

Victory on the Home Front

Unity and Sacrifice. These were the hallmarks of the home front. Americans pulled together in one giant effort, to support the troops and win the war.

World War II directly affected the lives of every man, woman, and child in Sacramento. Sacramentans faced food shortages, rationing, and the fear of enemy attack. Citizens worked together in ways almost unimaginable today. Children sacrificed their toys to scrap drives. Women, many with loved ones off to war, took on non-traditional and demanding jobs. Community organizers struggled to predict and ease difficult problems.

The home front could also be unfair. Japanese Americans faced undeniable hardships based on fear and racism. Men labeled "4-F" quietly endured the humiliation of a sometimes over-zealously patriotic society. Women stepping outside traditional roles were criticized by those threatened by the change.

The effects of World War II changed Sacramento more than any event since the Gold Rush. Sacramento, as the capital of California, was a sleepy government town before the war. With the establishment of McClellan, Beale, and Mather Air Force Bases, the Camp Kohler training center and the Sacramento Army Depot, defense jobs increased the population, thereby contributing to Sacramento's future suburban sprawl.

Men and women returning from overseas and other parts of the nation were changed by the experience. Even though the war, for some, was a horrifying chapter of their lives, for most people, it was a time of unquestioning loyalty to the Nation, deep commitment to democratic ideals, and shared values with a common purpose. These Sacramentans were a victorious people, united, and optimistically looking forward to a world of peace and prosperity.

Christmas 1943

Loneliness and uncertainty are never felt more keenly than during times of community rejoicing. Christmas on the home front, with family on battlefields far away, was bitter-sweet for Sacramentans. The grim news of the war cast a shadow over even the merriest of Christmas wish lists.

With war-time shortages, some holiday traditions were hard to follow. Butter and sugar shortages made candies, cookies, and other desserts hard to come by. Toys, often with a new military theme, were especially precious if they were made of metal and rubber. Liquor, for fortified egg nogs, fruit-cakes, and holiday toasts, was difficult to locate.

The holiday tradition of gift-giving took on special meaning when gifts had to be sent overseas. Department stores set up special booths filled with grooming kits, stationery, and other small personal items for military personnel. Soldiers sent home sweetheart jewelry and other easy to mail items. Often a small photograph was the most treasured gift of all.

Despite the worries and concerns of war-time, Sacramentans faced all four war-time Christmas seasons with determination and hope for a better year ahead, one of peace.

Victims on the Home Front

Soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, America declared war on Japan, Germany, and Italy. Community members with ancestral ties to these nations came under growing scrutiny. Minor restrictions were placed on Germans and Italians, while the Japanese faced major opposition. Sacramentans greatly feared surprise air attack from Japanese forces. Fear, racism, and economic hostility escalated into a call for the forced removal of Japanese Americans.

By December 8, the FBI in Sacramento seized Japanese community leaders, froze the Sumitomo Bank's branch assets, and closed four Japanese businesses. Despite the Japanese American communities' immediate pledge of support and loyalty to the United States, many organizations, businesses, and civic leaders vocally supported the call for the internment of all Issei (Japanese immigrants) and Nissei (second generation) residents.

By February, 1942, all enemy aliens 14 years and older were required to register at the local post office. Curfews and restricted movements were imposed on all enemy aliens and Japanese Americans. Then, on April 1, 1942, evacuation orders for those of Japanese ancestry were issued and soon posted on street corners throughout Sacramento.

On May 13, 1942, the first of 3,800 internees boarded buses at the Memorial Auditorium heading for Walerga Assembly Center. Most from Sacramento were then transferred to the Tule Lake Internment Camp for the duration of the war.

Without regard to the heroic sacrifices of Japanese Americans in military service, Sacramento businessmen and city officials tried to block the return of Japanese American competition when internment finally ended. Although many Sacramentans supported the Japanese community and argued against their treatment, the painful scars of war-time internment and community hostility still exist in Sacramento's Japanese American community today.

War Bonds

Any Bonds Today?

