
THE

MEDALLION



FROM HEROIC ACTIONS IN OVERSEAS BATTLES TO EVERYDAY SUPPORT THROUGH HOME FRONT ACTIVITIES, TEXANS WEATHERED WORLD WAR II WITH BRAVERY, DETERMINATION, SPIRIT AND RESOLVE.

WORLD WAR II SPECIAL EDITION

FROM BATTLEFIELDS TO BACKYARD GARDENS

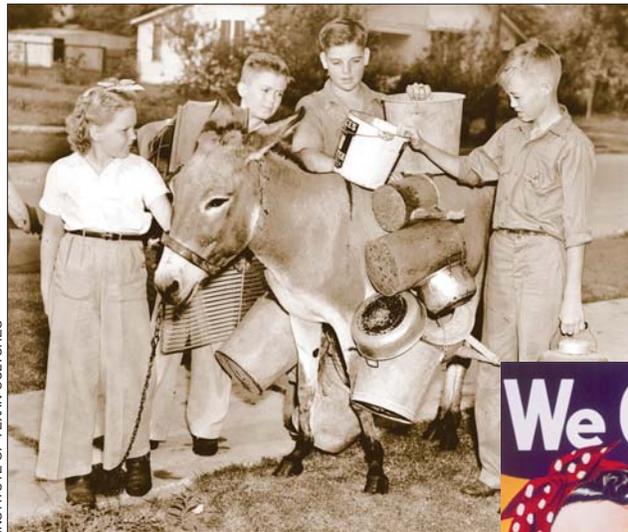
TEXAS DURING WORLD WAR II

World War II was a global event that in some way affected every family in every American community. Transformations brought about by the war — on both military and home fronts — also forever changed the character of Texas. The people and communities of the state, shocked by world events into a completely new way of life, did not return to their pre-war existence, but instead were catapulted into a new era following the war. Nothing was the same after monumental events on the world stage brought the war home to every community in Texas.

Through its special Texas in World War II initiative, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) will commemorate not only Sept. 2, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the end of the war (V+60), but also is developing plans to recognize and interpret the people and places significant in the history of World War II within our borders.

“During the war, Texans came together for a specific cause,” said THC Commissioner Shirley Caldwell, “and now is the time to come together again to preserve the sites and stories of that important era in our history. Members of the World War II generation experienced a time unlike any other, and we need to act now to capture those memories to ensure a lasting legacy for current and future generations.”

Still reeling from the devastation and hardships of the Great Depression, Texas was largely an agrarian state at the outbreak of World War II. Few families owned automobiles, telephones or even radios; the majority of women



Children and a helpful donkey, at left, lend a hand to the war effort by collecting scrap metal.

Rosie the Riveter, below, inspired women to do their part in support of the war.



INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES



★ ★ ★
**WITH A SHARED SENSE
OF PURPOSE,
ALL SEGMENTS OF THE
POPULATION — MEN,
WOMEN AND CHILDREN —
PARTICIPATED IN
INDIVIDUAL AND
ORGANIZED EFFORTS TO
HELP WIN THE WAR.**



worked in the home or on family farms; only about 40 percent of the population had a high school education; and ethnic

minorities, most notably Hispanics and African Americans, continued to suffer the injustices of segregation. With the United States' entry into the war in December 1941, the wheels were set in motion, and drastic changes came quickly to the Lone Star State.

One hundred seventy-five major military installations in Texas were either built or enlarged for the war. In addition to the Texans who served both at home and overseas, nearly 1.5 million

Texas troops played a pivotal role in attaining victory in World War II. Dalhart Army Air Field, 1942



service men and women trained or were stationed at Texas military installations between 1941 and 1945.

In more than 70 counties around the state, the government established 65 Army airfields, 35 Army posts, nine naval installations and eventually more than 70 prisoner of war camps that held mostly German, but also some Italian prisoners. In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice operated three alien detention camps in Texas — in Kenedy, Seagoville and Crystal City — which housed citizens of Japanese, German and Italian ethnicity from the U.S. as well as from South and Central America.

More than 750,000 Texans served in uniform during the war. Although Texas represented about five percent of the country's population at that time, Texans accounted for more than seven percent of military personnel.

Many famous World War II military personalities were either from Texas or had strong Texas connections. Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Chester W. Nimitz were both born in Texas. Gen. Douglas MacArthur attended a military high school in

San Antonio. Col. Oveta Culp Hobby, commander of the Women's Army Corps, hailed from Bell County.

The war's most decorated soldier, Audie Murphy, grew up in Hunt County, and Gen. Claire Chennault, commander of the famous Flying Tigers, was from Commerce, also in Hunt County. Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder, a native of Eden and mayor of Brady after the war, commanded the Army's Second Ranger Battalion and led his "Rudder's Rangers" in the D-Day invasion at Pointe du Hoc, famously scaling 100-foot cliffs under heavy fire to destroy German gun batteries.

Countless other Texans, perhaps lesser known but no less significant, made major contributions to the war effort. Waco native Doris (Dorie) Miller, an African American mess attendant in the U.S. Navy, performed heroically during the attack on Pearl Harbor and earned the Navy Cross. Leonard Roy Harmon, a native of Cuero, also a mess attendant in the Navy, died while helping rescue injured shipmates during the 1942 Battle of Guadalcanal and was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. The destroyer escort *USS Harmon*, christened by Harmon's mother and

launched in 1943, was the first U.S. warship named for an African American. José Mendoza Lopez, who died earlier this year in San Antonio, was one of five Hispanic Texans who earned the Medal of Honor during World War II.

Texas was home to the legendary Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) who trained at Avenger Field in Sweetwater. The WASP flew more than 60 million miles performing such duties as towing targets for live gunnery practice, ferrying military planes to air bases throughout the U.S., and test-flying new or damaged aircraft. Thirty-eight WASP lost their lives in service to the war effort, and the survivors, officially classified as civilian rather than military personnel, had to wait until special legislation was passed in 1977 to receive proper recognition and veteran benefits.

But the military history of Texas in World War II is only part of the story. Located throughout the state are reminders of the impact on the lives of those who supported the war effort on the home front. Nearly a half-million civilians, many who relocated to Texas, worked in war-related industries, and manufacturing in the state increased four-fold from 1940 to 1945.

— Continued on page 4



A patriotic pin

In particular, the Texas oil industry and southeast Texas shipbuilding activities had a tremendous impact on the war effort. Tens of thousands of Texans moved from rural areas into cities seeking war work, and the resulting population shift continued to affect the demographics of Texas for decades after the war. Women and minorities, although still experiencing unequal treatment, gained better employment opportunities through war work.

