Cornsilk



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Part II Hidden Heroes of WWII:

DeKalb County women on the home front

by EvaAnne D. Johnson

uring WWII, huge efforts and sacrifices on the home front contributed to American victory. Women in particular contributed to the war effort in unprecedented ways. For the first time, women became enlisted members of the U.S. military, and the almost 150 DeKalb County women veterans were honored in Part One of this honor roll (published in the Winter 2019 issue of Cornsilk). On the home front, there were scores more who filled war jobs in local factories, joined local organizations, donated blood, organized fundraisers and scrap drives, knitted clothing and wrapped surgical dressings, planted victory gardens, worked on local farms, and more. Women adapted to rationing by carpooling, walking, canning homegrown produce, and going without new stockings, shoes, and kitchen wares. Organizations like the DeKalb County United War Fund raised money for the USO, which included the Salvation Army and YMCA. Local women were essential leaders for selling war bonds and collecting scrap metal. In the fall of 1942, nearly 40 women applied to take a Civilian Defense course to learn how to use firearms in case of an emergency. Local factories, including Wurlitzer and Ideal Industries, produced weapons and equipment for the military, and women accounted for a large portion of their workforce during the war. Area farmers relied on women like Janet Pogue

and Joyce Neubauer (see photo) to help fill the farm labor shortages as their workers left for the armed forces or to work in higher-paying factories. Women were also leaders of many of the local organizations that supported the troops and provided essential wartime services.

CORN BELT GIRLS HELP IN FOOD-FOR-FREEDOM BATTLE

Beauties have gone to the front in the battle of food production this summer. Here Janet Pogue and Joyce Neubauer, Senior Students at Hinckley, Illinois, High School, are pulling tassels near Waterman, Illinois, in a hybrid seed field of the DeKalb Agricultural Association. These specially trained Corn Belt lassies are members of one of scores of all-girl crews on the many DeKalb company's farms, relieving farm labor shortages.

Sycamore True Republican July 28, 1942

The American Red Cross was the most active and influential organization in the county, with several chapters and units throughout the county. For the year of 1944 alone, there were 1,857 workers who put in 4,343 hours and produced 60,394 surgical dressings in the DeKalb County chapter. Young women and girls in the Junior Red Cross and the Girl Scouts ran scrap drives and bond drives, and helped knit items for soldiers. One dedicated knitter, Mrs. Emily Fox, knitted over 100 sweaters and gave over 1,500 hours to the Red Cross during both World Wars. The Red Cross also supported the training of other local groups, such as the Volunteer Nurses' Aides Corps and the Women's Ambulance Safety Patrol (WASP). As the need for more nurses and nurses' aides grew, the government offered nursing courses for free through the Cadet Nurses Corps program, and nurses' aides were trained through Volunteer Nurses' Aides courses. These programs jump-started the medical careers of many local women. A unit of the Women's Ambulance Safety Patrol was established in 1942, and this group prepared for "safety in time of peace and service in time of distress" by practicing first aid and auto mechanics.

American Red Cross

The DeKalb County chapters of the American Red Cross were likely the most active and prominent wartime organizations in the county. Their thousands of dedicated volunteers from DeKalb County are too numerous to mention. There were units in nearly every village and township across the county, and large chapters centralized in Sycamore and DeKalb. Women led a lot of these groups, and organized fundraising drives, knitting and sewing groups, first aid and nursing courses, and more. The American Red Cross had been very active in the county during the first World War, and continued to be a prominent organization during and after the second World War.

The DeKalb County chapter was headquartered in Sycamore, and covered Sycamore and all the areas in the county not served by its own city or township chapter. Starting in 1942, the chapter met in the basement of the Sycamore Library for mass sewing drives and wrapping bandages. Under its care, the chapter had units in most towns and townships in the county. Many of these units were organized in 1942. The county leaders included:

Irene M. Welch (Chairman of the DeKalb Co. chapter, 1940-1944)

Ethel Campbell (Chairman of the DeKalb Co. chapter, 1945)

Nellie Murphy (Treasurer, 1940-1945) Edith M. Bennett (Chairman of the Sewing/ Production Dept, Sycamore, 1942-1945)

