

Sumter City and County, South Carolina, WWII Heritage City

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



Figure 1: The Shaw Field main gate, 1942. Military guards are at the gate, and two Army Air Corps planes are in the sky.
(Courtesy Photo: Shaw Air Force Base)

Introduction

The three lessons, and culminating fourth lesson, support the development of understanding the significance of [Sumter City and County, South Carolina, World War II Heritage City](#). The first lesson explores the role of Shaw Field and the contributions and training of service members and civilians there. Shaw Field was a training site for pilots in the US Army Air Corps and for Allied cadet pilots. African American service members were stationed there supporting maintenance of aircraft, and women served at the field as Women's Army Air Corps (WACs) and Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). The second lesson teaches specifically about the contributions of the WASPs at Shaw Field, integrating oral histories. The third lesson examines ways in which locals engaged in home front activities and volunteerism, such as the Red Cross, Junior Red Cross, and victory gardens. All lessons highlight specific contributions but connect to larger themes and understandings of the U.S. home front during wartime. Primary and secondary sources are used across the lessons.

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 contributions of Sumter City and County, South Carolina and leads into a comparison with other World War II home front cities as a culminating activity.

1. [Shaw Field and Aviation Training in Sumter City and County, World War II Heritage City \(p. 5\)](#)

- Armed Forces
- Army Air Corps training
- Women in the service
- African Americans in service
- Women's Army Air Corps (WACs)
- Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs)

2. [The WASPs in Sumter City and County, World War II Heritage City \(p. 17\)](#)

- Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)
- Shaw Field
- Women in the service
- Civilian service
- Civilian volunteerism and contributions

3. [Home Front Volunteerism in Sumter City and County, World War II Heritage City \(p. 33\)](#)

- Red Cross
- Junior Red Cross
- Victory gardens
- Material drives
- Shaw Field
- Nursing

- Civilian volunteerism and contributions

[4. Sumter City and County, South Carolina: Comparing and Connecting WWII Home Front Cities \(p. 43\)](#)

Positioning these Lessons in the Curriculum:

The standards listed below 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 South Carolina 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

South Carolina Social Studies Standards

The lessons align to the following South Carolina Social Studies College- and Career-Ready standards (as of 2019).

Grade 8: South Carolina and the United States

Standard 5: Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of world events on South Carolina and the United States from 1929 to present.

Modern World History

Standard 5: Demonstrate an understanding of the Modern Age from 1933 to present day.

United States History and the Constitution

Standard 4: Demonstrate an understanding of how the American identity both at home and abroad was affected by imperialism, world conflict, and economic boom and bust in the period 1893 to 1945.

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

Lesson 1: Shaw Field and Aviation Training in Sumter City and County, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Sumter City and County, South Carolina, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to learn about aviation training and operations at Shaw Field. The readings include unique stories shared across newspaper articles, such as grandmothers who served as WACs, African American service members who completed critical maintenance aircraft training, and a father-son duo at the airfield. (Lesson 2 can be used to build on this lesson by exploring the service of the WASPs at Shaw Field, or as a standalone lesson.)

Objectives:

1. Explain the purpose of the aviation training and operations at Shaw Field and how they impacted the United States Army Air Corps.
2. Describe some of the many roles at Shaw Field for service members and civilians, including for women.
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 (and optional extensions)
3. *Recommended:* Map of South Carolina, with Sumter City and County marked



Getting Started: Essential Question

How did aviation training and operations at Shaw Field contribute to the success of the United States in the war?

Photos

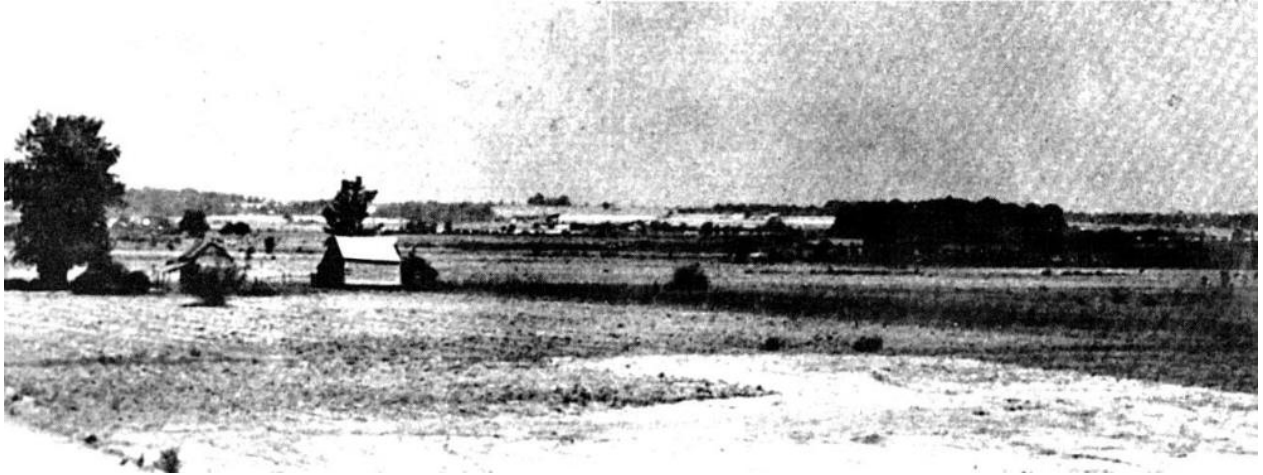


Figure 2: This photo was taken on May 28, 1941 – 11 days after the site was leased to the U.S. War Department to develop the Army Air Corps basic flying school near Sumter, S.C. (Courtesy Photo: Shaw Air Force Base)

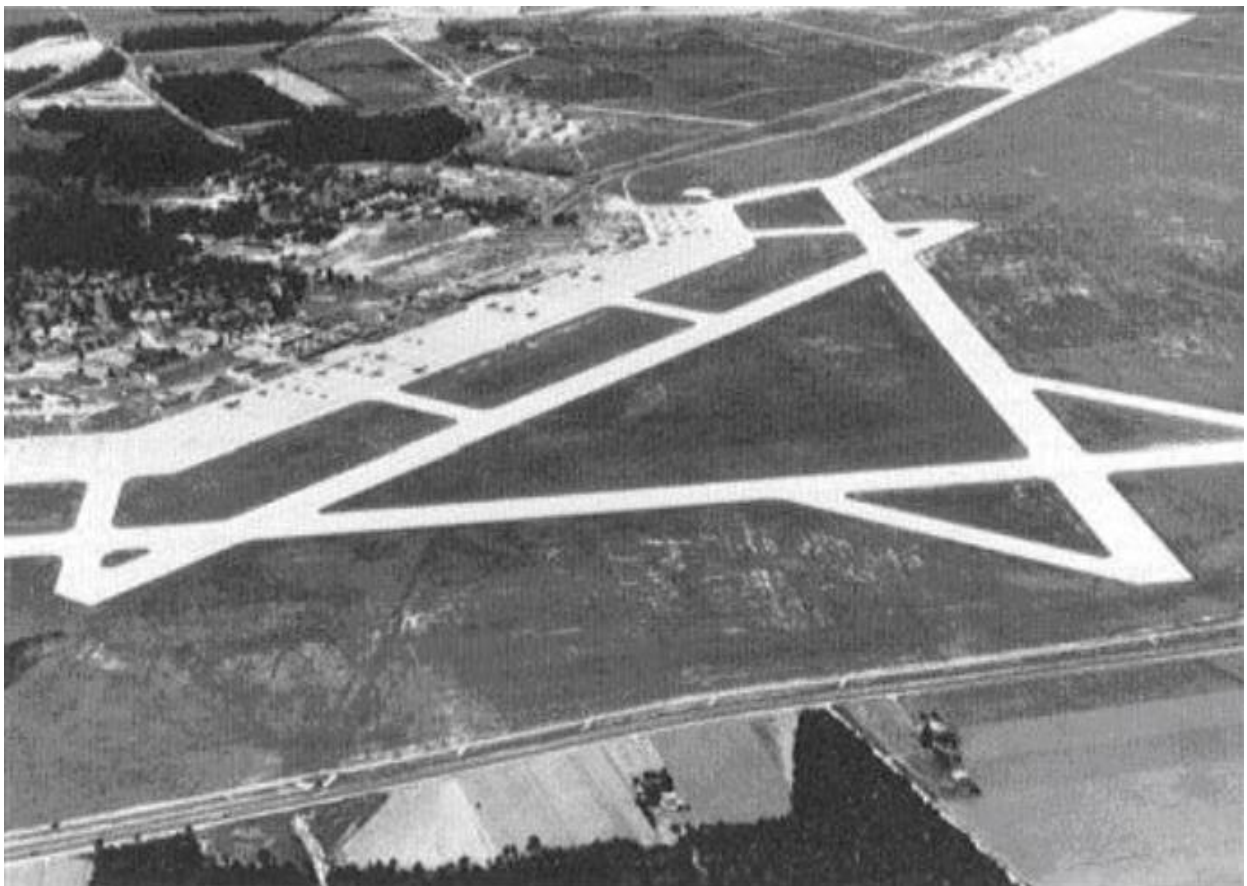


Figure 3: This photo shows Shaw Field after construction, in the 1940s. (US Air Force, Public Domain)



Figure 4: "U.S. Army Air Corps cadets pose for a photo after arriving at a railroad station in Sumter, S.C., Dec. 10, 1941. The cadets were members of one of the first aviation classes at the basic flying school at Shaw Field, S.C., now known as Shaw Air Force Base." (Courtesy Photo: Shaw Air Force Base)



