

# Valley City, North Dakota, WWII Heritage City

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



*Figure 1: A woman operating a tractor. With a labor shortage, women were trained and took on important agricultural responsibilities in Valley City and North Dakota. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.*

## Introduction

The three lessons, and culminating fourth lesson, support the development of understanding the significance of [Valley City, North Dakota](#), [World War II Heritage City](#). The first lesson shows examples of local military training and civilian defense efforts, such as the Navy V-12 program, Cadet Nurse Corps training, and a volunteer-based Home Guard. The second lesson explores the critical role of agriculture and farming, along with information about some local companies that received defense contracts. Women are highlighted in the second lesson for stepping into agricultural roles due to the wartime labor shortage. The third lesson describes ways in which Valley City residents, including youth, supported war financing efforts and material drives. The lesson also shares about Valley City businessman Herman Stern, who managed and supported the resettlement of Jewish refugees to the United States. 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 Valley City, North Dakota, and leads into a comparison with other World War II home front cities as a culminating activity.

### 1. [Military Training and Home Front Defense in Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City \(p. 6\)](#)

- Military training
- Navy
- Higher education
- Valley City State University
- Cadet Nurse Corps
- Home Guard
- Civilian defense

### 2. [Agriculture and War Production in Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City \(p. 18\)](#)

- Agriculture and farming
- War manufacturing
- Defense industry training
- Civilian workforce
- Women in the workforce
- Labor shortages

### 3. [Home Front Volunteerism and Contributions in Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City \(p. 29\)](#)

- Civilian volunteerism and contributions

- War bonds and stamps
- Material drives
- Youth involvement
- Jewish refugee resettlement
- Humanitarian efforts

#### [4. Valley City, North Dakota: Comparing and Connecting WWII Home Front Cities \(p. 41\)](#)

### 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 North Dakota Social Studies Content Standards (as of 2019) and North Dakota English Language Arts Content Standards (as of 2023). 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

## North Dakota State Standards

### North Dakota Social Studies Content Standards

The lessons align to the following categories of standards defined by the North Dakota Social Studies Content Standards (as of 2019, by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction).

#### 6-12 United States History

*Era 4: 1941-2001*

#### 6-12 World History

*Era 4: Age of Global War and Globalization*

#### 6-12 North Dakota Studies

*[Standards: ND.6\_12.1; ND.6\_12.2.3; ND.6\_12.3.1; ND.6\_12.4.5; ND.6\_12.4.6]*

## North Dakota English Language Arts (ELA) Content Standards

The lessons align to the following categories of standards defined by the North Dakota English Language Arts (ELA) Standards (as of 2023, by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction).

### Communication (C)

Learners will organize and express ideas in a format appropriate for the audience and purpose, focusing on skills involved with collaboration, active listening, and oral presentation of information.

*Examples include the standards C.1, C.2, C.5, and C.6 for grades 6-12.*

### Reading (R)

Learners will comprehend, analyze, and evaluate literary and informational texts in various formats, genres, and levels of complexity.

*Examples include the standards R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.7, R.9 for grades 6-12.*

**Note:** Skills for **Writing (W)** and **Inquiry and Research (IR)** are integrated throughout the lessons, but the standards can be specifically practiced and evaluated with the mastery product in the final lesson.

*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: Military Training and Home Front Defense in Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City

## About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to support learners' understandings about the role of military training and civilian defense efforts in Valley City. These include the Navy's V-12 program at Valley State Teachers College, Cadet Nurse Corps training at Mercy Hospital, and the state's first Home Guard, launched in Valley City.

## Objectives:

1. Explain the purpose and importance of the V-12 and Cadet Nurse Corps training in Valley City.
2. Describe how local civilians volunteered for home front defense.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 2-7 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of North Dakota, with Valley City marked



## Getting Started: Essential Question

How did local military training and civilian defense contribute to national preparedness and home front war efforts?

## Photos

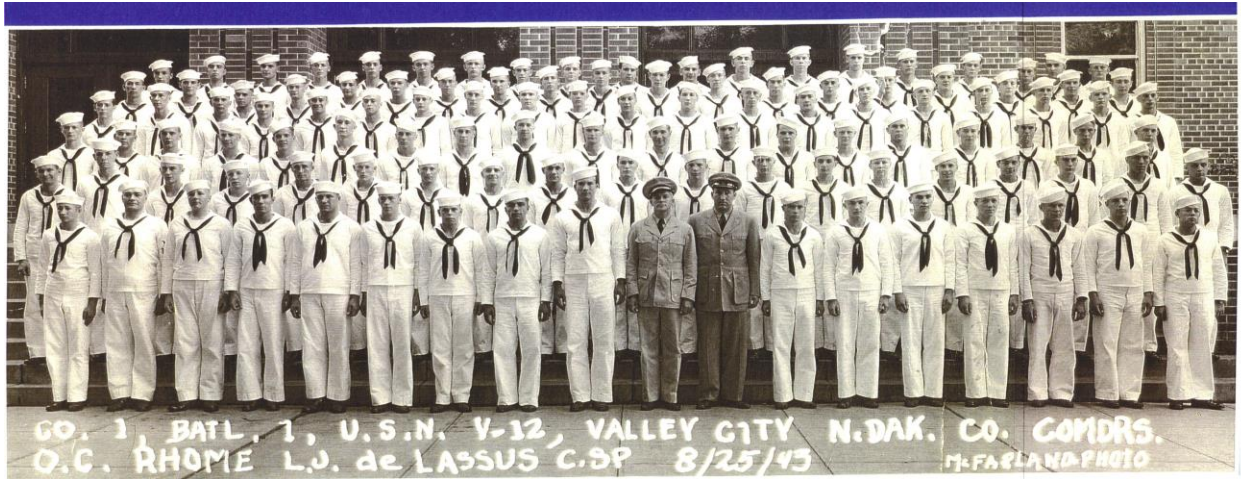


Figure 2: Navy V-12 Training group photo in Valley City, North Dakota. (Photo is captioned: Co. 1, Batl. 1, U.S.N. V-12, Valley City N. Dak. Co. Comdrs. O.C. Rhome, L.J. de Lassus C.SP, 8/25/43, McFarland Photo) Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 3: The 817th Tank Destroyer Battalion was stationed in Valley City to support the harvest season in 1943 due to the labor shortage. While in Valley City, they tested the use of Jeeps for use in postwar rural mail delivery. (Valley City Times-Herald, September 4, 1943)



Figure 4: A photo of women in class from Valley City State Teachers College. The college hosted classes for the Cadet Nurse Corps, women who served as future Naval stenographers, and other women who would later serve in the armed forces. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



## By the numbers:

### V-12

- Nationwide, more than 125,000 Navy officers were enrolled in 131 colleges and universities in the U.S. for V-12 training between July 1, 1943, and June 30, 1946.
- The first group at the Valley City Teachers College was 233 men. Over two years, 532 men were trained there. Training lasted four months.
- The local Red Cross volunteered to remodel 900 pairs of trousers for V-12 sailors in July 1943. (*Valley City Times-Herald*, July 15, 1943)

### Civilian Defense

- 254 local women registered for civilian defense at the City Hall in Valley City on February 21, 1942. (*Valley City Times-Herald*, February 21, 1942)
- In February 1943, sixty men in Valley City and Barnes County completed 42-hours of coursework on chemical warfare, first aid, fire prevention, handling bombs, and other education to qualify them as air raid wardens. (*Valley City Times-Herald*, February 25, 1943)



## Quotations to consider:

“Valley City had the finest volunteer defense guard for a strategic point of any city in the state.”

- Northern Pacific Railroad Company, from Barnes County Historical Society records

“ . . . I wanted to become a nurse since a teenager, and then the government offered the Cadet Corps to help ease the shortage of nurses during World War 2. I applied and was accepted and, after graduating from High School on a Friday, I packed up and moved to the nurses’ dorm and school began the following Monday. The government program furnished our white work uniforms and a military-style dress uniform, tuition, books, and a monthly allowance. . . ”

- Ethelyn (Smedshammer) Paulson, letter excerpt, courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society

“The women of Valley City are showing a fine spirit in their willingness to volunteer for the needed services. It is hoped that this registration and the registration of men (in civilian defense) which will take place soon will enable the Valley City Defense Council to set up an

efficient organization of protective services for the community. All women who have not registered are urged to do so today.”

