short article in *The Courier News* (Jan. 11, 1945) described that absenteeism was related to the local housing shortage. Camden residents were urged to provide rooms to workers until a 250-unit housing project at the plant was completed.



Getting Started: Essential Question

How did the demands of wartime production create both opportunities and hardships on the home front in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties?



By the numbers: Eminent Domain

- The U.S. government took over 68,000 acres of land in Calhoun and Ouachita counties for the construction of the depot.
- 308 families were forced from their homes and land, only receiving between \$20 and \$50 for compensation. While a few families chose to sell, most were forced to leave against their will.



Quotation to consider: Flooding

“After heavy rains here and in the watershed of the Ouachita river within the past few days, the stream has started to rise again and is due to past flood stage sometime today, and to go as high as 35 feet . . . Camden had 2.70 inches of rain during the past 24 hours. . . .

This will mark the eighth time the river has gone above flood stage (26 feet) and during six weeks of that period, it remained above flood stage and also above the 30-foot mark. Recently a record of 44.8 feet was set here for the highest modern flood.”

- “Ouachita to Overflow Here: Eighth Flood of 1945 Season for Local Area,” *The Camden News*, May 16, 1945



Read to Connect

Teacher Tip: To learn more about the background of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, use readings and resources in [Lesson 1](#) or the lesson’s additional resources. The following reading is a first-person account of the federal government’s use of eminent domain to take land from local farmers to build the depot. The reading contains excerpts from the full text to form one condensed student reading. Students will use the reading to define eminent domain. An example definition could be, “a government’s right or power to take private land for public use.”

The impacts of eminent domain on local African American families at the time are not well documented. However, one family's story is briefly shared in an extension reading, which is a compilation of additional pieces by Ashley, the author of this first reading.

Reading 1: Article Excerpts

"The Personal Price Paid by Property Owners for the Good of the Country During World War II"

By Dot Cox Coston Ashley, featured in *The Ouachita County Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (Winter 2005)

Eminent Domain is the conclusion of a larger work that is still a work in progress. This is being written so that people may know of the trauma my family, and others who were caught up in this process, suffered.

If you and your family were a part of this event, your memories will be different from mine, because you had a different perspective and while all of us suffered trauma, your experiences were different from ours. I encourage you to write your own story. This is what I remember . . . This is my story. . .

Eminent Domain

Webster's dictionary defines Eminent Domain as: 'a right of a government to take private property for public use by virtue of the superior dominion of the sovereign power over all lands within its jurisdiction.'

Until fall of 1944, most of the people living in our small community had never heard the term 'eminent domain' let alone knew what it might mean. And when we were told that the government was going to take our land, the learned gray-haired old men of the community declared that it could never happen. We learned about eminent domain the hard way and we learned it fast!

We had left the old Mac place in the fall of 1942 and moved into the house with Pop (Mother's father) at his request after his wife (Mother's step-mother) died. . . . Daddy was a hard-working man and his annual fishing and hunting trips [with his male relatives] were his only vacation. In October 1944, not quite all of our cotton had been picked, and the corn had not been gathered, it was wartime and field help was a bit more difficult to find than in previous years. . . .

While they were on their vacation word was received that the United States Government, by right of eminent domain, was confiscating all of the land where we and most of our friends lived to build a Naval Ordnance Plant. Mother, who could not drive a car, immediately got

someone to take her to line up cotton-pickers for the next few days. The next day, after the cotton-pickers were in the field working, she sent a note to Daddy telling him and the other men this disturbing news and telling them to come home at once. The men on the hunting trip scoffed and laughed at the note. They sent word back that she should calm herself because the Government could not take anyone's land away from them. This was A and they all had deeds!

The next day, after the cotton-pickers were at work in the field, mother sent another note (this one more demanding) along with a newspaper account of the announcement that had been made on the steps of the Calhoun County Court House. It was rumored that the good citizens of Hampton threw eggs and tomatoes at Congressman Oren Harris when he made the announcement. The men broke camp and returned home.

The workers mother hired had picked all of the cotton by the time Daddy arrived home. Daddy set about hiring what help he could find and gathering in the corn, while we waited to learn what was going to happen to all of us... We didn't have to wait long.

Almost overnight construction workers from all over the United States began arriving in Camden, Hampton and surrounding places. They came from faraway states. What had been pastureland for years now became trailer parks and tent-cities sprang up overnight. . .

All land owners living in the designated area received letters in the mail detailing the government's right to repossess the land and giving everyone a date when they and their belongings were to be off the land. No earnest money was to be paid. Everyone would receive fair payment for their land according to the value of their specific type of property this same date in 1942! No payment date was promised, and no interest was to be paid for the time between the date of the letter and the actual payment date. We were in what was designated as 'AREA A,' the spot they needed vacated the fastest, and December 5, 1944 was our deadline. . .

Soon construction crews appeared in our field and pasture and began tearing down fences and building roads and railroad tracks in our fields and pastures. . . No ceiling of any kind was placed on any property surrounding the area that the government confiscated. Now we have 200 Mends and neighbors looking for property to buy, in the midst of more than 1,000 construction workers, making better money than any of us believed possible, just wanting a place to stay for a few years. The going rate for property for sale outside of the area more than doubled in just a few weeks! And it kept going up after that. The people in our community had always formed a strong support group that could count on each other in times of trouble, but now; -- we were all victims of the same problem and though people

still tried to help each other, everyone was frantically trying to find a place to move. Everyone had to be on constant alert for vandalism which was rampant. . .

Daddy went to the local bank where he had borrowed money from time to time, just on his signature. He offered to let the farm he was purchasing plus the money he was promised from the U.S. Government for his land stand good for the loan. This banker, who had always loaned him any amount of money he needed, just on his signature – turned him down! The banker said they weren't lending any money to any of the people 'caught up in that thing' because they were afraid these folks might never receive any money from the government for their homes, and the land these people were buying wasn't worth what they were having to pay for it. He assured Daddy that he would be a preferred loan customer if the bank had not established a policy not to loan money to anyone losing [sic] their land by eminent domain. They had to borrow money from Mother's family in order to purchase the farm and have a place to move to. . .