Figure 5: Army Air Corps cadet flight crews in 1942 during a pre-mission brief at the Shaw Field control tower. (Courtesy Photo: Shaw Air Force Base)

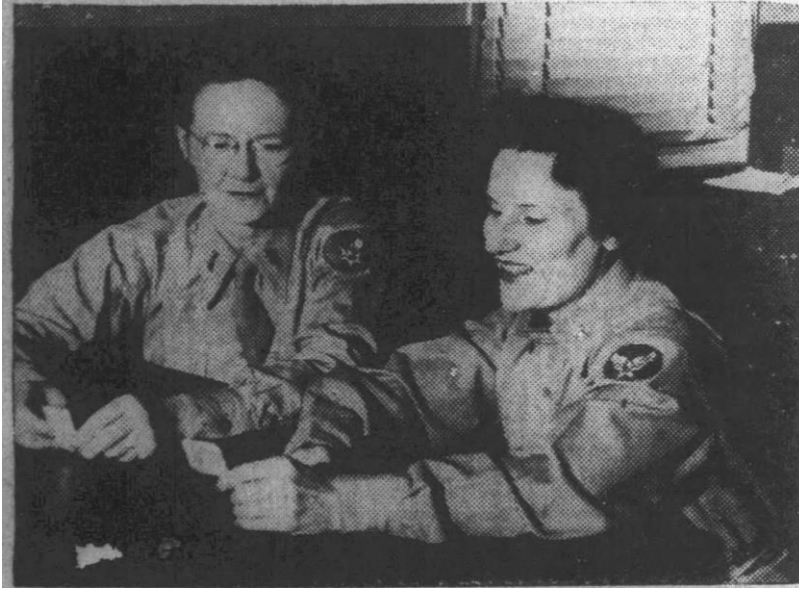


Figure 6: First Lt. Frances Hunter Bruce (Left) and Second Lt. Helen M. Smith. Bruce was the first American grandmother to enroll in the WAAC. Smith was the first WAC grandmother at Shaw Field. This photo was printed alongside **Reading 1** in *The Sumter Daily Item*, Sept. 30, 1943.



Quotations to consider: Women's Army Corps (WAC)

“Lt. Adeline Boland and Sgt. Mary F. Robertson, representatives of the Women's Army Corps, will be in Sumter today and tomorrow for the purpose of recruiting women for service in the WAC. Their office is upstairs in the City Hall and interested women from 20 to 50, inclusive, are invited to call there for particulars. According to recent statistics, South Carolina is at the bottom of the 48 states in the number of WACs in service, and Lt. Boland (a South Carolinian from Clinton) is anxious to have our state's quota of WACs increase. . . .

No special skill is required of a WAC as there are schools maintained by this branch which teach all types of work. There are schools of administration, bakers and cooks, radio, aerial photography, ground schools for Air Force work, motor corps. In all, there are 155 types of work that WACs do.”

- “Recruiters for WAC Here Two Days,” *The Sumter Daily Item*, October 1, 1943

“For almost 20 months, the Wacs at Shaw Field have worked side-by-side with enlisted men, performing jobs requiring military skill and innate ability. Many enlisted women are doing jobs far removed from tasks performed in civilian life. Not only are they clerks and stenographers and cooks, but control tower operators, radio mechanics, airplane mechanics, sheet metal workers, postal clerks, court reporters, map plotters and

laboratory technicians as well. . . . Its members are not only good workers, but good soldiers as well. This has been demonstrated time after time at retreat formations, in their high ratings on inspections, in their snappy salutes and in their willingness to see a job through – regardless of the hour.

In their all too short stay at Shaw Field the WACs have capably filled the shoes of many key men who were made available for overseas assignments.”

- “Shaw to Lose All Its Wacs,” *The Sumter Daily Item*, January 20, 1945



By the numbers: Shaw Field

- The site was officially leased to the U.S. War Department on May 17, 1941, for a period of 99 years at the sum of \$1 per year.
- Shaw Field was activated on August 30, 1941. On February 19, 1942, the school’s first 130 students graduated. In 1942, 2,450 cadets graduated from the school.
- Between 1942 and 1945, approximately 8,600 pilots graduated from the Army Air Corps basic flying school there. This included American, British, Canadian, and French cadets.
- Members of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) were stationed at Shaw Field for almost 20 months. The first contingent was activated on June 7, 1943 with two officers and twelve enlisted women. This section grew to nearly 100 until they were transferred to various new locations in 1945.
- Approximately 13 Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) were stationed at Shaw Field. These pilots were part of the 1,074 women who ferried and tested aircraft across the United States.
- Shaw Field also served as a prisoner-of-war (POW) camp from March 1945 to the beginning of 1946, housing about 175 prisoners in an encampment just off the main base. The prisoners worked in local agricultural jobs.



Read to Connect

Teacher Note: Shaw Army Air Base, or Shaw Field, is called Shaw Air Force Base today (since January 1948). It was established as a training base for the Army Air Corps. The three readings below highlight unique stories and the diversity of those who worked there, such as [WAC grandmothers](#), African American service members, and a father-son duo. For more focused information on the [WASPs](#), see [Lesson 2](#).

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

Teacher Note: Use the Quotations to Consider with the reading to learn more about WAC roles at Shaw Field.

Shaw Field's WAC Grandmas Hold Down Important Posts

The Sumter Daily Item, October 1, 1943

The first American grandmother to enroll in the Women's Auxiliary Corps is now stationed at Shaw Field. She is First Lieutenant Frances Hunter Bruce, whose daughter presented her with a grandson just eight days before she became a WAAC.

Although she was the first grandmother in the nation to join the armed forces, Lieutenant Bruce was not the first WAC grandmother assigned to Shaw Field. This distinction belongs to Second Lieutenant Helen M. Smith, who has been here since August 25.

The two WAC grandmothers came up through the ranks. They both pulled K.P. [kitchen patrol] and underwent strenuous basic training given all auxiliaries before they got their chance to attend officers' candidate school. That they made good is self evident. Lieutenant Bruce is assistant purchasing agent and contracting officer in the quartermaster department and Lieutenant Smith is assistant unit personnel officer.

Among the First

Lieutenant Bruce began her basic training in July 1942 with the first contingent of WAACs assigned to Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Lieutenant Smith joined six months later, but would have been among the first if she had been able to produce an official copy of her birth certificate.

It was while Lieutenant Smith was in basic training that she received the news of the arrival of her granddaughter.

Both officers were active business women in civilian life. Lieutenant Bruce of Los Angeles, Calif., was a financial investigator for Los Angeles County, and Lieutenant Smith, of Chicago, Ill., was secretary to Commonwealth Edison's general manager of merchandise sales.

They were also active in civilian defense work long before the Woman's Army Auxiliary Corps was organized. When the opportunity was given them to relieve men for combat, the two grandmothers did not hesitate to sign up for duty. As Lieutenant Bruce expresses it, "We were anxious to get into the war on a working basis." . . .

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

1. What made Lieutenant Bruce and Lieutenant Smith notable within the WAC?
2. Why might the newspaper emphasize that these women were grandmothers? What message does that intend to send to readers at the time? (Ex. Consider the role of propaganda)
3. What backgrounds did Lieutenant Bruce and Smith have, and how did this support their role as a WAC?

Quotations to Consider:

4. What types of work could a woman do as a WAC at Shaw Field?
5. Compare the recruitment article quotation (1943) to the quotation from the 1945 article about WACs leaving Shaw Field. How do the purposes of these pieces differ?

By the Numbers and Photos

6. Examine the photos showing the before and after the construction of Shaw Field. What surprises you or interests you about the photos?
7. What was the overall purpose of Shaw Field? What roles and groups of people supported its operations?

Reading 2: Newspaper Article

Background: The following text uses historical racial language that is not used today. African American service members at Shaw Field were in segregated units. They were limited in opportunities there due to racial discrimination and served in areas such as mechanics and maintenance. The [Tuskegee Airmen](#) did not train at Shaw Field; however, four service members from Sumter County did become Tuskegee Airmen. The military was segregated until 1948, when President Truman signed [Executive Order 9981](#).

Colored Soldiers Complete Mechanics' Course At Post

The Sumter Daily Item, December 15, 1942

The first colored soldiers at Shaw Field to complete a special course in aircraft maintenance and inspection, offered by the post technical inspector, have now taken their places on the line as valuable aircraft mechanics.

Their theoretical training finished, they will now receive practical experience which will prepare them for the jobs of crew chiefs and technical inspectors with colored flying outfits.

Chosen for their educational background and previous experiences with airplanes, these soldiers received two hours of instruction each day for a period of six weeks. The class began with more than twenty students, but only the following completed the course: Sergeants Albert H. Brown and John R. Brooks; Corporal William Snell; Privates First Class Nolan Moore, Benjamin Jackson; and Privates John Wilkes, George Bradley, James Brewer, Frederick Hughes, and Withey Davis.

An idea conceived by Col. Burton M. Hovey, Jr., post commanding officer, the course in maintenance and inspection was conducted by Captain Emil Brenckman, post technical inspector, who gave the colored students a thorough knowledge of the airplane, its parts and assemblies, and the use of inspection forms and maintenance records.

‘The ten men who completed the course made splendid grades on their examinations,’ stated Captain Brenckman, ‘and I feel sure that they will continue to maintain their high standards while working on the line.’