Jessie E. Evans (Chairman of Special Services, 1945)

Emilie L. Halsted (Chairman of Sewing/ Production Dept, Sycamore, 1942)

Nancy L. Hennis (Chairman of the Nurses' Aide Dept, 1945)

Helen B. McIntyre (Chairman of the Dressing Dept, Sycamore, 1942-1945)

Madeline M. Middleton (Chairman of the Home Nursing Committee, Sycamore, 1945)

Anne H. Rogers (Chairman of the Dressing Dept, Sycamore, 1942-1945)

Ruth D. Weeden (Supervisor of knitting projects, 1942)

Vesta L. Wylde (Supervisor of knitting projects, 1942)

The local and township units were each led by a chairman or president, who coordinated with the County chairman in Sycamore. These local units were each led by:

Florence M. Bennett (Co-chairman of Genoa unit, 1942-?)

Leila Cutts (President of Lee unit, 1943)

Kathryn J. Elkins (Chairman of Cortland unit, 1942-?)

Dorothy E. Horn (Chairman of Paw Paw Twp unit, 1942-1945)

Hattie Keene (President of Waterman/Clinton-Afton Twps unit, 19??-?)

Florence M. Klein (Chairman of Pierce Twp unit, 1944)

Lou B. Lamont (Chairman of Kirkland unit, 1944) Marian M. O'Donnell (Chairman of Lee unit, 1944)

Beatrice B. Ortt (Chairman of Kingston unit, 1944)

Margery S. Prain (Co-chairman of Genoa Twp, 1942-1944)

Delores Schmidt (Chairman of Hinckley unit, 1941-?)

Mildred Schmidt (Chairman of Shabbona unit, 1944-1946)

Alta M. Upstone (Chairman of Fairdale unit, 1944)

Birdie J. Veale (Chairman of Malta unit, 1944) Edith V. Warren (President/Chairman of Victor Twp unit, 1942-?)

Lily A. Weichlein (Chairman of the Sycamore unit, 1945-?)

Irene M. Welch (Chairman of the Sycamore unit, 1940-1943)

Eleanor B. Welty (Chairman of South Grove Twp unit, 1940-?)

Vesta L. Wylde (Chairman of the Sycamore unit, 1943-1944)

The Junior Red Cross had several units under the local chapters. It coordinated with local schools of all grades to organize knitting groups, assemble care packages for soldiers, and fund raise. The local chairmen were:

Kathryn J. Elkins (Chairman of Cortland Jr. chapter, 1942-?)

Evelyn E. Fawcett (Chairman of DeKalb Jr. chapter, 1944-1945)

Ethel F. Holland (Chairman of County Jr. chapter, 1942-1943)

Helen Louise Kennedy (Chairman of County Jr. chapter, 1945)

Cora B. Miner (Co-chairman of Sycamore chapter, 1943)

DeKalb had its own chapter, and met in the Haish Memorial Library in DeKalb, with its sew-

ing department quartered in The Chronicle building in downtown DeKalb. During WWII, the leaders included:

Roy Skorberg (Chairman)

Della Fisher (Secretary 1942)

Margaret Mihm (Treasurer 1942)

Miriam Mills Anderson (Chairman of the First Aid Committee, 1934-1956)

Minnie L. Carlson (Chairman of the Food and Nutrition Dept, 1943-1944)

Ellen M. Foiles (Chairman of the Home Nursing Dept, 1943-1944)

Alta Furr (Trustee 1942-1945, Chairman of the Life Saving Dept, 1944)

Pearl Jackson (Chairman of the Canteen Unit, 1944)

Mary A. Marvin (Chairman of Sewing Work, 1942)

Ruth E. McEwen (Trustee 1942-1945)

Eleanor S. Quinn (Chairman of the Blood Donor division, 1944)

Ulla M. Schreck (Chairman of Nurses' Aide Dept, 1943-1945)

Elmi Swanblum (Chairman of the Production Dept, 1944)

Clara A. Swanson (Chairman of the Civilian Home Service Dept, 1944)