Sacramentans couldn't read a newspaper or listen to the radio without being reminded to buy war bonds. Bonds were loans from citizens to the federal government to help pay for the war. Special booths in shopping areas, rallies to kick off War Loan Drives, and visits from stars like Bob Hope and Max Baer all helped make buying war bonds fun.

Buying war bonds was a patriotic way to make a good interest-bearing investment. High paying defense jobs and a lack of new houses, automobiles, and appliances to buy left extra money in America's pockets. The Treasury Department used bond sales to drain off excess cash and prevent inflation.

Eight War Loan Drives, each three to seven weeks long, helped pay the \$350.5 billion in total war costs. For example, in 1943 Americans earned \$135 billion. War costs that year were \$100 billion. Taxes brought the government \$30 billion. With these figures in mind, the Treasury Department set the 1943 war loan goal at \$70 billion.

Sacramentans did their bit to finance the war while showing their support for the boys overseas. Their efforts helped make the War Loan Drives a great national success.

Civilian Defense

When news of the attack on Pearl Harbor swept Sacramento, one young boy grabbed his BB gun and ran outside to a nearby orchard. Scanning the sky for enemy planes, he embodied the spirit of civil defense, protecting his home and his country from enemy attack. Fortunately it was an attack that never came.

Fear of air attack was very real for months after Pearl Harbor as the Japanese swept over the Pacific. Americans knew too well the horrifying costs of air raids over England and Europe. The Office of Civilian Defense and Sacramento Community Chest immediately organized black-outs and air raid drills. Thousands of volunteers took positions in an air raid warning system ranging from specialists of the Fourth Interceptor Command to neighborhood air raid wardens equipped with a frying pan and a block of wood to sound out a warning of impending attack. Other volunteers staffed the Ambulance Corps.

Firemen and school teachers lectured on incendiary bombs, the use of gas masks, and air raid safety. Boy Scouts visited every home in Sacramento, delivering over 32,000 black-out instruction pamphlets.

Many home owners kept sand bags ready to smother fires. Brueners furniture store voluntarily ended evening shopping hours to douse the neon lights and traffic headlights. Ed Sanford, a Southern Pacific employee, even built a black-out chicken house for his hens.

Even after fear of direct enemy attack began to fade, civilian defense gave people, like the boy with his BB gun, a sense of control in a time of uncertainty and of pride in serving country, a true hero on the home front.

American Red Cross

During WW II, 7,500,000 volunteers served and \$785 million was donated. In addition to the expansion of traditional Red Cross services given to members of the armed forces, the organization also developed a blood donor service, provided an extensive overseas club program, established prisoner-of-war documentation and aid, stepped-up recruitment of medical personnel for the military, and intensified a communications program and extended home care between servicemen and women and their families.

Branches of the Red Cross

- Production Service provided surgical dressings, hospital garments and clothing for the military and war victims.
- Canteen Service provided service to disaster victims and military personnel throughout the world.
- Motor Service provided transportation for both Red Cross and Military personnel and civilians in need.
- Gray Lady Services served in hospitals, giving aid and comfort to war casualties and civilians alike.
- Volunteer Nurse Aide Service assisted nurses in the military and civilian hospitals.

Girl Scouts of the United States of America

Girl Scouts in Sacramento and across the nation pledged their services during wartime. Girl Scouts formed "Commando" groups to gather, can, and distribute surplus victory garden produce. They sold War Stamps and provided desperately needed day-care for the children of defense workers. Anywhere labor was needed, Girl Scouts were ready to serve.

Women's Boy Scouts of America Air Scout Corps (W.A.S.C.)

Boy Scouts provided essential services on the home front. Boy Scouts distributed leaflets and collected scrap materials, books, clothing, x-ray film, razors, hangers, musical instruments, and milkweed. They served, in part, as civilian defense messengers, helped with harvests, built ship and airplane models for armed forces training, and searched the sky for enemy aircraft. They provided services for the War Ration Board and United War Fund, as well as service groups like the Red Cross, YMCA, and American Legion.