During the course, Captain Brenckman was assisted by 1st Lt. Yates Howell and M-Sgt. P.H. Flanagan, instructors in electrical equipment.

The course, as outlined by Captain Brenckman, covered the following topics: fire and safety; identification and functioning of parts, assemblies, and accessories of aircraft and engines; internal combustion engine principles; the visual inspection system as prescribed by the Chief, Army Air Forces; inspection procedure; technical order; their purpose and filling; use and purpose of Air Forces forms; pre-flight training; and proper use of tools.

Classes were held each afternoon in the 15th Aviation Squadron dayroom where training manuals and technical publications were made available to the students by the post technical inspection department.

Cooperating with Captain Brenckman on the organization of the class was Major Wade T. Leary, commanding officer of the 15th Aviation Squadron.

Questions for Reading 2

1. What kinds of topics were covered in the training?
2. How does the article show the challenges and importance of aircraft maintenance work?
3. How does this training program both expand opportunities and reflect limitations placed on African American service members?
4. How does this article portray African American service members and their contributions to the war effort?

Photo



Figure 7: Alfred B. Capell, 51, right, is serving with his son, Maxwell C. Capell, 18, both as enlisted mechanics at Shaw Field basic flying school. This photo was printed with **Reading 3** in *The Sumter Daily Item*, January 30, 1943.

Reading 3: Newspaper Article

Father and Son Working For Uncle Sam At Shaw Field

The Sumter Daily Item, January 30, 1943

Pvt. Alfred B. Capell, at 51, is seeing his second World War as a member of America's armed forces – with his son at his side.

Here at this basic flying school, in the swirling but systematized scramble to get hundreds of new pilots trained for combat, the Charlotte, N.C., father and his 19-year-old son are helping to 'keep 'em flying' and are enjoying the unique privilege of working side by side on important jobs.

The elder Capell is assigned as a mechanic on the line, and is charged with the responsibility of seeing that planes which are used by the aviation cadets in training flights are fit for service. His son, Maxwell C. Capell, works both as a mechanic and as a dispatcher, with the two jobs equally important. As a dispatcher, he helps keep the flight

plans in smooth operation, governing take-offs and landings to insure safety in both operations.

On their service records, both Capells are listed as 'recruits,' products of a mass enlistment drive for skilled mechanics and technicians which netted Shaw Field more than 1,700 new men in September and October.

Young Capell's enlistment was a 'natural.' He came into the branch of service where his mechanical aptitude would serve him best and he's happy with his new job. But with his father, it's a different story, in view of his being draft-exempt.

'I already had sent one boy to the service,' he explained today, 'and when I saw the other boy going, I started figuring things out. It wasn't hard to remember serving in the first World War, the one we figured was going to end all wars. And it just didn't seem right for me to stay at home when the boys were in uniform – for I don't feel too old.'

At the time they enlisted 'Dad' was civilian superintendent of a Charlotte, N.C. sanitorium [sic]. The recruiting officers made a big fuss over the fact that a father and son were joining up together but to the enlistees, it seemed like the natural thing to do.

They ran into a slight hitch, however, Maxwell lacked five days of being 18 years of age, so they had to stay around waiting to take the oath. There was no question about 'Dad' being old enough when they raised their right hands on Oct. 14, 1942.

A few days at Camp Croft, S.C., then one week at Fort Jackson, S.C., saw the recruits through their outfitting and classification processes. Then came the transfer to Shaw Field and the start of their 'on the job' training as aircraft mechanics.

Attached to 'Dad's' military service record is a brief outline of his record in the first World War. He served with the 81st Infantry division overseas and saw action in the battles of the Argonne and Metz. He is a native of North Carolina and was born and reared in Richmond County.

The other son, Fred B. Capell, 21, 'ranks' his father and brother, holding the stripes of a corporal in Panama, where he is serving with the Coast Artillery. The third child in the family, Virginia Rose Capell, 20, is completing her studies this year on a business administration course at Queens College, Charlotte, while the mother of the family, Mrs. A. B. Capell, is a housewife (at 416 W. 9th Street) in Charlotte.

How long the father and son will remain together is a question which only the fortunes of war can decide. The youngster wants to go to a technical training school to learn advanced aeronautical mechanics and this may split up the novel combination.

When they started their basic training, the youngster didn't have much trouble for it was all new to him, but 'Dad' ran into a bit of difficulty on the various facing positions and marching orders, for the stream-lined Army has changed somewhat and the commands are a little different than they were in the first World War.

'I got over the confusion in a hurry,' he laughs, 'for a father doesn't want to be the misfit in the ranks, especially when his son is watching. Now I know the new Army's way of marching and drilling and I'm having a swell time.'

Right now, however, they're buck privates, waiting for ratings to come along. The 'old man' says he wouldn't mind it too much if his son became a private first class or corporal before he got his stripes, but that's a father's pride.

The 'Fighting Capells' are doing all right in Uncle Sam's Army – and there's even talk about Virginia Rose joining the WAACS when she finishes college in June.

Questions for Reading 3

1. What previous military experience did Alfred Capell have before this war?
2. Why did Alfred Capell decide to enlist even though he was draft-exempt?
3. What work did Alfred and Maxwell do at Shaw Field? Why was this important to the training happening there?
4. How were the other siblings involved, or planned to be involved, in the war?
5. Why might the newspaper share a story about a father and son serving together?
What message does this send to readers on the home front?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did aviation training and operations at Shaw Field contribute to the success of the United States in the war?

Extensions

1) Exploring Oral Histories

Support students in using the [Veterans History Project from the Library of Congress](#) to locate oral history interviews of pilots who trained at Shaw Field, and women who served in various roles within the WAAC and WASPs. Students can search the project's service history records by location to identify service members who were stationed at Shaw Field. After reviewing additional interview(s), students should report new details they learn about

military duties and social life and compare these insights with the sources and readings included in this lesson.

Note: Oral histories from the Library of Congress are used in [Lesson 2](#) to support students in learning about the WASPS.

2) Shaw Field as a Prisoner-of-War Camp

Shaw Field served as a prisoner-of-war (POW) camp for German prisoners from March 1945 to the beginning of 1946. The 175 prisoners lived in an encampment just off the main base and supported local agricultural efforts until they were sent back to Europe.

The *Sumter Daily Item* had a brief article titled “Prisoners of War Available for S.C. Farm Work This Year” on October 5, 1945. It included the following information that would have also applied to the Shaw Field POW camp:

“The South Carolina Farm Bureau has petitioned the War Department through United States senators and congressmen to retain in this country war prisoner labor until the present acute farm labor shortage situation is relieved. . . . Assurance has been received today that prisoners of war will be available for farm labor throughout the harvesting season this year. It is feared, however, that the labor shortage will extend into or perhaps through 1946.”

Although there is little information available on the Shaw Field POW camp outside of the agricultural connection, you may support students’ research of it and compare it to prisoner-of-war camps in other Heritage Cities (such as [Tempe, Arizona](#), [Ponca City and Kay County, Oklahoma](#), and [Ogden, Utah](#)). These POW camps also supported meeting the demands of agricultural labor needs.

Additional Resources

[Looking back on seven decades of difference](#) from Shaw Air Force Base

[Lt. Shaw: 100 years later](#) from Shaw Air Force Base

[Shaw Air Force Base: South Carolina Encyclopedia](#)

Lesson 2: The WASPs in Sumter City and County, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Sumter City and County, South Carolina](#), [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos for students to learn about the role and impact of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) who supported the Army Air Forces at Shaw Field. The readings include newspaper articles and oral histories of WASPs who served at Shaw Field. Alongside the readings are photographs that include these specific women. The readings also connect to challenges faced by WASPs related to benefits. They served as civilians and were not granted veteran status by the federal government until 1977.

Objectives:

1. Explain the role of the WASPs in supporting the Army Air Forces and their connection to Shaw Field.
2. Describe challenges faced by women in the WASPs and their accomplishments despite these challenges.
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 (and optional extension reading)
3. *Recommended:* Map of South Carolina, with Sumter City and County marked



Getting Started: Essential Question

How did WASPs support operations at Shaw Field, and what challenges did they face in doing so?

Photos



Figure 8: WASPs pictured at Shaw Army Air Base. This picture was printed in the paper alongside the extension – additional reading in this lesson. Back row (Lt to Rt): Cathleen Dooley, Marjorie Wakeham, Mary Ann Showers, Mary Ruth Rance, Yvonne "Pat" Pateman, and Eleanor Feeley; Front row (Lt to Rt): Beverly Dietrich (**Reading 3**), Marybelle Lyall, Marjorie Popell, Ethel Meyer (**Reading 2**), Irene McConihay, and Irene Minter (Image Courtesy WASP Archive, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX).



Figure 9: This photo accompanied **Reading 1** in *The Sumter Daily Item* on Dec. 18, 1943. Two WASPs having a "wing talk" - Ethel Meyer is seated in the cockpit, and Marjorie Popell at the wing. Meyer's oral history is **Reading 2** in this lesson.



Figure 10: "Shaw AAB, Sumpter, South Carolina. Ethel Meyer (**Reading 2**), Marybelle Lyall, Marjorie Popell, Beverly Dietrich (**Reading 3**), Irene McConihay, Irene Minter, Cathleen Dooley, and Mary Rance" (Image Courtesy WASP Archive, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX).



