

World War II

The Beginning of an Era



For many Americans, World War II was the defining event of the twentieth century. Lasting six years, this was “total war” in which whole populations were mobilized for war, and it killed millions upon millions of soldiers and civilians alike. In the process, it covered much of the earth and changed the world in countless ways for the rest of the century and beyond. For the 15 million men and women who served in the armed forces of the United States, and the rest of the American people, mobilized into the world’s most powerful war machine, this was a matchless moment of their lives. It began in the summer of 1939 when Adolf Hitler invaded Poland, provoking declarations of war from its allies, France and England. In 1940, introducing a new form of mechanized warfare, *blitzkrieg* (“lightening war”), and running roughshod over neutral nations, the Germans conquered western Europe within months, isolating England. While the United States declared its neutrality in the conflict, public opinion was generally sympathetic to the British and their allies, allowing substantial American aid short of war. In the summer of 1941, Hitler launched a surprise attack on the Soviet Union in an enormous expansion of the war. The United States extended its aid to the Russians and the war in Europe settled into a grinding struggle to push the Nazis back to Germany.

Meanwhile the attention of many Americans, especially Californians, turned to Japan. In the 1930s the Japanese embarked on a plan to dominate Southeast Asia and the Pacific, eventually calling this their “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” Japan’s aggression began with the seizure of Manchuria in 1932, followed by war with China in 1937, then expansion into French Indochina in 1940–41. The United States resisted each step along the way by denying Japan war materials and other critical supplies. In the fall of 1941, the new military government of Japan, now a part of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo

Axis, finally concluded that war with the United States was preferable to what it regarded as a slow economic death. Japan's senior admiral, Isoroku Yamamoto, was assigned the task of designing a surprise attack on the Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. In late November a Japanese fleet of aircraft carriers crept across the North Pacific and, by surprise, struck Pearl Harbor at dawn on Sunday, December 7, 1941. Yamamoto's plan was wildly successful, sinking or disabling all but one of the American battleships in the harbor and many other warships. Although the three American fleet aircraft carriers were not in the harbor, the attack was devastating. It was followed by Japan's seizure of the Dutch East Indies, Britain's Southeast Asia possessions, the Philippines, and all the United States' Pacific island possessions west of Wake Island. Japan had become the master of the Pacific. Yamamoto, who had lived and studied in the United States, lost his life in the ensuing war, but not before he made the prophetic comment "all we have done is awaken a sleeping giant."

California in World War II

The Wakatsukis and the Uchidas returned to a California far different from the one they left in 1942. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 brought the economic recovery Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Dealers had struggled unsuccessfully to achieve since 1933, as war work finally ended the Great Depression. Then, America's entry into the war following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor turned the nation's economy to war production on a scale that profoundly affected California's economy. By 1945, the war had sped up the development of the west and ushered in the post-industrial era, in the process changing California from a resource-based, dependent section into the "pace-setter for the nation." The need of war industries for workers also triggered another wave of migration that soon made California the most populous state in the Union, faced with the serious consequences of such rapid growth.

When Hitler's troops marched into Poland in September 1939, Californians on the whole were engaged in the production of goods unrelated to war. Agriculture, mining, fishing, textiles, metalworking, and making furniture and movies still comprised much of their economy, along with tourism and real estate development. On the other hand, the state had a significant potential for war work. Its oil, aircraft, shipbuilding, auto, and tire industries—as well as its amazingly productive agricultural system—were capable of rapid expansion and conversion to military use. In addition, California's wide

variety of terrain was well adapted to training troops for battle almost anywhere in the world, and major bases at San Diego and Mare Island in San Francisco Bay facilitated a rapid naval expansion.

The European war brought a flood of war orders and military spending to California. With institution of a military draft in 1940, the Army expanded its already substantial training facilities, such as Fort Ord near Monterey and Camp Roberts near Paso Robles. The Marine Corps began to construct a major west coast base at Camp Pendleton near Oceanside, which proved to be ideal for training in amphibious warfare. As relations with Japan deteriorated, the Navy expanded its California facilities as well.

One of the first California industries to feel the impact of the war was shipbuilding, a result of Germany's frighteningly successful submarine war on British shipping. Hunting in "wolf packs," German U-boats sank hundreds of thousands of tons of Allied shipping early in the war, threatening Britain's survival. By 1941 orders for transports had revived private shipbuilding in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. Similarly, steel, chemicals, textiles, machine tools, and agricultural products all began to respond to the war's stimulus, while the state's young aircraft industry nearly quintupled in size. Tremendous change was therefore well under way by the end of 1941, as employment expanded, wages rose, and thousands of workers made the shift from service-related jobs to production work. The Great Depression was over.

The Impact of Pearl Harbor

With so many historical ties to Hawaii, the reaction of Californians to the shocking attack on Pearl Harbor was highly emotional. The fear of invasion was quickly spread by alarming press and radio accounts of the destruction of the Pacific Fleet, as well as the bombardment of Santa Barbara by a Japanese submarine. Cities were immediately blacked out and coastal defenses strengthened. The call to remove the state's Japanese Americans began, as unfounded rumors of Japanese sabotage, espionage, and planned attacks circulated widely in California.