The Air Scout program, created with military cooperation, provided specialized war-time training. Air Scouts learned principles of aviation and aircraft identification to provide an alarm in the event of invasion.

In addition to the above, they were trained in first aid procedures and procedures.

At the time the Corps was formed, Euring Sitwell (1914) was elected Major and Commanding Officer. Margaret B. Harrison (1910) was elected Lieutenant and Assistant. Upon the entry of Major Sitwell into the armed forces, Mrs. Harrison was elected Major and Commanding Officer and served this until the dissolution of the W.A.S.C.

Womens Ambulance and Transport Corps (W.A.T.C.C.)

The duties of the members of the Womens Ambulance and Transport Corps were varied. They transported service veterans to and from Letterman Hospital in San Francisco, transported pregnant wives of servicemen to and from hospitals, and returned them to their homes after births. They manned a disaster station which was in the basement of the county hospital on Stockton Boulevard. They practiced close order drill weekly at the National Guard Armory and were scheduled to learn to drive army trucks in the event of an evacuation order. The instructors were National Guard personnel.

With the close of the war, the Corps cooperated with the Red Cross Ambulance Corps in transportation services as noted above.

In addition to the above, they were trained in first aid measures and procedures.

At the time the Corps was formed, Bunny Russell (right) was elected Major and Commanding Officer; Margaret B. Harrison (left) was elected Lieutenant and Adjutant. Upon the entry of Major Russell into the armed forces, Mrs. Harrison was elected Major and Commanding Officer and served thus until the dissolution of the W.A.T.C.C.

Scrap Drives

With patriotic zeal and volunteer labor, Sacramentans collected more than a million tons of scrap. The Sacramento Salvage Committee organized the collection of rubber, metal, paper, rags, nylons, and fat needed for war production.

Collection industries like the Salvation Army joined forces with schools and service groups. But everyone got involved and helped any way they could. Most kids saved foil gum and cigarette wrappers they pressed into a ball. "Drunk tank" occupants unloaded scrap metal at the city corporation yard. Women donated extra irons and cooking pans. Some families even donated family heirlooms, like antique music boxes and swords.

Short-term drives for specific items produced an avalanche of resources. In just six days 107 tons of waste paper were collected. A rubber drive in June, 1942, produced nearly 3,000 tons of scrap. A metal drive in October, 1942, passed the million ton mark and kept going.

The wide-spread cooperation and effectiveness of home front scrap drives set an admirable standard for today's recyclers.

Women on the Home Front

Whether as a homemaker, a defense worker, or a volunteer, women faced new challenges and pressures on the home front. Women successfully filled in for men in the workplace, as well as at home. They emerged from the war with a new confidence in their abilities.

Defense workers enjoyed good wages and new-found independence. Defense trainees started at \$100 a month, while the state minimum wage for women was \$18 per forty hour week. Many enjoyed "bold" fashions, such as wearing slacks and red nail polish, or smoking and drinking beer in public.

Some Sacramentans felt threatened by these changes and worried women would take jobs from returning soldiers or, even worse, decrease women's civilizing effect on men and society. Community attention focused on the novelty of women in slacks. Letters and cartoons in the newspapers either attacked, poked fun at, or supported women as they dressed in non-traditional clothes.

As the war dragged on year after year, more realistic concerns appeared. Women were faced with raising their children alone during a time of uncertainty, their husbands on battlefields half a world away. They faced the daily ritual of trying to provide a wholesome diet while juggling food rationing stamps. They struggled to maintain aging appliances and make household repairs. Housewives and defense workers competed with each other for space on commuter transportation and in beauty salons.

The "bold" actions of women on the home front broke new ground for all American women. In a sense, they drew the fire while gaining new freedoms for those who would follow them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
WOMEN IN SLACKS CONTROVERSY

"The other day when I got on the bus on Ninth and K. Streets, a couple of well dressed, very attractive women were sitting inside. I sat down across from them. I was wearing a dirty pair of slacks and a dirty bandanna; had grease under my nails and, of course, black on my face in a spot or so.