By the numbers:

- More than 25,000 women applied to be in the WASPs. Only 1,074 graduated from the intense training and became WASPs. 13 WASPs were stationed at Shaw Field.
- "WASPS (Women's Airforce Service Pilots) are at present civil servants and are paid \$150 a month upon graduation. They receive \$6 a day for expenses when away from their bases, and when at the base live as junior officers, paying for their own lodging and mess." (From *The Sumter Daily Item*, February 15, 1944) [*\$150 is the equivalent of just under \$2,800 today.*]
- 38 WASPs died in service, including one at Shaw Field, in accidents during training or ferrying planes. As the women were classified as civil servants rather than members of the military, the federal government did not pay for death-related expenses for these pilots.



Quotations to consider: Pushback against the WASPs

“I was a civilian as a WASP. A Woman Airforce Service Pilot. We were given the honor of being taught to be Army Air Force pilots. We were very experimental and very controversial by some people. . . . Congress didn’t - half of Congress didn’t – three quarters of Congress - didn’t want us. We were pushed in by [Jacqueline Cochran](#), Eleanor Roosevelt, and a few other people. Hap Arnold, also. Having women fly Army planes was scaring a lot of people.”

- Eleanor Lillian Lawry, WASP veteran, interviewed on January 16, 2006, for the Veterans History Project. The full interview can be [accessed here](#).

“Nine hundred flying instructors have already been cut loose by the Civil Aeronautics Administration, another 4,000 are expected to be out by June 30. A similar number now studying to be instructors may wind up with nobody to teach.

All this is reason enough for the House committee investigating Civil Service to take a close look at the Women’s Air Force Service Patrol training program: 500 receiving instruction, 500 signed up and ready. The girls ferry planes, tow targets, etc. It seems foolish to pay for their training when experienced men pilots, unfit for combat service, are being turned off. It isn’t the principle of the thing. It’s a matter of \$6,500,000 for WASP training.”

- Opinion newspaper piece in the *Sumter Daily Item* on April 24, 1944, advocating for disbanding the WASPs

[Note: “Turned off” refers to “turning off” combat pilots overseas and sending them back to the home front for military service. You will be able to connect this quotation to details in Reading 3.]



Read to Connect

Teacher Note: Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) were not militarized. WASPs were classified as federal civil service employees and were not sent into combat. In 1977 the federal government granted women who served as WASPs veteran status. You can use the article [Women Airforce Service Pilots \(WASP\)](#) from the National Park Service as an additional background text for students. The article also includes information on diversity and discrimination in the WASPs. There was a small number of accepted Asian American, Native American, and Latina pilots, but there were no African American pilots admitted into the program.

Reading 1 announces the arrival of the WASPs at Shaw Field. The additional reading (extension) can be used to close the lesson, as it shares about the departure of the WASPs from Shaw Field and connects to both women from Reading 2 and 3. Readings 2 and 3 are oral histories from individual WASPs.

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

Women Pilots at Shaw

The Sumter Daily Item, December 18, 1943

Something new was added to Shaw's highly specialized personnel this week, and it came in the form of two lady flyers who will take their turn with certain flying jobs at the base.

They are Ethel Meyer, of Lake City, Minn., and Marjorie Popell, of Miami, Fla., both wear the wings of Women Army Service Pilots. They are the first to be assigned for duty at Shaw Field.

Coming to the base from a ferrying command assignment in Dallas, Texas, the two WASPs have drawn important jobs with the operations and engineering section down on the flight line. They are doing test piloting and plane ferrying work.

Both of the young women are graduates of the WASP Training School in Sweetwater, Texas, where the Air Forces put these women auxiliary flyers through six months of strenuous training before they win their wings and get their first duty assignment. Before qualifying for WASP training, the women flyers are required to have a minimum of 35 hours of civilian flying training to their credit.

Although the WASP dons the sturdy leather jacket and olive drab clothing of the regular Army flyer during duty hours, she is still a civilian, and when working hours are over, she quickly changes into the chic young miss which is the modern American woman.

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

1. How does the article connect the WASPs' identity to both military and civilian life? How were the women technically classified? (*Explore these ideas further with Readings 2 and 3 of this lesson.*)
2. What do the "By the Numbers" statistics suggest about some of the challenges of becoming and being a WASP?
3. Why might WASPs have been considered "controversial," based on both the reading and the quotations?
4. How did the work of WASPs at Shaw Field challenge traditional gender roles at the time? Use evidence from across the primary sources used so far.

Photo



Figure 11: Ethel Meyer Finley (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress – Veterans History Project; Ethel Meyer Finley Collection)

Reading 2: Oral History

Teacher Tip: You can use the video titled [“Talking with the Past #2: Oral History”](#) from the National Park Service to support students in analysis of oral histories (both for Reading 2 and Reading 3).

Oral History Excerpts: Ethel Meyer Finley

Ethel Meyer Finley (1920-2006) was interviewed by Nancy Durr on September 25, 1998. The full interview can be [accessed here](#) from the Veterans History Project. (Minor editing to the three excerpts has been done to support student readability, such as adding subheadings.) She is pictured in three of the other photos in this lesson as well.

Before Joining the WASPS

. . . Ethel Finley (EF): I was not even aware that the WASP program existed. Perhaps someone has told you the story of how we were recruited for the program. [Jacqueline Cochran](#) was told that she could get a list of people with many hours. She already had set

up a small office space in the basement of a government building and had bigger plans. She listed all the women who had any flying time. She had a file of over 3,000 women with differing amounts of time. She had gotten the list from the CAA files so this was perhaps a complete list of women with any flying time. In selecting women to be contacted, she took those with the most hours first.

Nancy Durr (ND): I know that [WASP classes] 43-1 and 43-2 needed 500 hours. So 43-5, how many hours did you need?

EF: Well, they said 100, but not everybody had that many. I had 150. And I'll tell you how I got them. It was interesting. I still didn't have any money to fly. I had graduated and started looking for a job. One of the requirements was that it be close enough to Winona so I could continue flying. . . . I got a job in a little town called Rushford, practically on the Iowa border - twenty miles from Winona. And, for 100 dollars a month I had to teach everything under the sun, because that is what you did those days. Basically, I taught Math, Science, and Physical Education courses. . . .

So I decided that I would fly weekends. By this time, I had used some of the first money I had earned to buy a bicycle. We had a rooming house where for 30 dollars a month we could have room and board. I lived there with three other teachers. Most weekends I would catch a ride with someone and take my bike along in case I needed to ride it back on Sunday. Soon Max [instructor and friend] said, you are not making much headway in this flying training on this schedule.

I thought I would try going to air traffic school and see if I could make more money. The school was in Chicago, and I hated it. So Max came to the rescue and offered me a job operating the Link trainer which is an instrument simulator. He was giving Northwest Airline pilots their instrument time. So I took the job and got free flying time. I wasn't there long. I had taught school a year and six weeks. There was Pearl Harbor Day, and I knew I had to do something different. I remember Pearl Harbor Day very vividly 'cause I was teaching school and they called everybody into the gymnasium and announced what had happened and turned the radio on for Roosevelt's speech. So that's when Max said, I think it's time to make up your mind if you are going to do this. So then I started getting my flight (hours). . . .

[Finley joined the WASPS and completed WASP training in Sweetwater, Texas.]

Shaw Field

EF: . . . But then within a short time, they decided to send us out to Shaw Field in Sumter, South Carolina. There we got a lot of flying time flying non-flying personnel and test flying for engineering. We could take cross-country flights on weekends within a thousand-mile radius in order to keep our proficiency in navigation.

ND: And now an engineering flight, is that like a test?

EF: When flying for engineering, you are really a maintenance pilot. You do slow-time on engines after overhaul or installation of new engines and check on the write-up of cadets as to some malfunction, etc. I think we had only one true test pilot, Ann Baumgartner Carl. I don't know if you have interviewed her yet - she was the first woman to fly a jet. She was stationed at [Wright-Patterson](#) and tested new equipment and planes. But I don't really consider our engineering assignment to be labeled test pilot. We went up and checked the planes, but not in the true sense of the word testing.

Being one of the earlier classes and home-based, we got a lot of flying time. We must have had 500 hours when we were asked to go to instructor's school. They wanted to see if women could instruct men in flying. The war still wasn't going that hot. So, I think it must have been February when we received orders to go to Randolph Field, Texas. We received instruction in flying from the back seat - until this time we always flew from the front seat. We were taught acrobatics and formation flying (including take-offs and landings) all from the back seat.

ND: Oh, you got to do formation flying?

EF: Oh, yes. We were going to teach this. Then we were sent back to Shaw Field. . . .

We really had fun with the guys because we had been flying with them, and we ate with them and spent time with them. We were flying or doing something all the time. Even after we were instructing, since I loved to fly so much, I would go to operations on weekends and ask, anything you need done? We'd fly non-flying personnel or do whatever they wanted us to do. One month I flew 147 hours; I got called in on that. . . . I had more flying time for the month than anyone on the field. The same Fleet Osborne called me in and asked, "What are you trying to do?" This was October, I remember vividly, the October before we were going to be sent home. And I said, well, I decided I might as well get it while I can, and he just laughed. So if you could say that it was a good experience, and a happy one - we had it.

. . .

Reflecting on Time in the WASPs

. . . ND: So, one of the questions I wanted to ask you - How do you feel your WASP experience influenced the rest of your life?

EF: Well, I don't know. I would say for one thing, I don't think it is because I am old-fashioned or trying to project my values on the next generation. The influence that women have in running a household and how much time it takes and the value of it, I feel it is very important. I had the satisfying experience as a WASP prior to getting married. I did not feel

the need for my own self-image to make a place in the outside world. I think that was one of the big influences. Also it gave me an awful lot of confidence, not that I didn't have it, but it kind of really brought it out that to be responsible for those types of airplanes, to be responsible in teaching other people the value in flying.

