

ABSTRACT

World War II disrupted the domestic roles of women living in Wilmington, North Carolina, but these roles did not change. Women were still expected to marry and establish a home, entertain guests, manage a budget, prepare meals, and raise children. In addition to these responsibilities, wartime domesticity included rationing, relocation, and separation from husbands. Despite such changes, women continued to establish homes and manage their homes. Interviews with Wilmington's female population sixty years after the war showed evidence of such disruptions, but these women interpreted their lives as relatively unchanged.

Propaganda and women's articles created or influenced by the federal government placed a new sense of urgency on domestic duties. By embracing both their peacetime and wartime domestic responsibilities, women could help win the war. Victory overseas began with a victory on the home front. Advertisements and rhetoric aimed at women sent the message to women that their actions in their homes determined the outcome of the national conflict. Women were enlisted to fight from every room of their homes. An Allied victory depended on women on the home front maintaining positive morale, purchasing war bonds, feeding their families, and raising their children.