One of them remarked I was an illiterate. The other said, no, I was probably a bar fly at night and a cheap mechanic days. I did not say anything because I felt sorry for them.

I am not an illiterate and I do not bully up to the bars. But they were almost right about the mechanic part. I am an assembly worker.

And as for being dirty, I had just put in eight hours work and I had stopped to cash my check. I also went to the bond window and bought my forty-seventh \$25 bond. Then I went to the Red Cross booth and bought a share in the goodwill of our dear ones overseas, \$10 worth, to be exact. For you see, maybe that \$10 will help my husband in the South Pacific.

Also I pay \$80 a month for my two little boys' board and room just for the privilege of working for the good old USA."

Defense Worker

Letter to the Editor
Sacramento Bee
April 3, 1945

"The war is causing some dislocations of our normal life activities, but I think the most serious one is the home life of our country. Hundreds of thousands of young men are departing for war service in foreign lands, and because of that event, many women have left home to work in the various industries, a considerable number of them are single women.

If the war lasts several years, it means these single women will not have an opportunity to marry soon. It is a known fact that women who remain single and devote themselves to business careers suffer a feeling of frustration. A good husband would be a godsend to the poor creatures.

After the war it would be advisable for all the single women to marry, because for a woman to end up as an old maid is a fate more horrible than death.

Our Creator has endowed men with a greater reasoning ability than women and the women ought to wake up to this obvious fact and quit making a vain attempt to climb impossible heights.

Immediately after the war ends all women should move back to their homes and again begin to fulfill the work for which they are biologically appropriate and then the returning soldiers can have the jobs."

G. Stephens

Letter to the Editor
Sacramento Bee
December 3, 1942

"I have kept silent about this subject as long as I could. It makes me boil every time I hear some men howling about women wearing slacks. Yes, women wearing slacks are now doing filing and numerous other jobs which demand a lot of stooping. What's the matter? Can't the men do without the sight of a bare leg?

I know some men who do not look like they belong in long pants either. If women can do their part to win the war more efficiently in slacks I say more power to them. Offices and factories are not the places for social engagements, but for more work and less play. More and more slacks are being seen on women of all ages in markets, gardens and shopping districts to save wear and tear on dresses and finer materials.

I think the women are being swell sports about all the kidding and insults they have to take about anything as practical as slacks."

C. Hermann

Letter to the Editor
Sacramento Bee
June 9, 1942

"Though I am a young, unmarried man I have been interested in the letters as to women's dress or undress.

I think slacks are fine, in most cases, at least certainly for yard work, outing trips, etc. But when the woman appears on the street and shopping in stores wearing the briefest of shorts and not much above the waist line, it is plain she hasn't much above the neck. I wonder what mothers hope to make of daughters who are allowed to grow up in that sort of dress. Men only make remarks when they pass.

I cannot imagine a man choosing that sort as a wife or companion."

O. B. Baxter

Letter to the Editor
Sacramento Bee
June 17, 1942

Southern Pacific Railroad

"Victory Trains Come First"

The Southern Pacific Railroad performed vital services on the home front. Transportation, salvage operations, and war production occupied thousands of employees in the Sacramento shops.

The movement of troops, supplies, heavy equipment, and civilians during the war sharply increased railroad operations, resulting in a constant labor shortage. Southern Pacific employment advertisements appeared on billboards, radio, window signs, and the newspapers. The railroad eventually hired more than 4,000 women and 22,902 Mexican nationals.

Civilian train travel increased due to a national 35 mph speed limit, as well as tire gas rationing. At the same time, the federal government became the railroad's primary customer. Although civilians were asked to avoid travel, passenger travel in 1943 increased 205% over previous peak levels.

Victory Gardens

In front lawns, vacant lots, even at the downtown post office, victory gardens sprung up everywhere in Sacramento. Within days of Pearl Harbor, Sacramentans were encouraged to start gardens. The city council even offered free water to commercial home growers. The federal government, faced with rationing and food shortages, stressed the need for home food production and preservation. Sacramentans, well aware of food shortages in war-torn England, needed little encouragement.

