

Plymouth Township, Michigan, WWII Heritage City

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



Figure 1: Women Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill in Plymouth Township, Michigan.
(Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)

Introduction

The three lessons, and culminating fourth lesson, support the development of understanding the significance of [Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City](#). The first lesson teaches about the Phoenix Mill, a Ford Motor Company Village Industry mill, which had an all-woman workforce during the war and produced parts for B-24 bombers. The second lesson shares home front volunteer activities and contributions, such as material drives, war bond efforts, and victory gardens. The third lesson examines how the war reshaped everyday life on the home front through voluntary actions, government requirements, and challenges such as rationing and shortages. All lessons highlight specific local contributions and life on the home front but connect to larger

themes and understandings of the U.S. during wartime. A mix of primary and secondary sources are provided, along with photos and media.

Plymouth Township surrounds the city of Plymouth, Michigan, but is independent of it. The lesson series includes sources referencing Plymouth Township and the city of Plymouth because their populations, workers, and home front efforts overlapped significantly.

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 Plymouth Township, Michigan and leads into a comparison with other World War II home front cities as a culminating activity.

1. [The Phoenix Mill and War Manufacturing in Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City \(p. 5\)](#)

- War manufacturing and industry
- Women in the workforce
- Phoenix Mill
- Ford Motor Company
- Village Industry factories

2. [Home Front Volunteerism in Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City \(p. 18\)](#)

- Civilian volunteerism
- War bonds
- Material drives
- Youth contributions

3. [Red Cross Life on the Home Front in Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City \(p. 29\)](#)

- Rationing
- Food and material shortages
- Air raid drills

4. [Plymouth Township, Michigan: Comparing and Connecting WWII Home Front Cities \(p. 42\)](#)

Positioning these Lessons in the Curriculum:

The standards listed beneath the lesson links are a collection of standards covered in the lesson collection. The lessons have been aligned to national standards and topics, as well as to the Michigan Social Studies standards (as of 2019). 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

Michigan Social Studies Standards

The lessons align to the following standards defined by the Michigan Social Studies Standards (as of 2019).

Social Studies Process and Skills Standards

P1 Reading and Communication – Read and Communicate Effectively

P2 Inquiry, Research, and Analysis

World History and Geography

WHG Era 7 – Global Crisis and Achievement, 1900 – Present Day

U.S. History and Geography

Era 7 – The Great Depression and World War II, 1920 - 1945

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 Phoenix Mill and War Manufacturing in Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about the wartime impact of the Phoenix Mill in Plymouth Township. This mill was operated by the Ford Motor Company and produced war defense materials, such as electrical harnesses for B-24 Bombers, by an all-woman workforce. The lesson's readings link historical events to personal reflections and efforts to preserve local history.

Objectives:

1. Explain the role of the Phoenix Mill in wartime defense manufacturing and its connection to the Ford Motor Company.
2. Describe the importance of the Phoenix Mill and the women who worked there in supporting the Allies.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 2-9 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of Michigan, with Plymouth Township marked



Getting Started: Essential Question

Why were the Phoenix Mill and the women working there important to the war effort on the home front?

Photos



Figure 2: Phoenix Mill in Plymouth Township (Credit: Plymouth Historical Museum)



Figure 3: Women Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)



Figure 4: Women Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)



Figure 5: Women Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)



Figure 6: Woman Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)



Figure 7: Women workers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)



By the numbers:

- During the war, the Phoenix Mill employed only women, hiring between 50 and 200 workers who earned \$5 a day—the same daily rate as men at other Ford Company locations. Unlike the men, the women were given two rest breaks each day.
- In February 1942, 58 women employees of defense plants in and near Plymouth enrolled in a defense training course at night school for instructions in micrometer reading. 32 men were enrolled in the other two courses on machine shop, drawing and blueprint reading. (*The Plymouth Mail*, February 27, 1942)



Quotation to consider:

“The great cities are doomed. . . A few will stay. They’ll be big distributing and assembling points, not congested centers. The people will go back to the farm and small town. Their work will commute to and from them. They’ll complete their work in their village workshop. Then it will be sent to one of the big assembling and distribution points.

Not 30 miles from Detroit I’ve established a small shop run by water power in an old mill. Work is sent down there, finished, and brought back here. The workmen will live in semi-rural conditions. They have gardens. They may keep chickens and cows if they wish.

I spoke of using water power to operate the little experimental plants. Water is the golden fluid of the future. It will give us our light, our heat, our power. We can’t exhaust it, and it will cost little. A river charges nothing for flowing.”

- Henry T. Ford, as reported in *The Bee*, in January 1924



Read to Connect

Teacher Note: The readings move from an excerpt of a history of the Phoenix Mill (reading 1) to an article featuring reflections from former mill workers decades later (reading 2). The final reading highlights local efforts to preserve the building and its connection to wartime history. These readings show the mill’s role during the war and encourage students to consider the benefits and challenges to preserve local history and building sites.

Reading 1: Article Excerpts

"History of the Phoenix Plant"

Excerpts from the typewritten history from Doris Cole Avis' personal papers, courtesy of the Plymouth Historical Museum. Avis worked at the Phoenix Mill. This text was written during the war, likely in late 1944 or early 1945.

The Phoenix Plant is located about two miles north east of the village of Plymouth, Michigan. It is erected on a picturesque spot on the Rouge River surrounded by beautiful trees and overlooking the Phoenix Lake. In the late 1800 Mr. Matthews owned this property on which stood an old grist still turning out many a sack of flour. The mill changed hands several times, some of our finest breakfast foods were made here. The mill burned and stood idle for fifteen years until Mr. Henry Ford purchased this property from Mr. Pardee and Mr. Northrop in 1919. He conceived the idea of decentralization of his vast industrial empire so that the benefits of industry could be spread through out the Rural Communities. At that time remembering his boy hood days spent along the Rouge River with its numerous grist mills which were operated by Water Power usually with overshot wheels, he decided to harness this source of power and utilize it in his decentralization program.

Erection of the Phoenix Plant started in 1920. . . . Mr. Ford had expressed the desire to employ women at the Phoenix Plant and the generator cutout being a small unit was very adaptable for women to manufacture. So it was agreed upon to make the Cutout at Phoenix . . . Production started November 6, 1922 with a force of 50 experienced women from the Highland Park Plant, operating the production line and breaking in local help as they were hired, after which they were transferred back to Highland Park as the local help became efficient on the different operations. At present there are 9 employees on the Phoenix payroll that were among the first to be hired at this plant. . . .

When war was declared things didn't look very good for Phoenix. With the stoppage of car production it meant a large layoff, and as the War Jobs increased the girls were called back. Some had already taken other government jobs, some were transferred to Willow Run Bomber Plant, Ypsilanti and Rouge Plant. Phoenix was glad for any kind of work available to a small assembly plant and started production in 1942 on the Badge job, GAH Director Wire and Director Dial Job, GPW-GAE service wrapping, GAD Resistor, Pratt Whitney parts and GTB-10505 for G8T Regulator. In 1943 we started production on GAK and GAU Instrument Panel, GPA Service Wrapping and Regulator and Kits for the GAK Armored Car. In 1944 we started making Automatic Pilot and Junction Control Boxes for the B-24 Bomber.

