

10-1-1995

# World War II, in Iowa and Beyond

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest>

Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

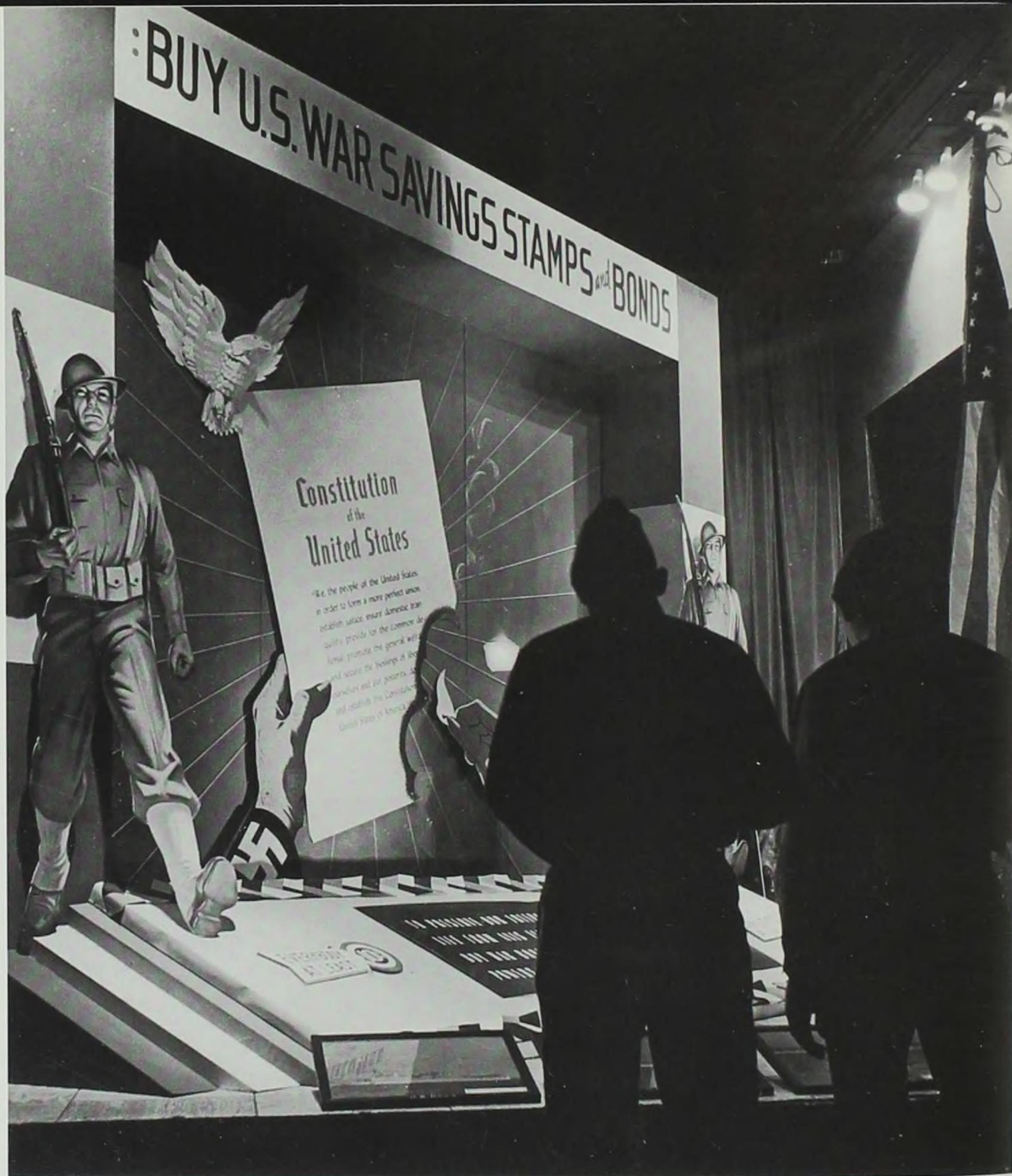
---

## Recommended Citation

"World War II, in Iowa and Beyond." *The Palimpsest* 76 (1995), 148-149.

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol76/iss4/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Palimpsest by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).



SHS1 (DES MOINES); J. W. BALDWIN, PHOTOGRAPHER

## *World War II, in Iowa and Beyond*

**T**wo 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.

re-election. In Germany, a young Jewish girl feigns saluting Hitler.

These stories appear in this *Palimpsest*, which is devoted entirely to World War II in Iowa and beyond—a fitting topic as we move beyond the fifty-year anniversary of the war's end. Although *The Palimpsest* generally publishes only Iowa history, we expanded our criteria for selecting articles this time. It isn't easy to stay within the state's borders when exploring a historical "event" of the magnitude of a world war. Because of the war, Iowans were leaving their home state to serve in the armed forces, reading about distant places in the Pacific, sending relief packages to Russia, rolling bandages for the wounded in Africa, raising food for the world. And newcomers were entering Iowa—as refugees, as prisoners-of-war, as defense-plant workers, as enlistees in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps at Fort Des Moines.

We can look at a world war historically on an enormous scale—of entire nations allied for victory, of massive troops timed for invasions, of industries and work forces converted for defense. But we can also look at a war on an individual scale. Millions of

individuals experienced World War II in subtle or life-changing ways. Likewise, millions of individuals affected the war in slight or substantial ways. The connections and stories are endless, and they are all meaningful.

We encourage you to reflect upon and record your own connection to World War II, either as someone who lived through that period or as a descendant of the World War II generation. Sit down with a tape recorder or a typewriter or a tablet. Settle back with a friend or relative, from your generation or another, and talk about the war. And don't stop with the war's end in 1945. Some of our authors in this issue reflect on the war's influence on their personal ideologies. What was the war's lasting effect on you—on how you have lived, and how you have viewed the world?

**W**e'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 co-workers at the State Historical of Iowa, particularly Ellen Sulser and Vicki Schipul, who helped gather photos docu-

menting 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