

Farmers Feed War Efforts



Agriculture's Role in WWII Victory

Because farming was vitally important to supply food for the war effort and at home, the WWII agricultural deferment program – known as the Tydings Amendment of 1942 - was initiated nationwide and affected many local farms. Draft deferments for farmers were issued to address the labor shortage and maintain agricultural production. This caused some emotional conflict as able-bodied men felt they were needed at the front, but it was encouraged that an “**Agricultural Army**” and the “**Soldiers of the Soil**” had great importance in sustaining the fight for democracy.

Despite the deferment program, Barnes County faced challenges in maintaining production due to the loss of workers who had joined the armed forces or sought jobs in defense industries elsewhere. They found help from local women, high school students, white-collar workers, and companies who volunteered their own workers for time in the field. In April 1945, it was reported that 5,000 Mexican workers would be arriving for the ND fall harvest, arranged by the Extension Service.

These efforts, along with other measures, ensured North Dakota's continued contribution to the national and world food supply, playing a vital role in the WWII victory.

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Farm Help Comes in All Shapes and Sizes

The call went out for help on local farms, and volunteers stepped up to do their part. The county agent's office called them Victory Farm Volunteers and they came from every quarter of the county. High school students were encouraged to do their part and accept farm work during the summer months. Businesses encouraged their employees as well as the white-collar sector to do their part in seeing that the harvest was complete.

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(Above, left) These young women volunteered their efforts in the potato harvest at a farm in the Rogers area.

(Above, left) These young men attending the Navy's V-12 classes at Valley City's State Teachers College show off their prowess at shocking a local field.



Rose Busche Crowned as Nation's First Wheat Queen

In September of 1944, the men of Company C of the Army's 817th Tank Destroyer Battalion were stationed in the Valley City area to help with the harvest. They decided to hold a contest to choose the nation's first Wheat Queen.

Their choice was Rose

Busche, an aircraft factory worker, who recently returned to the city. She was dressed in an outfit and crown made of wheat for the occasion.

To the Army's disappointment, Rose Busche would go on to take training at the Valley City State Teachers College with the Navy's V-12 unit as a naval civilian stenographer. She, along with her sister, then worked as clerk-typists for the Navy in Washington D.C.

Tractorette Training School Opens in VC

Valley City's Geisler Implement Company held a training class in May 1942 to provide competent help on farms "to replace men drawn off by war service or war industries." Those who completed the program would not only know how to run a tractor but would also have basic training in repairing and servicing, diagnosing mechanical trouble, and the proper attachment and setting up of tractor implements.

Thus was the introduction of those women who would be called the **Farmerettes**. The first Valley City Farmerettes made their debut in the harvest fields in August of 1942 when a group of five women from the Bell Telephone office shocked-up eight acres of heavy wheat on a farm ten miles northeast of the city in less than an hour and a half. Others soon took up the challenge, with Farmerettes showing up to shock 11 acres of barley, with plans to go to work on a 20-acre field the next day. The women hailed from various Valley City businesses.



(Above and below) It was common in North Dakota to see women helping on the farm even before the war- whether they helped with the harvest by driving tractor or truck or helping to shock wheat. During WWII, with a shortage of labor, women took to the fields in even larger numbers.



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