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Rosie the Riveter was Born

On **June 25**, 1924, Rosalind P. Walter (née Palmer) (1924-2020) was born. During her lifetime, Rosalind participated in a range of philanthropic activities and was a generous supporter of public television programming. Before her years of service to these causes, Rosalind was one of many young women who worked in the war industry during World War II.

Footage assembly in the Vought-Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, Stratford, Connecticut. Jack Delano, photographer, Nov. 1940. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-And-White Negatives. Prints & Photographs Division.

After high school, 19 year old Rosalind began working as a riveter on Corsair fighter planes at the Vought Aircraft Company in Stratford, Connecticut (pictured above). After a newspaper article featuring Rosalind's work was published, songwriters Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb were inspired to write the song "Rosie the Riveter."

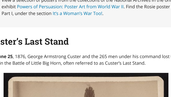
With the release of this song, the concept of Rosie the Riveter became a part of public consciousness. Some of the lyrics include:

"All the day long,
Whether rain or shine,
She's a part of the assembly line.
She's making history,
Working for victory,
Rosie the Riveter.
Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage,
Sitting up there on the fuselage.
That little girl will do more than a male will do."

The song concludes with:

"There's something true about,
Red, white, and blue about,
Rosie the Riveter."

Rosie the Riveter Song Lyrics[1]. From Rosie the Riveter Lesson Plan[2]. Accessed through the Eisenhower Foundation[3].



Riveter at work on Consolidated bomber, Consolidated Aircraft Corp., Fort Worth, Texas. Howard R. Hollem, photographer, Oct. 1942. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Color Photographs. Prints & Photographs Division.

It should be noted that while Rosalind may have been the first, there were many other "real life Rosies" throughout the war. Rosie the Riveter came to be a symbol of all women working in the war industries during World War II.

After the release of the song inspired by Rosalind, the image of Rosie the Riveter was further cemented in the public imagination in large part due to the circulation of illustrations and propaganda. On May 29, 1943, the artwork Rockwell Rosie Illustration[4] was published on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*. In the 1940's the circulation of the *Saturday Evening Post* was estimated by hundreds of millions, and they always printed extra copies when a Rockwell illustration was on the cover.

Today, perhaps the most famous image of all the Rosie imagery is "We Can Do It," created by J. Howard Miller and published by Westinghouse. Surprisingly, "We Can Do It" was not widely circulated during the war years, and there is no evidence to suggest that it was ever seen outside of the Westinghouse factory floors. Originally, the phrase of "We Can Do It" is largely attributed to its inclusion in a 1982 *Washington Post Magazine* article, "Poster Art for Patriotism's Sake," about the poster collections at the National Archives.

Learn More

- Take a look at the Library of Congress Research Guide Rosie the Riveter: Working Women and World War II.
- The Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division holds hundreds of images relating to American women workers in World War II. To see the factory where Rosalind P. Walter worked, search the collections for *Vought-Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation*.
- Rosie Pictures: Select Images Relating to American Women Workers During World War I offers a selection of photographs, as well as information on locating additional images.
- Search the collections of the Veterans History Project to find oral histories and other materials related to women working in the war industries during World War II.
- Explore Library of Congress Digital Collections, including the Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Color Photographs and the Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives. Both collections feature an extensive pictorial record of American life during World War II.
- Read Today in History features on D-Day: Operation Overlord, Pearl Harbor, and more.
- View a selection of posters from the collections of the National Archives in the online exhibit Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II. Find the Rosie poster in Part I, under the section It's a Woman's War Too!.

Custer's Last Stand

On **June 25**, 1876, George Armstrong Custer and the 265 men under his command lost their lives in the Battle of Little Big Horn, often referred to as Custer's Last Stand.

Sitting Bull., Bismarck, D.T., David Francis Barry, photographer, c1885. Prints & Photographs Division

Portrait of Maj. Gen. George A. Custer. Officer of the Federal Army. Brady National Photographic Art Gallery Photographs Collection (Jan. 4, 1865). Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints. Prints & Photographs Division

Educated at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Custer passed his brilliance and daring as a cavalry officer of the Union Army in the Civil War. Major General George McClellan appointed the twenty-three-year-old Custer as brigadier general in charge of a Michigan cavalry brigade. By 1864, Custer was leading the Third Cavalry Division in General Philip Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley campaign. Throughout the fall, the Union Army moved across the valley—burning homes, mills, and fields of crops.