- Valley City Times-Herald, February 21, 1942

## Read to Connect

*Background for Readings 1-3: The readings in this lesson show examples of military and civilian service and training connected to Valley City during World War II. The lesson specifically shares details about the V-12 Navy College Training Program at Valley City State Teachers College, Cadet Nurse Corps training at Mercy Hospital, and the work of the State Home Guard. These examples represent only part of the community’s involvement in the war effort.*

*Many men and women from Valley City joined the armed forces and served in various branches during the war. Some served in the 188th Field Artillery Battalion “D” Battery, which was stationed in Valley City and headquartered in Bismarck. Activated for a year of duty in April 1941, the battalion was later divided into two units. Soldiers from Valley City went on to serve overseas, including in major battles such as the Battle of the Bulge.*

*Valley City’s National Guard unit, originally organized as Company G in 1884, was mobilized on February 10, 1941. More than 1,500 service members were sent to train at Camp Claiborne in Louisiana before joining the fighting overseas in 1942, including in battles such as Guadalcanal.*

*In addition, the Army temporarily deployed the 817th Tank Destroyer Battalion to Valley City in 1943 to help support the community during harvest season.*

### Reading 1: Newspaper Excerpts

*Background: The V-12 program was a U.S. Navy initiative designed to train officers. Valley City State Teachers College served as one of the training sites, preparing students to become deck officers by teaching seamanship, damage control, and other essential skills. The college also held science courses for student nurses from Mercy Hospital and helped train women who later served as Naval stenographers. Many women connected to the college also joined branches of women’s military service, like the [WACs](#), [WAVES](#), and [SPARS](#).*

#### Part A: Newspaper Editorial

“Opportunity”

By Phil Mark, Valley City Times-Herald, June 25, 1943

When the Naval V-12 program opens at the college next week, Valley City will really have an opportunity to sell North Dakota to California. A majority of the 230 young seamen will be from the Golden State and to most of them no doubt this will be their first visit to this state. We have heard so much about the wonders of California that we become apologetic and even afraid to put in a good word for North Dakota. But this is the time to talk about North Dakota. This is a beautiful time of the year in Valley City. When these Californians arrive next weekend, don't be backward about waving North Dakota. They will like our lovely valley. They will enjoy touring the city and Chautauqua parks, visiting the fish hatchery, mink and fox farm, and the many fishing spots along the river, and gazing with admiration at the mighty Hi-Line bridge. It won't be a hard proposition to sell, and we venture these Californians will be struck with the beauties of this state and will write the home folks about it.

## Part B: Letter to the Editor

"In Today's Mail"

*Valley City Times-Herald*, November 8, 1944

Editor of the Times-Record,

I think that you already know that I am about to shove off from Valley City, but I do not wish to go until I have told the people of this community how much I genuinely appreciate their friendly interest and cordiality. Perhaps you will help me out by running this note in the Times-Record.

It has been my great pleasure to serve under and with the Navy V-12 unit, and to know the fine cooperative sprit of the STC officials and faculty. AS they say, it has been "good duty." But apart from my purely official connections with Valley City, I recognize with the greatest satisfaction the contribution to my enjoyment that the community as a whole has made, and many friends in particular. One cannot stay in a place for fifteen months-and keep alive-unless he puts down some roots; and I happily report that the soil here most congenial to the growth of friendship as well as many other good things.

It is true that I came here not knowing much about the Northwest, but I accepted my assignment with good sprit, for which it was my duty. You gave me a fine welcome, treated me royally, and made me feel at home. As a result, my duties became a greater pleasure, and my personal life was enriched.

I have heard much about the "resources" of North Dakota in recent weeks. The one I should emphasize above all others is the magnificent spirit you all have, and this you have graciously shared with me.

And by the way, I'm hoping to get back up here someday when the war's done, for another one of the nest meals served in America- and a little hunting. I know a draw down the river where even an amateur like myself can get his limit.

Very Sincerely, Charles M. Coffin. Lt. (S) U.S.N.R.

## Questions for Reading 1 and Photos

### Part A

1. What was the purpose of the V-12 program? What is its connection to Valley City?
2. What was Mark's main purpose in writing the piece? How did he try to persuade local residents?
3. Why did Mark suggest the trainees might write home about Valley City?

### Part B

4. Who wrote this letter? What is his connection to Valley City?
5. How does Lt. Coffin describe the Valley City community? How does the letter show the relationship between the community and the trainees?

### Summarize across Part A and B:

6. How do both the editorial and the letter show Valley City residents' efforts to welcome and support the V-12 trainees?
7. What can these texts show us about the influence between a military training program and the host community during wartime?

*[Teacher tip: [Johnson County and Warrensburg, Missouri](#) also hosted a V-12 training program. The second lesson in the [lesson series](#) can offer a point of comparison and connection to this question.]*

## Photos



Figure 5: Graduating Cadet Class of Mercy Hospital in 1947. Although graduating after the war, the image shows an example of uniforms of the time. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 6: Mercy Hospital Nurses Choir. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.

## Reading 2: Newspaper Article

*Background: The [Cadet Nurse Corps](#) was created in June 1943 under the Bolton Nurse Training Act to address a nationwide nursing shortage during World War II. The law provided funding to existing nursing schools so they could expand and accelerate their training programs. Nursing students received pay while attending these programs and pledged to serve either in the military or in essential civilian nursing roles for the duration of the war.*

*Mercy Hospital in Valley City was already training nurses, including those supporting the war effort, and applied to participate in the Cadet Nurse Corps. It became one of about 1,100 schools and hospitals nationwide in the program. Between 1944 and 1948, 58 cadet nurses graduated from Mercy Hospital.*

### Mercy Hospital Grads Now Active in Armed Forces

*Valley City (N.D.) Times-Record, March 8, 1944*

Mercy hospital reports the following items concerning nursing activities to forward the nursing profession, and help Barnes County do its part in assisting with Red Cross work. The American Red Cross does not have a separate nursing corps but cooperates with the army and navy by helping to recruit members for a vitally needed service to the armed forces.

Mary McLaughlin, '43 graduate, whose home is in Thief River Falls, Minn., has received her assignment to the Army Nurse Corps. Lt. Doris Ellison, '42 graduate, whose home is Litchville, was recently home on furlough. Since then, she has been moved to a port of embarkation. Lt. Ellison is a real soldier, in that she expresses a desire to 'get going and get through with this thing.' There is a feeling of great loyalty among members of the same unit, she says, in writing home of a party given to introduce the members of the 91<sup>st</sup> unit to each other.

Lt. Eleanor Raymond, '42 graduate, has joined the Army Nurse Corps in California. After finishing a short period of training at Camp White, Ore., she has been assigned to serve in a camp in California. Another Camp White, Ore., trainee is Lt. Blanche Connelly, '43, who writes enthusiastically of the work.

Miss Catherine McGrath, of Sheldon, the former night supervisor at Mercy, was to report to Great Lakes N.T.S. to become a member of the Navy Nurse Corps.

Seeing nursing service in Italy is Lt. Geneva Perius, '40 graduate, who says her hours on duty are not limited to an eight-hour day, but depend upon the work to be done. She also indicates a wish to see N.D. again when the job is finished.

Cadet nurses of Mercy hospital are anxiously waiting for their cadet uniforms. To date, the insignia which may be worn on regular school uniforms, and the set of Maltese Crosses for epaulets of the street uniforms. Graduates employed by the school are eligible to wear the uniform.

While waiting for their own material to come, Surgical Dressing workers pitched in and made enough sponges to care for hospital needs for several months, a task which would have been tremendous for the operating room force in addition to their other duties.

Junior Nurse Aides, public high school girls who come to the hospital five days a week, have been undertaking many tasks to release the nurses for other duties. These girls took the Home Nursing course last semester from Miss Florene Porter, R.N., who gave them a splendid background for the work they are doing. It is hoped that some of these girls will choose the nursing profession after finishing high school.

## Questions for Reading 2

1. What was the purpose of the Cadet Nurse Corps, and when was it created?
2. How do the examples of the locations of the Mercy Hospital graduates show the wider national shortage of nurses during the war?
3. How would you describe the author's tone toward the graduates? What descriptive language stands out to you?
4. How did the Junior Nurse Aides help? What would have been some of the benefits of the program?

## Photo



Figure 7: The Valley City State Home Guard marching in Valley City. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.

## Reading 3: Newspaper Article Excerpts

*Background: The Valley City Volunteer Home Guard was the first unit formed in North Dakota. Forty local men, comprised of members of the American Legion, VFW, other veterans, city employees, and railroad workers, volunteered to guard the Hi-Line Bridge in Valley City against possible sabotage. This bridge was a vital transportation route for moving supplies and service members. Volunteers received no compensation and provided their own shotguns.*

*After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the state organized official home guard units, and 74 men from Valley City joined. The War Department provided old uniforms, and the community supported the effort through local fundraising.*

### *Valley City Times-Herald: Excerpts highlighting the Valley City Volunteer Home Guard*

*Excerpts are both dated December 12, 1941*

#### Excerpt A:

“MEN 18 TO 65 MAY BE CALLED!”