California assumed a key role in turning the United States into an awesome war production machine. World War II was far-flung, with major battlefields in western Europe, the Soviet Union, Africa, and the western Pacific. In the Pacific, island-hopping tactics made amphibious warfare essential, and the attack on Pearl Harbor and the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in

1942 demonstrated that the naval war would be dominated by aircraft carriers. Moreover, highly technical communications and electronic equipment became essential. California possessed the industries necessary to meet these needs and enjoyed close, long-standing relations with both the Army and Navy. Consequently, the federal government poured some \$40 billion into California—more than 10 percent of the nation's wartime expenditures.

The state's geography and location also affected its contribution to the war effort. Its deserts proved ideal for training tank corps that went into action in North Africa in 1942. Its beaches provided the training ground for thousands of soldiers and marines sent ashore on Pacific islands. Its climate permitted year-round training of Air Force personnel. A huge expansion of military training facilities followed Pearl Harbor. In 1942, General George Patton established the Desert Training Center in the Mohave Desert near Needles, where his famous armored divisions were first created. Almost overnight Fort Ord became a city of 50,000. The Navy took over Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay and vastly expanded its other facilities in the Bay Area, San Diego, and on Terminal Island in Los Angeles. Air Force bases up and down the state were expanded, and many new ones were established. March Field, McClellan, Mather, Travis, and George Air Force bases became major establishments. Naturally, California became the staging area and depot for the war against Japan. Ships, planes, tanks, trucks, personnel, and incredible amounts of food and matériel funneled through California to Pacific battlegrounds. Almost all Army troops sent to the Pacific were processed through huge staging facilities such as Camp Stoneman near Pittsburg and Antioch; likewise Navy and Marine Corps personnel made their way to Pacific through California bases.

Meanwhile the state's chief ports, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Oakland, hummed with activity. Strikes were a thing of the past as longshoremen and military personnel worked night and day. It could be dangerous work and led to one of the state's worst wartime tragedies, at Port Chicago on Suisun Bay east of San Francisco. There, on the night of July 17, 1944, a ship that had been fully loaded with ammunition from the nearby Naval Ordnance Depot exploded with a tremendous blast, killing 323 people, demolishing 350 nearby homes, and breaking windows 35 miles away.

Among the dead were 200 black seamen from segregated units commanded by white officers, standard policy in the armed forces at the time. When surviving seamen were ordered to resume loading munitions, most

refused, citing the dangerous conditions and sheer terror. Fifty eventually faced court martial, charged with mutiny. During their trial, defendants' testimony revealed that their officers condoned hazardous conditions and exhibited blatant racism. Nevertheless, the verdict was guilty and each of the 50 defendants was sentenced to 15 years in prison and a dishonorable discharge. Subsequent appeals from Thurgood Marshall, Navy Secretary James Forrestal, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt led to reduced penalties. In January 1946, the sentences were set aside and the men returned to duty, eventually to be discharged "under less than honorable conditions" and denied veterans benefits. In the 1990s, California Congressmen Pete Stark and Ron Dellums sponsored legislation authorizing the Navy to reexamine these cases. In 1994 the Navy upheld the original decision.

The Port Chicago trial focused attention on Jim Crowism in the Navy. The Navy began eliminating segregation policies in 1942, but in 1946 Secretary Forrestal ordered a complete end to the policy, two years before President Truman's order desegregating all branches of the military.

The Rise of the Aircraft Industry

One of the most spectacular effects of the war was to turn aircraft construction in California into a giant industry that became a critical part of the state's postwar economy. Until the war, several factors made the state's fledgling aircraft industry weak and unstable. Initially, airplane manufacturers were dependent for their survival on wildly fluctuating government demand for military aircraft. Moreover, rapidly changing technology made for a high rate of obsolescence and high engineering costs, compounding the problems caused by the long design-manufacturing cycle. Consequently, the industry's progress was episodic.

California's airframe industry (motors were built in the East and Midwest and shipped to California assembly plants) began in 1912 when Glenn Martin formed a company in Southern California, followed soon after by the Loghead and Christofferson companies near San Francisco. Their production was negligible, however, and even World War I, during which Martin moved to the East, did not stimulate much growth. In fact, most California aircraft companies failed in the postwar depression, when the government dumped wartime planes on the market.

A turning point came in 1920, when Martin's chief engineer, Donald Douglas, formed his own company and located in Southern California. The region had

several attractions: the climate permitted year-round testing and minimal building maintenance, investment capital was available, it was a nonunion area with low wages and nearby military airfields. Douglas was soon building planes for the Army and Navy and, in 1924, scored a major success when he built the single-engine biplanes that made the first round-the-world flight. In 1926 he organized the Douglas Aircraft Company, the first to succeed in California. That same year Allan and Malcolm Loghead (whose original company had gone out of business in 1921) joined with John K. Northrup to form the Lockheed Aircraft Company, a phonetic spelling of their name deemed necessary to eliminate mispronunciations. A year later, the firm Claude Ryan had organized in San Diego achieved fame by building Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*, the first airplane to fly nonstop from New York to Paris.

Douglas, Ryan, and Lockheed all designed passenger planes, since government mail contracts promoted the development of commercial air travel, but military construction remained basic to their survival. In 1935, though, the company introduced the DC-3, one of the most successful commercial aircraft ever built. Valued for its economy of operation and stability in flight, the DC-3 captured 95 percent of the rapidly expanding passenger airline business by 1939. Favorable conditions attracted other aircraft manufacturers to California. In 1935 Consolidated Aircraft Corporation moved to San Diego, and in 1936 North American Aviation moved to Los Angeles. By 1939 more than half the aircraft workers in the nation were employed by southern California firms.

