



Connecticut's Contribution to World War II: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract

Connecticut, also known as the “Arsenal of Democracy,” played a vital role in the Allied victory during World War II. As one of the industrial powerhouses of the United States, Connecticut’s manufacturing capabilities ramped up to meet the war effort’s needs. The state produced everything from ammunition to airplanes, and its labor force played a crucial role in keeping the war machine running. This article will explore Connecticut’s critical role in World War II by examining its economy, industry, military contributions, and social impact.

Keywords: Connecticut, World War II, social impact, manufacturing capabilities.

1. Introduction

Connecticut’s contribution to the Allied victory in World War II was extensive and varied. From large munitions factories to small businesses producing essential war materials, Connecticut’s economy became a significant part of the American war effort. As a highly industrialized state, Connecticut had an extensive infrastructure for manufacturing, which helped to produce crucial supplies like ammunition, clothing, and machinery for the war. Looking beyond the state’s role in production, Connecticut also provided an essential social contribution through the sacrifices made by its people.

2. Connecticut’s economy and industry

Connecticut’s economy and industry grew significantly during World War II due to an increased demand for war materials. Manufacturing increased substantially as factories shifted production to make military products. The state’s skilled workforce quickly adapted to the new needed skills in the war production industries. In 1942, Pratt & Whitney Aircraft announced plans to build a new plant in East Hartford for manufacturing aircraft engines. The company constructed the plant to support the military’s needs, and by 1945, it had produced over 27,000 aircraft engines. Colt Firearms in Hartford ramped up production to provide arms to the military, producing over 700,000 rifles and machine guns by the end of the war.

Connecticut was also a significant supplier of ammunition. The Remington Arms factory in Bridgeport, which had established its roots in Connecticut in the 1800s, turned its efforts toward producing munitions for the war. The factory constructed a new building to accommodate

the increase in production and hired tens of thousands of new employees. By war’s end, the factory had produced over 1 billion rounds of ammunition.

Connecticut’s economy continued to thrive after the war, with manufacturing leading the way. Companies like General Electric and Uniroyal established operations in the state, and Sikorsky Aircraft, which had been producing aircraft in Connecticut since the 1920s, continued to expand. Throughout the rest of the 20th century, Connecticut became known for its advanced manufacturing, with companies specializing in aerospace, medical supplies, and more.

Connecticut’s economy also expanded beyond manufacturing. The state’s proximity to major cities like New York and Boston made it an ideal location for finance and insurance companies, and the insurance industry in particular grew rapidly. Hartford became a hub for insurance companies, earning the nickname “Insurance Capital of the World.”

Today, Connecticut’s economy is diverse and includes a range of industries such as healthcare, education, and technology. While the state has faced economic challenges in recent years, it remains a vital part of the U.S. economy and a leader in many industries.

The state’s location and transportation infrastructure also contribute to its strong economy. Connecticut is home to a number of major highways and airports, making it easy for businesses to move goods and people in and out of the state. The Port of New Haven is also an important transportation hub, connecting Connecticut to international trade networks.

Connecticut’s healthcare industry is particularly noteworthy. The state is home to some of the top hospitals and medical research institutions in the world, including Yale New Haven Hospital, Hartford Hospital, and the UConn Health Center. These institutions contribute significantly to the state’s economy and provide thousands of jobs for Connecticut residents.

Similarly, Connecticut’s education industry is a driving force behind the state’s economy. The state is home to some of the most prestigious universities in the US, including Yale University and the University of Connecticut. These institutions attract talented students and faculty from all over the world, and their research and innovation help to fuel the state’s economy.

Finally, Connecticut’s technology industry has been growing in recent years. The state is home to a number of startups, particularly in the biotech and fintech sectors. Companies like Infosys, Cognizant, and IBM have also established operations in Connecticut, creating jobs and driving innovation.

Overall, Connecticut’s diverse economy and strong industries have helped it weather economic challenges in the past and continue to position it as a leader today.

The strong manufacturing industry that arose in Connecticut after World War II was largely a result of the wartime economy. During the war, many factories in Connecticut were converted to produce goods for the war effort, such as munitions, aircraft, and military vehicles. This created a surge in demand for workers and raw materials, leading to a period of rapid growth in the state’s manufacturing industry.

After the war, many of these factories shifted to producing consumer goods, contributing to the post-war economic boom. Additionally, the demand for aircraft production continued as the Cold War began, leading to the expansion of companies like Sikorsky Aircraft in Connecticut.