Volunteer Nurses' Aide Corps

Shortly after the start of the war, hospitals nationwide were facing a severe shortage of nurses and nurses' aides. Many of the highly skilled young nurses were recruited into the military nurses' corps, leaving a dire shortage of staff at civilian hospitals. To help fill this need, the American Red Cross worked with the Office of Civilian Defense to train 100,000 volunteers to be nurses' aides. In DeKalb County, Mrs. Ulla May Schreck and a committee began training Volunteer Nurses' Aides in June 1942 under the instruction of Elaine Fisher, R.N. Other instructors and coordinators included Nancy L. Hennis, Katherine Kane, Ruth E. Lankton and Bernice E. Schwirtz.

For the next few years, their courses were offered every few months in DeKalb County, and over 100 women completed the course. During the war, most volunteer nurses' aides were assigned to Glidden Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital, although some most likely worked at other area hospitals as well. They were trained to do light nursing work, such as making beds, giving baths, taking temperatures and pulse, so that the fully trained nurses were able to care for patients with more advanced needs. They automatically became members of the Volunteer Nurses' Aide Corps of DeKalb County upon completing their courses. Many of these women continued in the medical profession after volunteering, and later joined the Cadet Nursing Corps or became fulltime professional nurses' aides or nurses. For many of these women, their volunteer work was not isolated to this service during the war, but was part of a lifelong commitment to volunteering and public service. While not everyone who completed the course was able to fulfill their volunteer commitment for the entirety of the war, their collective effort made it possible for the local hospitals to continue serving the local area.

The following women completed the Volunteer Nurses' Aide course in the year indicated, and many were active volunteers at local hospitals:

Eva Linnea Anderson, Sycamore, 1943 Grace Marie Andrews, DeKalb, 1942 Shirley Louise Avery, DeKalb, 1943 Eileen Louise Benson, Shabbona, 1943 Margaret Mary "Peg" Berkes, DeKalb, 1945 Vivian Bock, Sycamore, 1943 Jeanne Loraine Bodeen, Mayfield, 1943 Maxine Mary Bowling, Sycamore, 1945 Elizabeth Jane Bradt, DeKalb, 1945 Elizabeth Florence Budrow, DeKalb, 1942 Helen Marie Burcum, Sycamore, 1943 Katherine Burkart, Sycamore, 1945 Blanche Burrell, DeKalb, 1945 Beatrice Loretta Carlson, Sycamore, 1943 Doris J. Carter, Sycamore, 1943 Mildred Marie Carter, Sycamore, 1943 Marion L. Chesnutt, Sycamore, 1943

Carol Clubb, ?, 1943 Viola Mae Cochrane, DeKalb, 1944 Grace Coffey, Sycamore, 1943 Charlotte L. Conrad, Sycamore, 1942 Adoline B. Culver, DeKalb, 1942 Daisy Luella Daniels, Sycamore, 1942 Mary Clare Dieter, Amboy, IL / DeKalb, 1944 Hilda J. Dodge, DeKalb, 1944 Adele Marie Donohue, DeKalb, 1944 Catherine M. Dvorak, DeKalb, 1944 Marjorie Lucile Eaton, DeKalb, 1942 Edna M. Ebbesen, DeKalb, 1945 Virginia Eliason, ?, 1944 Smiljana "Mildred" Eror, DeKalb, 1944 Agnes Cecilia Farrell, DeKalb, 1942 Mabel Elizabeth Gates, DeKalb, 1945 Frances R. Gray, DeKalb, 1945 Dorothy Esther Grundy, DeKalb, 1942 Agnes Jeannie Hainds, DeKalb, 1942 Lucille L. Hakala, DeKalb, 1945 Dorothy Mae Hallgren, DeKalb, 1945 Marjorie Ellenor Hallgren, DeKalb, 1945 Irene Mabel Hanson, Leland, 1945 Alyce Pauline Holcomb, Sycamore, 1943 Marilynn J. Hope, DeKalb, 1942 Eva Marie Hutter, DeKalb / Somonauk, 1945 Genevieve Marie Jacobson, DeKalb, 1945 Charlotte Helen Johnson, DeKalb, 1945 Mary Lou Kaesser, DeKalb, 1944 Minnie Marie Kaisher, DeKalb, 1942 Betty Jane Kennedy, DeKalb, 1945 Mary Catherine Kennedy , DeKalb, 1944 Yvonne Lorraine Kerr, DeKalb, 1944 Fanny Maria Klasing, DeKalb, 1942 Helen M. Knudson, Sycamore, 1943 Arleen J. Krueger, Genoa, 1945 Dorothy Bernice Kukuczka, Sycamore, 1943 Vivian Pearl Letheby, Malta, 1945 Marion Louise Lydig, Sycamore, 1943 Miriam Mabel, Sycamore, 1945 Madalene Jean Maertz, Sycamore, 1943 Phyllis Elsie Maggeroli, DeKalb, 1944 Mayme S. Makela, DeKalb, 1942 Dorothy McCabe, DeKalb, 1942 Oneida Blanche "Nita" McClellan, DeKalb, 1945 Gladys Dorothy McGlynn, DeKalb, 1945 Myrtle J. McGuire, DeKalb, 1943 Mary Loretta McGirr, DeKalb / Afton, 1943 Mary M. Mitchell, DeKalb, 1944 Wella Pauline Moen, Sycamore, 1942 Wilma A. Motis, Sycamore, 1945 Lillian Mae Mueller, Maple Park, 1945 Mrs. Gerald Munson, ?, 1942