The expansion of the state's aircraft industry after Pearl Harbor was one of the extraordinary events of the war years. A massive infusion of federal funds, some \$10 billion, increased employment from 20,000 in 1939 to 280,000 by 1944. When President Roosevelt called for production of 50,000 planes per year at the start of the war, people scoffed, but the industry built nearly 100,000 planes in 1943 alone. This record was made possible by the huge numbers of women moving into industry jobs. Concentrated in Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties, the giant new industry became the base of the aerospace industry that developed after the war.

Shipbuilding

California's shipbuilding industry, traditionally centered in the San Francisco Bay Area, underwent a similar expansion. Employment in state shipyards soared from 4,000 to 260,000 as the federal government poured

more than \$5 billion into California for ships of all kinds. Private and Navy yards in Sausalito, Vallejo, Alameda, Oakland, and San Francisco built hundreds of transport, cargo, amphibious, and naval craft in a huge burst of activity. Most impressive was the creation of a great new facility at Richmond by the ubiquitous Henry J. Kaiser. This shipyard relied on all the techniques of management, engineering, design, and construction technology that Kaiser had developed in his years of directing the construction of such massive projects as Hoover Dam, and the venture brought assembly-line methods to the shipbuilding industry. Amazing production records were achieved at Richmond. The yard built one-fourth of all the Liberty ships produced in the United States during the war and, by prefabricating huge sections, ships were built in record time. When the war began, these rugged, dependable freighters took nearly 250 days to construct. Kaiser brought the time down to 25 days and set a record of eight days with construction of the *Robert E. Perry*. Here, again, the movement of thousands of women from low-paying jobs to war industries played a major role in setting such impressive records.

In addition, Kaiser established the state's first integrated blast furnace and steel-rolling mill at Fontana, 50 miles east of Los Angeles. When completed in 1942, the Fontana plant increased the state's steel production by 70 percent, and the dependence of the state's war industries on steel shipped from distant eastern plants was significantly reduced.

The Kaiser shipyard was responsible for a soaring increase in Richmond's population, from 20,000 to more than 100,000, including a very large number of "Rosie the Riveters." Kaiser took the lead in constructing low-cost housing to relieve the strains that came with such rapid growth. He also pioneered the concept of prepaid health care by organizing the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan for his workers, probably reflecting the large numbers of women among them.

Other War Industries and Agriculture

Conversion of California industry to war production was thoroughgoing. Oil production increased by 50 percent between 1941 and 1945, as the state produced most of the high-test aviation fuel and fuel oils necessary for the war against Japan. The state's rubber industry developed plants to produce synthetic rubber when Japan overran Southeast Asia and shut off America's supplies of natural rubber. Surprisingly, synthetic rubber proved to have qualities superior to natural rubber for many important uses and became



Richmond Shipyard at Night

At Henry J. Kaiser's Richmond shipyard, whole sections of ships that had been prefabricated on shore were lifted onto the spillways by huge cranes, which worked around the clock like great mechanical spiders. The production of Liberty ships at Richmond was an important factor in winning the fight against Hitler's submarine "wolfpacks" during World War II. *Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.*

a permanent industry in California. Many other state industries were converted to war production—from radios to electronic devices such as radar and sonar; from furniture to plywood subchasers and torpedo boats; from automobiles to tanks. Thousands of new plants produced amphibious craft, airplane parts, munitions, and electrical equipment. Heavy industry became a major part of the California economy and tripled its industrial labor force.

Increased prosperity and population growth, plus government purchases for troops being trained in California and for shipment overseas gave most types of agriculture a mighty boost. Dairy products, fruits, nuts, vegetables, cotton, and livestock all increased two to three times in value, and the overall value of agricultural products rose from \$623 million in 1939 to \$1.75 billion in 1945. California's position as the leading agricultural state in the Union was solidified in the process.

The chief wartime problem in agriculture was a shortage of harvest labor. The entry of more than 700,000

Californians into military service, the booming war industries soaking up the Okie population, and the internment of the state's Japanese Americans meant that California growers faced a sudden, drastic labor shortage. Grower complaints finally persuaded the federal government in 1942 to arrange a guest worker program with Mexico. Under this program, the United States agreed to provide transportation, health care, decent housing, and prevailing wages to Mexican workers under six to twelve-month contracts. This was the origin of the *bracero* program, its name derived from the Spanish term for a manual laborer. The United States admitted the first *braceros* in September 1942 in time for the sugar beet harvest in Stockton. The *bracero* program employed 26,000 workers in California at its peak in 1944. Although the program began as a temporary wartime measure, growers continued to take advantage of it after the war, as the oversupply of labor benefited farm owners and contributed to their record profits in the postwar years.

Science

When the war came, California had developed one of the nation's foremost scientific communities in its institutions of higher education. The California Institute of Technology, Stanford University, and the University of California, especially at Berkeley and Los Angeles, had faculties and laboratories that constituted a significant scientific resource. Turned to military work, they made important contributions to the war effort, developing rocket-assist systems for aircraft and new torpedoes that followed sounds emanating from their targets. In addition, most campuses of the state's universities carried on sizable officer- and specialist-training programs for the various branches of the armed forces.