#### ORGANIZE HOME GUARD TONIGHT

All Able-Bodied Men 18 to 50, Invited to City Hall Meeting

A meeting to organize a Home Guard in Valley City will be held in city hall tonight at 8 o'clock, announces Mayor Fred J. Fredrickson. This new unit will be designated as Company F, and upon organization, the guardsmen will conduct regular drills and be in readiness for a call on duty at any point within the state.

#### Excerpt B:

*From the City Desk, By Phil Mark*

“History Repeats”

Twenty-four years ago, City Weigher Art Ratzlaff walked guard on the High-Line Bridge here, and he says he “got a kick out of it” doing the same job as a volunteer this week. In 1917, he was a member of Company H at Jamestown, was called upon to do this when U. S. entered the First World War.

Local volunteers are to be congratulated for the fine work they accomplished when they responded to the appeal to guard the great N.P. span north of the city. Under the leadership of Mayor Fredrickson and Brigadier General Ritchie, the job was done with military precision, and the ex-service men filled their posts faithfully and cheerfully. Quite a

complicated job, too, in carrying out such a job. The local forestry department also deserves considerable credit for furnishing transportation.

The Northern Pacific Railway is to be complimented for giving jobs to six deserving men. All Legionnaires volunteered for the temporary jobs when there was no pay in sight and now have jobs with a paycheck. When volunteers were first wanted, several local men were “not interested” when learned there was no pay connected with the work.

### Questions for Reading 3, By the Numbers, and Quotations to Consider

1. Who volunteered to join the Valley City Home Guard?
2. What reasons might have motivated these volunteers to serve? Why do you think the author (in excerpt B) referred to a volunteer’s service in the First World War?
3. Why would the Hi-Line Bridge be a key area to monitor?
4. Consider the additional examples of military training and civilian defense in *By the numbers* and *Quotations to consider*. How was the Valley City community involved in local, state, and national defense efforts?
5. If you were in Valley City at the time, which of the defense efforts would you have been most interested in participating in, and why?

## Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did local military training and civilian defense contribute to national preparedness and home front war efforts?

## Additional Resources

[North Dakota’s Designated WWII Heritage City](#) by Barnes County Historical Society

*Barnes County Historical Society: Historical Panel PDFs*

[Dedicated to All Those Who Served](#)

[Local Standouts of World War II](#)

[The WWII Cadet Nurse Corps of Mercy](#)

[VC Battery D Goes to War and VC has 1<sup>st</sup> State Homeguard](#)

[VC Co. G storms Guadalcanal with Marines](#)

[Valley City State Teachers College \(VCSU\) and WWII](#)

[Women Join the War Efforts](#)

# Lesson 2: Agriculture and War Production in Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City

## About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson includes readings and photos to help learners understand the role of agriculture and wartime production in Valley City. The readings provide background on agriculture in the region, highlight a program that trained women to operate tractors, and share an example of local wartime production.

## Objectives:

1. Explain the role and impact of agriculture and wartime production in Valley City.
2. Describe how local initiatives, like the women's tractor training program, met wartime demands.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 8-12 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of North Dakota, with Barnes County and Valley City marked



## Getting Started: Essential Question

How did wartime demands reshape farming and industrial work in Valley City, and in what ways did the community's efforts help support the war?

## Photos



Figure 8: A boy, Bruce Large, from nearby Oriska, North Dakota, operating a tractor for spring planting, featured on the cover of Life magazine. The issue highlighted contributions of N.D. agriculture and was released May 25, 1942. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 9: Woman operating a tractor during the war. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 10: Sailors from the V-12 program at Valley City State Teachers College spent time volunteering to support harvest needs in Valley City and Barnes County due to the local labor shortage. The Army also sent members of the 817th Tank Destroyer Battalion to support the 1943 harvest. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 11: A woman operates farming equipment during the war. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 12: These were part of an article on the “melting pot” of North Dakota’s harvest fields. Although these pictures were not specifically from Valley City, they show the extra support needed due to labor shortages. From left to right: workers from Mexico who traveled to help with the harvest, local youth working in the fields, and Native American workers from Oklahoma who also came to assist. From *The Forum* (Fargo), August 20, 1944.



### By the numbers:

- The Russell-Miller Occident Milling Company received a war contract for 3,300 tons of granalko grits, which required 185,000 bushels of wheat. These grain-alcohol grits were made from surplus wheat and were used to produce synthetic rubber and explosives.

- The Davidson Machine Shop of Valley City received a subcontract for 15,000 bombing parts. This contract required at least two carloads of steel shafting and 24-hour production to meet deadlines.



### Quotations to consider:

“High School Students in Barnes County have been asked to cooperate with the U.S. Government in the Victory Farm Volunteer program. All schools have been contacted and were asked to complete a farm experience record. The records now in the office indicate that 60% of the students attending Barnes County schools are now living and working in farms and about one-half of the remaining students have volunteered to accept farm work during the summer months.

About 30% of the students attending school within Valley City now reside on farms and a small percent of the students residing in Valley City have volunteered to accept work during the present farm labor emergency. Farmers within Barnes County wishing to employ any of these Victory Farm Volunteers may call at the county agent’s office for placement as at the U.S. Employment office.”

- “Students Urged to Volunteer in Farm Program,” *Valley City Times-Record*, June 4, 1943

“Barnes County Farmers when they plant good seed, till their fields, battle the weeds and bring in the harvest are pitching steel at the enemy in the air, on land and on the seven seas just as effectively as though they were on the front line fighting shoulder to shoulder with our soldiers and sailors. In short, the farmer has a critical and important job to do right at home helping shorten and win the war so that the ‘boys’ can come marching home.”

- “Important Job For Farmer in War Stressed At Institute Here,” *Valley City Times-Record*, February 8, 1944



### Read to Connect

*Teacher Tip: The first reading provides background on wartime agricultural demands in Valley City. The second reading explores a local farm training program for women. The third reading highlights a local example of wartime production. Combined, the readings help students understand the impact of agriculture and war production in the community.*

## Reading 1: Background Reading

### Agriculture in Valley City, North Dakota During World War II

*By Sarah Nestor Lane, compiled with information reported in the Valley City Times-Herald from 1940-1945*

When the United States entered World War II, farms across the country, including in North Dakota, were told to increase food production. Additionally, men were joining the armed forces or pursuing other war industry jobs and leaving the state, creating an agricultural labor shortage. In Barnes County and Valley City, North Dakota, students, service members, women, and even out-of-state workers stepped up to meet these demands. Wartime shortages, new responsibilities, and long hours changed life on local farms.

#### Keeping Machinery Running

Metal was needed for war production and military equipment, so new farm equipment was limited. Even repair parts were in short supply. In early 1942, Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard urged farmers to fix old tractors and equipment before spring, warning that parts might not be available later. At that time, North Dakota Extension Service engineer Arthur H. Schulz explained that parts sales were already up 200 percent from 1940, and dealers couldn't meet the demand. At the same time, farmers were encouraged to sell or donate scrap iron and other metals in material drives so that manufacturers could reuse it for both wartime needs and farm machinery production.

By 1944, the federal government began lifting restrictions on farm machinery. Although factories still couldn't meet demand, farmers no longer needed ration coupons or special certificates to buy most equipment.

#### Labor Shortages and Local Efforts

With many local men drafted into the military or leaving North Dakota for better-paying wartime jobs, the state lost a lot of its workforce. Valley City felt this loss of labor too. Since the state received a limited number of major defense contracts, farming was one of North Dakota's key contributions to the war effort, which meant local farms needed to retain, or increase, their number of workers. The community volunteered and responded in creative ways. Workers from local businesses, high schoolers, college students, and more offered to help with the harvests.

In June 1942, local stores reported "100 percent sign-up" for potential harvest work. By July, 256 Valley City men and 87 women had registered to help with farm labor.

In fall 1942, the labor shortage became so serious that Valley City State Teachers College canceled its entire Homecoming weekend so students could shock grain and help with threshing. One reporter wrote, “There was not a male student on the campus this morning,” and even the dormitory chores normally done by men were taken over by young women. The college was also featured in a national publication and praised for its decision to cancel Homecoming during harvest. Sailors at the [V-12 program at Valley City State Teachers College](#) also volunteered to support the harvest.

Women also trained to fill roles traditionally held by men. The Tractorette Training School taught local women how to operate tractors, make repairs, and fix mechanical problems. Completing the course meant they could immediately step into field work. Their children pitched in too, usually helping with a variety of farm chores. Photographs of North Dakota farms, including from Barnes County, appeared in Life magazine in 1942, and featured a cover photo of a young boy on a tractor.