Phoenix Plant has had a hand in quite a number of different war jobs and will no doubt resume production of Voltage Regulators at the close of the war. At the present there are 177 employees on the pay roll.

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

Reading 1 and By the Numbers:

1. Who purchased the mill property in 1919, and what was his goal?
2. What types of military equipment did the Phoenix Mill produce during the war?
3. The Phoenix Mill employed women both before and during World War II. How does this continuity challenge the idea that women entered industrial work only because of the war?
4. How did the women's pay at Phoenix Mill compare to the men's pay at other Ford plants? Why was this meaningful?

Connecting to the Quotation to Consider and Photos:

5. How does the quotation relate to the first photo in the lesson, the aerial image of the Phoenix Mill?
6. Why might Ford's ideas about rural industry opportunities and water power have been especially appealing or practical during World War II?
7. What details do you notice about the women in the photos (such as age, tasks, tools, or workspace)? What do these details show about the kind of work being done?
8. How do the women's ages and roles challenge or support ideas about those who worked in wartime factories?

Reading 2: Newspaper Article Excerpt

Note: The article incorrectly states that the Phoenix Mill building was designed by Albert Kahn Associates. The firm of Albert Kahn was hired by Henry Ford for a sewer study but did not design the building. Ford's Dearborn Realty and Construction Company designed the building.

Phoenix Mill exhibit evokes memories for local women

Observer & Eccentric, May 24, 2009

By Linda Ann Chomin

One of the first items in the Phoenix Mill exhibit to evoke a reaction from Margaret Dunning and Doris Richard was a vintage photograph of the open windows along the line where they sat assembling automotive parts.

The two women recently visited the Plymouth Historical Museum where the mural-size image brought back memories of the heat they endured while working at the plant in the 1930s and '40s. The sweltering environment was the reason coffee breaks were instituted to relieve the women employed there. Dunning and Richard shudder to think of those days before air conditioning.

Phoenix Mill made history for a variety of reasons not the least of which was allowing women to work outside of the home. That was something women didn't do when the plant opened in 1922. Dunning worked there during the Great Depression when nearly 70 women assembled voltage regulators and carburetor cutouts for automobiles and later parts for B-24 bombers built at Willow Run. Today she owns a collection of classic cars that includes a Model T with one of the regulators.

'Women were important in history where they weren't before,' said Dunning of Plymouth. 'They had smaller hands than the men. The work required an extremely fine attention to details.'

Women Only

The exhibit tells the story of the women and Phoenix Mill, one of 19 small manufacturing plants Henry Ford established on former mill sites to produce parts using water power from the Rouge River. Ford hired mostly farmers at the plants. The exception was Phoenix Mill which employed only women who sat on stools as they worked in the building designed by Albert Kahn Associates [sic] on the site of a grist mill which burned in 1905.

Ford paid the women \$5 a day, the same as men but they had to adhere to stricter dress codes. Dunning and Richard were among the single women and widows who were required to wear dresses, stockings and high heels even during summer. These were women who needed to work because of financial circumstances. Dunning's father, Charles, died when she was 13 and her mother was struggling to make ends meet. They sold their dairy and potato farm in Redford Township, moved into Redford and then the village of Plymouth. Dunning graduated from Plymouth High School in 1929 and then went to the University of Michigan for two years before returning home.

'It's so long ago,' said Dunning, who turns 99 in June. After leaving Ford, she went on to work at First National Bank on Penniman then Plymouth United Savings Bank before purchasing a clothing store in downtown Plymouth in 1947. Dunning is well-known in the community for her philanthropic work and funded the building and addition to the museum.

‘I had come back from college and was helping my mother with finances,’ said Dunning. ‘It was the only place a woman could think of to get a job. I worked on the line with everybody else. It was interesting for me because I was mechanically inclined and it was automotive. We made valves and smaller engine parts. Valve grinding was very important but that was all a man’s job, not women’s. Phoenix Mill was strictly a woman’s plant. It’s a rather startling exhibit for some of the people who were not knowledgeable about what was going on, the history there. The mill made a difference. Women could get a job. There were a few jobs teaching but that required higher education which most of the people who worked at the Ford factory did not have. It was the only place where you could go and get that kind of money. If you got in over there that was pretty special. Ford started there \$5 a day. When I went into banking the pay was way down from Ford.’

Her First Job

Doris Richard fondly remembers Mrs. Sullivan, the woman who hired the ‘girls.’ Richard worked at Phoenix Mill in the early 1940s. She left in 1943 to marry her husband, Bruce, who worked for Ford as an engineer. Bruce volunteered at the museum every Monday and Wednesday for years and eventually became president of the Plymouth Historical Society. When the museum first opened, Doris helped with exhibits. Today the 87-year-old woman still lives in Plymouth.

‘It was really my first job,’ said Richard, a life member of the museum. ‘There were a lot of nice people there. All the women liked Mrs. Sullivan. They went to her for everything.’

‘She was a very, very strong woman,’ added Dunning. ‘We worked with very nice associates. You looked forward to lunch to talk with people. Lots of people were friends before they got to the factory because they lived in Plymouth. The mill meant a lot to the vicinity.’

The display case is filled with original valves from the Model T and Model A cars. From 1936 to the plant closing in 1948 the Phoenix Mill women produced half of all cutouts and voltage regulators in the U.S.

‘We’re trying to save and preserve the history on women,’ said (the) museum director. . . .

Questions for Reading 2

1. How did the Phoenix Mill shift its operations to support wartime production?
2. What do you learn about working conditions at the mill from the memories of Dunning and Richard? Consider details like breaks, dress code, and other details shared by the former workers.
3. How do the personal stories in this text help us understand some of the opportunities and limitations local women faced?

4. How did the Phoenix Mill connect local Plymouth Township residents to national industrial efforts during the war?

Photos: The Phoenix Mill Today



Figure 8: Today, the restored Phoenix Mill building is used as an event center. On the outside of the building you can see the steel railing that was used for blackout curtains during the war, as described in Reading 3. (Credit: Phoenix Mill Events)



Figure 9: Today, the restored Phoenix Mill building is used as an event center. On the outside of the building you can see the steel railing that was used for blackout curtains during the war, as described in Reading 3. (Credit: Phoenix Mill Events)

Reading 3: Article Excerpt

Bringing Phoenix Mill Back to Life for All to Enjoy

From *The Plymouth Historical Society*

After World War II, the ladies of Plymouth's Phoenix Mill went back to producing electrical parts for Ford's automobiles until Henry Ford's death in 1947. At that time, Ford Motor Company began to sell off the "Village Industry" mill experiments. Eventually, Ford Motor Company deeded Wayne County three of the mills, including Phoenix (in 1948) to be a part of the new Hines Drive Park.

Ford Motor Company deeded the property to Wayne County in 1948 after it moved these operations to Ypsilanti. Phoenix Mill has served as a maintenance facility for the County. For 25 years it served as the Wayne County Road Commission's sign shop and later it was home to Wayne County's Bridges Division.

Once, the mills were sold and the ladies of Phoenix Mill moved on to other occupations (some went to work at the Willow Run plant), their history was largely forgotten over the decades. A lack of county funds led to Phoenix Mill falling into a state of disrepair. By the time Wayne County began talks to sell the mills in 2018, Phoenix had been so neglected that the courses of bricks over the large metal frame windows were degrading and pulling away from the exterior walls.