View of a Cheyenne Village at Big Timbers.., Osgaarnwiggie by Solomon Carvalho, probably copied by Matthew Brady's studio, between 1853 and 1860. Daguerreotypes. Prints & Photographs Division

This daguerreotype of an Indian village in Kansas Territory, taken during the Fremont Expedition in 1853, is one of the Library's oldest images of the Plains Indians of the American West. Click on the image for a much sharper view of four large tipis (variant of teepees) standing at the edge of a wooded area.

The 3rd Cuirber dic.m.m.tn 7th of Oct.-retreat and burning the forage., Somewhere near Mt. Crawford, Va., Alfred Waud, artist, October 7, 1864. Drawings Documentary Prints & Photographs Division.

This sketch of Custer's division retiring from Mount Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley on October 7, 1864, is by Alfred Waud, a Civil War sketch artist who documented the war for the press. Sketch artists provided the public's only glimpse of battle at a time when the shutter speed of cameras was too slow to capture action. Waud's sketches sometimes placed him dangerously close to the fighting, portraying more intimately than any other artist, the drama and horror of the Civil War.

Tapped to pursue General Robert E. Lee's army as it fled from Richmond, Custer himself received the Confederate flag of truce when Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House. At the end of the Civil War, he was commissioned to the western frontier as part of an army campaign to impress and intimidate hostile Plains Indians with a show of U.S. military might.

After gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1874, white miners flocked into territory ceded to the Sioux less than ten years earlier. Although the second Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868) clearly granted the Indian exclusive use of the Black Hills, in the winter of 1875, the U.S. ordered the Sioux to return to their reservation by the end of January. With many Indians out of the range of communication and many others hostile to the order, the U.S. Army prepared for battle.

On May 17, 1876, *Lieutenant Colonel Custer* led the 750 men of the 7th United States Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory. Commanded by Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry, Custer's division was part of an expedition intended to locate and rout tribes organized for resistance under Chief Sitting Bull. Hoping to entrap Sitting Bull in the Little Big Horn area, Terry ordered Custer to follow the Rosebud River while he brought the majority of the men down the Yellowstone River. After meeting at the mouth of the Little Big Horn, they planned to force the Lakota Sioux and the Cheyenne back to their reservations.

Custer found Sitting Bull encamped on the Little Bighorn River in Montana. Instead of waiting for Terry, the lieutenant colonel chose to wage an immediate attack. He divided his forces into several groups and headed out. Quickly encircled by their enemy, the five companies under Custer's immediate command were slaughtered in less than an hour. Over the next two days, the remnants of the 7th Cavalry fought for their lives as they waited in vain for Custer to relieve them.

On June 27, the Indians retreated as reinforcements arrived. Expecting to meet Custer and prepare for battle, General Terry discovered the bodies of Custer and his men. Nearly a third of the men of the 7th Cavalry, including Custer and his brother, died at Little Big Horn. A stunning but short-lived victory for Native Americans, the Battle of Little Big Horn galvanized the public against the Indians. In response, federal troops poured into the Black Hills.

While many Native Americans surrendered to federal authorities, Sitting Bull sought refuge in Canada in 1877. Four years later, with his supporters on the brink of starvation, Sitting Bull returned to the U.S. at Standing Rock Agency in North Dakota. There, he fought the sale of tribal lands under the Dawes Severalty Act and participated in the Ghost Dance Movement—a cultural and religious revitalization among Native Americans. Threatened by a religious awakening that promised the end of white dominance, federal authorities attempted to take custody of Sitting Bull in 1890. He was killed in the affray sparked by the attempted arrest.

Learn More

- Relevant Today in History pages include features on Tecumseh and the Revolutionary War, the Creek War, Cherokee Chief John Ross, Nez Percé Chief Joseph, and the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.
- Search on *Sioux* or *Cheyenne* in American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940 to access texts of recollections of encounters between European Americans and the Plains Indians. Read the interview "History of a Buffalo Hunter," in which Don Manuel Jesus Vasques of Taos, New Mexico, recalls an 1877 hunt.
- Search Custer in Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints and in the Photos, Print, Drawing collections to locate additional photographs and depictions of Custer from that time.
- Although he was soundly defeated, Custer quickly was elevated to the status of hero. The collection Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, ca. 1870 to 1885 includes "Gen. Custer's Military March" (1878) and "General Custer's Last March" (1879), both of which immortalized him in song.
- From the collection, California Gold: Northern California Folk Music from the Thirties listen to the ballad, "Custer's Last Charge", an unsparing depiction of the battle. A transcription is also provided.

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