Most important, however, was the role of UC Berkeley in developing the atomic bomb. During the 1930s professor of physics Ernest O. Lawrence developed the cyclotron, or atom smasher, and synthesized new elements and isotopes, such as neptunium, uranium 235, and plutonium, that were important in nuclear research. His achievements attracted bright young scientists to Berkeley—among them J. Robert Oppenheimer—whose work put the university in the forefront of atomic science. In 1942, fearful that German scientists might be developing an atomic bomb, the U.S. government embarked on an urgent, top-secret program for the same purpose: the Manhattan Project. The government recruited the free world's best minds for the project and—at a laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico, managed by the university—teams of scientists under Oppenheimer's leadership developed the first atomic bomb. Use of the bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 ended World War II and ushered in a whole new age for the world.

Women in the War

The bombing of Pearl Harbor created a unity and commitment to war lacking before 1941. After the initial shock, fear, and chagrin of the attack, many Californians turned to the task of winning the war. In the next four years, thousands of California women joined the expanded Army and Navy Nurses Corps (ANC/NNC), women's branches of the Army (WACs), Navy (WAVES), and Coast Guard (SPARS). For the most part, they were seen as replacements for men who could be sent to combat areas. Many also saw service abroad, some in dangerous conditions.

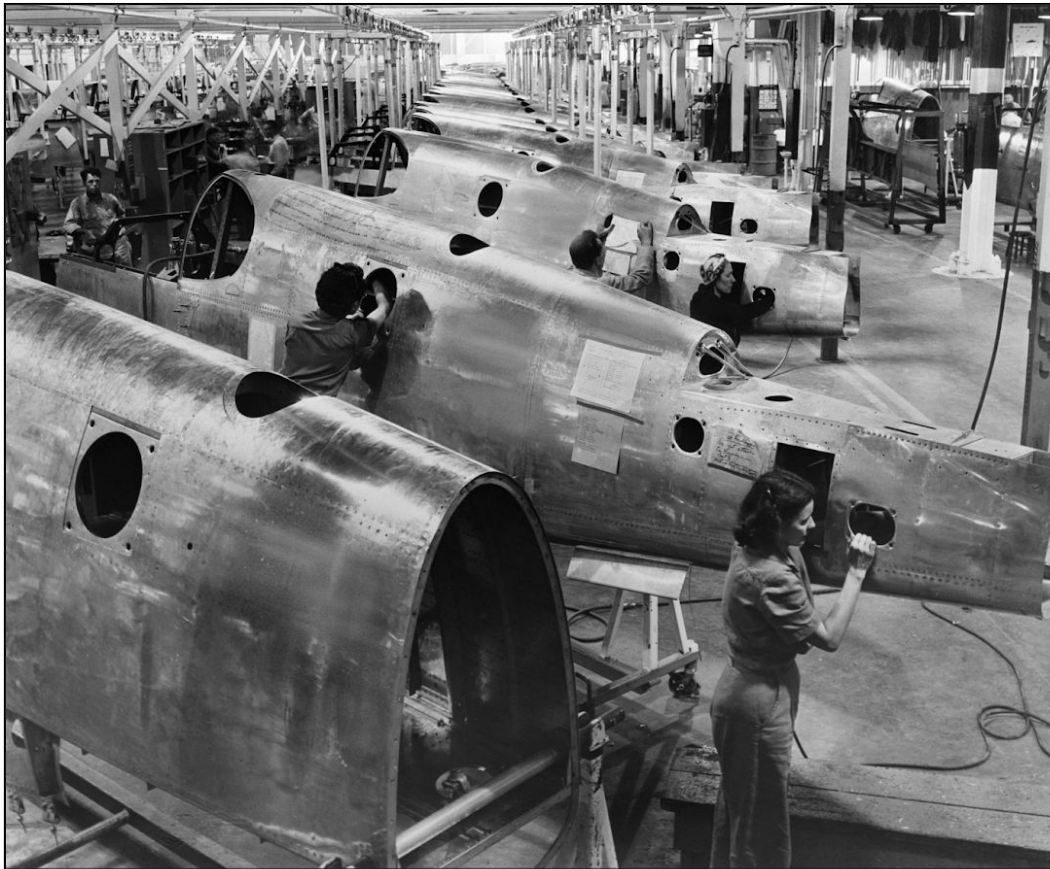
Nationally, thousands more left low-paying jobs for work in shipyards, airplane assembly plants, and

hundreds of other war-related industries, taking over production jobs previously dominated by men. Where a female employee in heavy industry would have been a rarity before 1941, thereafter roughly two million women found work in war industries, half in aerospace alone. Many flocked to California, attracted by the pay and nature of the work. Soon women accounted for 40 percent or more of aircraft employees.

The war proved to be an important turning point for California women. As men entered the armed forces, employment opportunities for women were greatly expanded. Women moved into other types of employment that had rarely accepted them before. Many took jobs as chemists, engineers, railroad workers, lawyers, and journalists, and in such rapidly expanding service industries as banking, retail sales, and education. Barriers that had always denied women access to a wide range of employment were lowered. For the first time, women enjoyed true occupational mobility.