### Workers from Out-of-State

In 1943, Valley City was “invaded,” as the newspaper jokingly phrased it, by 296 Army troops from the 817th Tank Destroyers and 221 farm workers from Mississippi. These groups came to support the harvest and were housed in the armory and city hall. Within their first day, soldiers shocked over 1,078 acres of grain. In August 1944 the *Fargo Forum* reported Native Americans traveling from Oklahoma and Mexican laborers coming north to the state for seasonal work.

### Life on the Farm

Farmers were constantly reminded that “food will win the war.” Advertisements in the local newspaper encouraged increased food production and depicted farmers as home front heroes. Barnes County was given ambitious production goals. In 1943, farmers were expected to produce over 8.4 million gallons of milk, requiring nearly every cow to outperform the previous year.

Many farmers wrote to the local newspapers to describe how demanding the work had become. One letter in 1945 described days that began at 4:30 a.m. and often didn’t end until 10 p.m. The writer said farmers frequently did “two men’s work all summer” and often worked late into the night with tractor lights to finish chores.

The increased workload on chickens was even depicted in the media. Local newspapers even labeled some eggs as “Victory Eggs.” These were giant eggs, many times with double yolks, laid by hens whose production had increased during the war. One farm reported finding 57 yolks in 24 eggs.

## The Impact

The experience of Valley City and Barnes County during the war shows how important agriculture was to the war effort. The region pulled together when facing labor and material shortages, long hours, and major challenges.

By the end of 1943, North Dakota farmers had produced more than half a billion dollars' worth of farm goods. This was the highest in state history up to that point. This production helped to provide "food for a nation at war, food for the men fighting in foxholes of Italy and France or on a Pacific island as well as for those in the more comfortable surroundings of the home front" (*The Forum* (Fargo), August 20, 1944).

## Questions for Reading 1, Quotations to Consider, and Photos

1. What challenges did the war bring to Valley City farms?
2. Who participated in helping with farm labor, both locally and from out-of-state?
3. Think about the long-term impact of the wartime agricultural efforts. How might they have changed local perceptions on farming and those who supported the efforts?
4. Reflect on the second quotation in Quotations to consider and the phrase from Reading 1, "Food will win the war." How did Valley City demonstrate these ideas?
5. *Photos*: How do the photos show the rising wartime demand for agricultural labor in the community?

## Reading 2: Newspaper Article

*Background: In May 1942, Valley City's Geisler Implement Company trained women to operate and repair tractors so they could fill farm jobs while many men left for the armed forces or to pursue other war industry work. These women, later called "Farmerettes," helped with harvest work, including shocking large fields of wheat and barley. They played a key role in keeping local farms productive during the war, helping meet the high demand for food both at home and for Allied troops overseas. This news article helped to announce the program to the community.*

### 'Tractorette' Training School to Open in Valley City Soon

*Women and Girls Urged to Enroll By May 25 At Geisler Impl. Co*

*Valley City Times-Record, May 13, 1942*

The Geisler Implement company announces that a training class will open in Valley City soon for the purpose of instructing women and girls in the operation of tractors and other farm machinery.

The name of this program, which will be nationwide, is ‘Tractorettes Training Program.’ The only purpose of this Tractorette training program is to provide competent help on farms to replace the men drawn off by war service or war industries. England, Canada, Australia, Russia and other countries are relying on women for both farm work and industrial production. The women of America always have been closely associated with our war efforts in the past and they will not fail to do their part now.

The training program will require a minimum of eight lessons. All Tractorettes will be taught the safe way to do everything about a tractor and other farm machines. A special manual outlining the instruction as well as slide films, special pamphlets, mechanical diagrams, service booklets and other material which will aid in the work will be furnished by the Geisler Implement company.

The course will be given free and all women interested in this course should contact or drop a card to the Geisler Implement company, Valley City, not later than May 25, as classes are to begin shortly thereafter.

A farm woman or farm girl who completes the “Tractorette” training program will not only know how to run a tractor but will also have basic training in repairing and servicing the machine, in diagnosing mechanical trouble, and in the proper attachment and setting up of the principal implements used with tractors, particularly plows.

This training course for farm women will be a rigorous one. After the first meeting, Tractorettes will report to class wearing either coveralls or trousers, for the women are warned to expect to get dirty and greasy.

The subjects which will be taught are: (1) Tractor Engine, (2) Power Transmission Line, (3) Tractor Operation, (4) Fuel and Cooling System, (5) Lubrication, (6) Plowing and Hitching, (7) Hard Starting and Uneven power, (8) Tractor Maintenance.

## Questions for Reading 2

1. How did the Tractorette Training Program address challenges caused by the war?
2. How might the name “Tractorette” both acknowledge women’s contributions and reinforce gender stereotypes of the time?
3. What types of skills were women taught in the program? What may have been positive long-term impacts of women learning these skills?
4. How does the program show how women’s roles and responsibilities were changing during the war?

## Reading 3: Newspaper Article

### 27 Men Finish Machine Course

*125 Enter Defense Industries Since School Opened at Davidson Shop*

*Valley City Times-Record, May 11, 1942*

Twenty-seven men making up the seventh and eighth classes in welding and machine work completed their ten-week course last Friday at the Davidson Machine Shop, Instructor and Manager Harold Davidson informed Secretary A.M. Paulson this morning. This makes a total of 125 graduates to finish locally to enter defense industries since the first class began its training in November 1940.

Several of these men will continue in the Davidson shop as part of the additional employees needed to manufacture the 15,000 bomb adapters which Harold Davidson contracted for as part of a statewide pool of war industries subcontracts.

Harold Davidson and Emanuel Monson are the two instructors for the class which usually numbers 10 to 14 men. This is known as a Vocational Educational Training course in welding and machine work.

Wm. J. DuVall, Wahpeton School of Science, is assistant supervisor of national defense training for North Dakota and oversees the project which is carried on with the V.C. State Teachers College as the connecting link with the governmental agencies.

Emanuel Munson has been employed in this shop for 18 years and Harold is manager of the enterprise established by his father, Peter Davidson, 40 years ago.

Graduates of the local defense school are now employed in defense industries in New Foundland, on several island possessions of the U.S., at Boeing Aircraft, Seattle, at the [Glenn L. Martin Aircraft factories in Baltimore, Md.](#), and Omaha, Nebraska., at the Rock Island Arsenal, in the Seattle shipyards, in other seaport towns and in many railroad shops.

These men now receive from 65 cents to \$2.24 an hour in their defense positions. Many of the men were for a time WPA employees.

The first class was organized in November 1940. Since then, there have been some 125 graduates, including this group.

A new class started training Monday morning, Mr. Davidson reported.

The Davidson machine shop is admirably suited to this program, supervisors declare. With both acetylene gas and electric welding equipment, plenty of space, with enormous lathes capable of handling steel weighing many tons and many feet long and wide, equipment can

be milled here of almost any size as well as tiny bits and pieces. The most accurate work, calling for the closest measurements, down to a fraction of a thousandth of an inch, is possible in this shop. Thus, it is a good laboratory for trainees in defense jobs.

Mr. Davidson states that the shop will soon go into 24-hour production employing from 20 to 30 men to turn out the 15,000 bomb adapters which he has contracted to deliver by December 1942.

‘The rush now is to ‘tool up’ the shop, to prepare it for this subcontract. We have to make the machines to make the bomb parts,’ Harold stated. . .

### Questions for Reading 3 and By the Numbers

1. What may have motivated local men to enroll in the classes at the Davidson machine shop?
2. Why was the shop well-suited for the training program?
3. How did the war contract impact the operations at the shop?

*By the numbers:*

4. What did the Russell-Miller Occident Milling Company produce under its war contract? What were they used for?
5. How do you think these war production contracts impacted the local community?

## Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did wartime demands reshape farming and industrial work in Valley City, and in what ways did the community’s efforts help support the war?

## Additional Resources

[North Dakota and the World War II Home Front](#) from the National Council on Public History’s World War II Home Front Education Materials

[North Dakota’s Designated WWII Heritage City](#) by Barnes County Historical Society

*Barnes County Historical Society: Historical Panel PDFs*

[Farmers Feed War Efforts](#)

[Local Businesses Rally Support for Troops](#)

[Local Women Join the Workforce](#)

[The Occident Mill and World War II](#)

# Lesson 3: Home Front Volunteerism and Contributions in Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City

## About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Valley City, North Dakota, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson has readings and photos for students to learn about some of the many ways civilians in the area volunteered and gave to home front efforts. Some examples included in the first two readings and supporting resources are material drives and war financing through stamps and bond sales, including the role of youth in organizing and donating toward efforts. The final reading includes the story of Valley City business owner Herman Stern, who managed and supported the resettlement of approximately more than 125 European Jewish refugees to the United States.