I think those are probably the most obvious, but also I think I'm a flag waver, and I would say if there were a secondary thing that all of us had was a very great sense of patriotism. And I'm not embarrassed about being a flag waver today. . . . I think that [peace] was one of the things that was a very much a factor in many of our lives at that time. You know, I wasn't just a starry-eyed kid; I still really believe in our country, and patriotism and the values. And even when I go abroad, I'm glad to get home. I still have that great feeling of it." . . .

Questions for Reading 2

1. Who recruited women pilots for the WASP program? How were they initially selected?
2. What happened on Pearl Harbor Day that influenced Finley's decisions?
3. How does Finley explain her work in maintenance and testing?
4. Why might the military have been interested in testing whether women could instruct men in flying? What does this show about attitudes at the time?
5. How does Finley's reflection help explain motivations for her participation in wartime efforts?

Photo



Figure 12: Beverly Dietrich Wilkinson (**Reading 3** - oral history) being carried to the Wishing Well at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas in 1944. The Wishing Well was a tradition for trainees. WASP cadets were tossed into the "wishing well" by fellow trainees to celebrate the solo flight milestone. (Image Courtesy WASP Archive, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX).

Reading 3: Oral History

Oral History Excerpts: Beverly Jeanne (Dietrich) Wilkinson

Beverly Jeanne Wilkinson (b. 1924) was interviewed by Jolene Pierson, July 29, 2008. The full interview can be [accessed here](#) from the Veterans History Project. The excerpts have been selected to share highlights, and subheadings added for organization. The transcript has been edited only for clarity. Wilkinson (maiden name, Dietrich) is pictured in three photos in this lesson.

Joining the WASPs

. . . Beverly Jeanne Wilkinson (BW): I was living in Phoenix, Arizona.

Jolene Pierson (JP): What prompted you to join?

BW: I was working out at Luke Air Force Base in one of the hangars as a supply clerk. And I watched the airplanes landing and taking off, and I met a handsome cadet who was training there, and he loved flying so much that I got the flying bug, and I wanted to join the WASPs. He later was my husband, after he got back from the wars. But I read in the Life magazine on the front page – the cover page – they had this woman pilot sitting on an airplane wing. And told all about how they were training in Texas, and I decided I had to join and try to get into the program.

Luckily, my mother was very cooperative. She lived in Reno and she knew of a flying service out in Yerington – near Reno where I could get my 35 hours in, in order to join. So, I went right up there and got my 35 hours. But, luckily while I was still in Phoenix, I called Jacqueline Cochran, who was the leader of the program, and said, “If you ever lowered the program age, I’m 18 and a half and I’m not 21, but if you should lower the age, would you let me know?”

She called me back just the very same day and said, “We’re lowering the age to 18 and a half and you’re in. You can have your interview at the Westward Ho [hotel in Phoenix] with a famous flying pilot [Maxine Howard].” And who was doing the interviewing, luckily, that day.

And I went down and got my interview, and she said, “You’re accepted - just as soon as you get your 35 hours.”

I had no logged hours. I had been a passenger a lot, but I hadn’t really gotten my pilot’s license. All that I needed was the 35 hours. I didn’t even have to have my pilot license, but I did get it. So, she said as soon as your instructor sends a telegram to me, we’ll assign you to a class. By this time, I was still in Reno. They sent me a telegram, and then I immediately got on a train and went to Sweetwater, Texas. . . .

Shaw Field

[After training in Sweetwater] Then I was in South Carolina for two months...

JP: In South Carolina. How was that?

BW: Very nice. They were nice to us. One critique of us after the war said that we were just looking for husbands. One of the male pilots. And then he later married a WASP! But he put this in the critique, which I saw years later. We were certainly not there looking for husbands because we were busy flying. It was dangerous.

JP: What was the danger?

BW: I was a test pilot. Engineering test pilot. They fixed the airplane after it had malfunctioned or whatever – crashed. And they fixed it, and then we had to take it around a pattern and test it out with loops and rigid testing to make sure that it was all fixed before the little male cadets could be flying.

Now the WASP ahead of me was killed flying. The one I replaced was killed flying. She said – it was written up on the engineering status that the left wing ran - hung low when you turned. And they said they had fixed it. Well, it did go low when she came in to land. It dipped and twisted her upside down, and she crashed. So, they hadn't fixed it. . . .

JP: Did you get any special training to do this testing, beyond what the ordinary training was?

BW: No. (Laughs)

JP: My gosh.

BW: No, they just said - take it up, fly it, and give us the OK to release it. So, we did.

JP: How many of those planes did you fly, do you think?

BW: I mainly flew the AT-6 which was an advanced trainer, and the BT-13 which was the middle instrument trainer. I flew those there. Those were the ones that were stationed there.

JP: And how many of those flights did you make?

BW: Oh, I don't know. I also did delivery work. I flew them - some of the planes to Tennessee and to Georgia. I don't know how many flights. I'd have it in my logbook, I suppose. I would maybe say twenty or maybe more.

JP: How was the experience in South Carolina different than in Sweetwater, or was it? Aside from flying, of course?

BW: The reception by the South Carolina people was very nice. They served picnics for us. They had watermelon feasts for us. They were lovely to us. And they were in Sweetwater, too. Sweetwater people. Which was a very small town. They were very nice to us. They had us into their homes and even to this day we still have reunions there and they sponsor them.

JP: So the civilians were very supportive?

BW: Yes. After the WASPs I was ferrying Worcester-plus airplanes into Reno. I remember one time a pilot came up to me and he said, "You women shouldn't have been in the service. You took our jobs." So that's the only time I ever had any feeling of any discrimination against us. He was a civilian by then, but he evidently resented women pilots. . . .

After the War and Reflection

JP: When you were going to school, you of course, weren't eligible for the GI bill?

BW: No.

JP: Did you resent that?

BW: No. We were just so happy to fly those beautiful airplanes. We didn't resent anything. We were just lucky, and we knew it. So, we would have loved to have had it, but Congress said no. I think we missed it by only eight votes. . . .

. . . Well, when one of us was killed in the WASPs, we had to take a collection to ship the body home. We were civil service and that wasn't part of our benefits. We were civilians as far as they were concerned. And so, we did take quite a few collections, which was terrible, I thought. But at that time, we didn't really fight hard enough. We should have fought.

We were busy flying, so we didn't go and lobby Congress back then. And we should have. We should have helped Jacqueline Cochran because she was really fighting for us - so hard. But we weren't given leave to go to Washington, D.C. or anything. We probably should have. Then Congress might have known what we were doing. We were ferrying, testing, instructing. We were doing all the activities that the males were doing. . . And we were successful. Our injury and fatality rate was very low, and it was difficult to get through.

Like 132 of us in my class started— no 108 of us started - and only 32 of us graduated and got our wings. So, it was a very difficult training, and you had to be a good pilot, or you just didn't get sent out into the airfields. So, we didn't have any trouble with that when we got to the airfields. . . .

Ferry pilots flew every kind of airplane. They had a much lower rate than the male ferry pilots because they didn't party at night and then get up in the morning. They sat in the airplane learning how to fly. They flew a different airplane every time they landed and delivered one, they'd get into a different airplane.

They had to learn all these different airplanes, so they'd sit in the cockpit at night studying the instruments. They were very dedicated, very, very good. They became famous, too. They flew under [Nancy Love](#). She was in charge of the ferry command, while General Cochran was in charge of the training command for the WASP. . . .

Questions for Reading 3

1. How did Wilkinson learn about the WASPs?
2. What was Wilkinson's job at Shaw Field, and how was it important to Shaw Field operations?
3. Why did Wilkinson share that WASPs should have fought for benefits? What reason did she give for not having time to go to D.C. to do so?
4. How did the civilian classification of WASPs create challenges for the women? Why might members of Congress have voted against the military status of the WASPs at the time? *[Additional optional resource to explore this question: "[1944 & HR 4219 – The Legislation to Militarize the WASP \(Part I\)](#)" from the National WASP World War II Museum. You can also connect back to the second "Quotation to Consider."]*
5. How are oral histories helpful for understanding perspectives from the home front? What are some of their limitations?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: How did WASPs support operations at Shaw Field, and what challenges did they face in doing so?

How do the different primary sources in this lesson show both progress and limitations in women's roles during the war?

Extension

Additional Reading

Teacher Note: Ethel Meyer (from [Reading 2](#)) and Beverly Dietrich (from [Reading 3](#)) are quoted in this article. This article shared that the WASPs were to leave Shaw Field, in contrast to [Reading 1](#), which announced their arrival. The WASPs left Shaw Field as the

program was *deactivated* on December 20, 1944. This was after Congress rejected a bill to militarize the pilots. In addition, there was political pressure from male pilots needing jobs after returning from combat at a time where the end of the war seemed imminent.

To Keep Flying is Desire of Most of Shaw's Wasps (Shaw Field News)

The Sumter Daily Item, December 15, 1944

By next Wednesday, December 20, 1944, the WASP will be no more. However, the women who make up the Women's Army Service Pilots are still looking skyward for their future. At least Shaw's thirteen Wasps are.

There is only one among them who intends to get a ground job. She is Mrs. Betty M. LeFevre, wife of Lt. William A. LeFevre, who is in France. She intends to 'get a ground job and wait for my husband to return home. Then I'll really settle down in a home.'