At this point I need to remind you that this was wartime! Gas was rationed, tires were rationed and few people could get permission to purchase tires. One could not purchase automobiles, among the many rationed and unavailable items. Purchasing a trailer was unheard of. . . Daddy had to move everything that he owned – farm equipment, livestock, chickens, feed for the livestock, family, house and household goods including about 100 jars of home canned meats and vegetables and a root house full of freshly gathered sweet potatoes. . .

He had his 1937 Ford and Pop had a T-model and a wagon, with horses, but neither of them had a trailer. The wagon was too slow. . . Mammaw (Daddy's mother) had a friend who owned a trailer and was willing to lend it to Daddy, but the trailer needed tires. Daddy went before the ration board and requested extra gas rations and permission to purchase two tires for the trailer. He explained to them that he was one of the landowners who was being forced to move off his property because the Government was confiscating it to build a Naval Ordnance Plant. I think he had to make a second appeal (note: a second trip – using gas, tires and time) before he was given permission to purchase the tires.

. . . There was no temporary hired help to be found. Anyone who wanted work could get a very good paying construction job. Traffic on the small gravel roads was horrendous and soon the road base gave way. I think he usually moved two loads a day.

. . . A few days later Pop was sent to stay with mother's sister, Dessie Lindsey, until the house could be moved. He cried the whole time he was there . . . his world was crumbling before his very eyes – he had owned and operated his farm for 40 years. . . He had a good

orchard on his farm consisting of apple, peach and plum trees. All of his fruit trees had to be left behind. . .

The local school systems were overcrowded and bursting at the seams with children of construction workers. They did not have space or teachers to cope with this influx of students. They did the best they could. I was one of many new faces at school. Most of the construction worker's children had been moved before and they had moved here by choice. They were accustomed to making moves and their living conditions (whatever they might be) were only temporary, and their parents were making very good salaries. Daddy was not making a salary of any kind; he had been too busy moving and still had urgent tasks evolving from the move. . .

Most of the people who lost their homes moved into Camden or Hampton or somewhere in the same school district where children had been attending school. People that we loved who were once a part of our daily lives now lived on the other side of the Naval Ammunition Depot from us and we had to travel fifty miles or more just to visit a former neighbor. Gas was still rationed, one didn't even dare hope to purchase a new tire, all of the roads were a complete mess, and you only got to see the one friend that you went to visit. No one was allowed entrance to our former home sites as armed guards were stationed at all entrance and exits. . .'

Questions for Reading 1 and By the Numbers

1. What is eminent domain? (Use the definition in the reading and the information in By the numbers.)
2. Describe two specific hardships the author's family faced after learning that the government was taking their land. How did wartime conditions make these challenges worse?
3. How does this account reveal the difference between the government's view of the land and the personal experiences of the people who lost their homes and farms? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
4. Do you think the government's use of eminent domain in this situation was justified? Explain your reasoning using evidence from the reading, information about the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in lesson 1, and your own understanding of wartime needs.

Reading 2: Poem Excerpt

Background: In the poem, W.P.A. stands for the Works Progress Administration, a program established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935 to bring jobs to those in need through public works projects.

W.H.M.S. stands for Winston Brothers, Haglin and Sons, Missouri Valley Constructors, and Sollitt Construction Company. The four construction companies worked as a conglomerate to expedite the construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot.

“Naval Ordnance Plant

Shumaker, Arkansas”

Author Unknown, featured in *The Ouachita County Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Fall 2008)

It was down in the Ouachita Valley in the spring of '45
Working in an Ordnance mud hole, across from a Camden dive,
There I learned Naval construction under a barber named Joe,
A New Deal politician and how he could spend the dough.

The site defies description, 'twas a series of swamps and bogs,
The only living inhabitants were Arkies, Mosquitoes and frogs.
The mud was knee-deep to a camel, the water over its ears,
The stench of rotting vegetation accumulated over the years.

Yes, down in the Ouachita Valley it rains night and day,
The only bit of sunshine is just an occasional ray.
The chiggers are living nightmares, the mosquitoes a whole lot worse,
It is the land that God forgot and upon it placed a curse.

Yes, the Navy needed Ordnance, the sites were very few,
The Big Shots in Washington thought that maybe it would do,
So they called in Joe, the barber and said “this is a Must
Joe, you’ve got to build it and the Treasury you can bust.”

Joe gathered all the crackpots from all o’er the land,
When he got them together he drew a Master Plan.
We’ll build the buildings first, without thought of a road or drain,
Talk about W.P.A., we’ll put that to shame.

They sent to New York State and got Fraser-Brace;
To the Engineering Fraternity their work is a disgrace.
When you needed any plans there was always hell to pay,
You'd get the plans tomorrow for the things you built today.

They needed a prime contractor whose reputation was fine,
Just in case of trouble their skirts to hide behind.
They looked north and south, looked east and west,
They finally decided they'd get, W.H.M.S.

When Joe saw them coming he cried out in glee,
'if you want to see them balled up, just keep your eye on me'
W.H.M.S. dived in with spirits flying high,
All the roads were dusty and even the swamps were dry.

The second week they were here, it started in to rain,
And since that fateful day it's never been the same.
They said many prayers to the man up above,
At times they sent out pigeons like Noah sent his dove.

For a while things ran along in a normal sort of way,
Showing a little progress each and every day.
Costs were about normal for the work being done
When you stop to consider that we never saw the sun. . ."

Questions for Reading 2, Quotation to Consider, and Photos

1. According to the poet, what was the physical environment at the construction site like?
2. How does the poet use humor to describe challenges? Use an example from the poem.
3. What attitude does the author seem to have toward leadership, such as the "New Deal politician" and "Big Shots in Washington"? Use evidence from the poem to support your answer.
4. This poem provides one construction worker's perspective. What does the tone of the poem suggest about some of the frustrations of wartime production on the home front? How does this compare with other accounts of wartime labor and construction? (*You can compare with [Reading 2 in Lesson 1](#), other sources, or additional home front city materials.*)

5. How does the information in the quotation to consider connect to the poem excerpt?
6. What do you notice in the lesson photos? How do they depict challenges at the work site?