A unified home front brought communities together to find ways for everyone to make a difference. With a shared sense of purpose, all segments of the population — men, women and children — participated in individual and organized efforts to help win the war. Popular slogans such as “use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without” spurred citizens to patriotically embrace government rationing of foods (sugar, meat, coffee, butter) and other goods (rubber, silk, gasoline, paper) to prioritize these items for the troops. Families and community groups organized scrap drives to collect materials needed for the military, including metal, in the form of tin cans, steel razor blades, even brass lipstick tubes; rubber, such as old tires, garden hoses, raincoats and bathing caps; and kitchen fat for use in manufacturing explosives.

War bond drives, often with



Students in San Augustine County sit in the shadow of a war bond poster, April 1943.

celebrity sales pitches, raised millions of dollars. Volunteers rolled bandages for the Red Cross, served sandwiches, coffee and doughnuts to soldiers traveling through their towns on troop trains, and entertained troops at dances and canteens sponsored by local United Service Organizations or other philanthropic clubs.

Countless families, both rural and urban, tilled individual and community “victory gardens” so commercial crops could be devoted to the military. They joined the rest of the country in changing to simpler modes of dress to accommodate shortages in wool and other fabrics. Women’s dresses sported narrower, shorter skirts and simpler styles to eliminate ruffles and pleats; men’s suits no longer included vests, patch pockets, cuffs or wide lapels. Texan Stanley Marcus called the new look “patriotic chic.”

From heroic actions in overseas battles to everyday support through home front activities, Texans weathered World War II with bravery, determination, spirit and resolve. Their legacy continues to inspire the generations that followed them.

In appreciation and recognition of that legacy, and through the generosity of charitable foundations, corporate sponsors and individual donors, the THC is planning a wide array of programs and projects to identify, interpret and preserve the sites and stories of Texas in World War II. The following list provides an overview of the THC’s three-year plan:

- **Texas in World War II initiative** featuring a special celebration on Sept. 2, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the war’s end — A festive V+60 event at the State Capitol in Austin will honor World War II veterans; two new Official Texas Historical Markers will be dedicated; military bands and bagpipes will provide musical entertainment; and World War II-vintage airplanes will fly over the crowd.

- **Texas in World War II brochure** — A full-color brochure, highlighting numerous historic and cultural sites related to the war, will be launched at the Sept. 2, 2005 event in Austin and will be distributed free of charge throughout the state.

HELP PRESERVE TEXAS' WORLD WAR II LEGACY

■ World War II sites identification — Each county historical commission has been asked to provide information regarding World War II military and home front sites in their counties, and volunteers — including members of the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network and student interns — have been gathering data on sites throughout the state. In addition, the THC hopes to obtain funding for a comprehensive statewide survey of World War II-related sites and structures.

■ Vignettes of Wartime Texas historical marker program — A series of 15 new historical markers for significant World War II topics not yet adequately interpreted will be placed across the state. The marker series will reflect the regional and cultural diversity of Texas and tell important stories of life on the home front and the role of business.

■ Texas in World War II online — Additions to the THC web site will provide features for students and veterans, general information regarding the war in Texas, and links to oral history collections, veterans organizations, historic sites, museums and other World War II-related sites.

■ Here and There: Recollections of Texas in World War II oral history project — THC staff will coordinate an oral history training program centering on stories from the home front as well as war experiences of Texans. A series of workshops will be conducted around the state to train local volunteers to gather oral histories relating to the war years in their home communities.

According to Commissioner Caldwell, these projects will play a significant role in documenting Texas' contribution to World War II.

"The Texas in World War II initiative is exciting because it gives county historical commissions and local preservationists opportunities to tell their parts of the bigger story," she said. "We encourage everyone to join us and rally to the task at hand — documenting the legacy of wartime Texas and ensuring its preservation for future generations." ★



A San Antonio Army camp postcard

This article was written by Cynthia Beeman, director of the THC's History Programs Division.

Page 4 photo of students: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection (LC-USF35-1326)

The Texas Historical Commission is embarking on a three-year project to commemorate the pivotal role that Texas and Texans played in World War II. The project will focus on the enormous socioeconomic and cultural changes affecting our state both before and after the war.

Details about this multi-year initiative of regional and statewide activities appear in the article at left.

The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission is raising funds to support the projects of the Texas in World War II initiative.

The following donors have generously designated their contributions to this important project.

If you would like to join them in this initiative honoring Texas' contributions to World War II and preserving the memory of the sacrifices and heroism of the "Greatest Generation" of Texans, please use the enclosed contribution envelope or call 512/936-2241.

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MEMORIES OF A CANTEEN

DISCOVERY SHOWCASES PALESTINE'S WORLD WAR II COMMUNITY SERVICE

While sifting through long-forgotten items in the Anderson County Historical Commission office, Palestine resident Jimmy Odom discovered a treasure trove. A worn box of World War II memorabilia — scrapbooks, newspaper articles, photos of local servicemen, magazine articles and letters — contained remnants of a rich era of local history.

Odom wasn't exactly sure about the box's origins, but he is now confident it came from the attic of longtime Palestine resident Rose Plaisance. Since finding the box nearly six years ago, Odom has used the artifacts to piece together the story of a canteen (a military recreational facility) for servicemen operated by local volunteers during wartime.

"This has intrigued me so much for years. I have thought about it with every project we've done," Odom said, adding that he plans to compile his research for others to use and enjoy.

Dozens of Palestine-area women worked at the canteen, known as the Palestine Service Men's Club, from April 1942 through December 1945. Instead of contributing to the United Service Organizations' efforts at military bases, the community wanted to do something locally. They raised funds and created the club on the ground floor of the O'Neill Hotel, across the street from the train depot.

Club proprietor Zula Hanks ran a tight ship: there was no alcohol and no side door for unseemly exits. During a time of rationing and food stamps, the Palestine community provided refreshments for several troop trains each day. They also offered a letter-writing desk, a piano and a stack of records for a jitterbug or two.

Most trains only stopped for approximately 30 minutes. When troops didn't have time to go across the tracks



ANDERSON OHC

The Palestine Service Men's Club provided refreshments for the troops passing through town. At right: Servicemen recorded spoken messages on phonograph records for loved ones at home.



to the canteen, the volunteers ran over and handed a sandwich or a stack of cookies to the soldiers hanging out of the train windows.

While exploring this era of Palestine's history, a time marked by fear for troops abroad and reassuring smiles to service personnel passing through town, Odom interviewed several of the women who once worked at the canteen.