Over the decades, in order to fit the new tasks required of the building, Wayne County made unfortunate alterations to the structure. For some reason the egress windows of the lower level (below ground on the Northville Rd. side, walk out level is at the back of the mill) were removed and filled in with cinder blocks, along with the water drains on the outside of the building, in front of these windows. These drains were engineered to divert water away from the generator tower on the Northville Rd. side of the structure. As a result of this action, rainwater had nowhere to go and pooled under the tower for decades causing this iconic part of the mill to begin sinking. The tower is a defining feature of this historic building and needed to be preserved.

The turbine was used by an Edison generator to make power for the factory. Henry Ford was so passionate about using renewable waterpower that he insisted the power producing mechanisms be showcased for passers-by to see. This can be seen in the Phoenix Mill by the fully glassed-in iconic Generator Tower. Drivers along Northville Road would have seen Phoenix Mill employees turning the controls to power the factory!

These major structural problems would have made most prospective buyers run. But not Greg Donofrio and Richard Cox of Critical Mass. Mr. Cox had already restored one Ford Village Industry mill in Northville, today a thriving business with several companies occupying space in the landmark structure. They already had a contractor who could produce double pane glass that would fit inside the individual metal frames of the windows. They knew that the wooden floors were a defining feature, as most of the mills have hardwood floors that were milled at Ford's personal sawmill in the Michigan's Upper Peninsula. In short, they knew the task that was ahead of them, and they relished the idea of diving into the work and saving this nationally important historic building. . . .

But the absolute best feature of the building, that reveals its war time manufacturing role, is the original steel railing for a metal black out curtain that Ford installed around the outside of the structure. It is an unobtrusive part of the building, but so vital to its role as a part of the "Arsenal of Democracy". The thought was that if enemy planes ever made it as far as Detroit, manufacturing facilities would be targeted. The curtain could be drawn and envelop the entire factory while the people inside kept working, safe and invisible from the air. When Mr. Donofrio began the work of restoring the curtain rail, he was thrilled to discover three of the original "trucks," the wheeled parts of the apparatus that the curtain would hang from, still attached. The wheels of the "trucks" would roll along the rail, enabling the curtain to be drawn very quickly. Mr. Donofrio personally restored the "trucks" himself. He believes there is only one other example in existence of this type of black out curtain rail. It is attached to another small factory that also helped with the efforts to defeat the Axis Powers.

We are so fortunate as a community that Critical Mass stepped in and saved this unique part of American history. They really were the right people at the right time. They are passionate about saving these mills and have even begun the work of restoring a smaller Ford Village Industry mill just south of Phoenix Mill. Without Critical Mass, the future of Phoenix Mill would have been in doubt. Luckily, they were the type of developers who cherish the historic details and recognize that even something as small as allowing some of the original brick work to show through today adds to the experience of imaging the mill when it was full of industrious women who were happy to help save democracy.

Questions for Reading 3

1. What was the purpose of the original steel railing? How does this reflect its wartime manufacturing role? *(You can also see the steel railing on the outside of the building in the photos of the mill today.)*
2. How can restoration keep the history of a building preserved while still allowing modern use? How does the Phoenix Mill show an example of this effort?

3. Why do you think it is important to preserve and study local histories like the Phoenix Mill when understanding the national war effort?
4. *Optional community connection:* Is there a local building or site in your community connected to the war (or another historical time or event) that should be preserved or has been preserved? What challenges might come with preserving it?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: Why were the Phoenix Mill and the women working there important to the war effort on the home front?

Additional Resources

[Curiosity Kit: Preservation of the Harada House](#) *(An example of historic preservation efforts that may be used to connect to Reading 3.)*

[Henry Ford: Village Industries](#) (The Henry Ford)

[Phoenix Mill Events: History of the Phoenix Mill Building](#) *(This resource can be used to see photos and a 3-D tour of the building in use today and support a discussion on historic preservation efforts in Reading 3.)*

[Plymouth Historical Museum](#)

[Research Guide: Ford Village Industries](#) (The Henry Ford)

[Women in World War II:](#) Article and Collections from the National Park Service

[Women of Ford: Part 1: 1900s-1940s](#) (Ford Corporate)

Lesson 2: Home Front Volunteerism in Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City](#). This lesson includes readings and photographs that explore how local civilians, including students, volunteered and contributed to meeting wartime needs on the home front. Examples include material drives, war bond efforts, and community initiatives that locals supported through volunteer work, such as preparing bandages for the Red Cross.

Plymouth Township surrounds the city of Plymouth but is independent of it. This lesson includes sources referencing Plymouth Township and the city of Plymouth because their populations, workers, and home front efforts overlapped significantly.

Objectives:

1. Identify examples of ways local civilians, including by youth, contributed to home front causes.
2. Explain the impact of volunteerism in Plymouth Township, such as meeting wartime demands for funds and materials to support the Allies.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 10-14 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of Michigan, with Plymouth Township marked



Figure 11: "Take your change in war stamps," in *The Plymouth Mail*, December 18, 1942.

Raise a Victory Garden!



- Uncle Sam urges all of us to grow Victory gardens this year — big ones and small ones, in town and country — to offset food shortages that are bound to come. Gardens will provide vitamin-fresh food for your table all summer, and food to can and store away for winter. Raise a Victory garden—for your family, for your country.

Come in and ask us about International Harvester's
84-page booklet, "Have a Victory Garden"

A. R. WEST

507 Main St. Phone 136 Plymouth

Figure 12: An ad for A.R. West in Plymouth reads "Raise a Victory Garden! Uncle Sam urges all of us to grow Victory gardens this year- big ones and small ones, in town and country- to offset food shortages that are bound to come. Gardens will provide vitamin- fresh food for your table all summer, and food to can and store away for winter. Come in and ask about International Harvester's 84-page booklet, 'Have a Victory Garden,'" in *The Plymouth Mail*, March 26, 1943.



Figure 13: "Children Plan War Gardens – to Do Own Work; Girls Going to Help Overcome Food Shortage" - a headline from *The Plymouth Mail*, March 26, 1943.



Figure 14: "Township Helps on Red Cross – Workers Raise Nearly Thousand Dollars; Plymouth township war club workers, who enlisted their services in the campaign to raise funds for the Red Cross, have reported a total to date of \$865.90, according to Mrs. Russell Powell, chairman of the township committee." - a headline and start of article from *The Plymouth Mail*, March 26, 1943.



By the numbers: local examples of home front efforts

- On the opening night of a war bond drive at the Penn theater in Plymouth in September 1942, \$8,400.75 worth of bonds were sold. The Plymouth high school band had opened the night of movies and the bond drive by playing patriotic music. (*The Plymouth Mail*, September 4, 1942)
- The Plymouth branch of the Woman's National Farm and Garden association held a Victory Garden Harvest and Flower show in September 1942, where 85% of proceeds were donated to the Army and Navy emergency relief fund. (*The Plymouth Mail*, September 4, 1942)
- One Plymouth man, Howard Gladman, converted all of his saved coins from the past two years to war bonds. The total was \$225, which included 52 silver dollars. He had two sons in the service - one in the Navy, and one in the Marines. (*The Plymouth Mail*, September 11, 1942)
- The Plymouth area fundraised for Chinese war relief efforts. A check for \$922.65 was sent to the United China Relief, Inc., headquarters in September 1942. The funds were used to support services provided at places such as hospitals, orphanages, and refugee centers. (*The Plymouth Mail*, September 18, 1942)



Quotations to consider:

“Plymouth township war club workers, who enlisted their services in the campaign to raise funds for the Red Cross, have reported a total to date of \$865.90, according to Mrs. Russell Powell, chairman of the township committee. This amount has already been turned in to the general Plymouth fund and has aided greatly in helping along the final total.”