Many Sacramentans purchased flats of summer produce for home canning. Some women car-pooled to cooperative canning centers where they could use commercial canning equipment.

Sacramento Victory Garden Contests

Contests encouraged more gardeners every year to work the soil. Participants in the Sacramento City Victory Garden Contests and the Sacramento Victory Garden Harvest Festivals increased throughout the war.

Over 16,000 people attended the 1944 Harvest Festival. Sponsored and organized by the *Sacramento Bee* and KFBK. The festival featured 1,375 exhibitors, including 295 individual home gardeners, and displayed fresh and preserved fruits and vegetables.

Volunteer hostesses from the California State Employees Association, dressed in evening gowns, handed out programs and greeted visitors. Girl Scouts rushed judges' decisions to the announcers. Winners fittingly received awards of War Bonds and Stamps.

The festival, held in August, offered gardening tips and inspiration to get Sacramentans started on their own fall gardens. Educational booths, run by the University of California Extension Service and Katherine Kitchen, taught food preservation techniques so gardeners could insure their supply of canned goods during the coming winter.

Rationing

As America prepared for war, food and materials were diverted for military use. As men left their jobs to enter the service and factories converted to war production, civilian goods became even more scarce. Rationing was instituted to equally distribute what remained to those on the home front.

Each family applied for coupon books containing stamps, each worth ten points, good during certain time periods. Each rationed item had a point value and a cash value. Consumers could buy rationed goods only if they had enough points left. Rationing created a challenge Sacramentans met with creativity and sometimes exasperation. Rationed items ranged from shoes to sugar, some were missed more than others.

Price Control

To control inflation and rationing, the federal government created the Office of Price Administration (OPA) in April 1941. The OPA set ceiling prices on almost all civilian goods. Retailers caught selling goods even one cent over the limit were fined \$50 per violation, payable to the Red Cross.

During shortages the OPA limited purchase amounts. During a shortage in December 1942, butter sales were limited to 1/4 pound, or one cube, per purchase. Luckily, Sacramento had fewer food shortages than many larger cities. Tobacco shortages hit everywhere and long lines formed when a shipment of cigarettes arrived.

Fat Collection

Fats and oils were desperately needed for making gunpowder, dynamite, medicines, and synthetics. One 12-inch Naval shell alone required 350 pounds of fat. Housewives were constantly encouraged to collect their used cooking fats. Most cooks kept a tin or coffee can for fat drippings near their stove. The full can could be exchanged at a butcher store for extra red (meat) rationing points.

Substitution and Creativity

Housewives tried substitutes for sugar, meat, and butter after their ration stamps were used up. Dried fruit, molasses, and syrups sweetened cooking. Oleo, an early form of margarine, consisted of an unappetizing cube of white fat sold with a capsule of bright orange dye. The dye was mixed into the fat to create an unconvincing substitute for butter.

Food columnists for the *Sacramento Bee* and the *Sacramento Union* offered homemakers creative tips. The Bee's "Katherine Kitchen" column provided "victory" recipes such as Peanut Rice Loaf and Lima Beans A La Creole to families used to meat and potatoes. When canned goods were rationed, columnists tried to find ways to make fresh fruits and vegetables more appealing.

Gas and Tires

The Japanese invasion of the Pacific drastically reduced American access to rubber. Tire rationing began within ten days of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Motorists were ordered to turn in all tires over the limit of five. A 35 mph national speed limit and gas rationing restricted driving to save the wear on tires. An A, B, C, or T rationing sticker was adhered to every vehicle to indicate its weekly gas allotment. Speeders lost their gas coupons. Conservation became essential. Commuters used car pooling and public transit extensively. Vacationers stayed closer to home.

Housing the Tidal Wave of Defense Workers

Sacramentans faced a serious housing shortage as thousands of defense workers and military personnel flooded the area. Additional short-term housing was also needed for service men on leave and travelers passing through the bustling Southern Pacific Depot. At the same time, new home construction stopped.

