

Rosie the Riveter

In the 1940s, the United States was fighting in World War II. Men were being sent off to war. They were leaving well-paying jobs in the manufacturing industry. Soon there was a labor **shortage** and the country had to make major changes. The Office of War Information introduced an ad campaign to attract women to the workforce.

Posters and advertisements showed a woman with a red bandanna on her head. She wore overalls and a shirt with her sleeves rolled up, flexing her muscles. The woman became known as Rosie the Riveter. Her image was used to get women to fill in for men who were fighting in the war.

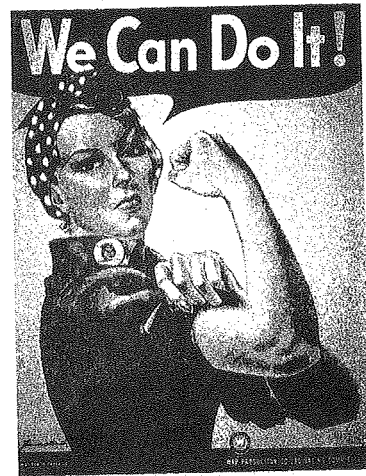
Before World War II, most women who worked were single and young. Most of them worked as seamstresses. Married women were expected to stay at home. They were not supposed to worry about what was happening in the world. But World War II changed America's attitude about women. Rosie became the symbol of patriotic women who were doing what they could to help in the war effort.

Working outside of the home doing "men's work" was a new experience for many women. But they were up to the challenge. "An American homemaker with the strength and ability to run a house and raise a family . . . has the strength and ability to take her place in a **vital** War industry," one ad said. Another ad read, "Do the Job He Left Behind."

The Rosie the Riveter ad campaign featured Rosie with the slogan "We Can Do It!" And millions of women proved that they could do it. They worked in airplane plants and shipyards as steelworkers, riveters, and welders. Rosie's image was a huge success. By 1944, more than 19 million women had put down their aprons and picked up toolboxes to work for their country. Women were doing the "manly" jobs very well.

Many women enjoyed working outside the home. They developed a sense of pride and dignity in the work they were doing for their country. Some women even wanted to pursue a career after the war. But when the war ended in 1945, women were turned away from manufacturing jobs. Men returning from war wanted their jobs back. Many people believed that women should go back to raising children and being housewives. But the Rosie the Riveter campaign had created a new generation of women.

Thanks largely to the millions of dedicated women during World War II, women now work in all fields, including the engineering, manufacturing, medical, government, and defense industries. They work in jobs once held only by men. More important, women make the choice to work or stay at home, not the United States government. Women take great pride in their skill to work in many different types of jobs.



RCP # 14