- “Township Helps on Red Cross, Workers Raise Nearly Thousand Dollars,” *The Plymouth Mail*, March 26, 1943

“United States Treasury department certificates of special merit have been awarded to 15 members of the Plymouth V-Women's war bond workers by State Chairman Frank Isbey as the result of the splendid work they did in helping to make the drive such an outstanding success. . . All of them sold more than a thousand dollars worth of war bonds. The total sales made by all of the Plymouth V-women workers in the last drive was \$64,425, according to the final check just made at the state headquarters.

This, like their previous record, is an especially good one. The V-Women have the hardest job of all. They do the ‘clean-up’ work in the war bond drives. They ring the door-bells,

canvas the factories and make repeat call after repeat call to catch the delinquent war bond buyer. There is no glamour about their work. Their job is the hardest of all”

- “Award V-Women Honors For 5th War Loan Work,” *The Plymouth Mail*, September 15, 1944



Read to Connect

Teacher Note: Part A and B in Reading 1 show examples of wartime volunteerism by high school students. These excerpts were printed in their student paper, the “Plymouth Pilgrim Prints,” printed within the local newspaper. The “Quotations to consider” and “By the numbers” after Reading 1, along with Reading 2 and 3, share more examples of various efforts that can be used to understand types of volunteerism and contributions made by those in the local community. These include [material drives](#), [victory gardens](#), and [war bonds](#).

Reading 1: Newspaper Articles - Students Chipping into the War Effort

Part A: “Wanted – Wastepaper”

[From the student paper, “Plymouth Pilgrim Prints,” printed in *The Plymouth Mail* on January 16, 1942]

“Have you been planning to burn that pile of papers thrust away in some corner? Don’t burn it! Give it to the Red Cross.

Paper is needed badly for national defense. Airplane parts, guns, all small articles are shipped in huge quantities to the far corners of the language in pasteboard cartons. If you can aid national defense, why not do it? The schools in Plymouth have launched a campaign for this purpose. The school children, both grades and high school, bring paper from home to Starkweather and Central where, every Tuesday and Friday, the city truck picks it up and deposits it at the brick garage behind Central. Mr. Rowe gives his time on these days to bailing and tying newspapers and magazines. These are sold to junkmen at 40 cents per 100 pounds and magazines at 55 cents per 100 pounds. The proceeds are donated to the Red Cross.

Students themselves are urged to conserve by using both sides of the paper and if only half a sheet is used, save the rest.

Do your part for national defense!”

Part B: “High School Students Can Help”

[From the student paper, “Plymouth Pilgrim Prints,” printed in *The Plymouth Mail* on December 18, 1942]

There are many ways in which we students can further the war effort such as performing neighborhood services or doing housework. In doing this, it is understood that these jobs will not involve purchasing of tools or material needed for the war effort, that they will be of real worth, and that they will not be dangerous.

Some of the numerous jobs boys can do are canvassing the blocks where they live, offering to empty ashes once a week at a fixed monthly price, or going around the neighborhood turning off water connections where needed, putting away tools, washing windows, cleaning cellars, and so on. It might help to get the job if the boy explains that any money earned would be put into war stamps.

Another way to earn money and help the war effort would be to talk with the various store managers and offer to run errands or make deliveries. This would be helping in two ways: First, by conserving the rubber of delivery trucks and second, by buying more defense stamps with the money earned.

For girls, those old enough to take care of children might arrange to stay with the neighbor’s children one or two nights a week, permitting the parents a free night.

Or, two or three girls can make War Stamp corsages. They are simple and cheap to make, the material for one hundred costing \$2.75, not counting the war stamps which cost \$90.00 or altogether \$92.75. Usually a corsage consists of nine ten-cent stamps and sells for one dollar, making a profit of \$7.25 on one hundred. . . .

These are just a few of the many ways in which high school students can help. Every student ought to try to perform some task to earn money for war savings stamps and if any of you have other ideas to earn stamp money, the Pilgrim Prints staff would be glad to hear about it.

Questions for Reading 1, By the numbers, Quotations to Consider, and Photos

1. *Part A*: What materials were students asked to collect? How did these items help support national defense?
2. *Part B*: Why do you think students were encouraged to do jobs that did not require new tools or materials? What kinds of jobs does the article suggest for students, and how do these reflect gender roles of the time?
3. *Summarize*: How do these articles show that local students saw themselves as important contributors to the war effort?

By the Numbers, Quotations to Consider, and Photos

4. Look at the photo of the map showing county war bond quotas in Michigan. Find Wayne County, where Plymouth Township is located. What other cities in Wayne County contributed to the county's high quota? (*Hint: Research, or use another map of Michigan, to find what other cities are nearby Plymouth Township.*)
5. Which example of home front volunteerism stands out to you the most, and why? What motivations do you think may have driven people to participate in these efforts?

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

Mayor Lists Defense Work: Citizens May Help in Various Programs

February 27, 1942, *The Plymouth Mail*

Plymouth is leading the state in organization for civilian defense preparations and to stimulate the local defense efforts. Mayor Ruth Huston Whipple this week issued suggestions for citizens to cooperate and contribute to the local program.

'Every day people telephone and ask what they can do for defense. In addition to buying defense bonds and stamps which Plymouth is doing well, the following are a few of the tasks that need to be pushed immediately,' declares the mayor.

'First, register for civilian defense if you have not already done so. Paper salvage is being carried on under the direction of Superintendent George A. Smith and Scout Leader Sidney D. Strong, but we still need leadership for the collection and conservation of rags, rubber and metal.

'Many of our local boys in service are still not being remembered by Plymouth people. You may do your share by aiding in the work of the Plymouth Canteen club. We still need 100 or more men and women, preferably over 40 years of age, for air raid service as block leaders. More doctors, graduate nurses, and others qualified to teach first aid courses are needed. There are four first aid classes now in progress at the city hall but we need twice that number to take care of the men and women who have already signed for civilian defense and those who are now registering for air raid duty.

'Other ways in which local persons may help in defense are to contribute books for the USO and deliver them to the local library and also provide leadership to raise funds for help to the poverty-stricken and battle-scarred Russians and Chinese,' concluded the mayor.

Questions for Reading 2

1. What are examples of preparations for local civilian defense?
2. How does Mayor Whipple's message try to motivate citizens to volunteer? What appeals does she use?
3. What initiatives do you think may have been the most challenging to get volunteers for, or sustain? Why?
4. Compare the volunteer work in this text to ways you can volunteer in communities today. What similarities and differences do you see?

Reading 3: Newspaper Article

"An editorial especially for Plymouth Ladies"

From "*What I Think and Have a Right to Say*" by Elton R. Eaton

The Plymouth Mail, September 8, 1944

It's tiresome work, and it's hard and monotonous, folding and preparing bandages to be used back of the front line battle trenches to stop the flow of blood from the wounds of American soldier boys.