"The thing I remember most is that the people at home went through an awful lot — the concern of all of our loved ones in battle," said Celia Smith, who, as a young bride, worked at the canteen along with her mother. "This motivated us to do something for these soldiers on the trains. They represented our loved ones. Most were coming from boot camp or basic training and headed straight on into battle."

Smith, whose husband and two brothers were stationed overseas, said she and the other women wanted to do whatever they could to make the troops' trip more enjoyable.

"You felt like you were doing something in a way — in a very small way," she said.

The Palestine Service Men's Club continued operating for several months after the war officially ended, providing for troops coming through town on their way home, where happier times awaited them. Today, only a single wall of the club remains, painted with a mural honoring the men and women from Palestine who served the nation during World War II and other military conflicts. ★

This article was written by Linda C. Henderson, a historian with the THC's History Programs Division.

LEADERSHIP LETTER



When World War II hit us, I was proud to see Texans swarm to the enlistment offices. I was proud to be a Texan in uniform to serve with the other Texans that fought so well for Texas and the United States.

Our family got into World War II with both feet. Our dad, a World War I combat veteran, raised vegetables for the military and the public after trying to re-enlist. Mother joined the WAACs at 44 years of age; my brother and I were in armored divisions, and our teenage sister worked with the USO.

I was a second year cadet at Texas A&M when I joined the Army at 19 with five years of ROTC behind me. Texas A&M furnished more officers for the military than West Point and seven Aggies received the Medal of Honor.

The Texas National Guard Troops made a big difference everywhere they fought. The Army was glad to have the 36th Infantry Division with its field artillery, engineers, medical, quartermaster and observation squadron. The 112th Cavalry, changed to amphibious infantry, made five invasions in the South Pacific and the 124th Cavalry served as mule packers and infantry in Burma.

My duty was a Buck Sergeant Tank Commander, 92nd Cavalry Recon, 12th Armored Division. We received three battle stars and served in the 7th Army, the 3rd Army and the French First.

One of my tank gunners was Fred Rosales of El Paso, and I want to say that all Texans of Mexican descent were great fighters and never held back. One great example is Sgt. Manuel Gonzales of Fort Davis. When the 36th T-Patches hit the beach at Salerno, September 9, 1943, Manuel and his company were pinned down by German fire. Manuel crawled, under fire alone, and knocked out four machine gun nests, one mortar squad and 88 with its crew. All of this in his first day of combat. He received the Distinguished Service Cross; but it should have been the Medal of Honor.

My art career started when I was five. I've been drawing, painting and sculpting ever since. My subjects have been the life I've led. Military, Texas A&M, cowboying in Texas and two years in Mexico for the Foot-and-Mouth Commission. Whatever I was doing, I did art at nights and weekends and have been a full-time artist since 1975. My largest bronze is a six-foot sculpture of Audie Murphy at Camp Mabry. I made a life-sized bronze of Reveille I and designed the interior displays for the Corps Center at Texas A&M.

Living in Texas has been my reward. It's the best.

Siempre,

Bill
- Leftwich -

Bill Leftwich
World War II veteran



*Bill Leftwich, pictured at top
in Germany in 1945,
and recently with his wife Mary Alice.*

INTERPRETING WORLD WAR II ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

TEXANS INVITED TO TRANSFORM MEMORY TO HISTORY

Each generation must analyze and understand the past for itself based on its own system of values. History is not static; it is dynamic and ever changing. Although some basic elements of any historical event may be indisputable, many more are open to conjecture, subject to the frames of reference of individual participants or observers.

People with first-hand knowledge of historical events are, in effect, the first editors of the story. How they pass their memories to the next generation is the basis of preservation. The more information bequeathed from one generation to another, the better the chances of accurate interpretation.

Because history is alive and current, its movement continues on a sliding scale of time. A perfect example of that phenomenon is World War II. A finite event in our collective past, it continues to have an influence on our society and even our geographical landscape. Since the formal conclusion of the war on Sept. 2, 1945, though, the available elements of that event have diminished. The first to disappear were the war materiel and supplies, followed by more artifacts, archival records and architecture.

Then, over time, we have lost the associated memories on a grand scale. Gone is the government leadership of the era, and most of the officer class. Time has also taken its toll on the military rank and file. Within a generation, the available stories to be collected will be those dealing with the home front and the children of World War II. And then, as the scale slides on, only the interpretation of past memories will remain.

Two important components of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas in World War II initiative speak directly to the preservation and interpre-



tation of memories. The first is an oral history project that will focus on collecting stories at the local level throughout the state. Currently, more than 300,000 World War II veterans live in Texas, but that number decreases significantly each year. No one agency or group can find all those individuals and record the remaining stories, but with a joint effort of multiple partners — the county historical commissions (CHCs) central to that effort — there will be more information to pass along.

Through the oral history component of the initiative, THC staff will conduct workshops in each region of the state, training family members, friends, students, historians and others in creative ways to capture the remaining stories. There will be special emphasis on developing depth within interviews through focused questioning, on understanding the layers of the home front story and on the need to be inclusive and comprehensive in the approach.

As Baylor University oral historian Thomas L. Charlton observed, “The

strength of oral history is in the individual dimension it brings to an understanding of our past. It allows us to share common, universal emotions and perspectives that help us view history in a personal way from the bottom up and from the inside out.” Teaching individuals how to record and preserve those added dimensions to the broad story of Texas in World War II will be the primary objective of the THC oral history workshops.

It is not enough, however, to merely collect the stories. History must be shared to remain alive. It is important that the generations who did not experience the World War II era weave those stories together so they can be understood and appreciated by those who will follow. One important way to accomplish that objective is through the placement of Official Texas Historical Markers. Since the early 1960s, the THC has marked sites and histories associated with the war. Much has been told through that venue, but much more remains to be told about the bases and fields, the units, the heroes, the home front efforts and countless other relevant stories.

Through the Texas in World War II initiative, the THC will place 15 special markers around the state during the next three years to commemorate the wartime years. The Vignettes of Wartime Texas marker project is made possible through the generosity of the Hoblitzelle Foundation of Dallas, longtime friends of the state marker program. Special marker topics have been selected, and the associated CHCs will be notified soon of their involvement. However, these markers represent only a sample of what should be interpreted and shared.

THC Commissioner Tom Alexander, who is providing leadership for the initiative, noted, “The war affected every



county in the state in some significant way, and as the appointed guardians of the past it is important the CHCs do what they can to share those stories.”

Alexander suggests the CHCs survey their unique stories and then assess where markers might be most effective in educating the public about war-related stories and places. He added, “The markers should be promoted as integral components of local heritage tourism efforts.”