Mrs. LeFevre has been a Wasp for one year and nine months. She has been a test pilot here since last August, and prior to coming to Shaw she was stationed at Jackson Army Air Base, Miss., where she was a staff pilot.

Misses Ethel Meyer and Marjorie Popell, both unmarried, and the first two Wasps to report to Shaw Field in December 1943, are anxious to get 'some kind of flying job.' They have sent letters to various Cub plane manufacturers without much luck yet. They have heard that there are some flying jobs open in Mexico, Alaska and South America – flying jobs like ferrying TNT. They have found that there is still some prejudice among civilian firms against 'female flyers' -- even though at Shaw they have been instructors with great success.

'I would like to go overseas,' says Miss Irene R. Minter, who has been test piloting and ferrying at Shaw, 'but first I'm going to get my instructor's rating and try to get a job instructing.'

With 45 hours of civilian flying and 11 months in the WASP, Miss Beverly J. Dietrich is 'going to Mexico with five other Wasps – to do absolutely nothing for two or three months.' She then hopes to get a flying job when she returns. At Shaw, she did testing and ferrying.

'I still intend to fly if possible after Dec. 20th,' says Miss Irene E. McConihay, 'but if I can't, I'll just get an office job.'

Questions for Additional Reading

1. How do the different WASPs' plans connect to their experiences during the war?
2. What challenges did Meyer and Popell face when looking for flying jobs outside of the WASPs?

3. How does this article show an example of the contrast between wartime and postwar opportunities for women?
4. If the WASP program had continued, how might their career paths have been different?

[For context, WASPs were given veteran status in 1977, over 30 years after the end of the war. Women began entering Air Force pilot training in 1976 and fighter pilot training in 1993. The WASPs received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2010.]

Lesson 3: Home Front Volunteerism in Sumter City and County, World War II Heritage City

About this Lesson

This lesson is part of a series about the World War II home front in [Sumter City and County, South Carolina, World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains readings and photos to contribute to learners' understandings about how local people, including civilians and service members, engaged in home front activities to both support the armed services and meet every day needs of those living on the home front. The readings share examples of women volunteering in the Red Cross, children engaging in the Junior Red Cross, and victory garden efforts (including one at Shaw Field Hospital).

Objectives:

1. Identify examples of ways local people, including children, contributed to home front causes.
2. Explain how some home front volunteer efforts supported both the armed forces and everyday needs of those living on the home front.
3. Compare local historical perspectives on service to synthesize and connect to larger wartime perspectives and themes.

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 13-17 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, 3
3. *Recommended:* Map of South Carolina, with Sumter City and County marked



Getting Started: Essential Question

How did people, including children, in Sumter City and County support the war effort through home front activities?

Photos



Figure 13: Mrs. A.M. Francis' kindergarten class. The girls in the picture wore Red Cross uniforms, and boys were dressed in soldier and sailor uniforms. The photo was titled, "Kindergarten Kids Ready for Action." (The Sumter Daily Item, April 17, 1942).



Figure 14: Virginia Ann Harvin (holding the patriotic-themed V for Victory) was crowned the Queen of Victory at a special program by St. Catherine's Kindergarten class. Kindergarteners had roles such as Uncle Sam, color bearers, Miss America, and soldiers, and performed patriotic songs. (The Sumter Daily Item, May 19, 1945.)



Figure 15: Alice Moore and Margaret Yeadon, Nurse's Aides in training, attend to some of the needs of Ladson Boyle, a patient at the local hospital, under the watchful supervision of their instructress, Mrs. W. W. Hill. (*The Sumter Daily Item*, March 27, 1943.)



Figure 16: The Surgical Dressings Packing Committee working in the Red Cross rooms at Edmunds High School. The dressings in the picture were part of a shipment of 100,000 that were made in 5 months in January 1943. An additional 55,000 were made and packed by February 22. 216 volunteers worked on the project last month, and 414 volunteers in total had helped the Red Cross at this department by that time. (*The Sumter Daily Item*, February 20, 1943).



Read to Connect

Teacher Note: The lesson's readings share examples of how local civilians and service members contributed to the home front war efforts. If looking to shorten the overall lesson, you could divide the class into three groups, where each group takes a reading and reports back on the local home front activities to the whole group.

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

For Red Cross Workers

It's Women At War Week

Fifty-two Weeks a Year

The Sumter Daily Item, November 28, 1942

This is Women at War Week. As far as the American Red Cross is concerned, however, there are 52 weeks a year in which the women are at war. Right here in Sumter, approximately 50 percent of our women are giving regular service through the Red Cross and many more who are not actively working for it are contributing generously to its War Fund. The Red Cross, of course, does not make weapons of war but it does the equally important and more merciful service of alleviating the suffering which war causes to both combatants and civilians.

To help bind up the wounds of war American women through the Red Cross make 90 percent of the surgical dressings to be used for our armed forces. More than three hundred women are working regularly at our own surgical dressings room, their only reward for their hours of monotonous work being the satisfying knowledge that their contribution is vital and necessary. Some 500 women are using their spare hours at home knitting or sewing garments which will bring comfort and warmth not only to service men but to refugees and civilians distressed by war.

A group of particularly devoted women have volunteered their work as Nurse's Aides. Their hours are long and their work is hard and their services are almost indispensable. The skills which they learn while working with civilians here at the hospital would be invaluable in the case of a war disaster striking near us.

An even larger group has learned home nursing and stand ready to take care of their families and neighbors. Many have studied nutrition in order to keep their families in top physical shape for the war effort.

The uniforms of the Motor Corps and the canteen are already familiar sights to Sumter and the members of these organizations already have proved their ability to use their training and stand ready for larger service in case of necessity.

Two hundred and seventy-five Sumter women are now trained first aiders and know just what to do 'before the doctor comes.'

Another large group are doing their bit helping the children with their Junior Red Cross. These women, most of them teachers, have not only inspired the children in their money raising campaign but have helped them to do actual and direct service in making useful articles for the men in service.

The women on the Red Cross Camp and Hospital Committee have done wonderful work in furnishing dayrooms and getting equipment for Army hospitals and chapels.

There is the Staff Assistants Corps who do clerical work and are at the service of all the branches of the Red Cross.

Besides these women doing special service there are many in executive positions seeing that the work goes forward smoothly and efficiently on all fronts.

All these women are really at war. They are working quietly, devotedly and patriotically in the sure knowledge that they are contributing not only to victory but to a just and lasting peace.

Questions for Reading 1 and Photos

1. What percentage of women in Sumter were said to be involved in Red Cross work?
2. Identify examples of work done by women in the Red Cross on the home front.
3. Why does the article argue that women are "at war"?
4. In your opinion, does this article expand or reinforce traditional gender roles during World War II? Use evidence from the text.

Photos

5. Why do you think schools developed patriotic school programs and activities? How would this have supported home front war efforts, both locally and nationally?
6. Connect two of the photos to text details in Reading 1. How do they provide more details to support your understanding of the work of the Red Cross?



By the numbers: examples of financial and material donations

- In a [material drive](#) - specifically, a tin can collection competition - Floyd Reeser, a seventh-grade student at the Junior High School, brought in 2,400 tin cans to school. The total collection of cans for that week across schools was approximately 20,000 cans. (*The Sumter Daily Item*, February 20, 1943).
- A city bell was rung on September 30, 1943 to celebrate that Sumter County had passed its \$1,896,100 war loan quota in the Third War Loan Drive. It was the largest amount the county had ever been asked to raise. (*The Sumter Daily Item*, September 30, 1943).
- In a March 1945 Red Cross War fund drive, local school students and teachers contributed \$1,967.44. By May 1, 1945, Sumter County had contributed a total of \$44,838.52 to this drive, exceeding its quota by over \$10,000. (*The Sumter Daily Item*, March 12)

Reading 2: Newspaper Articles

Background: The Junior Red Cross was a youth volunteer organization that involved school-aged children in the war effort. The Junior Red Cross was a large organization in many home front cities, including other World War II Heritage Cities. You may wish to compare examples from below to other city examples, such as [Foley, Alabama](#), [East Hartford, Connecticut](#), [Paterson, New Jersey](#), and [Bedford County, Virginia](#). Below are three short, unique examples of Junior Red Cross work from Sumter City and County, South Carolina.

Part A: Junior Red Cross Work

The Sumter Daily Item, November 20, 1944

The seventh grade of Miller school made decorations for a Halloween party at Shaw Field hospital for the sick soldiers. The local Red Cross organization furnished the materials and we did the work.

We had such a jolly time carving out real pumpkins for jack-o-lanterns and cutting out cats, bats, and witches from black construction paper. A Red Cross nurse from Shaw Field came for the decorations and came back several days later to return some bought jack-o-lanterns that she borrowed from us. She told us that the boys enjoyed their party a great deal. They put a witch on the face of the clock so they wouldn't know the time. These decorations also served another purpose. They were used in the Nurses' Home after the party.

Part B: Junior Red Cross Sends Gifts to Allied Children

The Sumter Daily Item, December 5, 1944

Seventy-five compact boxes have just been shipped overseas bearing the greetings of the Sumter Junior Red Cross to children in distant lands. Precious as shipping space is, the government is allowing the young people of America to send gifts to add to the Christmas happiness of less fortunate children not only in the recently liberated countries but in many of the Allied nations.

The boxes going out from Sumter contained marbles, combs, soap, crayons, notebooks, barrettes and toothbrushes. These things packed so cleverly that they fitted into boxes 9 by 4 by 3.