Yes, it's tedious to go down to the Starkweather school and sit there from 9 o'clock in the morning until 2:30 in the afternoon doing the same thing hour after hour.

But while the good ladies of Plymouth are doing this work, they can talk out loud. They can laugh, they can move about now and then and they can stand up without fear of a bullet crashing through one of the windows in their direction. In fact, it isn't quite as bad as it sounds.

It's tiresome work, and it's hard and monotonous, too, to fight suffer and tramp hour after hour, day after day, sometimes all day long and far into the night – fighting the enemies of America!

But American lads out on the fighting fronts do not complain. They do not go up to the fighting front one day and the next day stay away. They are right up there where they are the targets of determined killers every hour of the day and night. Week after week and month after month.

Over 200 Plymouth women registered to make bandages for use at the battlefronts. The Plymouth quota is only 10,000 of these little bandages per month, an exceedingly small number for such a patriotic city as Plymouth to produce. Our quota, say those in a position to know, should be something like 20,000 or 25,000 per month.

But have these 200 ladies who registered to do this work for the Red Cross made 10,000 bandages, per month.

No – we're sorry to say. The quota has not been made any month in the last year or so.

Please understand, no one is being scolded – we're simply trying to emphasize the fact that out of 200 women who registered to do this work, less than a dozen show up on Tuesdays and Thursdays to donate a little of their time in helping to save the lives of our fighting lads.

Every once in a while during the past year, there has been published on the first page of this paper an appeal to the women of Plymouth to aid in this highly important war work. During the next two or three days after these appeals have been made, there has been a slight increase in the number of the workers, but soon the number drops back to eight or ten or twelve.

Suppose our fighting lads followed the same rule – suppose they got tired and quite the battlefronts? What would happen?

The need for these bandages is far greater now than ever before. With another life added this week to the long list of Plymouth boys who have already been sacrificed on the nation's altar, it would seem that there would be a waiting line at the Starkweather school of hundreds of women anxious to get into the work room and do their bit for the boys at the battlefronts.

May we take this occasion to pay tribute to the Plymouth ladies who have not failed in this service to OUR BOYS. From the very day that the work room was opened several of these women have been consistent week after week, month after month, year after year in visiting the Red Cross work room twice each week helping to prepare bandages for use in saving the lives of our boys.

Yes, you are busy. You have lots to do, more than ever before. But isn't it possible to make your workdays a little longer, to neglect something you think must be done – and go over to the Starkweather school and help Plymouth make its quota of Red Cross bandages for wounded American fighting lads?

It is so important that you can well-afford to neglect everything except your children.

Let's begin now to make our quota each month!

Questions for Reading 3

1. What task were Plymouth women asked to do for the war effort?
2. According to the editorial, how many women registered to make bandages, and how many were showing up?

3. What types of language and comparisons does the author use to try to persuade women to volunteer more regularly?
4. What does this editorial show about the expectations for women's roles and contributions on the home front?
5. How does this text challenge the perception that home front efforts were always successful and enthusiastic? What might this tell us about some of the realities of sustaining volunteer work during wartime?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did civilians from Plymouth Township support the war effort through volunteering and other home front initiatives?

Closing reflection question: Which of these home front efforts would you have been interested in participating in if you lived in Plymouth Township at the time? How might your personal skills or circumstances influence your decision?

Lesson 3: Life on the Home Front in Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Plymouth Township, Michigan, World War II Heritage City](#). This lesson includes readings and photographs that help students understand life on the home front during the war. Civilians in Plymouth Township participated in both voluntary activities and government-mandated requirements to support the war effort. The lesson highlights examples such as air raid drills and rationing, as well as challenges like food and material shortages. Overall, the lesson offers students insight into how the war affected everyday life on the home front in Plymouth Township.

Plymouth Township surrounds the city of Plymouth but is independent of it. This lesson includes sources referencing Plymouth Township and the city of Plymouth because their populations, workers, and home front efforts overlapped significantly.

Objectives:

1. Identify both voluntary actions and government-mandated requirements on the home front that supported the war effort.
2. Explain how the war affected the everyday lives of local families, such as at school, meals and rationing, travel, and more.
3. Compare local, historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 15-21 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3 (and optional extension)
3. *Recommended:* Map of Michigan, with Plymouth Township marked



Getting Started: Essential Question

What did it mean for local civilians in Plymouth Township to “do their part” on the home front, and how did this shape everyday life?

Photos

DEFENSE

The Best
Defense
Of Your Tires
Can Be Made
Before
They Are
All Worn Out!

Let us change their wheel position and alternate their use . . . Keep them inflated to the proper weight and be sure your car wheels are in line.

**BURN BETTER GAS FOR
BETTER MILEAGE!**




WE GIVE GOLD STAMPS

FLUELLING'S

275 S. Main St. Phone 9163
Plymouth, Mich.

Figure 15: An ad for Fluelling's in Plymouth reads "The Best Defense Of Your Tires Can Be Made Before They Are All Worn Out! Let us change their wheel position and alternate their use... Keep them inflated to the proper weight and be sure your car wheels are in line. BURN BETTER GAS FOR BETTER MILEAGE!" The Plymouth Mail, January 16, 1942.



**In Our Small Way -- We're
Helping Fight to Win . . .**

By strictly adhering to government regulations in all auto and tire service; by honoring gasoline ration cards carefully; by denouncing black market operators, we are helping our industry fight through to Victory! Remember—gasoline powers the attack; don't waste a drop; don't use it except for the most essential driving! Service men and women . . . WELCOME!

**Open 'til 9 P. M. Daily
and Sunday from 8 to 8**

FLANAGAN

HI-SPEED SERVICE

275 S. MAIN ST.

Figure 16: An ad for Flanagan Hi-Speed Service: "In our Small Way—We're Helping Fight to Win . . . By strictly adhering to government regulations in all auto and tire service by honoring gasoline ration cards carefully; by denouncing black market operators, we are helping our industry fight through to Victory! Remember—gasoline powers the attack; don't waste a drop; don't use it except for the most essential driving! Service men and women....WELCOME!" The Plymouth Mail, August 25, 1944.

POUR YOURSELF A GLASS

of

HEALTH

3 or 4 Times
A Day!



Feel better fit for the extra work you are doing—on your own job, and toward Victory! Make milk a regular food-beverage at every meal. Our delivery service to your home or office won't let you "forget."

PHONE 9

*For daily delivery of milk,
buttermilk, cream, butter.*



Cloverdale Farms Dairy

Figure 17: An ad for Cloverdale Farms Dairy reads, "Pour Yourself a Glass of Health - 3 or 4 Times a Day! Feel better fit for the extra work you are doing - on your own job, and toward Victory! Make milk a regular food-beverage at every meal. Our delivery service to your home or office won't let you 'forget.'" From *The Plymouth Mail*, February 27, 1942.



Figure 18: "Children Will Get Shoes, Says Rationing Board: Youngsters Not to Be Deprived of Footwear," from *The Plymouth Mail*, February 19, 1943.