Memories are at the core of the Texas in World War II initiative. Oral history and Official Texas Historical Markers are two means of utilizing those memories and turning them into histories, bringing generations together to discuss within a broad forum the impact of the war on our state. They are also a means of ensuring future generations will have a more complete story to interpret and understand in their own fashion and then, as history dictates, to pass it along once again.

For more information on the various components of the Texas in World War II initiative, visit the THC web site at www.thc.state.tx.us. ★

This article was written by Dan K. Utley, chief historian with the THC's History Programs Division.

Opposite: An African American soldier in World War II. Photo courtesy National Archives.

Clockwise from top: Texas Medal of Honor winner, Cleto Rodriguez.

Marine volunteers departing San Antonio from the Southern Pacific Depot. Photo credit: Institute of Texan Cultures.

Students in San Augustine County (April 1943). Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection (LC-USF35-1326).

This African American gun crew received the Navy Cross for distinguished service. Photo courtesy National Archives.



RELIVE THE LEGACY OF

TEXAS' POWERFUL CONNECTION TO THE WAR ENDURES AT HER

“Sir, we have a 500-pounder (bomb) hanging nose-down in the back shackle.”

This grisly announcement from the flight engineer sent shivers down Pampa resident Mike Porter’s spine as he piloted his B-24 over the Adriatic Sea in 1944. But it didn’t stop him from fulfilling his duty. He vowed to diffuse the situation.

“I told the co-pilot, ‘Hold this baby steady,’ and I grabbed the fire axe,” Porter says.

The catwalk to the rear of the plane was a tight fit, so Porter had to remove his parachute. When he finally got to the bomb bay doors to cut the missile loose, things went south.

“I thought I had a real good grasp on the axe, but the next thing you know, the bomb fell, the axe fell and Mike fell,” Porter recalls.

Somehow, miraculously, his old A-2 bomber jacket got caught on the plane and jerked him back upward. Porter proceeded to crawl back to his pilot’s seat and safely land the plane.

“It’s just one of those things that happened,” he understatedly claims.

“I tell you what, though — a few hours after that I completely went to pieces. It finally hit me what had happened.”

Porter’s incredible story comes to life at Freedom Museum USA, where his bomber jacket — complete with the tear across the back where it caught on the plane — resides along with countless other World War II-related memorabilia. Porter is curator of this Pampa museum, which is featured in the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) new *Texas in World War II* brochure, along with dozens of other sites across the state with ties to the war.

Porter’s Texas connection is undoubtedly similar to some of the nearly 300,000 World War II veterans still residing in the Lone Star State. He trained at Pampa Army Air Field, where he learned to operate twin-engine planes (AT-17s, AT-10s and AT-9s), and returned to Pampa after the war to raise a family and make a living.

“Texas has had an enormous impact on my life as a soldier, husband, father and businessman,” Porter said. “I’ve always appreciated being in the Panhandle. Everybody around here treats you like family — they’ll reach out to you whenever you need a hand. That really made an impression on me.”



Mike Porter of Pampa holds the flight jacket that saved his life.

For decades, Pampa Army Air Field hosted reunions for U.S. Army Air Corps servicemen, and by the late 1980s, discussion turned to preserving their legacy by opening a museum. In 1995, Porter was named interim director, a title he retains to this day, and the Freedom Museum USA went on to amass a significant collection of military artifacts. They include: a B-25 bomber, a personnel carrier, a German uniform from a nearby prisoner of war camp and a wedding dress made from a parachute.

To learn more about other World War II-related heritage tourism destinations, order a free copy of *Texas in World War II* by calling 866/276-6219. In the meantime, consider visiting the following sites around the state.



WORLD WAR II

HERITAGE TOURISM SITES



Visitors pause at the Japanese Garden of Peace at the Admiral Nimitz State Historic Site in Fredericksburg.

FREDERICKSBURG

After guiding Allied forces to victory over Japan, U.S. Navy Adm. Chester W. Nimitz was among those who signed the 1945 instrument of surrender that formally ended World War II. He was a native of this Hill Country town that honors his life and times at the Admiral Nimitz State Historic Site and National Museum of the Pacific War.

The museum's George Bush Gallery provides a powerful overview of the war, and an exhibit on pre-attack Pearl Harbor features a Japanese two-man midget submarine (the only one on display in the continental U.S.). The museum also includes the Japanese Garden of Peace, a gift from Japan as a symbol of reconciliation.

GREENVILLE

The Audie Murphy/ American Cotton Museum combines stories of Hunt County's most historic crop, cotton, and its most famous native son, Audie Murphy, World War II's most decorated soldier. The museum grounds include a working cotton patch, picnic areas, and native grass and herb gardens.

Artifacts from Murphy's military experience intermingle with items from his post-war career in the entertainment industry. One exhibit displays the control panel of the crashed civilian plane in which he died in 1971 while on a business trip. The museum also hosts an annual Audie Murphy Days celebration.



Audie Murphy

WORLD WAR II EVENTS ACROSS TEXAS

■ SEPTEMBER 2, AUSTIN

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) invites all Texans to attend a special free commemoration ceremony of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II on the south lawn of the State Capitol in Austin. Gov. Rick Perry will deliver the keynote address at the event honoring Texas' "Greatest Generation."

Festivities begin at 8:30 a.m. and include a performance of World War II-era music, several distinguished World War II veterans and a dramatic flyover including a B-17 "Flying Fortress." For more information, call 512/463-6100.

■ SEPTEMBER 2, MADISONVILLE

Madison County Museum event with the Daughters of the American Revolution commemorating Texas in World War II. Call 936/348-5230.

■ SEPTEMBER 3, COLLEGE STATION

The Brazos County Historical Commission will co-sponsor an event honoring local connections to World War II at the George Bush Presidential Library. Call 979/862-1555.

■ SEPTEMBER 17, MASON

Reunion for World War II veterans includes a flyover, parade, barbecue dinner, musical entertainment, speakers and a veterans marker dedication. Call 325/347-5605 or www.masonxcoc.com/groups/histcomm.

■ OCTOBER 22, HALLETTSVILLE

Lavaca County Historical Commission's "On the Homefront: Lavaca County in World War II," with distinguished speakers, a band concert and air show featuring a B-25 bomber and an AT-6 Texan. Call 512/798-5833 or www.rootsweb.com/~txlavaca/histcom.htm.

■ COMING THIS FALL, BONHAM

Sam Rayburn House Museum opens a special exhibit about Sam Rayburn and World War II. Call 903/583-5558.