Part C: Emergency Call For Wire Coat Hangers For Men In Service

The Sumter Daily Item, April 12, 1945

The American Red Cross has received an emergency request for metal coat hangers to be used by servicemen. Sumter county chapter has been asked to donate between 1,000 to 5,000 hangers before April 18th.

Those persons who have hangers that they are willing to donate are asked to turn them in at Red Cross Headquarters or to any member of the Junior Red Cross. Donors may also call 1355 and someone will pick up hangers.

Several bundles of hangers have already been turned in by the Junior Red Cross and it is hoped that Sumter can meet her quota. It has been stressed that only metal hangers are needed and that these should be tied in bundles.

Questions for Reading 2 and By the Numbers

1. What kinds of items were collected or created by Junior Red Cross students?
2. How did students contribute to the war effort in both local and global ways?
3. What do these examples suggest about the range of the types of activities of the Junior Red Cross?
4. How might these activities have shaped children's understanding of the war and their role in it?

By the Numbers

5. Why do you think newspapers published these contributions and milestones? (And photos like those included in this lesson)

6. How do Reading 2 and by the numbers show the idea that everyone (including children) was expected to “do their part” and contribute to the war effort?

Photo



Figure 17: “Pete the mule earns his daily oats plowing the victory garden for convalescents at the station hospital. Pvt. Sam Logan of Sumter (wearing an arm band) may be seen driving the mule while Cpl. Richard B. Robertson takes over the plow.” (The Sumter Daily Item, May 26, 1945) This photo was printed alongside **Reading 3: Part B**.



Quotations to consider: Victory Gardens

“Available at the offices of the county agent in the agricultural building are handbooks on the growing of victory gardens and also plans for a home-made lime spreader which may be manufactured from the rear axle of a T-model automobile.

The garden handbooks give advice about planting and raising vegetables under the victory garden program and also about the treatment of insects, etc.

Designs for the home-made lime spreader were first shown in Florence last fall. Both the pamphlets on it and the victory gardens are free to the general public.”

- “Pamphlets Available at County Agent’s Office,” *The Sumter Daily Item*, February 19, 1942.

“There’s not much choice now as to whether you’ll plant a victory garden or not. The old argument that you can buy garden produce cheaper than you can raise it, holds no more. One glance at the list of rationed canned goods and the points necessary to purchase them prove that a victory garden is a necessity.

It’s either plant your garden now or be sorry later. In that you can take your choice, as you can clearly see the consequences.”

- Opinion page within the *Sumter Daily Item*, March 6, 1943

Reading 3: Newspaper Articles

Teacher Note: The Reading 3 parts share about a victory garden planted at Shaw Field. (To learn more about Shaw Field, use Lesson 1.) The quotations to consider continue to build on the idea of the victory garden being both patriotic and necessary on the home front. The article [“The American Home Front During World War II: Rationing, Recycling, and Victory Gardens”](#) from the National Park Service, can also support students as a background text.

Part A: Squadron Plants Victory Garden

The Sumter Daily Item, April 23, 1943

The guardsmen and military police of the twenty-ninth guard squadron have figuratively beaten their swords into ploughshares. Acting on the suggestion of their commanding officer, Lieutenant Robert P. McRae, the men of the twenty-ninth have joined in the vast nation-wide food production program and have planted a victory garden.

The garden is located just outside the hospital gate and is expected to produce vegetables in sufficient quantities to provide many a day of rations for Shaw Field mess halls.

The victory garden marks the first entrance of Shaw Field into truck farming and judging by initial progress the results will be more than successful. Last year on the lawn of the old 91st Material squadron watermelons were cultivated, by mistake, when the watermelon seeds accidentally became mixed with the grass seed.

So whatever the condition of the nation’s larder come summer and fall, GI’s of Shaw Field will be assured of meat and vegetables on the table – for a few days, at least.

Part B: Updates on the Victory Garden

The Sumter Daily Item, May 26, 1945

Radishes grown in the hospital victory garden already have been served to patients who are patiently waiting for crops of corn, cucumbers, turnips, potatoes, tomatoes, squash, egg

plant and string beans. The first crop is somewhat late because of unseasonable cool, wet weather.

As part of the convalescent training program, the hospital garden serves a dual purpose. The work out of doors provides the patient with light healthful exercise and at the same time supplements their diet with additional quantities of fresh vegetables. As an additional bonus many of the men are gaining their first knowledge of gardening methods under the expert guidance of George Milledge, hospital gardener.

An acre and one half of ground behind the hospital has been plowed by a mule furnished by D. Y. Chappell, superintendent of boilers. The patients have done all the hoeing, raking, weeding, and cultivation involved.

Some of the more enthusiastic gardeners intend to plant a fall garden which will include spinach, kale, cabbage, fall turnips, and English peas.

Questions for Reading 3 and Quotations to Consider

1. Part A: What was the purpose of starting the victory garden? Where was it located?
2. Part B: What benefits did the garden bring in addition to supporting the war effort?
3. Parts A & B: How did the purpose of the garden and its structures develop from 1943 to 1945?
4. What message might these articles be trying to communicate about cooperation and the war effort at the time?

Quotations to Consider:

5. How do these quotations show that victory gardens were encouraged as a patriotic duty while also meeting everyday needs for food? What evidence in the quotations supports both ideas?
6. How does Reading 2 (Part A & B) connect to both ideas?

Lesson Closing

Answer the essential question: Answer the essential question: How did people, including children, in Sumter City and County support the war effort through home front activities?

Connect: If you were on the home front during the war, which types of activities in the lesson would you have been most interested in being a part of, and why?

Lesson 4: Sumter City and County, South Carolina: 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 [Sumter City and County, South Carolina](#) designated as a [World War II Heritage City](#). The lesson contains photos, readings and a culminating project. The first reading shares about local civilian and service members working at Shaw Field. An optional media activity supports learning about the development of Shaw Field to Shaw Air Force Base today. The second reading connects the region to the designation of a Heritage City. The culminating project contributes to learners' understandings of Sumter City and County as a WWII Heritage City, with the opportunity to combine themes from the three other lessons in the [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 World War II aviation training in Sumter City and County and the impact to the Allied efforts.
- b. Explain the contributions of women to the operations at Shaw Field (ex. WASPs and WACs).
- c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of civilians, including youth, in Sumter City and County to home front wartime efforts.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences between Sumter City and County and other Heritage city(s) or World War II home front(s).

Materials for Students:

1. Photos: Figures 18-21 (*can be displayed digitally*)
2. Readings 1, 2, & optional media activity links
3. Maps, project materials (as needed)

4. Student graphic organizers (See Figure 22 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 World War II aviation training in Sumter City and County and the impact to the Allied efforts.
 - b. Explain the contributions of women to the operations at Shaw Field (ex. WASPs and WACs).
 - c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of civilians, including youth, in Sumter City and County to home front wartime efforts.
 - d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences between Sumter City and County 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 Sumter City and County chosen as a World War II Heritage City, and what are its similarities to and differences from other home front cities?

Photos



SHAW FIELD SUMTER, SOUTH CAROLINA

Figure 18: The shield of Shaw Field, S.C. in 1941. (Courtesy Photo: Shaw Air Force Base)



Figure 19: "A U.S. Army Air Corps mechanic works on a BT-13 Valiant at Shaw Field, S.C., circa 1942. Mechanics were responsible for maintaining the training aircraft, which were instrumental in graduating nearly 8,600 pilots between 1942 and 1945." (Courtesy Photo: Shaw Air Force Base)

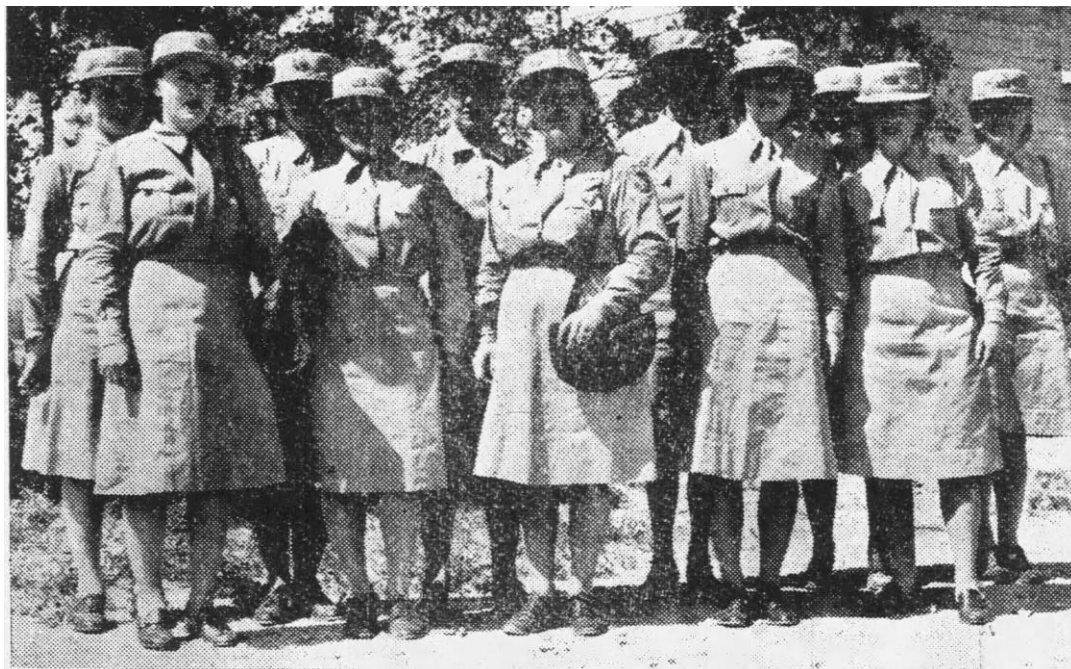


Figure 20: The first WAACs to arrive at Shaw Field, pictured in *The Sumter Daily Item*, June 7, 1943.

