World War II, in Iowa and Beyond
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Two Iowa girls send pen pal letters to two sisters named Margot and Anne Frank in Amsterdam, and then wait for a response. Women from the Clinton area scrub locomotives and operate roundhouses. A governor’s assistant scrambles to fill draft boards. A young man with a passion for planes enters air corps flight school in California, while beyond Iowa, another soldier ships out to Marseilles. Somewhere in the Pacific Theater, a combat correspondent from Iowa scans headlines of FDR’s
Left: Two soldiers are silhouetted before a window display promoting war stamps and bonds in Younkers department store in Des Moines, September 1942. The world war raging beyond Iowa reached deep within the state as well, affecting Iowans in thousands of subtle and significant ways.

We're grateful to many for their contributions to this issue.

Our thanks to an Iowa teacher, Shelby Myers-Verhage, who was eager to explore Anne Frank’s Iowa connection. Thanks to University of Iowa history professor David Schoenbaum, who alerted us to two compelling manuscripts, by Alan Spitzer and Tamara Schoenbaum, about the war beyond Iowa’s borders. Thanks to my coworkers at the State Historical of Iowa, particularly Ellen Sulser and Vicki Schipul, who helped gather photos documenting wartime Iowa for this issue.

We are also grateful to several people who have realized that history is composed of the individual stories of ordinary people, sometimes caught up in extraordinary events. The families of Iowa soldiers Robert Harwood Shannon and John R. Reilly recently donated war-related scrapbooks to the State Historical Society of Iowa. Relatives of teacher Birdie Mathews have donated her voluminous diaries. Only months before he died, John D. Zug donated photos and memoirs of his journalism career. These new collections are featured in this issue.

Over time, historians will begin to study how the individual stories of Shannon, Reilly, Mathews, and Zug expand our understanding of the war.

Our mandate at the State Historical Society of Iowa is to gather, preserve, interpret, and disseminate the history of Iowa for the public and for posterity. We disseminate that history through our collections, publications, and museum exhibits (such as “Working for Victory: World War II and the Home Front”; details on inside back cover). But we need your help. After you've read the compelling stories in this issue, please read “Help Us Save the Stories” on the inside back cover to find out how you can help preserve Iowa’s past.

—The Editor