By the numbers: housing and rationing

- In September 1942, the Federal Housing Administration granted permission for 125 new houses to be built in the Plymouth, Michigan area. This was to support housing for the Phoenix Mill, but also other Ford plants and industries in the region and Wayne County. 50% of the properties had to be rentals. (*The Plymouth Mail*, September 4, 1942)
- In February 1943, ration books were issued at three school buildings in Plymouth. Schools operated on a half-day schedule for a week so teachers could distribute the ration books. Residents were required to report how many cans of fruits and vegetables they had, and points were deducted from their ration books if they possessed more than five cans per person. (*The Plymouth Mail*, February 19, 1943)



Quotations to consider: student perspectives

"Bearing in mind this national emergency and the fact that defense industries in this area are dependent upon vast amounts of electricity, we make this suggestion to the faculty: Why not give the students less homework, thereby eliminating the wasted watts used by the lamp of the student as he studies into the wee hours of the morning?"

Now that wastepaper is being used to stall the impending paper shortage, P.H.S.'s [Plymouth High School's] chief of police is considering donating his notebook to the cause . . . And we're sacrificing our 'blue books.'"

- "Behind the Scenes," in the student paper, "Plymouth Pilgrim Prints," printed in *The Plymouth Mail* on January 16, 1942

"What? No more orangeade? Such questions were asked the lunchroom waitresses in the past few weeks. Because of the war the students of Plymouth high school and the Central grade school will receive no more Bireley's trucks going to work on defense; also the production of orangeade was cut down. However, this is not a permanent situation."

- "No More Orangeade," in the student paper, "Plymouth Pilgrim Prints," printed in *The Plymouth Mail* on February 27, 1942



Read to Connect

Teacher Note: In the "Additional Resources" section at the end of this lesson, you will find articles about life on the home front. These articles provide background information to support understanding of the primary source readings in this lesson and help students see how examples from Plymouth Township and the surrounding area reflect broader national trends.

Reading 1: Newspaper Article Excerpt

Background: This excerpt comes from a longer article that also described procedures at two other local grade schools—Central Grade School, with 535 students, and Starkweather Grade School, with 322 students. The same day's newspaper included an article on air raid rules and home preparations. The coverage air raid drills received in the newspaper showed that civilian defense and preparedness was a priority, not only in Plymouth Township and Plymouth, but across the nation.

School Drills Prove Success: Plan to Stage Weekly Air Raid Rehearsals

The Plymouth Mail, February 27, 1942

Plymouth's first practice air raid drills were successfully carried out in each of the three public schools last Friday and they will become a part of the school's weekly routine, according to Superintendent George A. Smith.

An assembly was held Friday morning to instruct students of the junior and senior high school grades of the air raid drill procedure.

The warning alarm was sounded by four short blasts of the regular fire drill alarm in both the Plymouth high and Central grade schools. The fire drill alarm is given with a sustained blast of the siren. At Starkweather grade school, the alarm was sounded by a horn operated by dry cell batteries.

Students in the high school were moved into the hallways of the first and second floors of the building, where concrete slab overhead affords the best of protection. The third and top floor was not used. Junior high students occupied the first floor corridors and the senior high students were on the second floor. In less than two minutes, every student in the high school building and annex was moved from his classroom to the hallway refuge, away from glass windows and entrances. Each of the 1,130 students in the building was given a space of five square feet in the hallways. The drill was accomplished, according to Principal C.J. Dykhouse, in good order and in less time than a regular fire drill requires. . . .

Letters were sent to parents of all school children before Friday's rehearsal stating that 'In view of present conditions, it seems advisable to supplement our present program of fire drills with a program of regular air raid drills as a matter of protection against the unlikely possibility that such an event will sometime happen. While your children are being given the best possible protection in school, you, as parents, should cooperate by staying at home in your own refuge room. Do not try to reach the school, either personally or by telephone, if an emergency should come. The wires must be kept clear for urgent messages, according to directions from the U.S. Office of Civilian Defense, in case of air raid alarms.'

Questions for Reading 1, By the Numbers, Quotations to Consider

Reading 1:

1. How were students and their families told to respond during an air raid drill? How do you think they felt about these drills and instructions?
2. How did air raid drills increase the responsibilities of schools in supporting civilian defense?

By the Numbers:

3. Where were ration books distributed, and what information were residents required to report?
4. How do these show examples of government actions during the war?

Quotations to Consider:

5. What shortages or changes do students mention?
6. How do the student quotations reflect both inconveniences and cooperation with supporting the war?

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

Here's History! Butter Shortage in Plymouth!

Food, Once Medium of Exchange, Now Nearly Off Market

The Plymouth Mail, December 11, 1942

A well known citizen of Plymouth walked into a grocery store the other day to pick up a few groceries for the home. As he waited for a clerk, another customer came in the store and wanted to buy a pound of butter.

'I haven't got an ounce of butter in the store,' declared the merchant.

That's something that has never before happened in a Michigan grocery store in more than half a century – not an ounce of butter to sell in a land where butter and eggs since pioneer days have always been a medium of exchange between customer and merchant!

The customer was so surprised that he seemed at first not to understand.

'No butter?' he again inquired.

'No sir, not a bit of butter. I haven't had any in two or three days. They've cut me to 25 percent of what I usually carry, but I haven't received that 25 percent yet. That's just one pound of four, so someone will have to go short on butter the way it looks to me,' said the pioneer merchant.

Not only are Plymouth homes faced with a mighty 'cool' winter, but it begins to look as though it might be a winter with actual food shortages – in a land of plenty.

Plymouth merchants are putting forth every effort to keep on hand a sufficient amount of the scarce food items to take care of their customers. They ask cooperation by suggesting that no one buy more than for their immediate needs.

Questions for Reading 2

1. Why was the lack of butter in Michigan described as surprising?
2. What percentage of butter was the merchant cut to?
3. How does the text show the impact of wartime government restrictions on local businesses and families?
4. Why do you think cooperation from customers was emphasized in addressing food shortages?

Reading 3: Public Service Announcements and Advertisements

Teacher Tip: The following three public service messages and advertisements show how the war affected life on the home front, including phone use, transportation, agriculture, and consumer purchases. In addition to these three advertisements, you can use the other photos in this lesson to expand the discussion and comparisons for Reading 3.

Advertisement 1: Consumers Power Company

**YOUR "DREAM" KITCHEN
MAY HAVE TO WAIT . . .**

This year some of the modern appliances you planned to put into that dream kitchen of yours—to bring you new leisure, lighten your kitchen tasks and save steps—may be hard to get due to curtailed production because of the WAR.

But such a temporary setback should not discourage you. Here's a suggestion. Why not take the money you planned to spend for those appliances you cannot now obtain and invest it in United States Defense Bonds and Stamps? When the WAR is over and America returns to peacetime production, those appliances will again be plentiful and your funds thus saved will be available to you to complete that "dream" kitchen.

A thrifty, practical and patriotic idea, don't you think? You help Uncle Sam... and he'll help you!

**FOR VICTORY
BUY
UNITED
STATES
SAVINGS
BONDS
AND STAMPS**

**CONSUMERS POWER
C O M P A N Y**

Figure 19: The Plymouth Mail, February 27, 1942

Text: "Your 'Dream' Kitchen May Have to Wait... This year some of the modern appliances you planned to put into that dream kitchen of yours – to bring you new leisure, lighten your kitchen tasks and save steps – may be hard to get due to curtailed production because of the WAR.