She'll Replace a Fighting Man

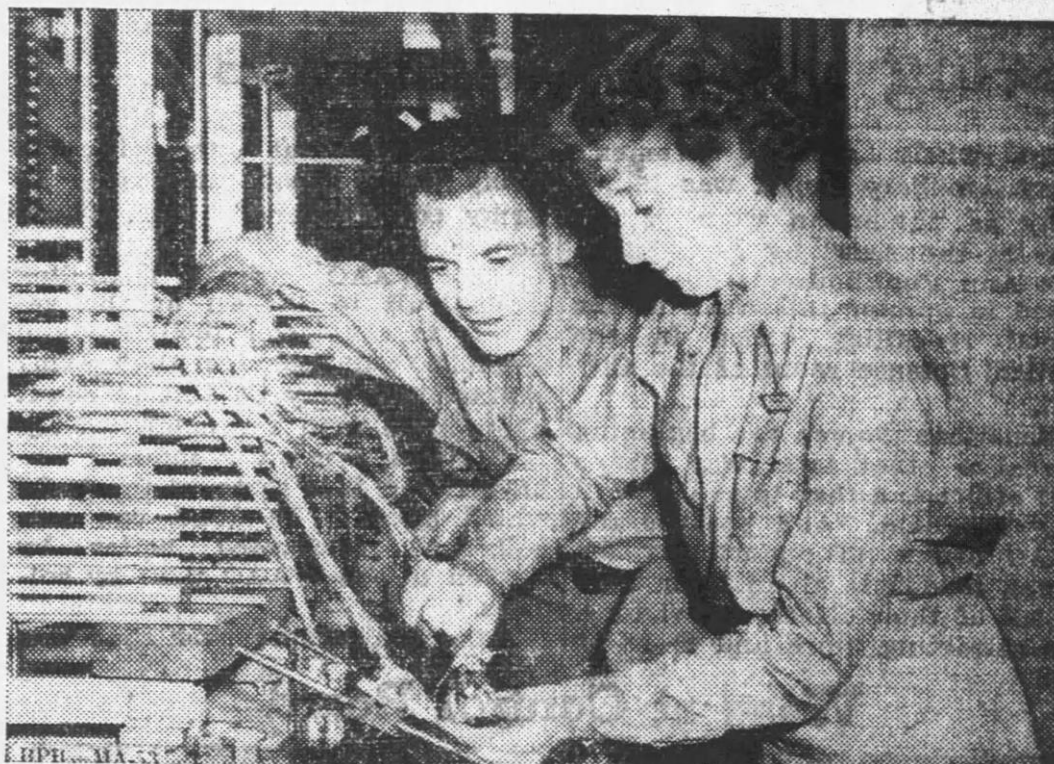


Figure 21: The photo, titled "She'll Replace a Fighting Man," shows a WAAC receiving instructions on wire-testing from a Signal Corps Officer. Photo from *The Sumter Daily Item*, April 19, 1943.

 Quotation to consider:

“Now that I am a member of the WAAC and I have seen the Americans who have already joined, I am more sure than before that American women have a precious heritage, and that they will guard it.

We women are spurred on by more than idle curiosity, the desire to change jobs, or the boredom of the jobless. We know that the campaign in Tunisia, the convoys in the Atlantic, the embattled isles of the South Pacific represent ideals. Those ideals belong not only to the men on the battlefronts, but to us women who do the essential non-combatant jobs. As we make available to the national effort our knowledge, skill and special training, and above all our willingness to serve, we are serving those same ideals.

It was to be a part of such a movement that I volunteered to (join) the WAAC. It is as a part of that movement that I now happily serve.”

- Lt. Lelia S. Cocke, WAAC Recruiting Officer for South Carolina, in “Why I Joined the WAAC” in *The Sumter Daily Item*, April 19, 1943

Reading 1: Newspaper Article

Locals contributed to success of flying school

“Sumter Item Reflections,” in *The Sumter Item*, January 22, 2017

Shaw was one of the most important air schools in the nation

From Shaw Field’s early construction, its air school grew into a viable and functional entity. Research finds that many individuals, including several from Sumter, made important contributions to the school’s growth and development. Contributions made by several individuals, both military and civilian, helped Shaw become one of the most important air schools in the nation.

Perhaps the leading local citizen serving at Shaw was William A. Thompson, former executive of the Sumter Chamber of Commerce who while on active duty served as base defense and class training officer. He graduated from Sumter High School and Clemson College, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps. During Thompson's tenure with the Chamber, he along with several Sumterites, including F.B. Creech, John Riley, Johnny Raffield and others, played an important role in convincing the military to choose Sumter as the site for the military flight school. Thompson was called to active duty and was selected to attend the

adjutant general's school in Washington, D.C. From Washington, he was assigned to a duty station at Maxwell Field in Alabama before coming to Shaw Field in the summer of 1941, where he was promoted to the rank of major. His initial assignment at Shaw was to plan and coordinate all training for officers and enlisted men at the basic flying school.

The Sumter community provided another key figure to the flying school, Lt. Ruth H. Beaty. Beaty holds the "distinction of being the first trained nurse to be stationed at Shaw Field." The day after she was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps, she was assigned to duty at Shaw Hospital. A Sumter native, nurse Beaty was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Beaty, and like Thompson graduated from Sumter High School. She graduated from Queens College in Charlotte and completed her nurse's training at Tuomey Hospital in 1941. She practiced nursing locally until she entered the service and was assigned to Shaw Field.

Many civilians were also employed at Shaw to help "speed the war effort."

"The first civilian employees reported to Shaw Field on Sept. 1, 1941, more than three months before flight training began. They were Elinor Barwick, civilian personnel clerk, and Miss Elizabeth Spears, special orders clerk. They were followed a few days later by Miss Anne Lemmon, Mrs. Dolores Sykes, Mrs. Ira Kay, Mrs. Edna B. Isley and Mrs. Raymond Fowler, who took up their duties in post headquarters, then an incomplete building with little or no furniture. These veteran employees can remember when they all shared one typewriter and used nail kegs for chairs. They can also recall the man who served them ice water from a canteen carried over his shoulder before water coolers were installed. However, the hardships were soon overcome, and by the time the first class of cadets arrived in December, many buildings with many new offices had been opened, and the number of civilian employees at Shaw Field had grown in proportion by the size of the post and its manifold activities." . . .

Questions for Reading 1, Quotation to Consider, and Photos

1. What roles did Thompson and Beaty have at Shaw Field during the war?
2. How did their jobs connect to the purpose and operations of Shaw Field?
3. How does the description of the civilians' workspace in 1941 connect to the quick wartime construction happening across the US on the home front?
4. Using what you have learned in the other lessons – who, or what groups, are not mentioned in this reading?
5. If you were to write a piece like this on Shaw Field during the war for an audience today, what key points would you include and why?

Photos and Quotation to Consider

6. Photos: What do you notice? How does each photo connect to Sumter City and County's designation as a Heritage City? What photos would you like to see if you had the chance?
7. How did women serve at Shaw Field?
8. What is your initial response to the quotation? Do you think this perspective is representative of the motivations of other women in service at the time? Why or why not?



By the numbers:

- In 1940 the Sumter County population was 52,463. This increased to 57,634 by 1950. (US Census)
- Shaw Field trained over 8,600 pilots between 1942 and 1945. There were approximately 2,400 personnel stationed at Shaw Field in 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

1. What was the purpose of the bill (H.R. 6118) according to the report?
2. Sumter City and County did have long-term population growth, but it was not like some home front cities who were considered “boomtowns.” What about the purpose of Shaw Field may have prevented large, permanent population growth?
(Use By the Numbers)
3. How did home front contributions, both paid and volunteer, in Sumter City and County support the US and the Allies? Consider both information from this text and from past lessons.
4. Why do you think Sumter City and County was designated as a World War II Heritage City? Connect details from the bill and evidence from the first reading, and/or other readings from the lessons.
5. Are there other cities you think of when considering home front contributions during wartime? Which, and why?

Media Activity

Shaw Air Force Base Across Time

Shaw Air Force Base continues to operate today. Since it first opened as Shaw Field in 1941 to support the mission of the Army Air Corps, it has undergone many changes to its role today as an Air Force Base. Using resources such as the [Shaw Air Force Base: “Soaring Through the Decades” video list](#) by the City of Sumter or [Fact Sheets](#) and [Photos](#) from Shaw Air Force Base, describe, or create a timeline, showing the development of the field from World War II to its role today.

Culminating Activity/Mastery Product

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

- a. Describe World War II aviation training in Sumter City and County and the impact to the Allied efforts.
- b. Explain the contributions of women to the operations at Shaw Field (ex. WASPs and WACs).
- c. Summarize the contributions and volunteerism of civilians, including youth, in Sumter City and County to home front wartime efforts.
- d. *Optional:* Describe similarities and differences between Sumter City and County 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 Sumter City and County, South Carolina 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 22: Single-Point Rubric (Standards; Blank) [Teacher selects priority standards for assessment.] Courtesy of Sarah Nestor Lane

Acknowledgment

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