Reading 3: Newspaper Article Excerpt

"Labor Shortage at Camden Said Fault of WMC"

Southwest American (Fort Smith, Arkansas), July 30, 1945

Little Rock, Ark. - (AP) - In a blast at the state office of the War Manpower commission, Leon J. Wilson, representative of Arkansas Dailies, Inc., an organization of daily newspapers in the state, charged Sunday that 'political bungling' on the part of WMC was responsible for a current shortage of bricklayers at the Camden Naval Ordnance plant.

Wilson, who formerly served as assistant employment manager at the Camden plant while on temporary leave from the newspaper organization, issued a statement in reply to action taken by military and WMC personnel at New Orleans Saturday proposing to call a holiday on private brick construction in Arkansas as the only means of obtaining needed workers.

Asserting that the office of State WMC Director D.O. Rushing had discouraged the use of an advertising campaign to recruit men, Wilson said that the use of such a campaign on a modified basis could provide within 72 hours all and more of the 200 bricklayers now needed at Camden.

He sent telegrams to Rushing and to Floyd Sharp, of Little Rock, regional WMC representative stating: 'Why haven't newspapers of Arkansas known about this situation prior to the so-called emergency existing? Just when did the War Manpower commission give the Camden Naval Ordnance plant clearance to hire bricklayers in Arkansas? Three weeks ago I am informed that a labor recruiter of the naval ordnance plant was called down by your office for attempting to hire bricklayers. How about it?'

Neither Rushing nor Sharp could be reached immediately for comment.

Sharp said in New Orleans Saturday that it was not proposed to stop non-essential or private brick construction but to curtail it long enough to get building work at Camden back on schedule, which is now running 30 days behind.

Ed McDonald, regional director of WMC, Kansas City, said that more than 100 bricklayers had left their jobs at Camden since May to obtain work at higher wages in non-essential building projects.

Wilson contended that the state WMC office was ‘very much in need of a housecleaning.’

‘I am basing this on my own experience at Camden and on my experiences since then,’ he said

‘It is ridiculous to think there are not 200 bricklayers available in the state of Arkansas. If the WMC was on its toes it would have the names of men who could be called upon immediately.’ . . .

Questions for Reading 3

1. Who did Wilson blame for the shortage of bricklayers at the naval ammunition depot, and why?
2. What solutions did Wilson propose to solve the bricklayer shortage? Do you think these strategies would have worked?
3. The War Manpower Commission (WMC) was responsible for balancing civilian and military labor needs during the war. What does the disagreement between Wilson and the WMC tell us about the challenges faced in recruiting and retaining a home front workforce?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did the demands of wartime production create both opportunities and hardships on the home front in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties?

Optional, additional reflection question: How do different voices and forms of writing show complex realities of life on the home front?

Note: Consider that each of the three readings was a different form of writing (personal reflection, poem, newspaper article).

Extension: The Impact of Eminent Domain on Local African American Families

Background: The reading combines excerpts from the longer reflection featured in [Reading 1](#) to create a short account of one African American family’s experience. The story is told from the perspective of a member of a white family and reflects their viewpoint, which may not represent the perspectives of the family described or the experiences of other African American families in the area. The text includes a historical label once used to describe race that is not acceptable for use today.

While specific details and statistics about the impact of eminent domain on African American families are unknown, discrimination and segregation were widespread in the [Jim Crow](#) South. As the reading suggests, displaced African American families would have faced significant challenges in finding local housing at the time, facing both a housing shortage and systemic racism. Additionally, sharecropping was a system in which farmers, often African Americans, worked land owned by someone else in exchange for a share of the crops rather than wages. Many did so because discriminatory laws and lack of access to credit made owning land nearly impossible.

Reading: Excerpt from "The Personal Price Paid By Property Owners for the Good of the Country During World War II"

“. . . A nice colored family, consisting of a couple, Wendy and Estella Burnell, and their two grown sons, now lived on the ole Mac place. They were share-cropping and making good tenants. . .

This is the deep-south in 1944 . . . a colored family caught up in a situation such as this was even more vulnerable than we were and Daddy felt responsible for helping relocate the colored people living on the old Mac place. . .

Daddy asked the family living on the [new] farm he had just purchased if they would move into one side of the farmhouse and let him put the colored family in the other side temporarily. This was unheard of in rural Arkansas in 1944 and there had never before been a colored family living in the community where the new farm was located. But; the people living there were aware of the influx of people moving into the community and knew they had no choice. It only took a couple of days to get the colored family moved. Daddy then put the two grown sons of the colored family to work, tearing down the house on the old Mac place and stacking the lumber so it could be moved while he turned his attention to emptying his barns and moving livestock and farm equipment. . . .

When the colored men got their house torn down, they helped load the lumber onto the trailer and helped Daddy move it to a location on the new farm where he planned to build a small house for them. Now the colored family was safely out of the area.”

Excerpts combined from "The Personal Price Paid by Property Owners for the Good of the Country During World War II," By Dot Cox Coston Ashley, featured in The Ouachita County Historical Quarterly 37, no. 2 (Winter 2005)

Questions for Extension Reading

1. Why does the author describe the Burnell family as “even more vulnerable?”

2. How did the adult sons of the Burnell family assist with the forced relocation of the farm?
3. How do the details surrounding the Burnell family connect to patterns of power, race, and class in the South at the time?
4. What may be missing from the Burnell family's side of the story? How might the story change if told from their viewpoint?

Additional Resources

[Camden \(Ouachita County\)](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[Calhoun County](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[Ouachita County Historical Society](#)

[Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot Laundry Building](#) from Arkansas Heritage

[Shumaker \(Ouachita County\)](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[World War II Ordnance Plants](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Lesson 3: Harrell Field and Military Training in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about the role of aviation and military training at Harrell Field, also known as Camden Army Air Field. The readings explore the role of Harrell Field in Camden as an Army pilot training site, but also the community-driven efforts, hospitality, and support that connected residents with the war effort.

Objectives:

1. Describe the purpose and daily activities of Army aviation training at Harrell Field.
2. Explain how the Camden community supported the establishment of Harrell Field and extended hospitality to the cadets training there.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 13-19 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3 (and optional extension activity)
3. *Recommended:* Map of Arkansas with Calhoun and Ouachita Counties marked



Getting Started: Essential Question

How did Harrell Field demonstrate the connection between military training and community efforts on the home front to meet wartime needs?