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HARLINGEN

Harlingen's Marine Military Academy is home to the original full-scale working model of the famous Iwo Jima statue at Arlington National Cemetery. In February 1945, five U.S. Marines and a U.S. Navy corpsman raised a giant American flag atop the island of Iwo Jima after a vicious battle. Joe Rosenthal's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the event became one of World War II's most enduring images, and artist Felix de Weldon's model allows Texans to experience this lasting legacy.

An adjacent museum features Marine Corps memorabilia, a 30-minute film dedicated to the Battle of Iwo Jima, and a veterans hall of fame. The monument and museum are next to Valley International Airport, built on the site of Harlingen Army Air Field, a World War II installation.



The USS Texas, anchored in La Porte, served as the flagship for the 1944 D-Day invasion of Europe.



Americans showed their patriotism with victory pins.



LA PORTE

The only surviving pre-World War I dreadnought battleship, the *USS Texas* is now permanently anchored in the Houston Ship Channel as part of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. During World War II, this esteemed vessel served as the flagship for the 1944 D-Day invasion of Europe, commanded by Texas native Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The *USS Texas* was the first U.S. battleship equipped with anti-aircraft guns and commercial radar, and the first to launch an aircraft. Visitors can climb up to the flying bridge or explore deep into below-deck areas. The *USS Texas* is listed as a National Historic Landmark and a National Mechanical Engineering Landmark.

**For more information visit
www.thc.state.tx.us.**

SWEETWATER

In 1942, the U.S. Army Air Forces launched the civilian Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program after women started taking home-front jobs once considered exclusively for males. From 1942 to 1944, these first women to fly U.S. military planes logged 60 million miles, ferrying military aircraft to bases nationwide.

The pilots trained at Sweetwater Army Air Field (Avenger Field) which currently serves as a municipal airfield and campus of Texas State Technical College. A monument bears the names of 1,074 women pilots who received their WASP silver wings here, and a memorial sculpture honors the 38 women pilots who died in service. A 1929 hangar near campus is the home of the National WASP WWII Museum, where exhibits tell the pioneer pilots' stories. ★

These sites represent a sampling of the communities profiled in *Texas in World War II*, a heritage tourism brochure produced by the THC's Texas Heritage Trails Program. It highlights Texas' vital connections to the war on both the home front and overseas, and showcases countless heritage tourism attractions in 34 cities across the state.

Order a free brochure today to begin your journey across Texas' remarkable and enduring World War II legacy.

This article was written by Andy Rhodes, managing editor of The Medallion.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Former POW Camp Captures Interest of Several Generations

People are often surprised to learn that during World War II Texas had more prisoner of war (POW) camps than any other state and the highest number of detainees. The numbers tell the story: an estimated 50,000 POWs, mostly Germans and some Italians and Japanese, inhabited more than 70 camps across Texas.

One site was on the outskirts of Hearne, in Robertson County near Bryan. With so many men serving in the armed forces, farmers around Hearne desperately needed workers, and they saw POWs as the answer, according to Cathy Lazarus, chair of the Robertson County Historical Commission and president of Roll Call: Friends of Camp Hearne. In early 1942, Hearne civic leaders began the campaign for a POW camp, and in June 1943 the first wave of prisoners arrived.

Today the town is again taking the initiative, this time by turning the site of the camp into Robertson County's first planned tourist attraction and a featured part of the Texas Brazos Trail Region. In the fall of 2005, the city of Hearne will unveil an Official Texas Historical Marker at Camp Hearne that describes its history and significance to the war effort.

In October, the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History in Bryan will open an exhibit about Camp Hearne and the German POW presence in America, with some of the displays later transferring to the Hearne Chamber of Commerce.

The exhibit promises a fascinating look at Camp Hearne, one of the first and biggest POW camps in the U.S., housing more than 4,800 German soldiers, mainly noncommissioned officers in Field Marshall Erwin Rommel's battle-weary Afrika Korps. Now, thanks in large part to the historical and archeological work of Dr. Michael Waters and his students at Texas A&M University, it is one of the most thoroughly studied camps in the state.

As part of his research, Waters interviewed former Camp Hearne POWs and made an intriguing discovery. By and large, the Germans remembered their time in captivity with fondness. Officers were not required to work, and noncommissioned



German POWs learned about wood carving at Camp Hearne.

officers could be assigned only to supervisory duty. Since junior enlisted men accounted for only 15 to 20 percent of the camp population, nearly everyone else was free for such pursuits as playing musical instruments — there were three orchestras at Camp Hearne — and constructing fountains, statues and miniature castles. The food was good and plentiful too, they said. In general, the German POWs were treated decently.

A little too decently, some Americans thought, as they endured rationing. But the U.S. military was operating according to the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention of 1929, which required that POWs be treated exactly the same as U.S. soldiers, Waters explained.

“They also wanted to show the POWs that this is what America is like, this is the way we are,” he said. “They wanted to win them over with kindness.” And perhaps just as important, the U.S. hoped the Germans would reciprocate in their treatment of American soldiers held overseas.

Shortly after the war, the camp was dismantled. Some buildings were sold and moved, the rest demolished. Nevertheless, remnants of camp life survived, hidden beneath the weeds and brambles.

“Every piece of ground has a story to tell. The cement slabs and decaying fountains obscured by vegetation at the site of Camp Hearne echo a time forgotten of a bustling city of nearly five thousand men brought together by world conflict.”

— From *Lone Star Stalag*
by Dr. Michael Waters

Waters' archeological team located fountains the Germans built, remains of other structures and approximately 1,400 artifacts — including military insignia, buttons, cigarette lighters and hair-tonic bottles — some of which will be on display at the Brazos Valley Museum and later at the Hearne Chamber of Commerce.

This brief, previously obscure chapter in Texas history is now better documented than ever in Waters' recently published book, *Lone Star Stalag*. Additional news about the site is available at www.camphearne.info. ★

This article was written by Molly Gardner, editor with the THC's Archeology Division.

Valuable Lessons from

RECYCLE BUILDINGS, CONSERVE MATERIALS

For many Texans, the end of World War II marked the beginning of a fascinating architectural journey.

After the war, military installations were deactivated and countless structures were abandoned, returned to original ownership, donated to the state or sold. Often, buildings from deactivated camps were dispersed and relocated for use elsewhere as schools, churches and housing. What remains of World War II in Texas varies from recognizable military facilities to eerie ruins visible from remote highways.

Texas hosted every type of military installation and related facilities during the war, including Army Air Forces, prisoner of war (POW) camps, United Service Organizations (USO) facilities and hospitals. Many of these sites were constructed just prior to or during World War II, whereas other facilities already existed, such as Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio and Fort Bliss in El Paso.