Women's reasons for taking civilian or defense industry jobs were varied and complex. A combination of patriotism and high wages motivated Jade Snow Wong. Born in San Francisco's Chinatown, Wong found work as a clerk with the War Production Board downtown. She found the job mind-numbingly tedious, but took comfort in the thought that in a small way she was contributing to the war effort and saving for her graduate education. Maya Angelou's reasons were less tangible. The 15-year-old African American noticed that women had taken over as conductors on San Francisco's streetcars. She was captivated by the image of "sailing up and down the hills . . . in a dark-blue uniform, with a money changer at my belt." Angelou was also determined to break the streetcars' color barrier. On her first visit to the Market Street Railway Company, the startled receptionist told her no jobs were available. When Angelou asked why the company was advertising for "motorettes," the receptionist said the personnel manager was away. Angelou returned again and again, slowly wearing down her adversary's resistance. After three weeks, she was hired as the first African American on the San Francisco streetcars.

African American women, in particular, benefited from the opportunity to leave low-paid jobs, and the number in domestic service declined from 55 percent to 40 percent. Early in the war employers often refused to employ blacks in war work and unions would not admit them to membership. But by organizing to get help from the federal Fair Employment Practices Committee, African American men and women forced significant changes. By 1944 blacks were over 7 percent



Women Aircraft Workers

Women workers assemble aircraft fuselage sections in a Los Angeles area plant. World War II produced a major shift of women into industrial jobs. Although men returning from war service typically displaced them, their war work earned many women workers a new self-confidence that profoundly affected postwar society. *Glasshouse Images / Alamy Stock Photo.*

of war industries' work forces. In the process, African American women workers led the way in securing state funds for child-care services and the adoption of the state's first Fair Employment Practices Commission.

War industries suffered both a severe labor shortage as well as a high turnover rate. Lack of access to housing, food, and transportation placed unique pressures on women workers, many of whom needed somehow to balance paid labor with motherhood and homemaking. In some plants, these problems contributed to turnover

rates of 100 percent and higher per year. When the war ended, to the disappointment of many women workers, they were displaced by returning veterans.

Incarceration of Japanese Americans

The forced removal of Japanese Americans such as the Wakatsukis and Uchidas from the West Coast and their detention in concentration camps has been called "our worst wartime mistake," the result of fear,

falsehoods, and racial prejudice. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrested over 2,000 Issei men who were already under surveillance. Most were businessmen, clergy, Japanese language teachers, and community leaders. Nearly 1,400 German nationals and over 250 Italians were detained as well. But whereas the Justice Department eventually released most of German and Italian “enemy aliens,” it continued to imprison the Japanese, ostensibly until they underwent hearings to determine their potential risk to national security.

Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, in charge of the Fourth Army and Western Defense Command in San Francisco, believed that Japanese Americans constituted a major national security threat and questioned the allegiance of Japanese born and raised in the United States. “The Japanese race is an enemy race,” he declared, predicting that Japanese Americans would “turn against this nation when the final test of loyalty” came. In February of 1942, DeWitt requested military action to remove the entire Japanese population from the West Coast, and secured approval from California attorney general Earl Warren. Soon after DeWitt’s certification that mass removal was a military necessity, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the secretary of war to prescribe military areas from which any and all persons could be excluded. The secretary delegated this authority to DeWitt, who ordered all individuals of Japanese ancestry residing in Military Area No. 1 (all of California, western Oregon and Washington, and Arizona) into assembly centers by June 1942. This included approximately 93,000 Japanese American residents of California. With less than a week’s notice, they were forced to sell their property at great losses, give up their homes, and leave jobs and schools. In the next few months, the incarcerated were transferred to ten internment camps spread from eastern California to Arkansas. The federal government euphemistically called the camps “relocation centers” and referred to the mass removal as an “evacuation.” The Nisei, who were American citizens, became “non-alien” in Army communications. In reality, President Roosevelt authorized the forced removal and incarceration of over 110,000 people, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, based on race, without due process or evidence of wrongdoing.

A few Japanese Americans mounted legal challenges contesting the constitutionality of internment. In *Hirabayashi* (1943), *Korematsu* (1944), and *Endo* (1944), the U.S. Supreme Court handed down decisions upholding mass removal on the basis of military necessity.

In *Hirabayashi* and *Korematsu*, the Court refused to question the judgment of military officials on the existence of a military necessity, despite the evidence that DeWitt’s orders were based on prejudiced racial views. In a famous dissent, Justice Frank Murphy stated that the exclusion orders had gone “over the very brink of constitutional power . . . into the ugly abyss of racism.” Although the Court decided in the *Endo* case that detention of citizens in the relocation centers was unconstitutional, it evaded the question of whether the government had exceeded its war powers in the evacuation.

Forty years later Fred Korematsu’s conviction for violating the evacuation order was vacated in the U.S. District Court of San Francisco, Judge Marilyn Hall Patel stating that the evacuation and internment had been “based upon unsubstantiated facts, distortions and misrepresentations of at least one military commander whose views were affected by racism.” Using the Freedom of Information Act, Korematsu’s attorneys demonstrated that the government had suppressed evidence that a “military necessity” no longer existed when the evacuation took place. Gordon Hirabayashi’s conviction was reversed on similar grounds in 1987. “I didn’t feel guilty because I didn’t do anything wrong,” Korematsu said of his decision to sue the U.S. government over the constitutionality of its actions: “Every day in school, we said the pledge of the flag, ‘with liberty and justice for all,’ and I believed all that. I was an American citizen, and I had as many rights as anyone else.”