Photos



SOLDIERS OF THE SKY



Figure 13: "Soldiers of the Sky" showing training cadets at Harrell Field in formation. From the 71st AAFFTD yearbook.

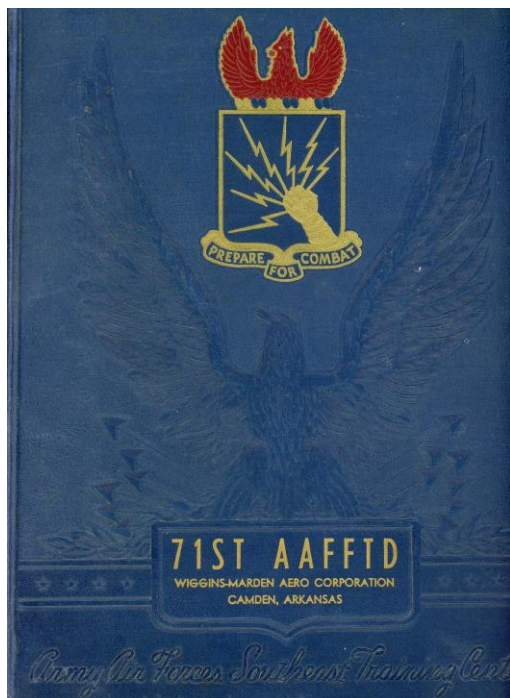


Figure 14: Yearbook cover for the 71st AAFSTD (Army Air Forces Southeast Training Center)– Wiggins-Marden Aero Corporation, Camden, Arkansas. (Courtesy of Danny Biggers)



Figure 15: Dean Addison Mogle, standing in front of a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. Mogle worked as a civilian test-pilot flight instructor. A native of Indiana, he met his wife in Camden during the war and decided to make it his home, becoming a well-known pottery and glass artist who operated his own shop there for many years. (Courtesy of Mogle's stepson, Danny Biggers)

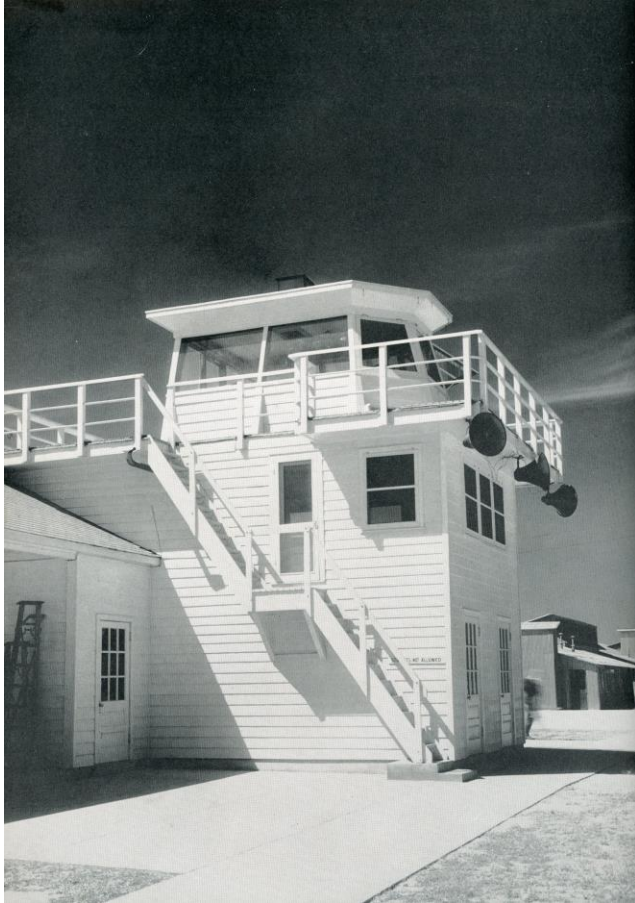


Figure 16: A control tower at Harrell Field in Camden, Arkansas. From the 71st AAFFTD yearbook. (Courtesy of Danny Biggers)



Figure 17: Cadets in training at Harrell Field. From the 71st AAFFTD yearbook. (Courtesy of Danny Biggers)

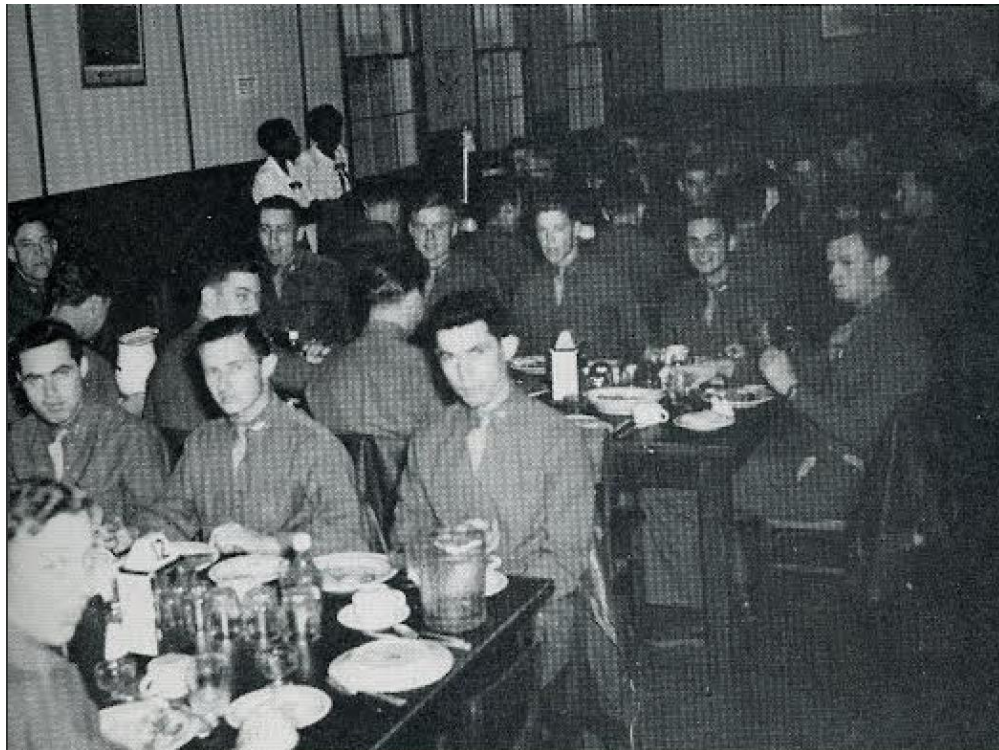


Figure 18: Mealtime for cadets in the dining hall at Harrell Field. By the wall stand two African American women employed there. From the 71st AAFFTD yearbook. (Courtesy of Danny Biggers)