## Objectives:

1. Describe the purpose and examples of home front volunteerism, including youth contributions.
2. Explain how material drives and financial giving helped to meet wartime needs.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 13-18 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended: Map of North Dakota, with Barnes County and Valley City marked*



## Getting Started: Essential Question

How did civilians in Valley City support the war on the home front, including volunteer and humanitarian efforts, and what impact did these contributions have?

## Photos



Figure 13: Cannons from three wars (From L-R, Spanish American, Civil War, and German of the First World War) were collected for a salvage drive. The city band and members of the Women's Relief Corps, American Legion, Company F, and city and park officials were pictured with the cannons. Photo by McFarland, July 14, 1942. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 14: Two women with collected cannon balls in the back of a truck for a salvage drive, Valley City, ND. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 15: Two women working in a victory garden. Photo dated May 23, 1943. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 16: Local high school students participating in a war bonds sale. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



## By the numbers: examples of community initiatives

- In late December 1941, locals came together, donating meat, bread, cream and butter, to do a buffalo sandwich sale. The sandwiches were sold at Mr. Lester Jackson's lunch counter at the Harrington Brothers sales pavilion and raised \$18 for the American Red Cross War Relief Drive.
- During the weekends, the local Boy Scouts troop collected scrap paper for a [material drive](#). In one late December 1941 weekend, the local newspaper reported the troop made \$10 from paper to use toward camping.
- In February 1943, local Elks club members donated books and money to a Victory Book campaign. 90 books were donated. These books were provided to service members to improve morale during the war. The local American Legion and other organizations also participated in the Victory Book campaign.



## Quotations to consider:

“Yes, it’s flying- ‘the Spirit of Barnes County No.11 North Dakota.’ We refer to the light bomber which the people of Barnes County purchased in war bonds earlier this summer. Gottfried Kuhn, secretary of the county welfare board, received word from a friend this week that he has seen the bomber on the airport in Minneapolis. Eight-inch letters on both sides of the ship gave the name, he said. ‘I really was thrilled to see it and I immediately thought of my friends in Barnes County,’ he added.”

- Phil Mark, “Spirit of Barnes County,” *Valley City Times-Record* July 30, 1943

“Thousands of service men and women passing through Valley City on trains are to be furnished with current magazines through the courtesy of the Sons of the Legion and the Civic and Commerce association. A sticker will be placed on each magazine which reads, *‘May your journey be a pleasant one. Presented to the service men and women by Sons of the Legion and the Civic and Commerce association. If you enjoy reading this magazine, may we hear from you?’* . . .

A survey of train traffic recently revealed that thousands of service people are traveling daily and many of them are making long trips from coast to coast. These people find that several days travel becomes tiresome and that reading material is scarce and at a premium on trains.”

- “VC Sons of Legion to Distribute Magazines to Servicemen at Trains,” *Valley City Times-Record* December 9, 1943



## Read to Connect

### Reading 1: Newspaper Articles

*Background: These two Valley City Times-Record articles highlight how local schools contributed to defense stamp and [war bond](#) efforts at different points during the war. As you read, consider why students chose to participate and how school involvement in war financing shaped the home front.*

#### Part A: School Inaugurates Defense Stamp Sale with Gilmour B. Hanson, commerce instructor, in charge of sales

From the *Valley City Times-Record*, December 31, 1941

The high school has started a drive for the sale of savings stamps. This drive affords students and faculty an opportunity to participate in a regular savings plan as well as in a patriotic campaign. Mr. Hanson will take down the home room of each student who buys stamps. He will keep a cumulative list of the amount each home room has bought and he will post both this list and the total amount sold in the school on the bulletin board in the study hall. However, this is not a contest between homerooms. It is a purely voluntary effort on the part of students and faculty to give financial aid for national defense.

With their minds running on one track, all of the high school students are suffering from that age old malady of envy. Yes, envy. And the cause of all this suffering is none other than an innocent little sophomore, Bob Kloubec. It all started, when Bob bought five dollars worth of defense stamps the first day they were on sale in the school. Everybody began biting his nails trying to figure out ways and means to get five dollars so that he could buy some stamps. The seniors were especially chagrined, as they wanted to set the good example to the school. However, now they're concentrating on buying the greatest quantity of stamps. Each person is trying to think of ways and means whereby the budget will stretch and allow for this expense. Betty Corner, senior, claims she has a foolproof method. She says, "It's so simple. All I do is stay home from a movie and buy defense stamps with the money I would have spent."

#### Part B: School Account For War Bond Sales \$31,000, Fearing Told

From the *Valley City Times-Record*, February 3, 1945

Fifteen field ambulances, a jeep, two walkie-talkies, a parachute and five first aid kits will be purchased with the money raised by the schools of Barnes County in war bonds and

stamps between September 1 and December 21, Superintendent of Schools Ray Fearing has been advised by LeRoy Pease, deputy director in North Dakota.

Total sales in the schools in that period were \$30,924. Please congratulate the school personnel and pupils “upon your splendid record in the schools-at-war program.”

According to Pease, ambulances cost \$1,950 each; a jeep costs \$1,165; a walkie-talkie, \$200; a parachute \$85; and first aid kits \$4.65 each.

Sponsorship panels bearing the words, “Barnes County, North Dakota” have been forwarded to the treasure department and will be placed in the equipment.

### Questions for Reading 1

1. How did the school track participation in the 1941 stamp drive? (Part A) How might this have been motivating to students?
2. What are examples of defense materials purchased (in Part B)?
3. Why do you think students were willing to change their spending habits (like going to the movies in Part A) to buy defense stamps?
4. What do these texts show about the role of schools in supporting the home front war efforts?
5. *Summarize across Part A and B:* How do the articles show evidence of the continued efforts and impact of student participation over time? Consider how the articles were published in 1941 and 1945.
6. If you were a student at the time, would you have been motivated to participate in these efforts? Why or why not?

### Reading 2: Newspaper Article

*Background: This text was from the Mandan Pioneer newspaper (from Mandan, North Dakota, about two hours west of Valley City) but was also featured in the Valley City Times-Record. You will be using this text to compare the details to statewide efforts to specific examples within Valley City. (Note: For reference, the total of \$30,664,287.75 in the text is the equivalent of over \$557 million today.)*

#### “A Fine Record”

From “Comments of Other Writers,” *Valley City Times-Record*, January 2, 1943

North Dakotans have every reason to be proud of the record made by their state during the past war year.

In addition to the great contribution made to the war effort through the production of bumper crops of food stuffs, under conditions made exceedingly difficult by shortage of manpower and farm machinery, here are a few of the outstanding direct assists made by the people of the state toward hastening victory:

Out of a population of 641,935. . . 38,000 have gone into the armed services. This is almost six percent of the population, and added to this nearly the same number of persons have left the state to go into defense industries. We doubt if any other state can show a greater percentage of men in the armed services. Casualty reports, too, indicate that North Dakota men are right in there pitching in the front lines. No report on total state casualties is available, but piecemeal reports show that the percentage of men who have made the supreme sacrifice is high.

In scrap collection, the state, aided by a concerted drive staged by the newspapers of the state, 53,973 tons were collected, 159 percent of the state's assigned quota and in addition 6,000 tons of rubber were collected, most of which was donated.

Citizens of the state last year purchased \$30,664,287.75 in war stamps and bonds, well over its quota, and in November the state exceeded its quota by 147 percent, topping the nation for that month.

Called upon to contribute to navy relief, the state doubled its quota, and its citizens went well over the top in complying with requests for donations to the Red Cross, the USO, and army relief.

And on the other side of the ledger, North Dakota has no war industries, no army or navy airports. AND, BECAUSE THEY ARE THE KIND OF PEOPLE THEY ARE, NORTH DAKOTANS WILL KEEP RIGHT ON DOING WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE RIGHT, WHETHER OR NOT THEY RECEIVE ANY RECOGNITION FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

## Questions for Reading 2, By the Numbers, Quotations to Consider, and Photos

1. What types of donations and contributions did Valley City residents make to support the war effort? (*Use evidence from across the readings and photos*)
2. How do these examples show the different ways people could contribute to the war effort using varied skills and resources? Consider the differences in participation in activities such as a sandwich sale or donation of historical cannons.
3. How might seeing a bomber with the county's name on it have affected community morale and motivation to contribute further? (*Quotation to consider*)

### Questions for Reading 2

4. Which numbers and figures stand out to you in this text, and why?
5. Why was it meaningful for the author to point out that North Dakota had “no war industries, no army or navy airports?”
6. Why might the author have ended the piece with all uppercase letters? What type of message were they trying to convey?