Preserving Texas' war-related structures, in their various current uses or states of neglect, depends heavily on citizens conducting surveys documenting sites for official records.

Gen. Franco DiBello, an officer in the Italian army who became a prisoner of war housed in a Hereford camp in April 1943, returned to the town in 1981 to celebrate the restoration of a chapel built by the prisoners.

"There is no sign of what was here," DiBello said. "All is covered by wheat; this is a symbol of peace and prosperous future over the mistakes of humanity."

Fort D.A. Russell (formerly Camp Marfa) in Brewster and Presidio Counties serves as an excellent example of a closed military installation with many original structures still in use. The city of Marfa acquired much of the fort after its deactivation; now former barracks serve as local

residences, and the former headquarters building is the Marfa National Bank.

Artist and sculptor Donald Judd, who transformed many of the remaining structures into gallery space and offices for the Chinati Foundation's internationally renowned art installations, purchased the remainder of the abandoned post in the late 1960s. Painted signs in German for POWs remain on the walls of the former storage warehouses alongside Judd's rows of stainless steel cubes. Murals painted by German POWs still adorn the walls in Building 98, which was recently designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.

On the other side of the state along the Houston Ship Channel, the Hitchcock Naval Air Station was commissioned in 1943 to protect the area from invasion by Axis submarines in the Gulf of Mexico. Hitchcock had a massive timber-frame structure (more than 300,000 square feet of floor space) built specifically to house approximately six blimps, also known as "lighter-than-air craft."

After redesignation as a naval air facility, the hangar was used for storing rice, and, according to the Handbook of Texas Online, the state could have stored its entire rice harvest in the building. Hurricane Carla damaged most of the hangar in 1961, and it was eventually demolished.

Nearby, Fort Travis on the Bolivar Peninsula contains structures from both World War I and World War II. The Republic of Texas established the fort in 1836, and during World War II the site housed German POWs. The barracks are gone now, but gun revetments (gun emplacements) remain. Fort Travis is currently part of the Galveston County Parks System.

Many deactivated military bases were dispersed when public and private

entities purchased the buildings for relocation and reuse as schools and churches.

Bartlett school trustees purchased four buildings from Bastrop County's Camp Swift in November 1949 to accommodate growing enrollment at the African American campus; however, the school complex has since been demolished. In addition, Austin's Hyde Park Presbyterian Church incorporated barracks from Camp Swift into its parish hall. Likewise, when its 19th-century Lutheran church was destroyed by a hurricane in 1945, the community of Danevang, the heart of Texas' Danish settlement, rallied and bought the chapel from Camp Hulen in nearby Palacios; the church continues to keep Danish tradition alive.

In La Grange, a former barrack from Camp Swift Infantry Base is now an espresso bar and live music venue called the Bugle Boy, in tribute to the World War II-era hit by the Andrew Sisters ("Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy"). Another unusual conversion is a former underground concrete revetment turned into to a hotel spa at San Luis Resort in Galveston, though its original purpose is hardly recognizable from the interior.

Many structures in use during the war have also been converted to museums. The Rattlesnake Bomber Base Museum is in Pyote, and the National WASP WWII Museum in Sweetwater is at nearby Avenger Field, where the Women Airforce Service Pilots trained. One or more World War II hangars from Bryan Army Air Field are now being used at Texas A&M University to conserve and reassemble the *Belle*, the French ship that wrecked in 1686 under the command of Robert Cavalier Sieur de la Salle. In San Marcos, the original 1873 Hays County Jail became a World War II USO center for black servicemen, and now has new



World War II



An aircraft hangar at former Fort D.A. Russell in Marfa now contains modern art sculptures as part of the Chinati Foundation.

At right: The restored POW chapel in Hereford stands in a cornfield.



life as the Calaboose African American History Museum.

Interesting from a military standpoint, Amarillo's Pantex Ordnance Plant, authorized in early 1942 following the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, is still in business. The plant, built in nine months, transformed a 16,000-acre wheat field into a bomb factory site. Its use reversed course over the years, moving from an initial mission of assembly to one of disassembly.

Many other decommissioned World War II buildings and structures are a part

of the rich story of Texas' wartime experience, and each serves as a tribute to the men and women whose dedication to the war effort is remembered across the state today. The architectural remnants of this era are appropriately being used in a way that World War II taught its generation — in the true spirit of conservation and reuse. ★

This article was written by Amy Lambert and Susan Tietz of the THC's Architecture Division.

Lavaca County Markers Honor Downed World War II Aviators

People could hear the explosion from miles away. Houses shook “as if by an earthquake,” a local newspaper reported. The B-25 Mitchell bomber with engine trouble, carrying at least 500 gallons of gasoline, gouged a crater in a field near Hope, Texas that is still visible today, more than 60 years after the crash that killed six young aviators.

This was the first of seven fatal Army Air Corps crashes in Lavaca County during World War II. The loss of life affected the residents so deeply they took up a collection to place a marker at the exact spot the B-25 went down, and they continued to set up markers as more airmen died in their county.

Each marker bears the Army Air Corps insignia, the aviator’s name, the date of his death and an inscription that reads, “Lost his life in Army Air Corps in the performance of duty.” The small tombstone-like monuments dot the fields and pastures of these rolling coastal plains about halfway between Houston and San Antonio.

“It was strictly a grassroots effort, a response to the deaths of these young men in defense of their country,” said Brenda Lincke-Fisseler, Lavaca County Historical Commission member. No government entity or official organization prompted the initiative.

By the end of the war, county residents had volunteered to honor 13 aviators. Most had been based at nearby Army airfields, where they were taking advanced training in single-engine AT-6s. In the rush to get pilots into combat as quickly as possible, this instruction would be their last before shipping overseas.



“Bam! The next thing they knew, they were in battle,” said Doug Kubicek, chair of the Lavaca County Historical Commission.

Student pilots at Foster Army Air Field, a few miles away in Victoria, were learning how to navigate by using just a compass, and the spiral atop the Lavaca County Courthouse served as a reference point signifying when to return. According to official crash reports, pilot error likely caused the majority of accidents. The fliers, mostly in their early 20s — some even younger — often got lost, or “just plain ran out of gas,” Lincke-Fisseler said.

The Lavaca County markers appear to be unique in Texas, and possibly in the nation. U.S. Air Force historian Dr. Bruce Ashcroft said he knows of no other community in which citizens contributed their own funds to mark the locations where aviators died during World War II. And Lincke-Fisseler, despite years of research and hundreds of pages of notes, reports and clippings, did not find any evidence of a similar phenomenon elsewhere.