Figure 19: Women working in the administration office at Harrell Field. From the 71st AAFFTD yearbook. (Courtesy of Danny Biggers)



By the numbers:

- More than 6,000 cadets passed through the Harrell Field program during the war.
- In 1943 alone, 76,800 flight hours were flown at Harrell Field.
- Over 100 aircraft were stationed at any given time in Camden for the flight training.
- An allocation of \$31,460 federal emergency fire protection funds was given to seven Arkansas defense areas in August 1942. Harrell airfield was one of these areas. It was equipped with an emergency firefighting crew to protect timber-producing areas.



Quotation to consider:

“[I went to] Camden, Arkansas. That was flying school. They [the planes] were Stearmans that were designed to train young pilots. . . They [the instructors] were tough. I don’t think they were overly tough. . . I guess in Camden you’d probably get 5-10 people, in that range [washing out]. . .

Well, in primary you flew a Stearman, which is a two-cockpit, open-seat plane, and that would go for two months. Then we’d be transferred out to the high school. . . That’s Camden. That’s the first series of flying lessons that we received.”

- Bennie Eugene Hatfield, former Captain, pilot, Army Air Forces. Hatfield first trained at Harrell Field and went on to serve at other bases and overseas on a B-17 bomber. (From the [Bennie Eugene Hatfield Collection](#), Library of Congress’s Veterans History Project)



Read to Connect

Teacher Note: The first reading, a background text, shares the details of the creation of Harrell Field and its role during the war. It provides context and connecting details to the two primary source readings (second and third readings). The second reading highlights the Camden community’s initiative and advocacy in bringing the aviation school to the area, while the third focuses on the Cadet Club and the residents who supported the cadets. Encourage students to make connections among these readings to understand how Harrell Field reflected both military training efforts and community involvement on the home front.

Reading 1: Background Reading

Harrell Field: Camden's Home Front Role in World War II Aviation Training

By Sarah Nestor Lane

Camden's mayor, Don Harrell, other city leaders, and businessmen advocated for building an army flight training center and field in Camden, Arkansas. The airport would have two purposes: to support the war effort and to provide the community with an airport. The contract with the federal government would allow the city to take over the field after the war.

Local fundraising and advocacy efforts were successful. In March 1942, the War Department officially announced that Camden, Arkansas, had been selected as the site for a new Army flying school. The farmland chosen, listed as the Murphy and Barnes farm, was about three miles east of town. The property owners were approached and agreed to the federal offer for the approximate 660 acres of land.

The airfield was officially activated on June 1, 1942. It became the first Army Air Corps station in South Arkansas and was operated by the Wiggins-Marden Aero Corporation, a civilian contractor for the U.S. government. Local excitement about the airfield was high. On August 2, 1942, more than 6,500 visitors attended an open house to tour the field. That afternoon, U.S. Senator Lloyd Spencer officially dedicated the airfield as Harrell Field, in honor of Mayor Don Harrell, who helped make the field a reality.

Training at Harrell Field

The first group of cadets from across the country arrived on August 7, 1942. They traveled by Pullman railway cars and were met by Army officers to then travel to Harrell Field by bus. Harrell Field accommodated about 500 student pilots and employed several hundred instructors, mechanics, and support staff. However, due to segregation in the armed forces at the time, no African American pilots trained there. Discrimination also limited the types of job opportunities at Harrell Field for African American men and women. They were hired for jobs such as custodial work and cafeteria duties.

Training for cadets lasted nine weeks and included classroom lessons, field instruction, and hands-on flight training with both military and civilian instructors. Cadets practiced using Link trainers (early flight simulators), flew training aircraft, and participated in physical conditioning, like on the field's full obstacle course. Facilities included a hospital ward, recreation hall, mess hall, control tower, two large hangars, and three runways.

Flight training at Harrell Field, like elsewhere on the home front, was dangerous. The first fatal accident at Harrell Field occurred in November 1942, when two cadets died during an emergency landing attempt. Other crashes followed, such as one in March 1943 and another in November 1944, both killing cadets. Despite these fatalities, the field continued operations as part of the urgent wartime demand for pilots.

Cadet Club

The local community worked together to make the cadets feel welcome in Camden. Residents came together to run the Camden Cadet Club. They raised funds, donated furniture, books, and other items, and volunteered. The club served as a social and recreational space for trainees. Mrs. Luther Ellison, the club's hostess, became well known in the area and by cadets, for her hospitality and volunteerism. The club positively connected residents and cadets, many visiting Arkansas for the first time.

Closure of the Cadet Training Program at Harrell Field

On April 22, 1944, the cadet program in Camden was closed due to the Army Air Force being ahead of schedule in training cadets. By August 1944, the Army announced plans to sell surplus training planes, including those from Harrell Field.

In September 1944, the federal government announced the construction of Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in Calhoun and Ouachita counties. The grounds at Harrell Field were temporarily turned over to the U.S. Navy and its contractors to support housing needs. The former flying school's barracks and buildings were repurposed to house construction workers during the depot's development. Afterward, the site was returned to the city and once again became Harrell Field, serving as a regional airport. This fulfilled Mayor Don Harrell's vision and demonstrated the lasting impact of Camden's wartime efforts to support the Allied forces while strengthening its own community.

Questions for Reading 1, Quotation to Consider, and Photos

1. Explain how Camden citizens and Mayor Don Harrell helped make Harrell Field possible.
2. When was Harrell Field officially activated?
3. What was the training like for cadets at Harrell Field? What risks did they face?
4. How did Harrell Field's creation demonstrate cooperation between local citizens and the federal government?
5. How did Camden residents support visiting cadets?
6. What long-term impacts might a project like Harrell Field have had on Camden's development and/or sense of community after the war?