*Synthesis across the sources:*

7. Compare what you have learned about the contributions of Valley City residents to those of the state as a whole. What similarities and differences do you notice?
8. How does looking at both Valley City and statewide examples help you understand how home front contributions supported the war effort and what motivated people to participate?

## Photos



Figure 17: Portrait of Herman Stern. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.

### Through The Underground Route

## Former French Soldier, Now In Fargo, Flees To Safety Through Nazi Lines



Figure 18: This picture accompanied the newspaper article used in Reading 3, Part B. Mr. and Mrs. Stern are pictured center, with their sons, John (12), left, and Michael (7), right. *The Fargo Forum*, April 18, 1943.

### Reading 3: Biography and Newspaper Article

*Teacher Tip: This reading has two parts. The first section is a background piece to share about Herman Stern and his connection to Valley City. The second section includes an excerpt from a 1943 news article about Stern's nephew escaping to the United States with Stern's help. This excerpt shows an example of how Stern's rescue efforts were reported at the time. However, coverage was limited, and many people in the community were unaware of the full extent of his work. Students can learn more about Herman Stern from [this panel PDF](#) with information from the Barnes County Historical Society and information from [The Mission of Herman Stern](#).*

#### Part A: Herman Stern

*A short biographical background reading by Sarah Nestor Lane*

Herman Stern immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1903 when he was 15 years old. He moved to Casselton, North Dakota to work with his cousin, Morris G. Straus, in a clothing store. This business grew into a regional chain, including the second established Straus store, located in Valley City. Stern settled in Valley City, where he lived and worked for most of his life.

While running his business in the 1930s and 1940s, Stern helped more than 125 Jewish refugees escape from Nazi Germany. What began as an effort to rescue relatives soon expanded to include friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. Although he urged his family to leave Germany before the war had formally begun, many chose to stay. Stern lost two brothers, a sister-in-law, and a nephew in the Holocaust.

Stern did not publicize his work for refugees, and many locals never knew the extent of what he was doing. However, word spread in Germany that he was helping people escape, and many visa requests were sent to him. Each rescue required Stern to complete complicated processes, including personally vouching for each person and securing a job for them before they arrived. He built connections with businesses across the Midwest to help sponsor and provide jobs to the refugees he brought to safety.

At the same time, Stern was heavily involved in many other home front efforts during World War II. He led both state and local war bond drives, chaired salvage collection campaigns, served as a USO director for the state, and volunteered countless hours to civic and community service. He continued his work in the community and state after the war.

Herman Stern was posthumously awarded the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award in 2014. His award can be seen today at the Barnes County Museum in Valley City.

## Part B: Newspaper Article Excerpt

Through the Underground Route: Former French Soldier, Now in Fargo, Flees to Safety Through Nazi Lines

*The Fargo Forum*, April 18, 1943

By Lloyd Sveen

‘Something will develop very shortly on the continent of Europe.’ Speaking was Gustav Stern, now in Fargo at 1142 Fourth Street N, with his family. Stern makes his prediction from reports he receives through a Fighting French newspaper published in New York, which carries the latest reports received from France through the underground movement.

Stern, a nephew of Herman Stern of Valley City, N.D., knows something about that underground, for it helped him flee occupied France after edging his family past Nazi sentries during two terror-filled nights. . .

Then came nearly a year of waiting – waiting for precious permission from the United States to enter the land of freedom. Herman Stern in Valley City had long ago began requests to the state department which finally granted permission.

'I received my visa Dec. 8, 1941, the day the United States declared war on Japan. I heard President Roosevelt's message to congress through a British Broadcasting company broadcast. We French were thrilled that at last America would join us and we knew the day of our liberation would be hastened.

'Heavy penalties were decreed for listening to BBC, but we all did every day.'

### Go to Africa

The Sterns secured passage on a steamer to Oran, Algeria, where they traveled by train to Casablanca in French Morocco.

'Casablanca was a beautiful city but there, as in France, there was always the Gestapo,' Stern says.

At Casablanca they boarded a Portuguese steamer and traveled sub-infested waters to Jamaica, through the Caribbean to Cuba and then to New York. It was a nervous voyage because 'I knew submarines didn't always respect neutral ships,' Stern comments. 'Our ship had secured governments to sail and we cabled our position daily but even then we felt the danger of the trip.'

### Working in Store

His father and mother going to Valley City, Stern and his family lived in Chicago before coming to Fargo, where he has found a home and a job in the Straus Esquire clothing store. . ."

## Questions for Reading 3

### *Part A: Herman Stern*

1. Who was Herman Stern? How did he support both refugees and the broader war effort?
2. What challenges do you think Stern faced when helping refugees?
3. Why may Stern's refugee assistance have not been well known at the time?

### *Part B: Newspaper Article Excerpt*

4. Who is Gustav Stern, and how is he related to Herman Stern? How did Herman support Gustav's escape?
5. What were some challenges Stern and his family faced in traveling to the United States?
6. What work did Stern do after arriving in North Dakota?

*Synthesize Across Part A & Part B:* Compare Herman Stern's behind-the-scenes work with Gustav Stern's firsthand escape experience. How do they show the complexities and challenges of the wartime refugee crisis?

## Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did civilians in Valley City support the war on the home front, including volunteer and humanitarian efforts, and what impact did these contributions have?

*(Consider the impact of contributions of volunteer time, money, and donated materials.)*

## Additional Resources

[North Dakota's Designated WWII Heritage City](#) by Barnes County Historical Society

[The Mission of Herman Stern](#)

*Barnes County Historical Society: Historical Panel PDFs*

[Community Unites to Support War Efforts](#)

[Farmers Feed War Efforts](#)

[Local Talents Entertain the Troops](#)

[WWII Hero Worked from 'Home' \(Herman Stern\)](#)

# Lesson 4: Valley City, North Dakota: 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 [Valley City, North Dakota](#) designated as a [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson includes photos, readings and a culminating project. The first reading shares an example of a war effort update published in the local newspaper. Details found in the lesson's photos, statistics, and quotations, share additional examples of local war efforts. The second reading connects the region to the designation of a Heritage City. An optional third reading explores the idea of a “boomtown” in the context of Valley City. An optional media activity supports student exploration of local resources and digital archives. 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 Valley City lesson [collection](#). This is to summarize the city’s contributions and encourage connections to the overall home front efforts.

## Objectives:

In a culminating product:

- a. Describe the importance of local military training and civilian defense activities.
- b. Explain the impact of local agriculture and industry training programs on meeting wartime demands.
- c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of Valley City residents to home front wartime efforts, including those of youth.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Valley City and other Heritage city(s) / World War II home front(s).

## Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 19-23 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2 (and optional reading and media activities)

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. Describe the importance of local military training and civilian defense activities.
    - b. Explain the impact of local agriculture and industry training programs on meeting wartime demands.
    - c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of Valley City residents to home front wartime efforts, including those of youth.
    - d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Valley City and other Heritage city(s) / World War II home front(s).

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



## Getting Started: Essential Question

Why was Valley City chosen as a World War II Heritage City, and what are its similarities and differences to other home front cities?