A statistic might help explain the strong feelings of those Lavaca County residents of the 1940s.

“About 90 percent of the men of fighting age in the county were in service during the war, so almost every family had a son or husband or brother in the military,” Kubicek said. “There was such a feeling of helplessness. They couldn’t do anything to help their family members, but they thought, ‘Here is something I can do.’”

Lavaca County will honor the downed fliers again this year at a special event in Hallettsville on October 22. Organizers hope some of the men’s relatives will be able to attend, but it is sometimes difficult to locate family members, said Lincke-Fisseler. Many of the dead were so young they did not have wives or children.

Before the October event, the Lavaca County Historical Commission will place a final marker for a pilot who died toward the end of the war, but was somehow overlooked. This memorial will be exactly the same as the others, chiseled in the same lettering by the same monument company.

All the markers, and the memories of the sacrifices they represent, are expected to last far into the future because of the efforts of Lavaca County residents.

“In every case, someone has taken the trouble to mow around the markers,” Kubicek said. “I know of a man who weeds around one in his field, and another who puts flowers on his.”

Oil company employees working in the area even built a small fence around one to protect it, he said. “These markers are like hallowed ground.” ★

This article was written by Molly Gardner, an editor in the THC’s Archeology Division.

Earning Her Wings

Maxine Flournoy Recalls Experience as a WASP over Texas Skies



As a member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), Maxine Flournoy deftly maneuvered AT-7s, the standard trainer planes for navigators during World War II. She never imagined that 60 years later she would once again find herself in the cockpit of an AT-7.

The opportunity arose during a WASP reunion earlier this year at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, where these pioneering pilots trained from 1942 to 1944. Thirty-one alumnae of the program were in attendance, and Flournoy wore the biggest smile of them all.

“When you’re 84 years old, flying one of those planes is quite a treat,” she says, adding that she researched the AT-7’s flight instruments to re-acclimate herself with the aircraft. “It felt wonderful — everything was right there just the way I remembered. It was such a thrill. I was really grateful for the opportunity to do that.”

Flournoy logged hundreds of flight hours over the past six decades as a private pilot and for recreation. As a Texas Historical Commission (THC) commissioner in the 1980s, she flew her Cessna 337 to meetings, and she took pride in flying to WASP reunions across the country.

“There’s satisfaction in getting from point A to point B without someone else doing the flying for you,” she says. “When I couldn’t fly my own plane, I had to take the airlines for awhile, and that really hurt my feelings.”

Flournoy’s interest in aviation took off at Joplin Junior College (Missouri) in the early 1940s. A friend was enthusiastically discussing her recent experience doing aerial spins and stalls in a small plane, and her stories inspired Flournoy to eventually seek a pilot’s license.

In 1943, a WASP recruiter contacted Flournoy about serving in the group; she accepted, and spent the rest of the year training in Sweetwater. After graduation she was assigned to training command in Hondo, Texas, for navigation school. Her duty was routine test flying — slow-timing new engines, checking throttle settings, and recording instrument flight gauges. It was the WASP’s job to fly the planes for two hours over Hondo, but sometimes they veered a bit off course.

“This was before radar was being used extensively, so they couldn’t track us. Occasionally, I’d go over to San Antonio just to take a look at Randolph Field or the Kelly base,” Flournoy recalls with a chuckle. “We flew just high enough so people couldn’t see our tail numbers, and we always got back to Hondo in two hours. Two hours is two hours — we did our job and did it well, but we also had a good time.”

Flournoy says the thought of flying combat missions never entered the WASP’s minds; they did not expect to take those jobs from male pilots. But their patriotism was strong, and they viewed their duty as fulfilling an important mission for their country.

“That was why most of us were flying — we wanted to do our part,” Flournoy says. “Other people were doing whatever they could to help by rationing supplies or growing vegetables. We were flying airplanes instead.”

After the WASP disbanded in 1944, Flournoy took a job as a company pilot in Alice, Texas. There, she met her husband Lucien, a prominent oilman, and remained on the ground for 15 years while she raised their family. Eventually, she took to the skies again in her own Beech Baron for leisure and to attend THC meetings.



Maxine Flournoy is happy to be in the cockpit after 60 years of flying.

Left: Flournoy during training in 1944.

Far left: The official WASP logo, Avenger Field in Sweetwater



It is her WASP experience, however, that keeps her head in the clouds.

“It was a wonderful time, but we’re all over 80 now, and many have made their last flights,” Flournoy says, adding that she has continued to be involved with the group by recently serving as president of the alumnae organization. “I consider myself very fortunate to have experienced the sisterhood of being a WASP.” ★

This article was written by Andy Rhodes, managing editor of The Medallion.

My History

Mathis Clay, a ninth grader at Vanguard Preparatory School in Dallas, has a special connection to World War II. His grandfather, Matthew Honer Clay, Sr., served in the war in the Pacific Theater. Mathis recently spoke with his grandfather about the war, and afterward he wrote an article about what he learned. If you have a relative or neighbor who is a World War II veteran, perhaps you can ask them about their experience and write something similar to Mathis' story.

My grandfather was drafted for World War II in April 1943. He reported to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio and was sent to Camp Bonneville in the state of Washington for basic training.

His duties included “supervising the operation of machines used in fumigating and bath units.” He was promoted to technical sergeant, but he became separated from his company because of hernia surgery.

My grandfather especially remembers when bombs were dropped on their troops' ship, and the anti-aircraft didn't provide much protection. Just as he and others boarded the L.C.M. (Landing Craft Men), Japanese suicide bombers “split the ship into pieces,” and it sank while the rescued troops floated near the shore.

My grandfather says, “It is important for Texas students to realize that many sacrifices were made to accomplish the peaceful surrender of the Japanese after the atomic bombs were dropped in 1945.”

He earned enough service points and combat badges while serving guard duty on warehouses and supply dumps in Japan to qualify for an honorable discharge in May 1946.

A recruiter at Fort Sam Houston asked my grandfather if he would ever reenlist in the Army Reserve. His reply was, “Man, after all I've been through, I wouldn't join the Salvation Army!”



Matthew Honer Clay, Sr. and Mathis Clay

NOW YOU KNOW

Airplanes played a very important role in World War II. In fact, the war started and ended with aircraft action — the Germans attacked Poland by air in 1939, and the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Japan from a plane in 1945. During the war, many different kinds of planes took to the skies, and a lot of them had colorful nicknames, such as the C-47 “Gooney Bird,” the C-119 “Flying Boxcar,” the P-61 “Black Widow” and the P-63 “King Cobra.” Here are a few of the best-known World War II planes:

AT-6 TEXAN

Many U.S. pilots in World War II flew the AT-6 Texan at some point, and most Army Air Forces' fighter pilots trained in the AT-6 before graduating from flying school. Many of the Royal Air Force pilots who flew Spitfire and Hurricane planes trained in the British version of the AT-6.