7. Photos: What stands out to you when examining the photos? How do the photos and the details in the captions connect to details in Reading 1?

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

Camden Aviation School Tribute to Enterprise of Camden's Own Citizenry

Hope Star (Hope, Arkansas), May 5, 1942

Editor's Note: Arkansas and the war. What are our cities doing in the fight for victory? This is another in a series written exclusively for The Associated Press by editors of AP papers describing conditions in their communities.

By Al Rose, Editor, Camden News

Camden, Ark. - 'Everything comes to him who waits,' or something like that.

Camden citizens tried to get what we've always called a 'war plant' but which for a few years were known as 'defense plants.' The politicians, the lobbyists, the various blocs in Little Rock and Washington, the office holders and those who wanted to be office holders were contacted and asked to help. The chamber of commerce went all out. Local businessmen gave and gave.

But they depended on others and the others failed.

So Camden people went to work themselves.

Today, hundreds of workmen are busy turning one of South Arkansas' finest farms, four miles northeast of this city, into the Camden Aviation School where more than 500 Army cadets will get their primary flight training. The E.W. Wiggins Airways, Inc., had contract for this training and over 100 civilian instructors, mechanics, etc., in addition to Army officers and personnel will be here for this work. The Wessell Construction Co., Memphis, has contract to build the field, erect barracks, administration building and other structures on the 660-acre tract.

The Camden citizens got this big school on their own. Led by Mayor Don Harrell, City Engineer Mack Graves and members of the city council, the businessmen got busy. They raised \$55,000-\$80,000 through a bond issue and \$25,000 by public subscription- and bought the land after getting War Department approval for the school. Now we have something that will be here after the war. Camden will have a modern airport.

The contract with the War Department provides that after the war the airport and training field, together with all equipment, will revert to the city.

There is no rent gouging here and no need for it as there wasn't any 'war boom.' Local people are thankful now that, although they tried awfully hard to get a big plant.

Local folks have kept right on buying war bonds and stamps at the rate of \$80,000 per month which is above the county's quota. The membership war bond drive started today.

The civilian defense setup has been completed. First aid classes are being held regularly. Camden is battalion headquarters for the State Guard and a Camden man is the major of this battalion. Every citizen is anxious to do his or her part and there is no lagging here.

Camden's own Battery 'E' of the 206th Coast Artillery, anti-aircraft was one of the first units to be called to the 'front.' More than 125 Camden and Ouachita county youths are serving at outposts. In addition hundreds of others are in other units of the armed forces, some in Australia, some in the Philippines, some at sea.

Camden citizens are anxious to help and merely await orders.

Questions for Reading 2

1. What project did Camden residents take on to support the war effort?
2. How would this project have had long-term positive effects on the community?
3. Why might the author emphasize that there was "no rent gouging" or "war boom" in Camden? *[Note: This was over two years before the land was taken and construction started for the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot in Calhoun and Ouachita counties.]*
4. What other local civilian defense and military service examples are described in the reading?
5. How does the author view Camden citizens?

Reading 3: Newspaper Article

"Social Whirligig" Excerpt

By Grace Witherspoon, *The Sun* (Jonesboro, Arkansas), May 13, 1944

Jonesboro friends of a former popular Jonesboro matron, Mrs. Luther Ellison, will be interested in these comments made in regard to the GRAND work that she's done for the CADETS stationed down at Camden. . .

Roses go today to Mrs. Luther Ellison, hostess at the Cadet Club since it was founded. She has been 'mother' to all the Cadets who have been in Camden, as well as confident of many local girls who have been at the club. Too, she's played the role of Camden's No. 1

civic booster in all that time, taking parents of cadets on sight seeing tours and over Camden's many industrial areas.

It has been a hard job and it has taxed the hostess' strength time and time again, but she has always been kind, sympathetic, understanding, and pleasant at the club. To say the Cadets loved her would be stating it mildly. She has received hundreds of letters from Cadets who have gone on from Harrell Field. She has also received many letters from grateful parents.

The Cadet Club has been Camden's greatest entertainment gesture for the hundreds of embryonic fliers that have stayed in Camden for about nine weeks. It was enjoyed every minute and has meant much happiness and joy to these youths. Too, it has brought Camden the most favorable publicity and reaction of anything ever done here. Every Cadet has gone away singing the praises of Camden and Mrs. Ellison. Majority of all the Cadets were from the north and east. For many it was the first trip to Arkansas. Like all northerners and easterners they had never heard one nice thing about our state. It had always been the 'Slow Train' stuff. They were amazed at what they found here and they will never forget it. Each one of these Cadets will be a Goodwill Ambassador for Camden. They will never let anyone low-rate or deride Camden or Arkansas. Many will return here after the war and will bring their families with them.

That kind of advertising can't be bought. It's priceless.

Chief success of the club is due to Mrs. Ellison. B.T. Fooks and G.S. Dobbins of the Chamber of Commerce have handled the financial end and both have done swell jobs. The Chamber of Commerce 'Daddied' the club and local businessmen including the writer 'pounded pavement' and raised the \$2,000 needed to start the club. Camden people generously donated furniture, books, magazines, curtains and many other things. Mac Graves aided with built in furniture and other articles. Others at Harrell Field helped. To list all would be impossible. E.W. Wiggins and Wesley Marden gave generously in money and helped in a big way. Major Huglin, first 'CO' [Commanding Officer] at Harrell Field, who sponsored the idea of a club did much too. It is a common community project with no special credit due to one, but to all, for its existence. But the thing that makes it click and put it over after the physical groundwork was laid, was the sincere and sensible management of Mrs. Ellison.

The hostess really made the club go. She looked after all the Cadets and the needs of the club. Designing and decorating it took a lot of her time. It was a big job but she filled it well and she is due many roses today and much praise for her untiring efforts. We pass them her way and we wish the Cadet Club was to continue and are saddened that there will be

no more Cadets after about April 20, under present Army Air Force plans. But it was a fine thing while it lasted.

Too, we can't help but recall there were a few who opposed and condemned the club at the start and fought it as an 'evil influence.' Wonder what they say now. The police record reveals the remarkable fact that during all the time Harrell Field has been here not a single Cadet has ever 'gotten out of line.' They've had a nice place to go and entertain their girls and families when they came. They reciprocated by the most exemplary conduct. No other post could boast such a record.