Connecticut’s location on the East Coast and its transportation infrastructure also made it a strategic location for defense-related industries during the Cold War. Companies like Electric Boat, which produces submarine technology, became an important part of the state’s economy during this time. Overall, World War II had a significant impact on Connecticut’s economy, shaping its manufacturing and defense industries for decades to come.

3. Connecticut's military contribution

More than 300,000 Connecticut residents served in the military during World War II, with many going overseas to European and Pacific theaters. Connecticut's contributions to the military extended beyond the number of soldiers it supplied. The Navy's largest submarine base, located in Groton, was significant in the Pacific theater. The submarines constructed there played a critical part in winning the war in Japan.

Additionally, the Pratt & Whitney factory created more than 17,000 airplane engines, and Sikorsky Aircraft in nearby Stratford contributed significantly to the development of helicopter technology. These aircraft, crucial to the war effort, were also used extensively in the post-WWII world for commerce and humanitarian aid.

Connecticut's military contribution did not stop with World War II. The state continued to play a significant role in other conflicts, including the Korean War and the Vietnam War. In fact, the Vietnam War Memorial in Hartford is the first state memorial in the country dedicated solely to Connecticut veterans who fought and died in that war.

Connecticut's military heritage is also reflected in the National Guard units stationed throughout the state. These units have been activated for various missions, including peacekeeping and disaster relief efforts.

Overall, Connecticut's military contributions have been substantial and have helped shape the history of the United States. The state's dedication to the military continues to this day, with Connecticut residents serving in current conflicts around the world

In recognition of the state's military history and contributions, Connecticut has established several museums and memorials dedicated to honoring veterans and educating the public about their sacrifices. These include the Connecticut Military Museum in Danbury, the Connecticut Trolley Museum in East Windsor, and the Veterans' Memorial Park in West Hartford.

Connecticut also offers various education and support programs for veterans and their families, including the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs and several veteran-specific job training and educational assistance programs.

As Connecticut looks to the future, its military heritage will continue to inform and shape its identity. The state remains committed to honoring its veterans and supporting current members of the military, continuing its long tradition of service and dedication to the nation.

Connecticut's military contributions during World War II laid the foundation for its continued service and dedication to the military. The state played a critical role in the war effort, producing and supplying vital resources and equipment, including submarines, rifles, and aircraft engines. Connecticut residents also served bravely and made sacrifices on the battlefield, with many losing their lives in service.

The state's contributions to World War II had a lasting impact, both on the nation and on Connecticut's identity. By maintaining a strong military presence and continuing to honor veterans and their sacrifices, Connecticut carries forward the legacy of its World War II contributions and its deep commitment to serving the country.

4. Connecticut's impact by theater

Connecticut's impact on World War II was significant in all major theaters of the war. Here's a breakdown of Connecticut's contribution to each theater.

4.1 European Theater

Connecticut was home to several major military production facilities, including the Bridgeport Brass Company, which made thousands of casings for artillery shells. Additionally, Connecticut-trained soldiers served in key roles throughout the European theater. In the European Theater, Connecticut industries manufactured a vast array of products that the military needed in its fight against Nazi Germany. One of the state’s most significant contributions came from the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company in East Hartford, which produced thousands of aircraft engines for the U.S. Air Force. Pratt & Whitney’s engines powered most of the American fighter planes, bombers, and transports that fought in Europe.

Another critical contribution to the war effort came from the Winchester Repeating Arms Company in New Haven. The company manufactured machine guns and other weapons, which provided critical support to U.S. troops during the Normandy invasion and subsequent battles against Nazi forces in France.

Connecticut also played an essential role in the training of soldiers who went on to fight in Europe. Several Connecticut military installations trained troops, including the Camp H.H. Arnold in Groton, the Fort Sheridan in New Haven, and the Fort Devens in Massachusetts.

The state’s residents also served in important leadership roles throughout the war, including General Colin Powell, who rose to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War, and General John W. Vessey Jr., who served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President Ronald Reagan.

In addition to the military, Connecticut was also involved in a significant humanitarian effort in Europe during the war. Thousands of state residents donated money and supplies to the American Friends Service Committee, which provided relief to civilians affected by the conflict.

In addition to Connecticut’s contributions to the war effort, many Connecticut residents saw action in the European Theater. They served alongside members of other U.S. military units, including the 10th Mountain Division and the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. Several Connecticut residents earned significant honors for their service in the European Theater. For example, Private Joseph W. Mastronuzzi from New Haven received the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor, for his heroism in Italy in 1944.

