

## Guide to the World War II Collection

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### Collection Number V-1-4-5

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See also:

World War II Office of Civil Defense Collection V-3-6-3

Esther Genung Collection V-63-3-6

World War II Servicemen Collection V-14-2-1

War Posters, RL Map Drawer #8

World War II Photos - General Photo Collection Z10

#### COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

In the late 1930s, many in the United States did not support American involvement in the Second World War. After the first global war of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, public sentiment strongly opposed further conflict, as it had caused significant damage to the economy, social structure, and the generation of men whose lives were taken by the war. Despite this opposition to entering another war, the situation in the United States was dire even before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The Great Depression threatened to destroy the economy, and the failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles weakened the League of Nations' ability to prevent future conflict. In addition, as tensions escalated between European nations, Congress passed legislation such as the Neutrality Act of 1935 and the Lend-Lease Act of 1941 as an attempt to stay out of the conflict while tangentially supporting the Allies. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 made it clear that the United States would have to get involved, and this meant a total war: the United States would have to draft troops to fight in Europe, mobilize war production, and regulate civilian consumption through rations.

This collection gathers materials from the World War II era concerning Tompkins County, from civilian support for the war to local soldiers' documents. The first item of the collection is a mobilization plan that was written in 1940 and lists the names, addresses, and ranks of the Veterans of Foreign Wars members who committed to mobilizing for war. Also included in the collection are materials produced by the Ithaca-Tompkins County War Council detailing plans and warnings for such emergencies as blackouts, air raids, and poisonous gases in the event of a domestic attack. On the financial side, this collection features records of savings bonds and war loans as well as rations on sugar, fuel, metal, and other commodities. Communication between soldiers and civilians is another important highlight of the collection, taking the form of V-Mail, the Servicemen's Weekly Newsletter, and WHCU radio shows

discussing news reported by soldiers. Finally, this collection represents the history of American women's role in World War II, particularly in nursing.

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