Thelma E. Murphy, DeKalb, 1942 Marie Murray, Sycamore, 1943 Ruth Nehring, DeKalb, 1945 Bettie Elizabeth Nelson, DeKalb, 1942 Dae Nelson, DeKalb?, 1943 Janet Loraine Nelson, Sycamore, 1943 Hazel E. Neujahr, DeKalb, 1945 Alice M. Petersen, DeKalb, 1944 Adele M. Petrocchi, DeKalb, 1943 Geneva Rosemarie Prather, DeKalb, 1945 Jeanne Putnam, ?, 1945 Grace Mabel Risley, DeKalb, 1943 Mary Lou Robertson, DeKalb, 1945 Charlotte Victoria Sabin, Sycamore, 1943 Margaret Theresa Sailor, Sycamore, 1943 Gertrude Kate Scarlett, DeKalb, 1945 Evodia June Seablom, Maple Park, 1943 Eudora Jayne Shaw, DeKalb, 1942 Mareva Mildred Simmons, DeKalb, 1944 Mary Eleanor Slade, DeKalb, 1942 Lucille Maude Smith, DeKalb, 1944 Marilyn Jane "Lyn" Staderman, Sycamore, 1945 Shirley Ann Stevens, DeKalb, 1942 Dorothy Fredrika Swanson, DeKalb, 1942 Jannan Swift, Waterman, 1944 Luella Eileen Tedford, DeKalb, 1945 Helen Wilhelmina Telford, DeKalb, 1943 Lina Louise Trotter, DeKalb, 1942 Evelyn Katherine Turk, Maple Park, 1945 Lorraine E. Valentine, DeKalb, 1942 Lillian Elizabeth Varness, DeKalb, 1945 Virginia J. Wallace, Sycamore, 1943 Betty Wenzel, Kirkland, 1945 Dorothy B. Willrett, Malta, 1943 Dorothy M. Willrett , Malta, 1943 Chana Jean Wilson, DeKalb, 1942 Guyla Mae Winebrener, Mayfield, 1945 Jeann H. Wirtz, DeKalb, 1945 Helen Yusunas, DeKalb, 1944 Shirley Lorraine Zwiener, Sycamore, 1943

Women of the Cadet Nurse Corps

Due to the shortage of civilian and military nurses at the beginning of the war, the US government offered a free nursing training program through the Cadet Nurse Corps. Women who completed the program were prepared to join the Nurse Corps in the Army or Navy, or become a civilian nurse. Most of the DeKalb County women remained civilian nurses in the area after com-

pleting the program, and were dedicated nurses throughout their careers. A few women, like Betty Craig, Doris Hagman, Janice Lindus, and Margaret Weydert, joined the ANC or NNC after completing the program.

