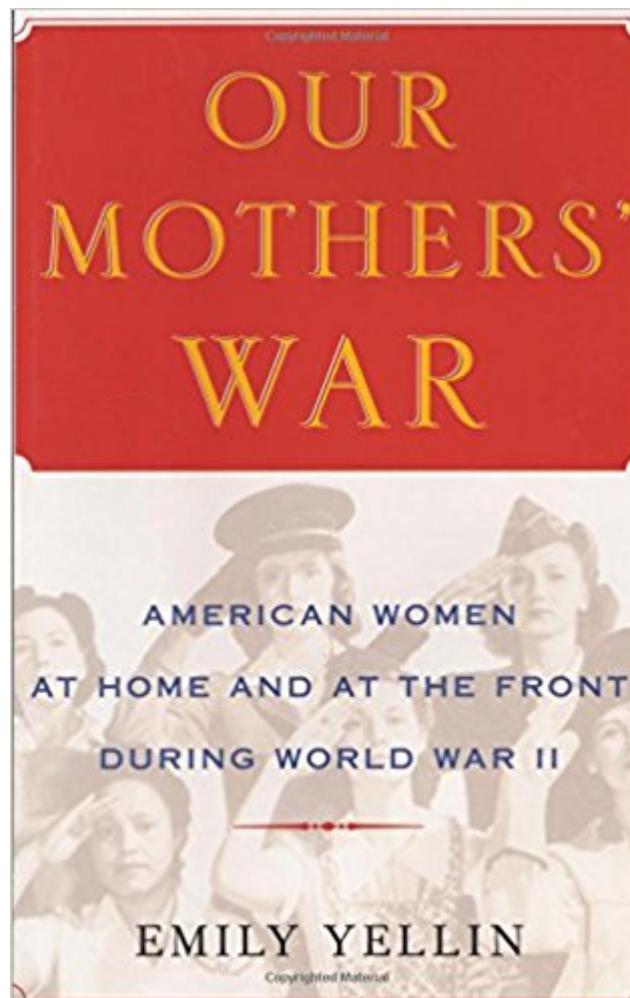




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# Our Mothers' War: American Women At Home And At The Front During World War II



## Synopsis

"Our women are serving actively in many ways in this war, and they are doing a grand job on both the fighting front and the home front." -- Eleanor Roosevelt, 1944

*Our Mothers' War* is a stunning and unprecedented portrait of women during World War II, a war that forever transformed the way women participate in American society. Never before has the vast range of American women's experience during this pivotal era been brought together in one book. Now, *Our Mothers' War* re-creates what American women from all walks of life were doing and thinking, on the home front and abroad. Like all great histories, *Our Mothers' War* began with an illuminating discovery. After finding a journal and letters her mother had written while serving with the Red Cross in the Pacific, journalist Emily Yellin started unearthing what her mother and other women of her mother's generation went through during a time when their country asked them to step into roles they had never been invited, or allowed, to fill before. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including personal interviews and previously unpublished letters and diaries, Yellin shows what went on in the hearts and minds of the real women behind the female images of World War II -- women working in war plants; mothers and wives sending their husbands and sons off to war and sometimes death; women joining the military for the first time in American history; nurses operating in battle zones in Europe, Africa, and the Pacific; and housewives coping with rationing. Yellin also delves into lesser-known stories, including: tales of female spies, pilots, movie stars, baseball players, politicians, prostitutes, journalists, and even fictional characters; firsthand accounts from the wives of the scientists who created the atomic bomb at Los Alamos, African-American women who faced Jim Crow segregation laws at home even as their men were fighting enemy bigotry and injustice abroad, and Japanese-American women locked up as prisoners in their own country. Yellin explains how Wonder Woman was created in 1941 to fight the Nazi menace and became the first female comic book superhero, as well as how Marilyn Monroe was discovered in 1944 while working with her mother-in-law packing parachutes at a war plant in Burbank, California. *Our Mothers' War* gives center stage to those who might be called "the other American soldiers."

