

CONCLUSION

While World War II affected women's domestic responsibilities, their primary roles changed very little. The wartime experiences of women living in Wilmington, North Carolina were similar to those found across the nation. Courtships were abbreviated and many women found themselves separated from their husbands shortly after marriage. Women lived at home with their parents or in-laws, or they relocated to a new town away from friends and family in order to be closer to their husbands before their deployment. While neither option was ideal, women were still expected to establish a home. Once their homes were established, women took on the new but temporary responsibilities of preparing for blackouts, corresponding with soldiers, investing in war bonds, cooperating with the rationing system, and raising children as single parents. Women adjusted to these tasks, perhaps with varying degrees of acceptance, even as they continued to uphold prewar values and expectations.

The federal government influenced the advertisements and articles directed at women that appeared in national magazines and local newspapers. Advertisers and writers targeted women in every room of their homes. Traditional domestic duties became acts of war. Victory overseas required that women build homes, maintain their silence about troop movement, purchase war bonds, feed their families, and provide adequate care for their children. The ideal of domesticity was transformed temporarily and it became equated with the foundation of the home front, and deemed vital to the war effort. Thus, women's domestic roles did not change, but were intensified during the war.

Close to sixty years after the war ended, Wilmington women remembered their domestic lives as largely unchanged. Their recollections provided evidence of wartime disruptions, but they brushed off these changes as minor. Women consistently recalled their wartime domestic life as happy and satisfying. Of course they missed loved ones, struggled to budget finances, and grew weary of being single parents; nonetheless, they chose to dwell on the more positive experiences of the war years while making light of their sacrifices. World War II was a symbol of their youth, and the sacrifices they made became the historic marker of a generation. The women interviewed for this project had a role to play at this decisive moment in history. Their recollections make it clear that they have no regrets about any decision they made in their youth. Their collective memory of the World War II home front speak to a continuity with the domestic experiences of their mothers. Change, however, will dominate the lives of their post World War II baby boom daughters.