

4-H club contributions to the war effort

COMMENTARY AND SIDEBAR NOTES BY DAVID WALBERT

Reports from county agents of the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1945. Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries.

As you read...

This page includes three reports sent by county agents of the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service after the war ended. Each county agent outlined the contributions of 4-H club members in his or her county to the war effort.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How did Haywood County 4-H members help the war effort?
2. How did Camden County 4-H members help the war effort?
3. How did Durham County's African American 4-H members help the war effort?
4. What were the "Junior Commandos" in Durham County? Why might that term have appealed to kids?
5. What did the Durham agents mean when they said that 4-H members "are eagerly willing to share their responsibilities in helping to win the peace and to participate in a full measure the enjoyment of a better American way of life for which the war was fought"?

Haywood County

In the year following Pearl Harbor, the Mobilization for Victory Campaign in Haywood County 4-H Clubs brought 281 enthusiastic boys and girls to the defense of our Country. Under food production the girls reported having 31 acres in Victory Gardens — 23 acres in soybeans — 39 acres of other foods or feed crops, 465 chickens, 73 pigs, 24 dairy calves, 22 baby beeves and 4 sheep. They put a money value of \$2,134.79 on the above projects.

Members saving for Victory have collected 16,548 lbs. of scrap iron, rubber, aluminum and waste paper. Money received for scrap was given to the Red Cross, school and to buy bonds and stamps for themselves. This group owns \$268.75 worth of stamps and bonds.

Six members were enrolled in defense program, 33 girls had taken the first aid course at school. The girls have rolled bandages, made 36 garments and three complete layettes for Red Cross.

The spirit of these boys and girls was expressed by Martha Best, "I sewed for the Red Cross, planted a Victory Garden, bought War stamps and bonds, collected aluminum, iron and paper. I can do more if anything else needs to be done."

"Food for Victory" program inspired the 286 members to sign up to carry out 324 projects for 1943. Members saving for victory have collected 30,000 lbs. of scrap iron, 5,000 lbs. of rubber, and 35 lbs. of waste fat. Money received for scrap was given to the school, Red Cross and to buy war bonds.

98% of the Junaluska Club members contributed their share in the Ambulance Fund Drive.

The continued Victory Program for 1944 inspired the 584 members to carry 696 projects.

Edith Noland has done her part in producing food to feed the members of the armed services. She says of her project — "For the past four years I have had poultry for my 4-H project" — with the proceeds from the poultry project Edith bought a choice Hereford yearling calf. Upon selling the steer she bought ten yearling steers. After selling these her total income from poultry and baby beef was \$1455.32.

Club members in the same year collected 113,000 lbs. of scrap iron, 14,790 lbs. of rubber and 40 lbs. of grease. They have sold \$3,500 worth of bonds and bought \$17,072 worth. The club members have learned to take care of the things they have and have worked harder than ever before. They are willing to work harder to help win the war. The boys and girls have furnished much of the labor on farms during the summer and fall.

Added responsibilities continued in 1945 — to which the 4-Hers responded willingly. Hilda Crawford reports, "This year more than ever I have really been working hard to help at home and also to buy every war bond I possibly could. This year I have been trying to live by and uphold the ideals of the 4-H club. As a result, I'm having a better life, a better family, a better home and better community. I have been trying very hard to make the best better."

Camden County

There was an average 4-H enrollment in the county of 215 members per year.

These boys and girls bought during this period some over \$5,000 worth of War Bonds and Stamps.

During the salvage drives the following materials were collected by 4-H members

- 10,000 pounds iron
- 4,000 pounds rubber
- 11,600 pounds waste paper
- 400 pounds used fats
- 250 old phonograph records

Under food production an average of 83 Victory Gardens was grown per year. This means that the club member[s] conducted during the war about 250 garden projects. Twelve baby

beef projects were conducted, involving some 10,000 pounds of beef. There were 1600 birds raised on 90 poultry projects. There were about 250 pigs grown and used for the production of pork by club members. The 4-H girls canned 5,000 quarts of foods. The girls also made about 400 garments during this period.

Lota Leigh Harrison, a 12 year old Shiloh 4-H girl, and winner of the county "Feed a Fighter Contest" produced enough food for five fighting men. Among her productions of food were 13,680 eggs, 300 baby chicks, 2 pigs, one acre garden, and she also canned 82 quarts of fruits and vegetables.

Bill Old, of South Mills Senior 4-H Club, conducted a pig project in 1942 consisting of 46 animals with a profit of \$572.92.

As a matter of special interest the South Mills boys and girls collected 1400 keys in the scrap drive.

The 4-H boys and girls of Camden County are proud of their efforts in helping to preserve the priceless freedom of the world for ages to come.

Durham County

The Negro 4-H boys and girls of Durham County like other Americans contributed in every possible way to the many efforts launched to help with the war. Some of the participations and accomplishments of these American Youths have been as follows:

Animal Production:

Beef Cattle — 9

Poultry — 6769

Dairy Cattle — 39

Swine — 116

Acreage in Corn and Other Cereals — 75

Canning — 20,024 Qts.

Garments Made — 689

Rooms Improved — 131

Articles Made — 1459

Bonds and Stamps Sold — \$4450.00

Scrap Iron — 23022 Lbs.

Rubber — 2119 Lbs.

Grease — 216 Lbs.

Paper — 26,552 Lbs.

Bonds and Stamps Bought — \$6027.28

The Junior Commandos, an organization for the collection of scrap was organized throughout the county under the direction of the home agent. A teacher in each school acted as Post Commander. Her job was to supervise the local company of Commandos and to keep a record of scrap collected. During the month of October, 1942, 16450 lbs. of scrap iron, rubber and tin cans were reported.

On Saturday, October 24, 1942, several of the boys and girls had the thrill of their lives when they appeared on the "Hail Junior Commandos" program over the radio station WDNC. The boys and girls who had collected the largest number of pounds of scrap in

each community represented their group of Commandos. Commandos were awarded arm bands, caps, and sweaters according to rank.

It is believed that the fine spirit in which these Negroes enrolled in the various activities to help win the war they are eagerly willing to share their responsibilities in helping to win the peace and to participate in a full measure the enjoyment of a better American way of life for which the war was fought.

(Mrs.) E. T. Nixon
Negro Home Agent
J. C. Hubbard
Negro County Agent

On the web

Effects of civic action

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1597>

In this lesson, secondary students will analyze primary source materials to investigate how 4-H clubs made an impact on the home front in completing projects that supported the war effort during World War II. This lesson should be taught at the end of a World War II unit.

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About the author

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David Walbert is Editorial and Web Director for LEARN NC in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education. He is responsible for all of LEARN NC's educational publications, oversees development of various web applications including LEARN NC's website and content management systems, and is the organization's primary web, information, and visual designer. He has worked with LEARN NC since August 1997.

David holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of *Garden Spot: Lancaster County, the Old Order Amish, and the Selling of Rural America*, published in 2002 by Oxford University Press. With LEARN NC, he has written numerous articles for K–12 teachers on topics such as historical education, visual literacy, writing instruction, and technology integration.