To prevent inflated rents, the Emergency Price Control Act of 1942 set rent controls at "fair and reasonable" levels. Boarding houses and civilians were also asked to register all available rooms with housing officials.

Thousands of servicemen found overflow housing in the city jail, the vacated Japanese Buddhist Association buildings near O and 5th Streets, and the Memorial Auditorium. An average of 180 slept in the auditorium basement every Saturday night for a fee of 50 cents. The YWCA at 17th and L Streets built an addition to house female defense workers from McClellan Field. During the Fall of 1944, local canneries managed to find temporary housing for 6,619 soldiers from Camp Beale helping to bring in the harvest.

The housing shortage became a crisis in 1946 when Federal rent controls were lifted. Suddenly inflated rents threatened to put thousands of people out of their homes. The Sacramento City Council passed a special ordinance setting the rent increase limit to 15% over Federal limits.

The increase in suburban home construction eventually eased the crisis. In the process, Sacramento was transformed by subdivision sprawl.

Sacramento Army Depot

The Sacramento Army Depot was officially established on June 1, 1943. It was then known as the Sacramento Signal Depot and was "wholly a child of the second world war." The Depot handled communications (signal) equipment, sending out radios, telephones and other signal equipment for the Army from a Bercut-Richards Packing Company's old warehouse on Richards Blvd. Through the remaining months of 1943 and during 1944, the Depot expanded rapidly and at the end of 1944 employment at the Depot was in excess of 1,000 persons.

On July 5, 1945 ground breaking ceremonies took place at the Sacramento Army Depot's current location on Fruitridge Road. Even though the war was to end a few months later, construction continued and consolidation of most of the Army's Signal Corps supplies and maintenance activities on the West Coast became the providence of the Sacramento Army Depot.

Since the Korean War of the 1950s, the Sacramento Army Depot has supported our troops in all conflicts which includes the war in Vietnam and most recently Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

From the original workforce of a few people without a permanent home, the Sacramento Army Depot and its tenants have expanded to become one of the larger employers in the Sacramento area with more than 3,000 civilian and 300 military personnel assigned here.

Unfortunately, the Base Realignment and Closure Committee recommended the Sacramento Army Depot be closed. The exact closure date has not been announced.

Sacramento Air Depot **(McClellan Air Force Base)**

The advent of World War II, shortly after the depot was established in 1939 increased its size and stepped up its activity until there were 17,652 civilians at the peak in 1943 (22,000 with civilian and military). Of this extraordinary amount of personnel, 40% were women and 60% were men. The depot was in constant need of employees, advertising in all the local newspapers. It was a great opportunity for women and high schools boys to experience the working world. Jobs ranged as high as \$146 per month.

The Sacramento Air Depot was the only air depot on the West Coast and played a critical role in the war. The repair and overhauling of P-39s and P-38s became a primary work load in November 1943. There were two continuous production lines with the aircraft moving progressively from station to station. Each aircraft required a complete overhaul with the installation of new engines and landing gear and the repair or replacement of the wings, intercoolers, superchargers and surface controls. Between July 1943 and January 1945 the production line managed to completely overhaul 307 P-38s.

Mather Air Force Base

Mather Air Force Base served in two World Wars as a training base, being activated and de-activated between the war years. Operations at Mather Field began on June 12, 1918 when the first of four Curtiss JN-4D, "Jennies," left the ground.

In late 1939 as the war clouds were gathering, word came from Washington that the development of Mather Field was imminent. In 1941, Mather Field covered little more than a square mile, but on April 8, 1941 construction started and was to make Mather one of the largest aerial navigation schools in the country with nine square miles in 1944. Starting out with 20 students in a class, they would eventually grow to classes of 470 navigation cadets.

As the war approached a climax, Mather was to play an even more direct role as the aerial port of embarkation for heavy bombers and combat crews deploying to the Pacific. Mastery of the air had been achieved in Europe, and the United States was mustering its awesome power for the final assault against Japan.

Since 1947, Mather has continued to grow in its importance to the U.S. military with the expansion of its navigator training mission. During the 1960s, Mather acquired all Air Force navigation training programs and for the first time in Air Force history all such programs were consolidated at one base. Unfortunately, with the deactivation of many military installations around the country, Mather Field is scheduled to close in 1993.