B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

The B-17 Flying Fortress is one of the most famous airplanes ever built. It served in every World War II combat zone, but it's best known for long daylight bombing raids over Europe. The B-17 became famous because it usually brought crew members back to base even if the plane was damaged in battle. With up to 13 machine guns on it, the B-17 was considered a flying “fortress in the sky.”



B-24 LIBERATOR

The B-24 Liberator was one of the most abundant of all of the U.S. planes in World War II. It served in different kinds of combat, delivering large bomb loads over long distances. Its oval-shaped rudders were one of a kind, and it had special “roller-shutter” doors that pulled back into the plane when bombs were dropped.



B-29 SUPERFORTRESS

The B-29 Superfortress came onto the scene in the later years of World War II to serve as the long-awaited “magic weapon” in the war against Japan. The B-29 was known for its great range, which came in handy for the long flights to attack Japan from bases in China and the Pacific Islands.



P-51 MUSTANG

The P-51 Mustang is considered to be one of the greatest single-seat fighters used in World War II. Its ability to fly great distances made it famous during the long missions to Germany and over the endless stretches of the Pacific Ocean. By the end of the war, pilots in P-51s had destroyed 4,950 enemy aircraft in the air, more than any other fighter in Europe.

Photos courtesy National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.





Where on Earth? You tell us! Write to the Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276. You also may fax your answer to 512/463-6374 or email it to medallion@thc.state.tx.us. The first three people who correctly guess the site will be named with the answer in the November/December issue of *The Medallion*. The first correct mail answer will be counted, even if correct emails and faxes arrive first.

Want a clue? The World War II soldier depicted in this statue is the focal point of an annual festival in this northeast Texas community.

Answer to the photo from the last issue: The Nazareth Academy building is in downtown Victoria. Designed in 1904 by noted South Texas architect Jules Leffland, this Alsatian-design Rococo Revival building housed students until 1951.

Congratulations to **Debbie Curti** of Lubbock, and **Shirley Melvin** and **Peter Riesz** of Victoria. Winners receive prizes from our Texas Heritage Trails Program, the Texas Historical Commission's regional tourism initiative, as tokens of our appreciation for taking part in the fun. Thanks to all participants!



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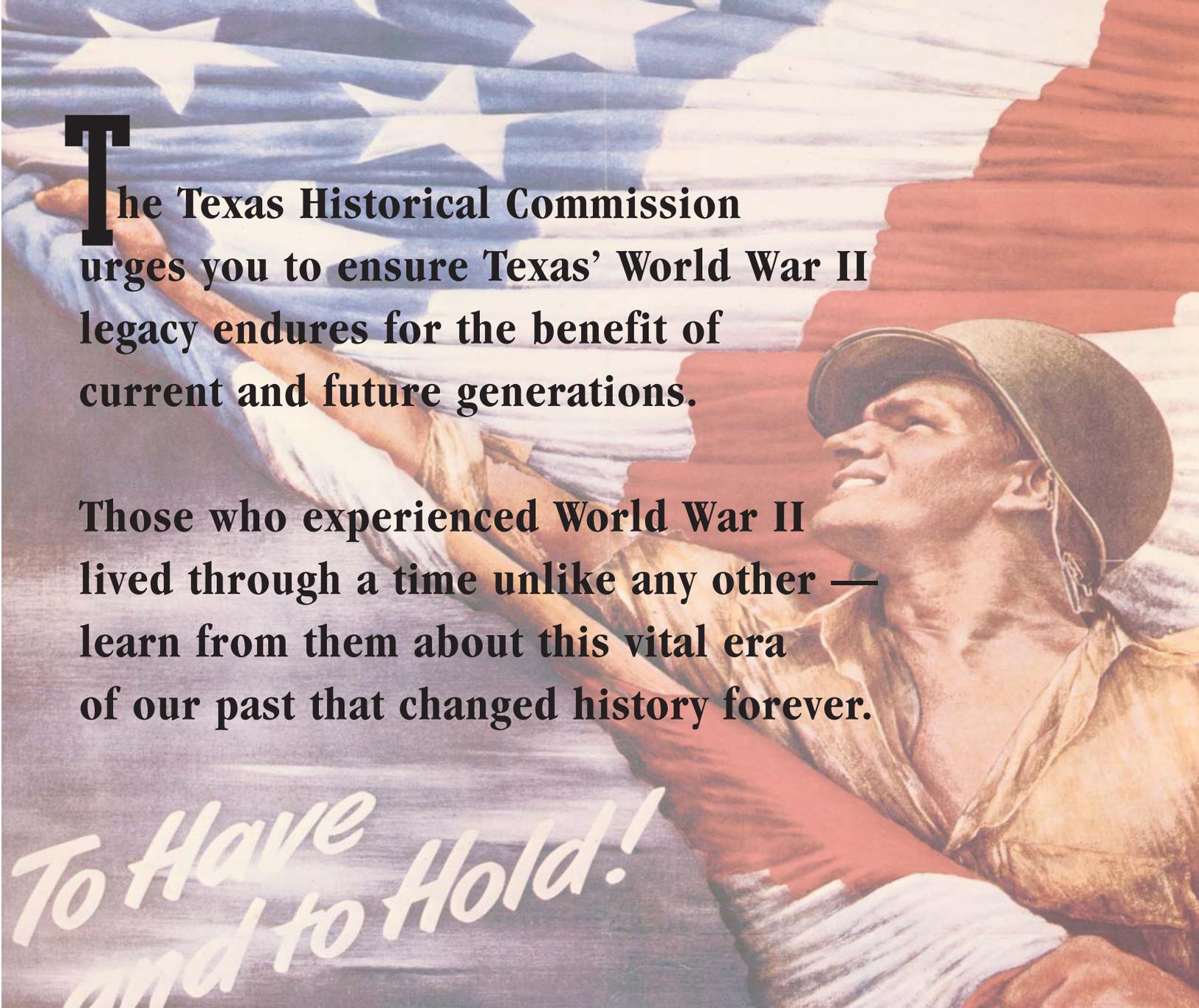
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The Texas Historical Commission
urges you to ensure Texas' World War II
legacy endures for the benefit of
current and future generations.

**Those who experienced World War II
lived through a time unlike any other —
learn from them about this vital era
of our past that changed history forever.**

*To Have
and to Hold!*



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