Questions for Reading 3

1. Who was Mrs. Luther Ellison, and why was she being celebrated?
2. How did other Camden residents support the Cadet Club?
3. How did the author's tone toward Mrs. Ellison and the community reflect attitudes about civic duty and patriotism at the time?
4. The author wrote, "that kind of advertising can't be bought." What does this show about what they hoped the cadets would think or say about Arkansas and Camden after leaving?
5. How does this story show how civilians and those in military training on the home front connected and developed a sense of unity?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did Harrell Field demonstrate the connection between military training and community efforts on the home front to meet wartime needs?

Extension Activity: The Journey of Pilots Before and After Training at Camden

These two pilots completed their flight training at Harrell Field. Although their references to Harrell Field are brief, their oral histories offer insights into the training journey and service of Army Air Force pilots during World War II. Students can use these interviews to better understand the pathway from cadet training to active service. These interviews are documented through the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project.

- 1) [Bennie Eugene Hatfield Collection](#)

Hatfield discusses Camden, Arkansas beginning at approximately the 7:40 mark.

2) [Richard William Hurrell Collection](#)

Hurrell mentions Camden, Arkansas at approximately the 4:15 mark.

Additional Resources

[Camden \(Ouachita County\)](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[Calhoun County](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

[Ouachita County Historical Society](#)

[Camden Army Air Field](#) from Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Lesson 4: 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 [Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas](#), designated as a [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains photographs, readings and a culminating project. The first reading highlights the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot's role in supporting the war effort and shaping the community's long-term development. The second reading connects the region to the designation of a Heritage City. Photos and other lesson materials also connect back to Harrell Field in Camden. 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 Calhoun and Ouachita Counties [lesson collection](#). This is to summarize the contributions and encourage connections to home front efforts.

Objectives:

In a culminating product:

- a. Summarize the purpose and impact of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot.
- b. Explain the complexities and challenges of the construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, including the impact of eminent domain.
- c. Describe the role of Harrell Field in Army pilot training and the ways the Camden community contributed to creating and supporting the program.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Calhoun and Ouachita Counties and other Heritage city(s) / World War II home front(s).

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 20-23 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2
3. Maps, project materials (as needed)
4. Student graphic organizers (See Figure 24 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. Summarize the purpose and impact of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot.
 - b. Explain the complexities and challenges of the construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, including the impact of eminent domain.
 - c. Describe the role of Harrell Field in Army pilot training and the ways the Camden community contributed to creating and supporting the program.
 - d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Calhoun and Ouachita Counties 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 were Calhoun and Ouachita Counties chosen as a World War II Heritage City, and what are its similarities and differences to other home front cities?

Photos

EMERGENCY!

The Navy Dept. has called upon Arkansas people to construct the most important United States . . .

NAVAL ORDNANCE PLANT

AT
CAMDEN, ARKANSAS

Production of newly developed and very essential weapon of World War 2 . . .

“ROCKETS”

TO SAVE OUR BOYS’ LIVES!

LABORERS

Enroll NOW!

WINSTON, HAGLIN, MISSOURI VALLEY
AND SOLLITT
(Prime Contractors)

GOOD PAY

FREE TRANSPORTATION TO THE JOB

Time and half for overtime. Food and lodging available on the job for workers at \$1.00 per day. Excellent working conditions . . . Help build this plant so vitally needed by our fighting forces.

Hiring on the Spot and Free Transportation
Furnished at Every

**UNITED STATES
EMPLOYMENT SERVICE
OFFICE IN ARKANSAS**

If you are now engaged in an essential activity at your highest skill, do not apply.

Men under 21 must have minor’s release form signed by parents which can be obtained at Employment Office.

ROCKETS WILL SAVE LIVES!

Text: “Emergency! The Navy Dept. Has called upon Arkansas people to construct the most important United States . . . Naval Ordnance Plant at Camden, Arkansas. Production of newly developed and very essential weapon of World War 2 . . . “Rockets” to save our boys’ lives! Laborers Enroll NOW! Winston, Haglin, Missouri Valley and Sollitt (Prime Contractors). Good Pay. Free Transportation to the job

Time and a half for overtime. Food and lodging available on the job for workers at \$1.00 per day. Excellent working conditions . . . Help build this plant so vitally needed by our fighting forces.

Hiring on the spot and free transportation furnished at every United States Employment Service Office in Arkansas. If you are now engaged in an essential activity at your highest skill, do not apply. Men under 21 must have minor’s release form signed by parents which can be obtained at Employment Office.

Rockets will save lives!”

Figure 20: An employment ad for the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, featured in *The Sun* (Jonesboro, Arkansas) on January 20, 1945. ([Link to photo](#))



Figure 21: A photo of construction of housing at the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, in a 1950s publication by the depot: "NAD Yesterday and Today." (Courtesy of Public Library of Camden, Ouachita County)



Figure 22: Cadets in training at Harrell Field. From the 71st AAFFTD yearbook. (Courtesy of Danny Biggers)



ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

CAMDEN LANDMARKS

Below, Top: Barracks.
Bottom: Link trainer building.

Below, Top: Mess and recreation building.
Bottom: Ground school.

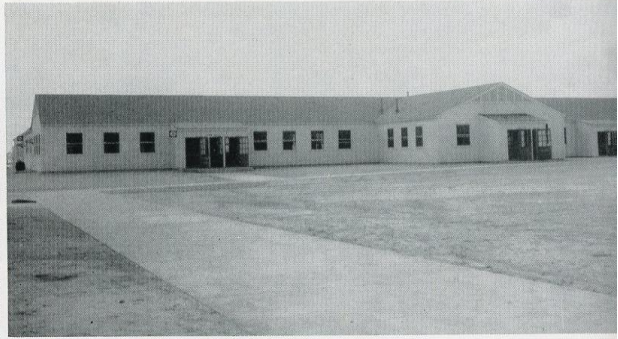


Figure 23: "Camden Landmarks" at Harrell Field. Top – Administration building; Below left: Barracks; below right, mess and recreation building. Buildings were rapidly constructed using standardized designs to speed up assembly. From the 71st AAFTD yearbook. (Courtesy of Danny Biggers)



Quotations to consider:

“Camden and Newport, Ark., were in the list of ten communities added to the WPB [War Production Board] Tuesday to the list of defense housing critical areas. Such listing entitles the area to priority aid in construction of dwellings for war workers and the families of military personnel.”