Camp Kohler

Camp Kohler was established in September 1942 as the third Signal Corps Replacement Training Center to help meet the ever-increasing need for trained specialists to operate and maintain the Army's vast communications system in a war which already had become global in its proportions.

Camp Kohler was located twelve miles northeast of Sacramento at the site of the former Japanese collection center, Walerga. The Camp was closed after the war, but the laundry was still in use after the war and operated by civilians for other installations such as McClellan Air Force Base. The main part of the Camp burned down in the 50s, but the Camp had already been abandoned by then. The recreation hall was used extensively during the war and stood many years along the south side of Highway 80. Kohler Road, which led to the entrance of Camp Kohler, is located off Auburn Blvd, just north of Madison Ave.

Camp Beale

Camp Beale was born in 1942 with the construction of buildings, utilities and various firing ranges. The 13th Armored Division was the first unit to actively train on the base and during the course of World War II, the 81st and 96th Infantry Division also received training there. Camp Beale was also used as a personnel replacement depot, induction center, overseas replacement depot, prisoner of war encampment and, at the end of World War II, was utilized as a West Coast separation center. During this period, Beale was also the site of a 1,000 bed hospital. By the end of the war, Beale was supporting a military population of over 60,000 personnel, and contained 86,000 acres.

Camp Beale's Prisoner of War Camp

The German prisoner of war compound at Beale Air Force Base near Marysville opened on May 17, 1944. An estimated 3,000 prisoners would live and work there until released in July of 1946. The compound consisted of seventeen barracks, four mess halls, a canteen, a chapel, and six company storehouses, which also served as recreation buildings. There were two guardhouses with their own fences, lights, and tower. The only structure now remaining is the solitary confinement cell block. The concrete cell block consists of ten cells, each six feet square, which were used to detain those who refused to work and the "incurables."

Most of the prisoners worked at Camp Beale, within the compound walls or in the hospitals, laundries, motor pool or other areas of the camp where they were needed. Many helped to prepare and harvest the crops in nearby Yuba and Sutter County orchards and fields.

Prison life in the camp included many things besides work. The prisoners played various sports, had their own symphony and band, had a canteen where they could purchase cigarettes, ice cream, newspapers, and an occasional beer.

The prison compound did have its share of problems. Some of the prisoners were ardent Nazis and on April 20, parties were held to celebrate Adolf Hitler's birthday.

51st Evacuation Hospital

The 51st Evacuation Hospital was the only hospital unit from the Sacramento area to serve in World War II. The nucleus of this 750 bed field hospital was made up of doctors, dentists and nurses from the Sacramento area, recruited by Dr. Orrin S. Cook, Sr., radiologist at Mercy Hospital.

The Unit was mobilized at Ft. Lewis, Washington in September 1942. In 1943 the 51st Evacuation Hospital provided medical support for General George Patton's armored divisions training in the Mohave desert of Southern California. In 1944 the Unit went overseas, first to Oran, Algeria, then Naples, Italy, and was the first hospital unit to land in support of the invasion of Southern France in August 1944.

The 51st Evacuation Hospital remained with the U.S. Seventh Army, moving north through France and Germany until V-E Day. The Unit received the "SERVICE AWARD OF MERIT" October 1945 in Stuttgart, Germany. The Unit was cited for its record of 277 days of service in the European Theater of Operations, with 21,666 patients admitted during that time, 9,454 operations performed, and 6,143 patients returned to duty. The hospital was deactivated October 12, 1945.

Surviving members of the original group of physicians and dentists from the Sacramento area are:

James H. Yant, M.D.	Andrew M. Henderson, Jr., M.D.
Arthur F. Wallace, M.D.	Gandolph A. Prisinzano, M.D.
Charles V. Soracco, M.D.	E.T. Rulison, Jr., M.D.
Kenneth I. Dufour, D.D.S.	

None of the surviving nurses live in this area.