The economic cost of the removal was never resolved. Forced from their homes and businesses, Japanese Americans disposed of property at fire-sale rates, left possessions and property in the hands of sometimes unreliable friends or acquaintances, and frequently, like the Wakatsukis, were robbed of everything while locked up in WRA camps. In 1942 the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank estimated the incarcerated’s losses at \$400 million, yet Congress denied aid for their economic rehabilitation. Not until 1948 was the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act adopted by Congress; even then claims were limited to \$2,500 each. After reviewing extensive testimonies and documents, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians reported in 1983 that the wartime imprisonment of Japanese Americans had been a “grave injustice” motivated by “racial prejudice, war hysteria and the failure of political leadership.” Acting on the recommendations of the commission, Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, and President Ronald Reagan signed it into law. The act brought a formal apology and reparations payments of \$20,000 to each surviving internee.

Finally, there is probably no measure of the human costs of internment. Who can measure its effect on Ko Wakatsuki and his family? The great majority of Japanese Americans accepted it and cooperated, like the Wakatsukis and Uchidas, in the spirit of *shikata ga nai* and in the hope that it would prove their loyalty to the United States. Their primary interest was to keep their families intact and make the best of the situation. Still, there was widespread bitterness over the injustice of incarceration, though the deep sense of loss, invasion of privacy, and humiliation was often suppressed, not to surface until many years later. Only when their children and grandchildren, influenced by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, began to question why mass resistance to incarceration failed to emerge did Nisei begin to express themselves. Jeanne Wakatsuki Huston wrote *Farewell to Manzanar* nearly 30 years after the fact, and Yoshiko Uchida wrote *Desert Exile* 20 years after her removal to Tanforan and Topaz.

Wartime Community Dynamics

Two million new residents arrived in California from 1941 to 1945, and for the first time a significant percentage of them were African Americans. Shipyard work, especially in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Richmond, attracted southern blacks in large numbers, as did new military installations. In 1940 African Americans were 1.8 percent of the California population, a figure that nearly quadrupled during the war. But their increased numbers generated increased hostility. Until World War II other racial groups, most notably Asians, had been the chief targets of discrimination in California. Housing discrimination, in particular, led to the formation of small ghettos in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, and Richmond, beginning a cycle of rising black population coupled with rising white racism.

Discrimination in housing and employment, in turn, produced impoverished inner-city neighborhoods. From 1945 on, as war production wound down, whites moved out of war industries to peacetime jobs, leaving African Americans in soon-to-be-closed war plants. When the war ended and plants shut down, blacks found themselves out in the cold. Good peacetime jobs were filled and African Americans were at the bottom of hiring lists. Unemployment and welfare benefits became the chief refuge for a great many. The foundation for the explosive Watts riots of the 1960s may well have been laid during World War II.

Racial conflict was pronounced in Los Angeles, where war work, educational opportunity, and other benefits

attracted a sizable Mexican migration. Mexicans, like African Americans, were subjected to discrimination in housing and employment, and limited to residence in the *barrios* of East Los Angeles. In the early 1940s, many Mexican American youths adopted a distinctive style of dress, the "zoot-suits" that local law enforcement associated with criminalism and juvenile delinquency. White military personnel demanded proper "respect" and often harassed young Mexican Americans. In the summer of 1943, about 50 U.S. seamen dragged Mexican American, black, and Filipino youths from bars, movie theaters, and restaurants and beat them in the streets. For ten straight nights, white sailors cruised Mexican American neighborhoods in search of zoot suiters, who responded with like violence. Articles in Los Angeles newspapers and the national press referred to "marauding Latin gangs" and "roving wolf-packs" of Mexican Americans engaging in criminal behavior. No one was killed during the riots, but scores of Mexican Americans were beaten by mobs and later arrested for disturbing the peace.

Nevertheless, the war enabled large numbers of Mexican American workers to move from unskilled to semi-skilled and skilled labor jobs. In 1930 8 percent of males were in semi-skilled positions; in 1950 it was 21.6 percent. Similarly, in 1930, 13.6 percent of Latina workers held clerical positions; in 1950, almost 24 percent were so employed. A growing Mexican American middle class developed new community organizations and set the stage for participation in the civil rights movements of the 1960s.

While Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes and detained, conditions improved for other Asian populations in California improved after Pearl Harbor. Chinese, Filipinos, and Asian Indians, whose native lands were now allies of the United States, experienced greater acceptance and found new job opportunities in fields previously closed to them. Resident aliens were allowed to enlist in the military, with promises of U.S. citizenship in exchange for their service. Over 13,000 Chinese Americans served in the armed forces, including 22 percent of all Chinese adult males in the United States. In California, 16,000 Filipinos, comprising 40 percent of their numbers in the state, registered for the first draft, viewing military service as a chance to become "soldiers of democracy" instead of farmworkers and domestic servants. In Los Angeles, 300 Chinese American laundry workers closed their shops to work on the construction of the ship *China Victory*. In 1943, Chinese workers constituted 15 percent of the San Francisco Bay Area's shipyard workforce.