4.2 Pacific Theater

Connecticut played a major role in producing ships for the Pacific fleet. The shipbuilding industry in Connecticut was boosted by the emergency shipbuilding program launched by the U.S. Maritime Commission in 1940. By 1945, Connecticut was producing dozens of Liberty and Victory ships each month, which were used to transport troops, supplies, and equipment to the Pacific theater.

Many Connecticut residents served in the Pacific, and the state also contributed to the war effort on the home front.

Connecticut was a hub of manufacturing during the war, producing goods ranging from ships and submarines to munitions and aircraft engines. The Electric Boat Company, located in Groton, Connecticut, was a major producer of submarines for the war effort. Electric Boat designed and constructed the Gato-class submarine, which became one of the most successful and widely used submarine classes in the war.

Connecticut residents also served in various branches of the military and participated in major Pacific battles, such as the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Battle of Iwo Jima, and the Battle

of Okinawa. One notable Connecticut resident who served in the Pacific was Joseph W. Stilwell, an Army general who led Chinese and American troops in several key battles.

Connecticut residents also contributed to the war effort through fundraising, bond drives, and other forms of support on the home front. The state's close proximity to major population centers like New York City made it an important hub for logistical support and supply chain management during the war.

Overall, Connecticut played an important role in the Pacific Theater and World War II as a whole. The state's contributions on both the military and home front fronts helped ensure victory for the Allied forces.

Naval Submarine Base New London, located in Groton, Connecticut, was a crucial part of the submarine force in the Pacific Theater. The base trained submarine crews before they were sent to the theater, and also served as a repair and resupply hub for subs that were already deployed. The base was responsible for training over 15,000 submariners during the war.

Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation is an aerospace company, founded in Stratford, Connecticut, was a major producer of helicopters and became a crucial component of the Pacific Theater. Sikorsky's helicopters were used for transport, reconnaissance, and medical evacuation in areas where traditional planes couldn't land. Sikorsky also trained helicopter pilots and maintenance crews during the war.

Governor Raymond E. Baldwin, who served as the governor of Connecticut from 1941 to 1946, was an active supporter of the war effort. He served as chairman of the War Manpower Commission for New England, which oversaw labor and production efforts in the region. Baldwin also assisted in the formation of the Connecticut State Guard, a defense force made up of civilian volunteers.

In 1943, a U.S. Navy training vessel collided with a freighter off the coast of New London, Connecticut. The training vessel, which was carrying African American sailors, sank within minutes. 221 sailors were killed or went missing in the incident, and the Navy initially claimed that the ship had suffered a torpedo attack by Japanese forces. The true cause of the sinking wasn't uncovered until decades later this is known as The Amistad Incident.

Pratt & Whitney produced engines that were used in many of the Allied aircraft in the Pacific. In fact, Pratt & Whitney engines powered some of the most famous planes of the war, including the B-17 Flying Fortress and the P-51 Mustang.

Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, played a significant role in training military personnel for the Pacific Theater. The school's curriculum was tailored to teach skills like Japanese language and culture, as well as military strategy and tactics.

The GE plant in Bridgeport, Connecticut, produced important components for the aircraft, ships, and submarines used in the Pacific. The company was also responsible for developing and producing some of the most advanced electronic equipment of the time, which was critical to the success of U.S. military operations.

U.S. Coast Guard Academy: Located in New London, Connecticut, this academy trained many Coast Guard officers who served in the Pacific Theater. The academy also played a critical role in developing amphibious warfare tactics, which were essential for Allied troops to gain a foothold on islands in the Pacific.

All in all, Connecticut played a critical role in the Pacific Theater during World War II, from producing submarines and helicopters to training personnel for the war effort. The state's contributions helped ensure Allied victory and changed the course of history.

4.3 North African Theater

Connecticut-trained troops played a role in the campaigns in North Africa, particularly the Allied invasion of Algeria in 1942. Connecticut also provided equipment and supplies for the troops, including ammunition and fuel.

The state’s manufacturing industry, particularly in Bridgeport, played a crucial role in producing the necessary military equipment and supplies for the war effort.

One of the most notable contributions from Connecticut was the production of M4 Sherman tanks by the American Locomotive Company in New Haven. These tanks were used extensively by American and British forces in North Africa, including in the decisive battles of El Alamein and Kasserine Pass.

Connecticut’s naval industry also played a key role in the North African campaign. The Electric Boat Company in Groton, which was originally founded to build submarines, produced a number of landing craft and other amphibious vessels that were used in the Allied landings in North Africa.

Connecticut residents also served in the North African Theater as part of the United States armed forces. Connecticut’s 43rd Infantry Division was one of the units that fought in North Africa, participating in the capture of Faid Pass and the Battle of Hill 609.