The following DeKalb County women were enrolled in the Cadet Nurse Corps during WWII:

Mary Rose Adee, DeKalb / Clare, 1944-1947 Agnes Mae Anderson, Waterman / DeKalb, 1945-1948 Hannah Jeanette Baker, Waterman, 1943-? Mary Margaret Barrett, DeKalb, 1943-1946 Evadine Marie Benson, Sycamore, 1945-1945 Hollis R. Breunig, Somonauk, 1944-1944 Lois Ruth Carroll, Genoa, 1943-1946 Marjorie Dorothy Christenson, Hinckley, 1945-1946 Audrey Lea Coss, Lee / Paw Paw, 1943-1946 Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Craig, Shabbona, 1943-1944 Betty Jane Crisler, DeKalb, 1943-1946 Marie Lucille Diedrich, DeKalb, 1944-1947 Margaret Irene Douglass, Shabbona, 1945-1948 Betty Jean Dunning, Sycamore, 1943-1945 Marjorie Irene Dunning, Sycamore, 1944-1944 Mary Loretta Duffy, Waterman, 1944-1947 Eva Fenwick, DeKalb, 1943-1945 Margaret Jane Foose, Hinckley, 1943-1944 Barbara J. Flusch, DeKalb, 1943-1944 Betty Cloe Garner, Hinckley, 1945-1948 Elizabeth "Beth" A. Gilchrist, Waterman, 1943-1946 Beverly Gene Gliddon, Kirkland, 1945-1948 Doris Elizabeth Hagman, DeKalb, 1943-1944 Catherine Louise Herrmann, Shabbona, 1945-1948 Rita Jean Herrmann, Lee, 1943-1945 Rosemary Herrmann, Shabbona, 1943-1946 Elizabeth Mae Holderness, DeKalb, 1945-1946 Mary Jane Holderness, DeKalb, 1943-1945 Jean E. Holroyd, Genoa, 1945-1948 Betty June Hueber, Kingston, 1944-1946 Agnes C. Jensen, Sandwich, 1945-1948 Melba Kemnitz, Sycamore, 1943-1945 Mary Catherine Kennedy, DeKalb, 1944-1945 Janice Elaine Lindus, DeKalb, 1943-1944 Marian Lucas, Kingston, 1943-1946 Marjorie L. Maple, Waterman, 1943-1946 Dorothy McCabe, DeKalb, 1943-1946 Ora June Meyer, Shabbona, 1944-1945 Mary Jo "Judy" Mohrmann, DeKalb / Paw Paw / Earlville, 1944-1944 Mava J. Morsch, Hinckley, 1945-1947 Joan Irene Mueller, Sandwich, 1945-1948

Verta May Mumaw, Mayfield, 1943-1946

Joyce Nelson, DeKalb, 1944-1947 Mila Marie Pearson, Mayfield / Sycamore, 1943-1946 Phyllis G. Rand, Malta, 1945-1948 Shirley Pauline Rote, Sycamore, 1944-1946 Margaret J. Rueff, Waterman, 1945-1948 Evodia June Seablom, Maple Park, 1945-1948 Eudora Jayne Shaw, DeKalb, 1943-1946 Maxine Elizabeth Snyder, DeKalb, 1943-1944 Margaret J. "Peggy" Sparrow, Sycamore, 1943-1946 Bonita Stoda, Genoa, 1943-1945 Gertrude E. Tadd Yount, DeKalb, 1944-1946 Shirley M. Walker, Sandwich, 1944-1947 Doris M. Warner, DeKalb. 1943-1946 Helen I. Warner, DeKalb, 1943-1946 Margaret Emily Weydert, DeKalb / Maple Park, 1943-1944 Joyce White, Kirkland, 1943-1945 Lilly Lucinda Wilcox, Shabbona, 1943-1946

DeKalb County WASP Unit

The Women's Ambulance Safety Patrol, or WASP, should not be confused with the Women Airforce Service Pilots of WWII. The Women's Ambulance Safety Patrol was first established by a group of Rockford women in the spring of 1940. This was the first women's ambulance program in the country. Very quickly, units were established across the United States. Sisters Sally and

Louise Doyle, two of the early members of the Rockford patrol, were originally from Sycamore. That summer, along with Agnes Cleary, they encouraged their Sycamore friends and neighbors to start their own unit. A DeKalb County unit was first formed in August 1940. This group was led by Major Agnes Cleary, 1st Lt. Viola Hunt, and 2nd Lt. Pauline Dusch. Marion Hayes presided over the first meeting in September 1940. However, it seems that this first group did not gather enough interest for a full unit, and the group did not meet after November.