Most surprisingly, over 30,000 Nisei served in the U.S. military during WWII. The War Department formed the 100th Battalion in Hawaii on January 19, 1942, as a segregated unit composed of Nisei volunteers. In 1943, the War Department created the segregated 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up solely of internment-camp volunteers. The 442nd and 100th fought valiantly in the European theater, ultimately earning seven Presidential Unit Citations, 21 Medals of Honor, 29 Distinguished Service Crosses, 560 Silver Stars, 4,000 Bronze Stars, and more than 4,500 Purple Hearts. This impressive war record, combined with the civil rights movements of the 1950s and '60s, called public attention to the injustices of 1942. Reacting to the new national mood, in 1952 Congress removed the prohibition against naturalization that had made enemy aliens of Ko Wakatsuki and Dwight Uchida.

Wartime migration produced a shortage of housing that plagued the state's cities during the war years, particularly in communities near military installations and defense industry plants. San Diego's aircraft and naval facilities produced a population increase from 203,000 in 1940 to 362,000 by the end of the war. Shipbuilding nearly quadrupled the populations of both Vallejo and Richmond. Towns near Air Force bases, Army training camps, and major processing centers experienced similar growth.

Material and labor shortages caused by the war substantially reduced new construction. Some companies built low-cost, dormitory-style, barracks-like buildings near new war plants to provide minimal housing for their workers. Thousands of low-cost units were built by the National Housing Authority (NHA) and many large tracts of single-family homes were constructed by private builders under Federal Housing Authority (FHA) programs. The government, however, made little effort to prevent racial segregation in local officials' allocation of public housing. Supply never caught up with demand, and the war years were characterized by the crowding of two and three families into single-family homes and apartments. The wartime migration also stretched related municipal services such as sewers, water, gas, electricity, and telephones to the limit, while almost all highway construction was essentially suspended and street repairs indefinitely delayed.

California's reputation for a superior public school system suffered due to wartime population growth. In 1940 Richmond's schools had 3,000 students. In 1943 they had 35,000. Unable to adapt immediately to such rapidly swelling student populations, schools were forced onto double-session schedules with half their students attending a morning session and half in the

afternoon. Although parents expressed concern that the quality of education would suffer, the practice seemed permanent in some metropolitan areas, as the educational system faced even greater population growth after the war.

Waiting in lines to board crowded buses and streetcars, or at the local meat counter, became a part of daily life in wartime California. Grocery store shelves were quickly depleted of scarce items and most Californians had their first experience of rationing. A variety of necessities, such as meat, dairy products, sugar, and gasoline, were rationed, and the ration-coupon book became an important household item. Thousands of families planted backyard vegetable gardens at the government's urging to "grow your own for victory." For the highly mobile Californians, the rationing of gasoline involved the greatest sacrifice and curtailed travel sharply. Although a black market in gasoline ration stamps arose, the vast majority of Californians saw adherence to the rules as a part of the war effort and, through carpooling and careful planning, managed transportation on their allotted share.

Californians not directly employed in war work found other ways to contribute to the war effort. Hollywood actors and actresses, including a future politician named Ronald Reagan, made training and propaganda films for the government, while others worked for the Red Cross and the United Services Organization (USO). The USO was perhaps most fondly remembered by World War II veterans for its canteens, which offered refreshments and dancing with local girls. At the Hollywood canteen, a volunteer dance partner might turn out to be a famous movie star!

Civil defense was another field in which Californians showed their support for the war. Volunteer "block wardens" inspected their territories for blackout violators, while other citizens joined aircraft-spotting units. Long after any real threat of a Japanese attack had passed, if one ever existed, such activities continued to give thousands the sense of contributing to the war effort.

Preparing for Peace

The year 1944 marked the beginning of the end of World War II. Soviet armies, which had stopped Hitler's invasion of Russia at Stalingrad in 1943, began their relentless march from the east on the Third Reich. Americans and the British, under General Dwight D. Eisenhower, crossed the English Channel on "D-Day" in June to begin the march on Germany from the west and, in October, American troops landed in the Philippines.

By then there was little doubt about the outcome of the war, and thoughts turned to preparations for peace.

In San Francisco a momentous meeting took place in April 1945, when representatives of 46 nations met to establish the United Nations. Meanwhile, planning began for winding down the tremendous war production machine of the United States. In California, orders for tanks, ships, aircraft, and other war matériel were gradually reduced, with a similar decline in related industries. Shipyard and aircraft workers were laid off, and there developed a growing concern that the war would be followed by another serious economic downturn, as World War I had been.

Those who feared a recession, however, overlooked some important facts. In a very real sense, the war years had returned the nation to prosperity. During this period in California, personal income rose from \$3 billion to \$13 billion. Although individual spending increased with rising incomes, increases in savings were also considerable: Californians' liquid assets rose from \$4.5 billion to \$15.25 billion during the war. Thus the war ended with a huge, pent-up buying power. Moreover, the state's population grew nearly 30 percent during the war, creating an enormous demand for consumer goods, housing, and services. Finally, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the "GI Bill of Rights") proved to be not only an effective buffer to unemployment for millions of men and women returning to civilian life, but also an important stimulus to the economy. The act provided veterans with low-interest loans for farm and home purchases, and paid the full educational costs of veterans returning to school. Millions of veterans thus enrolled in colleges all over the nation to complete baccalaureate and graduate degrees. The impact on state university systems was enormous, more than tripling wartime enrollments.