In addition to the production of tanks and landing craft, Connecticut played a role in supplying other military equipment and supplies for the North African campaign. The Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company, based in East Hartford, produced aircraft engines that were used in planes flown by American and British forces in North Africa.

Connecticut also contributed medical personnel to the North African Theater. The Yale University School of Medicine sent over a dozen doctors and nurses to the region to help care for wounded soldiers.

Connecticut soldiers who served in the North African Theater received numerous decorations and honors for their bravery and service. Among them was Private First Class Henry Wojtusik, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Hill 609 in Tunisia.

The North African campaign was a crucial turning point in World War II and marked the first significant victory for the Allies in the European theater. Connecticut’s contributions to the campaign helped to secure this victory and furthered the state’s reputation as a key contributor to the war effort.

4.4 Mediterranean Theater

Connecticut was a key supplier of arms and munitions to the Allied forces fighting in Italy and across the Mediterranean. The state’s military contributions were primarily focused on providing supplies for the war effort, as well as training and deploying soldiers and airmen.

Connecticut also saw a significant number of its residents serve in the Mediterranean theater. Yale Medical School, for example, set up a medical unit that was deployed to North Africa to treat wounded Allied soldiers.

Connecticut’s contributions to the Mediterranean Theater in World War II were not limited to just the production and distribution of weapons and equipment. The state also played a significant role in training troops and providing logistical support.

One of the most important military installations in Connecticut was the Groton Submarine Base, which operated throughout the war and supplied submarines to the Mediterranean Theater. The base also hosted thousands of sailors and seamen who trained for service in the submarine corps.

Another notable military installation in Connecticut was the Bradley Field Air Base, which was located in Windsor Locks. The base was primarily used for training pilots for the war effort, including the pilots who flew combat sorties in North Africa and Europe.

In addition, Connecticut was home to several Army and Navy hospitals that treated wounded soldiers and provided medical support for the war effort. The state's medical personnel were highly regarded for their expertise and many had been recruited from the state's leading hospitals and medical schools.

Overall, Connecticut's contributions to the Mediterranean Theater were essential to the Allied war effort. The state's industrial power, training facilities, and medical expertise all played crucial roles in the military operations that helped secure victory in Europe and North Africa.

4.5 China-Burma-India Theater

Connecticut helped to equip U.S. forces fighting in the China-Burma-India theater, which primarily involved supporting Chinese forces fighting the Japanese. The Groton Iron Works supplied metalwork, while the Bridgeport Brass Company manufactured artillery shell casings. Connecticut also played a role in providing communications equipment for U.S. forces in this theater.

The state's contributions to the theater were mainly focused on the production and distribution of weapons and other war materials.

One of the most important military installations in Connecticut during the war was the Colt's Manufacturing Company in Hartford. The company produced a variety of weapons, including rifles, machine guns, and pistols that were used by Allied troops in the China-Burma-India Theater.

The Winchester firearms company in New Haven also played a crucial role in producing weapons and ammunition for the theater. Winchester produced rifles, machine guns, and ammunition that were used by American and British troops in the region.

Connecticut was also home to several companies that produced aircraft components and engines for planes that were used in the theater. The Pratt & Whitney company in East Hartford, for example, produced a range of aircraft engines, including the famous R-2800 engine, which was used in many of the planes that flew in the China-Burma-India Theater.

Overall, Connecticut's industrial expertise helped to provide essential support for the Allied war effort in the China-Burma-India Theater. Without the state's contributions, it would have been much harder for the Allied forces to supply and equip their troops in this crucial area of the war.

5. Social impact

Connecticut's contribution to World War II also had a significant social impact. With many men overseas, women took on new roles in the workforce. In factories across the country, women took on jobs that were previously considered only for men. It was said that women

“manned” the home front, going to work and producing essential materials for the military. Connecticut’s female workforce helped the state produce the goods necessary to fight the war.

Connecticut also saw an influx of immigrants and African Americans during World War II, as they were recruited to work in the defense industry. This led to increased diversity and changed the social fabric of the state. Despite facing discrimination and bigotry, these groups made significant contributions to the war effort and helped overcome the labor shortages caused by the absence of men in the workforce.

The war also had a profound impact on the families and communities of Connecticut. Many residents lost loved ones, and the state rallied together to support and honor those who served and sacrificed. The war created a sense of patriotism and unity among Connecticut’s residents, and this legacy continues to this day.