After the United States entered WWII, local interest in forming a WASP unit again surged. Sally and Louise Doyle once again made the trip from Rockford to help form a DeKalb County Safety Patrol unit in February 1942. This new unit was the 18th WASP unit in the nation, and started drilling in March 1942. Major Hazel Graham and Capt. Jeanette Struthers were chosen to lead them. The group took courses in basic and advanced first aid, auto mechanics, and map reading, as well as completed over 30 hours of drilling. In October 1943, they started meeting and

Clean or Dirty, Patrol Group Members Work in Garage



As part of the regular training of the Women's Ambulance Safety Patrol twenty hours of mechanical instruction were necessary. Here the group is shown at the Fourth Street garage where they were receiving instructions. Jumpers and coveralls, clean or dirty were all taken in stride by the patrol members.

—Chronicle photo.

January 9, 1943

drilling at the Armory building in Sycamore. Membership in the DeKalb County unit never reached full strength, and peaked at 22 active members in October 1942. Many of their members left the group to join the military or the nurses' corps. The WASPs continued drilling and meeting with Capt. Geraldine Niewold as their leader through the summer of 1945, and likely dissolved at the end of WWII. Many of these women were friends and classmates from DeKalb and Sycamore, and many remained friends and participated in similar service organizations after the war.

The following women were leaders of the DeKalb County WASP unit between 1942-1945:

Hazel Graham (Major, 1942-1943?)

Jeanette Struthers (Captain, 1942)

Geraldine Niewold (Captain, 1943-1945;

Sergeant, 1942-1943)

Lucille McKelvey (1st Lt., 1942)

Olga Johnson (1st Lt., 1943-1944; Corporal, 1943)

Donna Harris (2nd Lt., 1942)

Janet Gregory (2nd Lt., 1943)

Barbara Brown (Sergeant, 1943)

Irene McKelvey (Corporal, 1942)

Peggy Blakley (Corporal, 1943)

Marjorie Hallgren (Corporal, 1943)

Other known members of the DeKalb County unit include:

Jane Elizabeth Bemis (Member, 1942)

Margaret Brown (Member, 1943)

Violet Eastwood (Member, 1942-1943)

Virginia Fulsome (Member, 1943)

Dorothy Grundy (Member, 1943)

Dorothy Hallgren (Member, 1943)

Frances Stroyan (Member, 1942)

Marian Swanson (Member, 1942)

Marguerite Terwilliger (Member, 1943)

Conclusion

Many of the service-minded young women in these organizations eventually enlisted in a branch of the military while others remained strong leaders at home throughout the war. Many of these women had brothers, husbands, sons, fathers, daughters, and sisters who were enlisted servicemen, and their sacrifices were likely never far from the minds of those at home. Women young and old worked together to provide for their loved ones serving overseas and their neighbors at home. The efforts of these women did not win them any medals, but these home front heroines were dedicated workers and volunteers.

For further reading about DeKalb County during WWII, I suggest Sycamore, Illinois during World War Two: a small Midwestern community's contributions and sacrifices during the years 1940-1945 by Thomas Woodstrup and DeKalb Goes to War: A study of World War Two industrial production in an Illinois town, by Keith Lowman, both available at local public libraries.

More information about the service of these women may be found at the Joiner History Room or by contacting the author. This honor roll was compiled from local newspaper articles, census records, obituaries, and other records found on Ancestry.com. The women's names and hometowns reflect their names and permanent residences at the time of service during WWII. While I have striven for accuracy, I apologize for any mistakes. Please forward any corrections or additions to this honor roll to the Joiner History Room staff or the author. \mathfrak{S}



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