- “Camden and Newport Named Housing Areas,” *Southwest American*, September 23, 1942

“The Camden rocket plant will be completed and will play a dominant role in the future design, research and experimentation of rockets, according to Commander Joseph White, officer in charge of construction.”

- “Camden Rocket Plant to Do Important Work,” *Northwest Arkansas Times* (Fayetteville, Arkansas) August 16, 1945 [Note: This is referring to the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot.]

“Many residents today are not aware that fifty years ago during World War II, Camden was a beehive of military flight training activity in support of the war effort against the Axis powers. However, it could have been very different, because on 7 December 1941, Camden had no airport. Had it not been for the efforts of Mayor Don Harrell in the days immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, a United States Army Aviation School for Camden would not have been announced on 2 April 1942.”

- “Ouachita County and World War II,” *Ouachita County Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Spring 1992



By the numbers: Population of Ouachita and Calhoun Counties compared to employment and training data

- The population of Ouachita County, including Camden, in 1940 according to the U.S. Census data, was 8,975. In Calhoun County, the 1940 population was 9,636. This was a total of 18,611 across the counties.
- The Harrell Field Army Air Force training program hosted about 500 pilots at a time, and more than 6,000 passed through during the war.
- At its peak, 20,000 workers were hired for construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot. By August 1945, the depot employed about 20,000 people in construction or munition production. (*Southwest American*, August 22, 1945)

- In 1950, the total population across the counties was back down to 18,504 (11,372 in Ouachita and 7,132 in Calhoun).

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

Teacher Tip: This article offers a retrospective look at the history of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, written nearly thirty years after the end of World War II. Support students in connecting the text to the broader legacy of wartime development in the area, emphasizing how home front contributions shaped communities into the postwar era. Encourage students to use the quotations and photos in this lesson to summarize key points about the impact of Calhoun and Ouachita Counties. The summarizing questions in Reading 2 can help students identify these main ideas before completing a mastery project or comparing Calhoun and Ouachita Counties to that of another U.S. city or area.

NAD Area Has 10 Year History

The Camden News, July 3, 1974

The Naval Ammunition Depot at Shumaker (now East Camden) was partially built during World War II as a high production plant to assemble and test rockets for use by the U.S. Navy and other branches of the armed services.

Some 60 million dollars was released to cover costs of land acquisition and construction.

When it was purchased at the cost of some two million dollars in 1944, the land which eventually became the Shumaker area was divided between wooded plots and cultivated land. The original purchase was for some 69,050 acres covering parts of two counties and 110 square miles. In the purchase there were two family burial sites, two cemeteries, three churches, two filling stations and two stores.

Construction was started in the spring of 1945 as a Naval Ordnance Plant with National Fireworks Incorporated as the opening contractor. On November 5, 1945 the operating contract with National Fireworks was terminated and the area was renamed the Naval Ammunition Depot (NAD).

The development was estimated to cost \$72,220,000 but when all the contracted work was finished the figure amounted to \$95,000,000. During the peak period of its construction, weekly payrolls for construction personnel ran to approximately \$1,800,000.

The Shumaker area was named in honor of Samuel Robert Shumaker, Captain, U.S.N., Class of 1915 U.S. Naval Academy. Shumaker was a leader in the development of the

modern ordnance and one of the foremost advocates of rockets as ordnance. He was killed while on active duty in the Pacific on May 26, 1944.

With the end of World War II in 1945 all new construction was ended except for necessary housing and recreation facilities for a group of U.S. Marines stationed there.

Orders were issued in the fall of 1950 with the outbreak of the Korean Conflict for renewed construction. The rocket assembly lines were fully completed and production facilities were expanded to increase their output.

The original plans for the area were completed during this second construction effort. It looked just like many other facilities of its type: concrete buildings set far apart due to the armament produced there, rows of concrete igloos for ammunition storage, and many recreation and housing buildings in which the service personnel lived.

Many of the buildings can still be seen today. They have been taken over by private companies and are used for production of a variety of different products.

Questions for Reading 1, Photos, and Quotations to Consider

1. How did the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot change Calhoun and Ouachita Counties? Think of changes in land use, jobs, and the local economy.
2. How did the creation of Harrell Field bring similar changes or growth?
3. Find out what these sites are used for today. How do their current uses show the lasting impact of wartime development in the area?
4. Reading 1 was written in 1974, almost thirty years after the war. How do its tone and details compare to the wartime stories about the depot? (Such as in Lesson 1 or quotation) What does this show you about perspectives over time?

Photos

5. Read the advertisement for employment. What language was used to appeal to civilians' sense of patriotism and duty? How does the ad show both the opportunities and pressures faced by civilians on the home front?
6. Examine the other photos. How do they show how the region adapted to meet wartime demands for training and production?

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 By the Numbers and Reading 2

By the Numbers

1. How many people lived in Ouachita and Calhoun Counties before the war?
2. What contributed to the growth in population in Calhoun and Ouachita counties?
3. What challenges might have resulted from the population in the area nearly doubling during the war?
4. Why might the population of the area have returned to prewar levels by 1950, even after the wartime growth? Consider the type of training and occupations bringing people to the area during the war.

Reading 2

5. What was the purpose of the bill (H.R. 6118)?

6. Why do you think these counties were jointly designated as a World War II Heritage City? What makes the counties unique? Connect details from the bill, evidence from the first reading, and readings from the other lessons in the series.
7. Summarize: How did home front contributions and training in Calhoun and Ouachita Counties support the US and the Allies? Consider both information from this text and from past lessons.
8. 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. Summarize the purpose and impact of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot.
- b. Explain the complexities and challenges of the construction of the Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot, including the impact of eminent domain.
- c. Describe the role of Harrell Field in Army pilot training and the ways the Camden community contributed to creating and supporting the program.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Calhoun and Ouachita Counties 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 Calhoun and Ouachita Counties 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 24: 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 funded by a National Council on Public History's cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.