## Photos

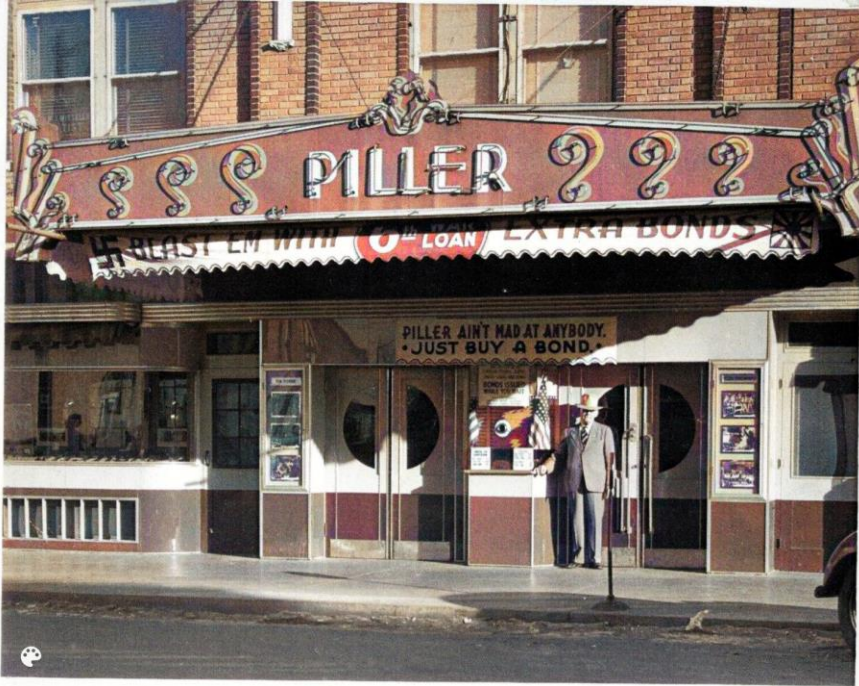
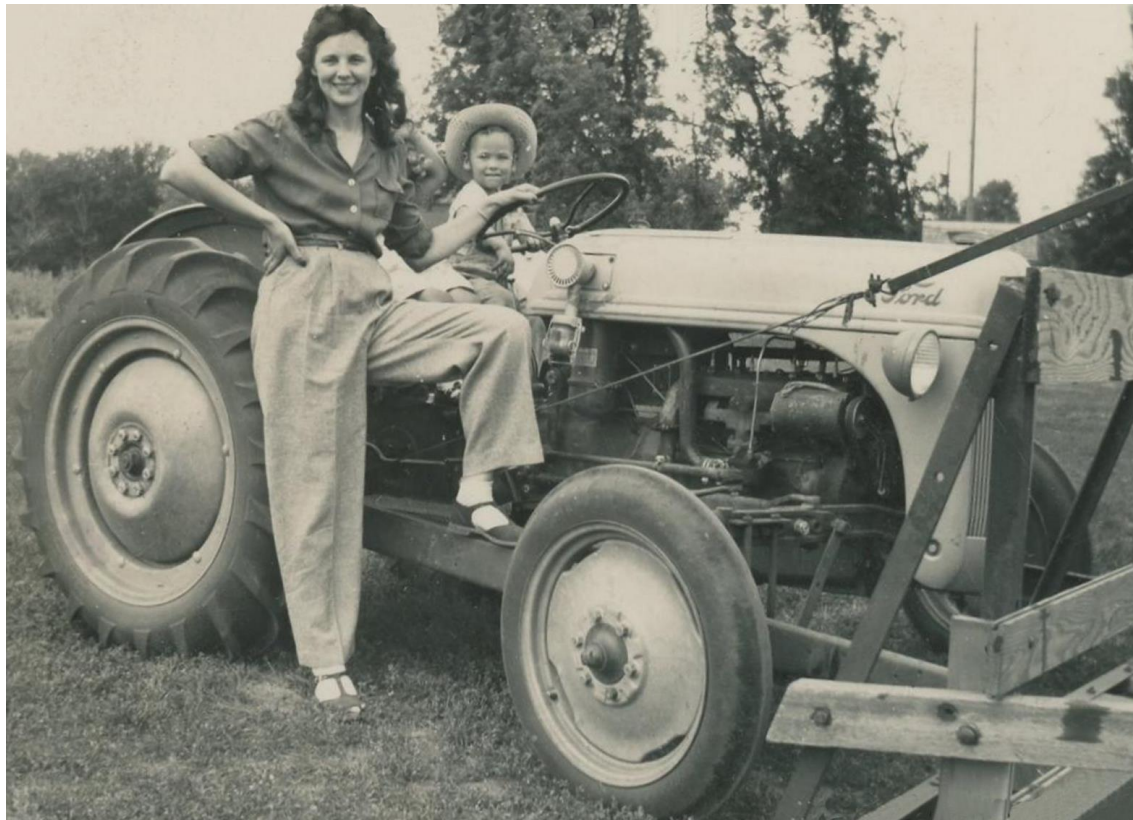


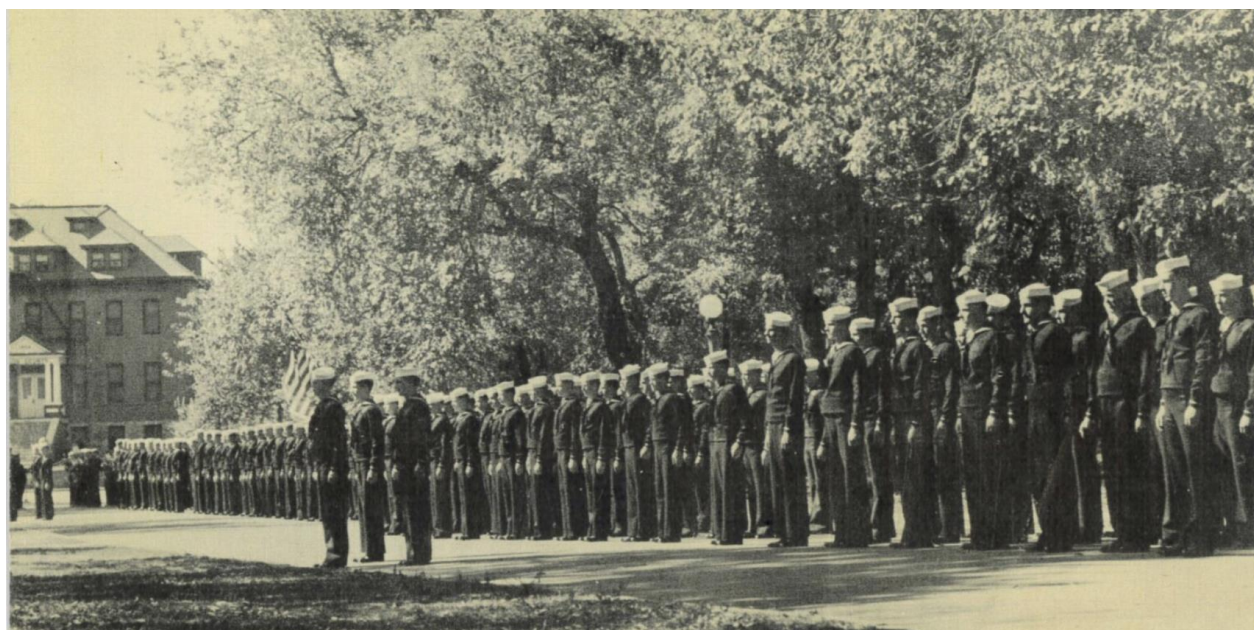
Figure 19: The Piller Theater in Valley City. The banner reads “Beast Em with Extra Bonds - 6th War Loan” and an additional banner that reads, “Piller Ain’t Mad at Anybody, Just buy a bond.” Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



Figure 20: This parade is after the war in Valley City and shows the American Legion and Auxiliary float that says “Welcome Vets.” The woman carrying the flag is Judy Jungnitsch of Valley City who served in the Navy as a WAVE. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.



*Figure 21: Woman with child at tractor. Women in Valley City increasingly supported with agricultural responsibilities and jobs, stepping up as men from across the region left for the armed services. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.*



*Figure 22: Sailors at the V-12 program at Valley City State University, pictured in the V-12 program yearbook, "First Cruise," July 1, 1943 – March 1, 1944. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.*



Figure 23: A photo of the V-12 Program Memorial on the campus of Valley City State University. Courtesy of Barnes County Historical Society.

### Quotations to consider:

“To the men of the V-12 Unit, July first marked the beginning of a great adventure- an adventure which might lead to the far corners of the earth, the service ribbons studded with stars, to duty on everything from a scull to the USS Missouri. To the Faculty of State Teachers College the adventure of the Unit meant an exciting experiment in education; to the citizens of Valley City it brought a deeper realization that the war being fought was a young man’s war. To all concerned it has been a valuable and abiding experience in human relationship and human understanding.”

- V-12 program yearbook at Valley City State Teachers College, “First Cruise,” July 1, 1943 – March 1, 1944

“Patriot Barnes has been saving pennies, and last week she counted out 3,100 of them and purchased a defense bond. Yes, \$31.00 of her long-time savings to help Uncle Sam whip the [Japanese] and Hitler. She spent most of her Thanksgiving holiday counting and rolling them into fifty-cent packages. If the chimes should ring for Defense Bond purchasers, recalling the old Christmas story, then the chimes will surely ring for Marion. She’s the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul M. Barnes, 123 Sixth Street, Valley City.”

- From the City Desk, by Phil Mark in the *Valley City Times-Record* December 19, 1941

“We would be remiss, as the saying goes, if we did not now pause to congratulate Valley City citizens for the grand response to the last-minute appeals issued in the Seventh War Loan. . . . In Valley City, and Barnes County, Mr. and Mrs. Average Citizen measured up! This newspaper was certain that they would! They never yet have let the boys down, on any patriotic endeavor, and their record is still 100 percent. . .

It is a pleasure to live among folks such as we have in Barnes. It is a thing which tickles the pride, to know that always Barnes County can be counted upon to do its part, and more.”