## Book Information

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After years of planting Victory gardens, volunteering at USOs and coping with increased home front responsibilities, in early 1945 Yellin's mother quit her desk job at Reader's Digest and shipped out to the Pacific Front to join the Red Cross. Wartime manpower shortages were bending gender rules, and many women seized the opportunity to try something different. While feminist historians have analyzed the meaning of their war experience, Journalist Yellin takes a more subjective approach. This nonjudgmental, anecdotal account covers the usual range of topics—women in war industries, in volunteer work, in the armed forces, in undercover operations—but Yellin avoids retelling the familiar. Thus, she discusses the experiences of Lena Horne and Julia Child more fully than those of Eleanor Roosevelt, and delves deeper into the anti-Semitic Mothers' Movement and Hawaiian prostitutes walking picket lines than more mainstream organizations like the CIO women's committees. Yellin describes the exclusion of African-American women from most military units and the internment of Japanese-American women, but adds little to present scholarship on minority women's participation. Indeed, since her most original material comes from interviews with relatives, family friends and contacts, the book is strongest on the experiences of educated white women, which were surprisingly diverse. For WAVES director Mildred McAfee—the president of Wellesley College before the war—life in the navy took her out of her "cloister" and thrust her into a world where "women are women and men are men." For others, like Yellin's mother, the war let their genies out of the bottle. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adult/High School – An exceptionally well-written, exhaustively researched book. During World War II, females were confined to auxiliary roles. Yellin reveals all of the responsibilities held by women, including helping to manufacture aircraft, ships, and other munitions; and, in the process, outproducing all of America's allies and enemies, by far. Readers see war brides who

worked hard to maintain the morale of their husbands while surviving long separation, fear, and shortages of virtually everything necessary to support a family. Yellin writes about performers like Betty Grable, who traveled to combat theaters to raise the spirits of soldiers, sailors, and airmen. Our Mothers' War is an important book because the role played by women in World War II has been regularly ignored. — Alan Gropman, National Defense University, Washington, DC Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Brings many subjects involving the effect to women's works in the period 1942-1945 and beyond into discussion and consideration. I found it one of the most interesting and enlightening books about WWII that I have read, particularly with regards to those "left behind". Those "left behind" were invaluable to winning the war. Without the millions of great women working back in the States during those years, we may all be way too fluent in speaking German and Japanese, without our desire of doing so.

Growing up in a small Ohio city, I remember my mother use to pickle fruit and vegetables this was late '50s. In our garage you would find several pickle jars full of peaches, pears and other fruit. I never thought about it, just thought all moms did this. Wasn't until reading this book that I begin to understand why. My mom was doing her part for the war effort. Even 11 years after the war ended, she was still doing her part. I've read about the war and watch war movies, but nowhere did these mention the woman's part. Glad someone did.

From WACs to Rosies to traitors to spies and beyond, Emily Yellin spans the scope of women's roles in WWII. Research of this kind is difficult because it isn't the main focus of the war years, but Yellin does a beautiful job revealing what has been hidden and telling stories that illuminate the lives of half the American population. The personal connection is deftly woven into the larger context and makes for a satisfying whole. Well-worth the read.

This is a real history book. My own mother worked in the Norden Bomb sight factory during WWII while neighbors looked after me. In those days most Americans looked after each other while the fathers, sons, uncles, brothers and the husbands were off at war. Mine father was in Europe. The newer generations are not aware of the sacrifices of the women during WWII. Had it not been for them joining the effort we would have used many more men and many would not have survive. Great job by some brave women.

Bought this for a college paper. I usually can't stand reading for school work (since it usually doesn't fit my typical tastes) but I REALLY enjoyed reading this! It covers so much more than just women on the homefront and women in the military. This book chronicles even the darker aspects of female involvement, including the prostitutes that followed the soldiers' travels to training camps and posts across the country. It thoroughly discusses the womens' workforce movement, including the adversity and even dangers they faced to do the jobs vacated by the men and created by the war effort. Pretty good read, I recommend it to anyone interested in anything WW2 related, and especially those looking for the empowerment of female military members, and the poignancy of the women left behind.

This book was great! I read my parents letters from WWII prior to reading the book, and found that it filled in so much of what was going on during those letters. Women played many roles during WWII, but we seem to only hear about "Rosie the Riveter." Not everyone was a Rosie, and this book examines the contribution of all women who served their country during WWII--whether on the farm at home or nursing with the Red Cross. The book not only speaks about the groups of women, but also has letters and interview information about various women in various roles about how their life played out during the war years. Great job!

The book made me so proud to be a woman and so very aware of the extraordinary contributions these women made to successive generations. Ms. Yellin's research was remarkable and I don't think a single woman was left out from housewives to whores. I particularly liked reading about women spies and the women of Los Alamos. This will not be the last time I see the book as I have highlighted so many wise words, particularly those of the author's mother.

I was a young child during WWII and never gave a thought about how the war affected women in USA. I liked this book and ordered 2...one for my own to keep and one for an 85 year old friend. I learned a lot from the book. I never knew that women were sent to be laborers on farms. Of course, I had no idea about prostitutes and camp followers. I had never heard or read about the women in the military being abused and disliked by the male soldiers. I thought they would be glad to have the additional aid. None of the women at home or abroad had it easy.

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