But such a temporary setback should not discourage you. Here's a suggestion. Why not take the money you planned to spend for those appliances you cannot now obtain and invest it in United States Defense Bonds and Stamps? When the WAR is over and America returns to peacetime production, those appliances will again be plentiful and your funds thus saved will be available to you to complete that 'dream' kitchen.

A thrifty, practical and patriotic idea, don't you think? You help Uncle Sam... and he'll help you!"

Public Service Announcement 2: Michigan Bell Telephone Company

Clear the lines for WAR!

MAYBE you have waited on a siding while a troop train, or a fast freight loaded with munitions, roared past on the main track. And you said, "Sure — that's as it should be. We've got a war to win!"

Like the railroads, the Long Distance telephone lines today are carrying a vastly increased load of wartime traffic . . . and the congestion can't be relieved by adding equipment, because the needed materials have gone to the fighting front.

You'll help give vital war calls the right-of-way if you:

Make only really urgent Long Distance calls.

Keep all calls as brief as you can.

Michigan Bell Telephone Company

★ WAR CALLS MUST GO THROUGH ★

Figure 20: The Plymouth Mail, April 2, 1943

Text: "Clear the lines for war! Maybe you have waited on a siding while a troop train, or a fast freight loaded with munitions, roared past on the main track. And you said, 'Sure - that's as it should be. We've got a war to win!'

Like the railroads, the Long Distance telephone lines today are carrying a vastly increased load of wartime traffic... and the congestion can't be relieved by adding equipment, because the needed materials have gone to the fighting front. You'll help give vital war calls the right-of-way if you:

Make only really urgent Long Distance calls.

Keep all calls as brief as you can.

War Calls Must Go Through."

Advertisement 3: Saxton Farm Supply Store

if You Have
Chickens

**You MUST Produce
More Eggs This Year**

Uncle Sam urges you to cull your flock. Give your producing hens better attention and to feed them tested feeds that make higher production.

The quantity of chickens must be reduced because of the feed scarcity so the quality must be improved.

Feed **Larro**
FOR HIGH PRODUCTION

**Saxton Farm
Supply Store**

Figure 21: The Plymouth Mail, February 18, 1944

Text: “If You Have Chickens You MUST Produce More Eggs This Year.

Uncle Sam urges you to cull your flock. Give your producing hens better attention and to feed them tested feeds that make higher production.

The quantity of chickens must be reduced because of the feed scarcity so the quality must be improved. Feed Larro For High Production.”

Questions for Reading 3 and Photos

1. In the first ad, what products were described as unavailable? What does the ad suggest as a solution?
2. In the second ad, why were people urged to limit unnecessary long-distance phone calls? Describe why the company may have compared this to railroad transportation.
3. In the third ad, how did the store frame wartime demands as an advertisement?
4. How do some of the advertisements (in the reading and photos) combine messages of patriotism and support for the war effort while also promoting products or sales?
5. *Summarize:* How were people on the home front expected to make personal sacrifices and adjust their daily lives to support the war effort?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: What did it mean for local civilians in Plymouth Township to “do their part” on the home front, and how did this shape everyday life?

Reflection: How might you have felt about these changes if you lived in Plymouth Township during the war, and why? How do you think they may have affected you and your family?

Extension

The Detroit Race Riot of 1943

During the 1940s, Michigan’s suburban areas such as Plymouth, were predominantly white, while African American populations were largely concentrated in Detroit and a limited number of other communities. Plymouth Township is located less than 30 miles west of Detroit, and both are part of Wayne County. While the Detroit Race Riot did not occur in Plymouth Township itself, news of the event was widely shared in the region, highlighting racial discrimination and tensions both locally and across the country during the war. To explore this local history with students further, you can use the lesson: [\(H\)our History Lesson: The Detroit Race Riot of 1943](#) from the National Park Service. You may also provide

the [June 25, 1943 digital copy of *The Plymouth Mail*](#), courtesy of the Plymouth Library, to read the article on page one, “Detroit Riot Regulations Hit Plymouth,” to see local impacts after the riot.

You can also use information about the Double V Campaign to examine the campaign against discrimination and inequalities faced by African Americans both on the home front and abroad during the war. Resources you can use from the National Park Service include [James G. Thompson: Originator of the Double V Campaign](#) and the lesson [\(H\)our History Lesson: African American Contributions on the Home Front in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, WWII Heritage City](#).

Additional Resources: Life on the Home Front

The following articles are from the National Park Service:

[The American Home Front and World War II \(Overview\)](#)

[The American Home Front During World War II: The Economy](#)

[The American Home Front During World War II: Rationing, Recycling, and Victory Gardens](#)

(This includes links to information on [food rationing](#), material drives, victory gardens, canning, and more.)

Lesson 4: Plymouth Township, Michigan: 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 [Plymouth Township, Michigan](#) designated as a [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains photographs, readings and a culminating project. The first reading shares war efforts in the state of Michigan and offers the opportunity for students to connect statewide and national efforts to the industry and contributions of Plymouth Township. The second reading connects the region to the designation of a Heritage City. The culminating project contributes to learners' understandings of the city as a WWII Heritage City, with the opportunity to analyze lesson themes from across the three other lessons in the Plymouth Township [lesson collection](#). This is to summarize the local contributions and encourage connections to the overall home front efforts.

Plymouth Township surrounds the city of Plymouth but is independent of it. This lesson includes sources referencing Plymouth Township and the city of Plymouth because their populations, workers, and home front efforts overlapped significantly.

Objectives:

In a culminating product:

- a. Explain the impact of the Phoenix Mill in home front war manufacturing and the role of women workers there.
- b. Summarize contributions and volunteer efforts of local civilians to home front war efforts, including those of youth.
- c. Describe life on the home front, including personal sacrifices and compliance with government requirements.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences between Plymouth Township and other Heritage city(s) or World War II home front(s).

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 22-26 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2
3. Maps, project materials (as needed)
4. Student graphic organizers (See Figure 27 at end of lesson, for reference)
 - Create Comparison Matrices for your students to use. To compare two cities, create a one-page sheet with three columns and four rows. Label the left column Theme/Topic and the other columns City 1 and City 2. For a Comparison Matrix for three cities simply add an additional column.
 - Create two Single-Point Rubrics to assist students' self-assessment. One is for assessing proficiency in meeting teacher-selected standards. One is for assessing proficiency in meeting objectives.
 - For the rubric on standards, create a one-page sheet with three columns and four rows of content. Label the first column "Areas for Improvement," the second column, "Proficient (Meeting Standard)," and the third column, "Areas of Exceeding Standard." Leave the first and third columns blank. In each row of the second column identify a Standard and indicate a space for noting the evidence for meeting the standard. Include a space at the bottom of the page for assigning points for each column.
 - For the rubric on objectives, create a one-page sheet with three columns and four rows of content. Label the first column "Areas for Improving toward Objective," the second column, "Proficient (Meeting Objective)," and the third column, "Areas of Exceeding Objective." Leave the first and third columns blank. In the four rows of the second column identify these four objectives:
 - a. Explain the impact of the Phoenix Mill in home front war manufacturing and the role of women workers there.
 - b. Summarize contributions and volunteer efforts of local civilians to home front war efforts, including those of youth.
 - c. Describe life on the home front, including personal sacrifices and compliance with government requirements.
 - d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences between Plymouth Township and other Heritage city(s) or 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 Plymouth Township designated as a World War II Heritage City, and what are its similarities and differences to other home front cities?