- “We Did It Again,” from the *Valley City Times-Record* July 11, 1945



### By the numbers: war bonds and service

- A war bond parade in September 1943 kicked off a \$774,000 Barnes County war bond campaign in Valley City. The city’s quota for the month was \$350,000. One woman was recognized for selling \$5,000 in bonds in a single day while working from the lobby of a local hotel. The parade itself featured more than 200 local V-12 naval students and 50 visiting soldiers from a Tank Destroyer battalion, along with their jeeps. (*Valley City Times-Record* September 7, 1943)
- In the Sixth War Loan campaign, local businesses created window displays featuring service members to increase interest in war bond purchases. Over 21 Valley City businesses participated. Special recognition was given to persons who sold more than \$300 in war bond purchases. (*Valley City Times-Record*, Nov. 18 and Nov. 28, 1944)
- From May 1941 to December 1944, Barnes County alone had purchased more than six million in war bonds (*Valley City Times-Record*, December 29, 1944). This is more than \$110 million today.
- The *Valley City Times-Record* reported on November 30, 1944 that by November 15, 1944, Barnes County had sent 1,366 men and women into the armed forces. Of this number, 792 were selectees from the selective service and 574 were enlistees. For comparison, the 1940 US Census recorded the population of Barnes County as 17,814.

## Reading 1: Newspaper Article

*Teacher Tip: This reading provides an example of what a brief newspaper update on local war efforts looked like at the time. It connects to topics explored in other Valley City lessons and helps students remember details while considering how wartime activities were communicated to the public. This text is intended as a starting point for exploring what is not included, identifying perspectives students may want to investigate, and thinking critically about how information was shared during the war. It can be coupled with this lesson's media activity to explore more information.*

*[Note: At the time of publication, there was not a harvest labor shortage, but there was a shortage following this article. For example, in 1943, the Army temporarily sent soldiers to assist with the harvest, and V-12 sailors also helped. To learn more, see lesson 2.]*

### "Our War Effort"

By Phil Mark, *Valley City Times-Record*, July 31, 1942

Whether it's buying bonds, shocking or any other war effort, Valley Citians are doing their part. The Legionnaires closed a successful War Bond drive Wednesday night in which they sold \$15,000 in bonds in three days. Chairman Clarence Carlson and his coworkers are to be commended for their work. They are now engaged in collecting phonograph records to be sent to our men in service. You can cooperate by leaving your records at any store in the city or at the Legion Home.

Food will win the war but there's also the job of getting the grain harvested. Our "white collar" workers are already in the fields. Two crews were out last night and are very enthusiastic about the whole thing. The "Hustling Six," made up of Dalton Petersen, Emil Markseth, Walter Anholt, Merve Tiedje, Lloyd McAllister, and Kenneth Coglan shocked a 26-acre field of rye in one hour and 45 minutes on the Howard Martin Farm north of the city. That was some real hustling, and they did a good job of it too. Another party consisting of Sheriff Leo Stowman, Gottfried Kuhn, Irvin Reidman, Earl Thomas, and Kenneth Bucy were out again tonight. Perhaps that big chicken dinner was an incentive for their efforts and also a double reason for their enthusiasm

At present there is no harvest labor shortage, reports the local state employment office. Transient labor is sufficient to meet current demands, and some men have been sent to Wimbledon, Enderlin, Lisbon and other nearby cities. But harvest is just beginning and coming along fast, and there is likely to be a good demand for "white collar labor." One farmer south of here is typical of the harvest rush. He found himself this week faced with

considerable hay to put up, was cutting 200 acres of rye, and his wheat was soon ready for the binder.

If our war effort necessitates buying bonds, producing food, and supplying men for service, Uncle Sam will find North Dakota cooperating 100 percent.

## Questions for Reading 1 and Photos

1. Why was the “Hustling Six” celebrated in the reading?
2. Why would the author emphasize the involvement of “white collar” workers?
3. How did Valley City residents contribute to both the financial and material needs of the war effort? What examples are identified in this text?
4. What examples of local contributions or perspectives were not included in this specific update? What would you have included as the author?
5. Why might these brief newspaper updates have been appreciated by the local community at the time? Consider morale building, recognition, and community pride.
6. *Photos:* Describe each photo’s connection to Valley City’s designation as a Heritage City. What other types of photos might you include in a display on Valley City’s contributions to the war efforts?

## Reading 2: Heritage City Designation

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

“ . . .PURPOSE OF THE BILL

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

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

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

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

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

### Questions for Reading 2, Quotations to Consider, and By the Numbers

1. What was the purpose of the bill (H.R. 6118) according to the report?
2. Why do you think Valley City was designated as a World War II Heritage City?  
Connect details from the bill and evidence from the first reading and sources, and/or other readings from the Valley City lessons.
3. Are there other cities you think of when considering home front contributions during wartime? Which and why?

*[Note: The bill describes “boomtowns.” Explore this term further and its connection to Valley City with an optional reading 3.]*

### Questions for Quotations to Consider and By the Numbers

4. Why do you think the newspaper highlighted the story of Marion Barnes?
5. What might be the author’s purpose in using phrases like “they never yet have let the boys down” and emphasizing 100 percent participation?
6. How did local businesses support war bond sales? Considering the high percentage of Barnes County residents serving in the military, how might this have inspired civilians to participate in war bond purchases and other home front efforts?

### Optional Reading 3 Activity

*Background: Many Heritage Cities became known as “boomtowns” due to population increases during the war. However, Valley City and other towns in North Dakota experienced population declines as men and women either joined the armed forces (through enlistment or the draft) or moved to other areas for high-paying wartime jobs.*

*This excerpt, from the Litchville Bulletin (Litchville is about thirty minutes south of Valley City) and also published in the Valley City Times-Record, reflects some experiences that overlapped with Valley City. The text can be used to challenge the assumption that all cities making significant contributions to the war effort were “boomtowns.” Communities even with declining populations played a critical role on the home front, as shown throughout the rest of the lessons and resources on Valley City.*

### From the *Litchville Bulletin*, and published in the *Valley City Times-Record*, August 14, 1942

LITCHVILLE, in common with practically every other small town in the state of North Dakota, has some weighty problems to solve, special problems brought on by the war, and therefore perhaps more difficult than those with which towns have learned to cope in the past.

For some reason or other (perhaps because the state’s representatives in Washington have little prestige with the powers-that-be) North Dakota has not been given any defense industries worthy of the term. This has led to drainage of power and population from the state to states having such industries, where high wages were and are a great attraction. Whole families have thus been drawn out of North Dakota communities and no others have come to take their places. Add to these the hundreds of young men taken into the armed services of their country from every section of the state, and one gets a fair picture of what is taking place in our community and our state. It poses a real problem, a problem for which the government can’t and won’t help us find a solution. Small towns will have to do that themselves.

For instance, the population of Litchville is considerable smaller today than it was a year ago and the trend downward will not end until the war ends. What is true here very likely is true of every other community in the state, large and small. Families have moved to Oregon, to Washington, to California and elsewhere to take advantage of opportunities offered by employment in war material factories, and only a few young men of draft age are left in their accustomed places in the home. What this means to a community is not hard to understand.

### Optional Reading 3 Questions and Activity

1. What factors contributed to people leaving Litchville and other North Dakota communities?
2. How did population declines affect these communities? Consider areas such as community life and businesses/agriculture.

3. How do cities such as Valley City challenge the idea that most, or all, cities contributing to the war effort were “boomtowns”?
4. Extension activity: Have students look up U.S. Census data for Valley City and North Dakota from the 1930s to 1950s. Ask them to record population numbers before, during, and after the war to identify trends. Then, have students compare the data to this reading and other readings to discuss how population changes affected local communities and their contributions to the war effort.

## Optional: Media Activity

### Exploring Local Resources: Past and Present

You can support students in exploring local coverage of the war and home front efforts in more depth. They can examine images and readings summarizing Valley City’s contributions on the [Heritage City site maintained by the Barnes County Historical Society](#). Students can also access [archived copies of the Valley City Times-Record](#), to see how events were reported at the time.

If students are local, consider having them participate in the talking tour or read historical markers at sites around the city, and visit exhibits at the Barnes County Historical Society.

These activities can be used to review and connect learning from other lessons, while also uncovering stories and activities not included in the current lessons.

## Culminating Activity/Mastery Product

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

- a. Describe the importance of local military training and civilian defense activities.
- b. Explain the impact of local agriculture and industry training programs on meeting wartime demands.
- c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of Valley City residents to home front wartime efforts, including those of youth.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences of Valley City 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 Valley City, North Dakota 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
	<b>Standard:</b> _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
	<b>Standard:</b> _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
	<b>Standard:</b> _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
	<b>Standard:</b> _____ Evidence of meeting standard: •	
<b>Points</b>		

Figure 24: Single-Point Rubric (Standards; Blank) [Teacher selects priority standards for assessment.] Courtesy of Sarah Nestor Lane

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