Careful analysis revealed that, under the hothouse stimulus of the war, California had developed a complex, modern, technological economy with enormous potential for the future. The war years, then, provided the economic base that was to make the state the pacesetter in the development of the high-technology society of the late twentieth century.

The Warren Administrations

Suspension of partisan politics generally accompanied the war. To no one's surprise, the popular Republican attorney general Earl Warren easily defeated Gov. Culbert Olson in 1942. Governor Warren went on to establish one of the state's most notable records in

that office. Warren has often been compared to Hiram Johnson because he dominated the political arena of his era in the same fashion. Like Johnson, he had an uncanny ability to appeal to a broad range of voters, and he never lost a bid for state office.

Born in Los Angeles in 1891, Warren earned a law degree from UC's Boalt School of Law in 1914, and, after a short stint of private law practice, was elected district attorney for Alameda County in 1926, where he emerged as an important Republican Party figure. As chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, Warren played a key role in establishing the California Republican Assembly (CRA). The CRA was formed in 1934 as an informal organization representing local Republican voters' groups. It could perform such regular political party functions as pre-primary endorsements, which were prohibited under state election codes. It became a vital mechanism that helped Republicans remain in power in California for 25 years after the New Deal, when Democrats became the state's majority party.



Earl Warren

Courtesy of the California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

In 1938 Warren won election as state attorney general, the only Republican elected to statewide office that year. With the attack on Pearl Harbor, he became one of the leading politicians calling for the mass removal of Japanese from the state, whether citizens or not. His election as governor in 1942 signified Warren's emergence as the preeminent practitioner of California's unique style of politics, a product of progressive reforms. Distrustful of political parties and fearful of bossism, California progressives, through nonpartisanship, cross-filing, and a stringent elections code, had succeeded in weakening parties to the point of impotence. Candidates campaigned independently of their party, playing down party affiliation and emphasizing the individual over party and platform. Incumbency was a huge advantage under cross-filing, since the incumbent led the list of candidates on primary ballots without mention of party affiliation.

To all of these features of California politics, Earl Warren pioneered the added practice of hiring public relations firms to manage his political campaigns. In his 1942 campaign for governor, he had the help of Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter, whose firm, Campaigns, Inc., used modern advertising techniques to manage political campaigns. Warren's campaign became the prototype of present-day campaigning. By 1946 Warren had so mastered progressive-style politics that, by cross-filing, he captured the nomination of the Democrats as well as the Republicans, the only person ever to win both major party nominations for governor. In 1950 Warren became the only California governor to be elected to a third term.

In national politics, Warren accepted the Republican's nomination for the vice presidency as Thomas E. Dewey's running mate in 1948. When President Harry Truman's famous "Give 'Em Hell Harry" whistle-stop campaign produced the political upset of the century, Earl Warren suffered his one and only election defeat. He remained prominent in national Republican Party affairs, however, and in 1952 was instrumental in Dwight D. Eisenhower's nomination. After the latter's election as president, Eisenhower promised Warren appointment to the next opening on the Supreme Court, a position the Californian had long coveted. It was only by chance that the first vacancy turned out to be the position of chief justice, from which Warren led the Court into epoch-making decisions in the fields of civil and individual rights.

As governor of California from 1943 to 1953, Warren proposed, and obtained, significant reductions in taxes, yet managed to build a substantial surplus in the state treasury as a "rainy-day fund." As the war came to a close, he promoted planning for demobilization and reconversion to a peacetime economy, persuading the legislature to authorize special state construction projects to provide jobs for returning veterans.

Throughout his career, Warren was a typical progressive. Non-ideological on the issues, he preferred a scientific approach. He regularly appointed boards and commissions to study specific problems and based his legislative proposals on those recommendations. He was unusually effective in securing bipartisan support for his legislative proposals, 90 percent of which were adopted in one form or another.

Warren took great pride in the modernization and upgrading of the state's departments of public health, mental health, and corrections; in the expansion of workers' compensation and unemployment benefits; and in a program of aid to families with dependent children (AFDC). He strongly supported the state's systems of higher education and expanded state expenditures on highways, housing, and public schools.

Detractors of Earl Warren often criticized him, claiming his budgets were too high, he sponsored unnecessary taxes, and meddled too much in social issues. It was in the last field, actually, that Warren's record was mixed. For several years he sought legislation for a social-security type of medical health insurance plan, only to lose to the California Medical Association lobby, which employed Whitaker and Baxter against him. He unsuccessfully called for the establishment of a commission on political and economic equality to protect the rights of California's ethnic minorities. Not until he wrote his memoirs, published after his death, did he express regret for the role he played in the detention of the state's Japanese in 1942. In the economic field, Warren's long battle with utility interests, especially PG&E, over public distribution of Central Valley Project power from Shasta Dam, ended in a compromise generally regarded as favorable to the utility.

Warren served California as governor through a period of booming growth and prosperity and enjoyed nearly universal press support. These advantages, along with his ability to cover the political middle of the road and his mastery of progressive-style politics, made him the state's most successful politician since Hiram Johnson.