Photos



Figure 22: "For Sale: Nine New Defense Homes" ad from Daniel S. Mills, *The Plymouth Mail*, December 18, 1942.



Figure 23: Woman Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)



Figure 24: Woman Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)



Figure 25: Women Making Electric Harnesses for B-24 Bombers at the Phoenix Mill (Credit: From the Collections of The Henry Ford.)

Nearly 1,500 Plan To Have Gardens

More Down Town
Lots Are Needed

Figure 26: "Nearly 1,500 Plan to Have Gardens" - a headline from *The Plymouth Mail*, March 26, 1943.

Quotations to consider:

"Good ladies of Plymouth! It's rags now! You've given up your old stockings, tin cans and what-not for Uncle Sam. Now he wants your rags! He's got to have them.

Wednesday, December 16 has been set by the Plymouth salvage committee, as the day for the first general collection in Plymouth and vicinity. You are to do your own collecting and delivering. . . . It's rags for Uncle Sam – and let's see how many hundreds of pounds we can give him next Wednesday!"

- "Rag Collection Next Wednesday: Plymouth Women Out for New Record,"
December 11, 1942, *The Plymouth Mail*

"From the little city of Plymouth, with a population slightly under 6,000, there has been shipped during the past two weeks over 600 pounds of old silk and nylon hosiery to a government war munitions plant somewhere in the East. Six hundred pounds!

That's over a quarter of a ton of old stockings that have been collected by women in Plymouth and vicinity and turned over to the collecting depots in Plymouth. . . . 'Will Plymouth women make it? Sure they will,' declares Mrs. Terry."

- "Over Quarter Ton of Silk Stockings Collected Here," December 11, 1942, *The Plymouth Mail*

“On Saturday, September 26, the big Wayne county ‘Buy a Tank’ drive takes places, but already at this date over eight thousand Scouts are busy making house-to-house distribution of some four hundred thousand ‘Buy a Tank’ drive pamphlets to every house in the county, Plymouth Boy Scouts are cooperating one hundred percent in the work. The drive is for ten thousand tons of scrap which is to be sold by the Wayne County Council of Salvage committee ... it is expected that the proceeds will purchase at least three tanks for our Armed Forces.”

- “Plymouth Scouts Aid in Tank Drive: Helping to Buy Equipment for Army,” September 18, 1942, *The Plymouth Mail*

Reading 1: Newspaper Editorial

Teacher Tip: This text is intended to help students think about how Plymouth Township connects to broader home front efforts across the state of Michigan during the war.

Encourage students to connect parts of the editorial to local industry and volunteerism in Plymouth Township and the greater Plymouth area. Because the piece was published in a local Plymouth newspaper, readers at the time likely connected the author’s thoughts to their own local experiences. The author does not focus heavily on volunteerism, which is a point to discuss with students.

It is also important for students to recognize that this is an opinion piece, even though it is grounded in historical context. Students can consider how opinion and historical fact intersect in discussions of Michigan’s role on the home front.

"Aren't You Proud That You Live in Michigan?"

By Schuyler Marshall of Clinton County, from “Rambling Around... with Prominent Michigan Editors,” in the *The Plymouth Mail*, published June 5, 1942.

Michigan is a great state. It is a rich state. It is a lovely state. It is a versatile state. Michigan is an empire all by itself. Too many Michigan people do not know enough about Michigan. We are learning some things in these days of war about our state. We are coming to realize that if the United States is the arsenal of democracy, then Michigan is the workshop that supplies a large part of that arsenal. Munitions, materials, tanks, planes, foods, metals, chemicals, and many more come from or are produced in Michigan.

This week many advertisers are featuring Michigan Days. This campaign might be called by any one of several other names. It is designed to impress Michigan people of the vast resources of Michigan and the great advantages gained by Michigan people using Michigan products.

Many things will be upset this year and for the duration of the war. But Michigan's great resources will remain. Even war cannot take away the fertility of Michigan soil. War will not exhaust Michigan's vast resources of minerals. War will not take away the 5,000 plus resort lakes. War will not take away the great waterways formed by the Great Lakes and the vast sources of raw materials that lay adjacent to the shores of those lakes. Michigan's great industrial area is located here for sound reasons... it is not an artificial promotion. Millions of people will always live in Michigan because Michigan is economically sound. It is blessed by nature.

Michigan has grown remarkably in this century because ingenious brains and active imaginations saw the great advantages of this state. All that Michigan needs to go to greater progress, to greater achievements in this war and in the years that are to follow is to have more enthusiastic Michiganders believe in Michigan.

Questions for Reading 1, Quotations to Consider, and Photos

1. How does the editorial connect Michigan's industrial and natural resources to the war effort?
2. How might residents of Plymouth Township have seen themselves connected to the workshop of the "arsenal of democracy" mentioned in the text? Consider both paid and voluntary efforts.
3. The author does not focus heavily on volunteer efforts in Michigan. How might you connect the ideas in this text to the volunteer work in Plymouth Township, and/or the state?
4. Why might the author have emphasized that Michigan's resources will remain despite the war?

Quotations to Consider:

5. Why do you think the newspapers highlighted the achievements of Plymouth women and Scouts in these drives?
6. What themes connect the three quotations?
7. How might activities like these have shaped the home front community, identity, and morale?

Photos:

8. Explain how each photo relates to Plymouth Township's designation as a Heritage City. What local and national themes do the images represent? What people or topics are not shown?



By the numbers:

In 1940, Plymouth Township had a population of 2,270, and by 1950, the population was 4,945 (an increase of 117.8%).

The local city of Plymouth also experienced population growth from 1940 to 1950, growing from 5,360 to 6,637, or 23.8% growth. (US Census Data)

Plymouth Public School enrollment set a record in the fall of 1942, with a registration of 2,062 students across three schools. The enrollment had increased by about 168 students from the previous year. (*The Plymouth Mail*, September 11, 1942)

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 and By the Numbers

By the Numbers:

1. How did the local population and school enrollment change? What do these changes suggest about the impact of the local wartime industries?

Reading 2:

2. What was the purpose of the bill (H.R. 6118) according to the report?
3. What may have contributed to the growth of Plymouth Township, even if not considered a large “boomtown?” Also, think about the nearby major industrial areas.
4. Why do you think Plymouth Township was designated as a World War II Heritage City? Connect details from the bill and evidence from the first reading, and/or other readings from the Plymouth Township lessons.
5. Are there other cities you think of when considering home front contributions during wartime? Which and why?

Culminating Activity/Mastery Product

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

- a. Explain the impact of the Phoenix Mill in home front war manufacturing and the role of women workers there.
- b. Summarize contributions and volunteer efforts of local civilians to home front war efforts, including those of youth.
- c. Describe life on the home front, including personal sacrifices and compliance with government requirements.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences between Plymouth Township and other Heritage city(s) or 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 Plymouth Township, Michigan 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 27: Single-Point Rubric (Standards; Blank) [Teacher selects priority standards for assessment.] Courtesy of Sarah Nestor Lane

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