

Women at Work

During both world wars, many women were employed in non-traditional jobs due to the rising demand for war related goods and shortage of available men to fill the jobs. When the war ended and the men returned, women were usually asked to leave their jobs.

During World War I:

Women were hired as waitresses on Kootenay Lake boats, earning \$60/month, an extremely high wage at that time.

During World War II:

- The first female postal delivery worker was hired in Nelson, Beatrice Lukotich;
- Palm Dairies hired four women to work on the production line for the first time;
- From 1943 to 1945, **Nelson's Civic Centre Badminton Hall** was turned into a satellite manufacturing plant for Boeing Aircraft from Vancouver (see adjacent photo). Boeing came to Nelson having gained assurances from Mayor Norman Stibbs that the city would be capable of supplying a 65% female workforce. The factory produced aluminum hull frames for Canso Flying Boats.

Support from Home

Many individuals and groups were active in Nelson during the wars, supporting the war efforts in many ways. They fundraised by hosting events and selling war stamps, organized bottle and salvage drives, prepared care packages to send to soldiers abroad, even collected cigarettes (see framed “Save Smokes for the Boys” picture)! The particular efforts of just two of these groups are listed below.

Women of the Kokanee Chapter of the **Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.)** worked closely with the Red Cross and raised funds by any means. They made garments and care packages to send to men in the trenches. They gave dances in their homes, ran a tea shop on Baker Street, organized an ice carnival, held tag days, sold flowers on street corners, sold ice cream, and held endless raffles. All these projects brought funds to the Red Cross, Prisoner of War Fund, the Patriotic Fund, and more organizations.

On September 8, 1944, a group of 25 girls established the **Miss Canada Girls**. They fundraised through the sale of war saving stamps. Children would invest their money in these stamps each week and the money was invested in the war. After the war, children could sell their stamps and get their money back. They sold the stamps in stores and then at a hut on Baker Street that was built for them with donated lumber and paint by students from the manual training class at the Junior High School.

For King and Country

Nelson supplied more men per capita to the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa than any other Canadian community its size.

The Forestry Corps.

The war effort desperately needed timber for a variety of uses, including the building of bomb-proof dugouts in the trenches and timber ties for the rail lines that transported train-loads of supplies. During World War I, 22,000 members of the Canadian Forestry Corps were turning trees into timber for the Allied war effort. Most of the men were older than the C.E.F. average and had been turned down for service, but could use their special skills through the Canadian Forestry Corps.

Victory Loans

The Canadian government used numerous Victory Loan (also called Victory Bond) drives in both World Wars as a way to finance the war efforts.

Canada's involvement in WWI began in 1914, with Canadian war bonds called Victory Bonds after 1917. During World War II, Nelson and district residents raised \$8 million for Victory Bonds.

After WWII in 1946, the first Canada Savings Bonds were issued as a natural successor to the Victory Loan program.

Internment Camps

Fueled by a mixture of fear and existing racism and discrimination, people of various ethnic backgrounds were declared “enemy aliens” and held in internment camps in both world wars. Those in the camps often endured harsh living conditions and lost businesses, houses, land and any other possessions they were unable to take with them.

WWI

Although the story of the internment of Canadians of Japanese descent in our area in WWII is relatively well known, there was also an internment camp in nearby Edgewood during WWI, which held men of German, Austrian and Ukrainian descent.

The **walking stick** in the glass case to the left was carved by a self-described “Austrian prisoner of war” for John E. Taylor, who worked at the Edgewood Lumber Company at the time.

WWII

During WWII, Japanese internment camps in our region were created in Sandon, Kaslo, New Denver, as well as several locations in the Slocan valley. Many who were not interned were deported “back” to Japan.

Although WWII ended in 1945, it wasn’t until 1948 that Japanese Canadians were given the right to vote, and 1949 that mobility restrictions were removed.

Preparing for the worst

During WWII, Air Raid Precaution (ARP) Committees were formed across Canada.

George Der Kaiway was part of the ARP in Nelson. Now living in the Lower Mainland, he recently donated the **ARP helmet and gas mask** in the glass case to your right to Touchstones Nelson.

The following is a short passage that he wrote to accompany the donation, describing his experience:

After Pearl Harbour was attacked by the Japanese, rumours circulated about the invasion by the Japanese into North America through Alaska. The B.C. and federal governments considered the need to protect the people of this province.

I felt the need to participate in the war effort after watching 20 to 25 people march in downtown Nelson, B.C.. They were going to the train station to board the Kettle Valley train which would take them near to their training location. With the threat of invasion looming, volunteers were signed up to be ready to help people in B.C. communities.

Thus, Air Raid Protection [sic] (ARP) was formed. Approximately 25 civilians were trained in Nelson, B.C., and I was part of this group. We were shown how to wear and use the equipment, which was comprised of a gas mask, steel helmet, thick and heavy khaki overalls, and boots. Training included walking through a lime solution and various drills. The thought at the time was that gas or different types of bombs would be dropped if B.C. was to come under attack.

54th Kootenay Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Forces (CEF)

During World War I (1914-18), the 54th Kootenay Battalion was the only battalion in British Columbia with a distinctive regional designation.

After basic training in Vernon, the Battalion arrived in England in 1915 and served continuously at the Front from August 1916 until the war's end, fighting in the battles of Amiens, Arras, Bourlon Wood, Cambrai, Lens, Somme, Passchendaele, Valenciennes and Vimy Ridge.

While thousands fought under her colours, approximately 700 never returned home.