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Women and World War II at Gettysburg College

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Abstract
An examination of the women attending Gettysburg College during World War II. This project examined what the women did and experienced during the World War II, along with analyzing campus culture and life.

Keywords
Women, World War II, WWII, Gettysburg College

Disciplines
History | History of Gender | Military History | Oral History | Social History | United States History | Women's History

Comments
This paper was written for Professor Julia Hendon's First Year Seminar, FYS-103-3: Bringing the Past into the Present, Fall 2015.

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FYS: Bringing the Past to Present 103-3

The War on Efforts

The Gettysburgian

Throughout the years of the war, The Gettysburgian continued to act as a college newspaper.
• Articles on social events, sports statistics, dance ticket sales, and fraternity fundraiser events were all among the non-war related topics.

You can see the effects of the war in The Gettysburgian, by both the content and physical appearance of the newspaper.
• From the 1942-1943 academic year, to the 1944-1945 academic year, the physical size of the paper decreased.
• The measurements went from 20 in x 13 in to 17 in x 11
• The type of paper also changed.
• The paper used in 1941 was a thinner and light gray color, while the paper used in the 1943 Gettysburgian was much thicker and a yellowish brown color.
• The October 12, 1943 issue of The Gettysburgian gives the readers an explanation for this change stating that The Gettysburgian is in its war time form. News was to be condensed and printed on smaller paper.
• The newspaper snapped his size until after the war, when it went back to its former 20 in x 13 size
• The gray paper in 1946.

Another point to note about the college newspaper was the propaganda ads.
• Around the year 1943, the slogan “Buy War Bonds” was placed at the top right hand corner of every front page of the Gettysburgian.
• Political cartoons depicting US soldiers’ involvement in battle, titled “American Heroes” by an artist named Lall, started to show up in the newspaper around the year 1943.
• Movies that were getting advertised all relate to the war.
• In addition to physical signs of war, the articles and content within the Gettysburgian give ample information on changes happening on the campus due to the war.

The Question Process

I formulated a set of questions to help me conduct my research.

My primary question was: What was the college life like at Gettysburg College during World War II, primarily between the years 1941 and 1945?

I then asked questions about my primary sources, analyzing their physical appearance and subject matter.
• Why did the Gettysburgian decrease in physical size from the years 1941 to 1945?
• Why was there a change in paper?
• When did the Gettysburgian start putting in propaganda ads?
• Where was the Gettysburgian printed?
• What year did these people (Dorothy, Esther, and Doris) attend Gettysburg College?
• How old were they when they were interviewed?

Larger Questions

I also asked larger and general questions about my sources and research
• How greatly was the college affected when Pearl Harbor occurred?
• Did rationing affect college life?
• How involved was the college with the war effort?
• How many students served in the war?
• Why did the Gettysburgian change in 1943?

The War Effort on Campus

• USO dances and scrap metal drives were held on campus.
• Campaigns urged women to write to those who attended Gettysburg College who were now serving.
• There was a war fund drive in which the students raised over seven hundred dollars more than the estimated one thousand goal.
• No cars were allowed on campus because of gas rationing
• Many dances were held on campus to keep morale up.
• The 1943 Junior Prom was to be a defense theme
• “Victory” became the slogan for the last Pan-Hellenic Dance that was sponsored by the Fraternities

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The Voices of the Women

The war on men led to a large increase in female population
• The academic years 1942-1945 marked the first time in college history that female enrollment exceeded male enrollment.
• The lack of male presence on campus allowed the women to become more integrated into college social life.
• The year 1942 was the first year that a woman was mentioned in the Gettysburgian editorial staff.
• The first female editor in chief was selected in 1944.
• The first female Student Christian Association president was elected.
• More women participated in intermural sports.
• The rise in women involvement at Gettysburg College serves as evidence to the rise of women in the nation during the years of the war.

Conclusion

• In May 1946 a memorial service was held for the 62 graduates who fought and died for their country.
• 1500 Gettysburg students served in World War II.
• After the war an overwhelming number of war veterans applied for admission.
• New houses was under reconstruction and the college started to go back to its former state before the war.
• Both the Gettysburgian and oral histories provided a detailed firsthand experience of college life during the World War II.
• The effects of World War II seem to have been at Gettysburg College as those that had seen the country through.
• Propaganda fliers, USO dances, and scrap metal drives were held on campus.
• The lack of male presence on campus allowed the women to become more integrated into college social life.

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