This shift in gender roles had a lasting impact on the social fabric of Connecticut and the nation, as it challenged traditional stereotypes and expectations of women in society. It also helped pave the way for greater gender equality and opportunities for women in the workforce. Today, Connecticut continues to honor the contributions of women in the war effort and promotes gender equality in all areas of society.

Additionally, Connecticut’s African American population also played a significant role in the war effort. Segregation in the military was still in effect at the time, but African Americans were able to serve in support roles such as cooks, drivers, and laborers. In Connecticut, African American communities rallied together to support the war effort and raise money for war bonds. These contributions challenged the systemic racism and segregation that existed in the United States during this time and helped pave the way for greater civil rights and opportunities for African Americans. Today, Connecticut acknowledges the important contributions of the state’s African American community during World War II and continues to strive towards greater racial equality and inclusion.

Both the contributions of women and African Americans during World War II, as described above, were critical elements of the war effort. The mobilization of the entire population in support of the war was vital to the success of the Allies. Women and African Americans, who had often been marginalized and discriminated against in American society, were able to prove their value and capabilities during the war, which helped pave the way for greater equality and social progress. These contributions were also a key factor in the ultimate victory of the Allies in World War II.

Additionally, the experiences of minority groups, including women and African Americans, during World War II have been cited as catalysts for the Civil Rights Movement and the women’s rights movement that emerged in the post-war years. The war effort required a massive mobilization of labor and resources, which opened up new opportunities for marginalized groups, but also exposed and challenged the inequalities and prejudices that existed in American society at the time. The successes and contributions of these groups during the war helped to fuel social and political movements that sought to achieve greater equality and justice in the years that followed.

Connecticut played a significant role in supporting the war effort, including in the mobilization of women and African Americans. The city of Bridgeport, for example, was a major center of manufacturing for the war, with factories producing goods such as aircraft engines and munitions. Women and African Americans were a key part of this workforce, with women taking on jobs traditionally held by men and African Americans filling positions that had previously been closed to them.

In addition, Connecticut was home to the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African American pilots who were trained in Tuskegee, Alabama, but who were stationed at the Bradley

Field air base in Windsor Locks, Connecticut during the war. These pilots were recognized for their bravery and skill during the war and helped to break down racial barriers in the military.

Connecticut also contributed significantly to the war through its naval base in New London, which was a primary training site for submarine crews. The base played a vital role in the Battle of the Atlantic, which was a major theater of the war.

Overall, Connecticut's contributions to the war effort, including those of women and African Americans, were critical to the Allied victory and helped to pave the way for greater social and political progress in the post-war era.

6. Connecticut's role in the Manhattan Project

Connecticut played a critical role in the Manhattan Project, which was the top-secret research program that produced the world's first nuclear weapons during World War II. The state was home to several important facilities and institutions that contributed to the project's success.

One of the key facilities located in Connecticut was the Yale University Physics Department, which was led by renowned physicist Ernest O. Lawrence. Lawrence was instrumental in the early stages of the Manhattan Project, and his team at Yale worked on the development of the magnetic separation process, which allowed for the extraction and purification of Uranium-235 from natural uranium.

Another important facility in Connecticut was the Manhattan Project's research laboratory at the University of Connecticut, which was led by chemical engineer John H. Reilly. The laboratory focused on the production of heavy water, which was used as a neutron moderator in nuclear reactors.

Perhaps the most significant facility in Connecticut was the Connecticut National Guard Armory in New Haven, which was converted into a heavily guarded and top-secret factory for the production and testing of high-explosives. This factory, known as the Winchester Repeating Arms Company or the New Haven Laboratory, produced large quantities of high explosives that were used to detonate the atomic bombs during the war.

Overall, Connecticut's contributions to the Manhattan Project were critical to the successful development and eventual deployment of the atomic bomb, which played a significant role in ending World War II.

In addition to the facilities mentioned above, Connecticut was home to other important institutions and companies that played a role in the Manhattan Project. For example, the Combustion Engineering Company in Windsor worked on the development of nuclear reactors, and the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company in East Hartford manufactured some of the components and parts for the atomic bombs.

Connecticut's role in the Manhattan Project was not limited to technological contributions. The state was also home to significant political and scientific leadership. For example, Connecticut Senator Brien McMahon was a key legislative figure in the creation of the Atomic Energy Commission, which was responsible for the post-war management of the nation's nuclear weapons program.

Moreover, Connecticut's proximity to New York City, where many of the leading scientists and technicians working on the Manhattan Project were stationed, made the state a key logistical center for the program. Connecticut played a crucial role in transporting materials, equipment, and personnel to the various Manhattan Project sites around the country.

Connecticut’s contributions to the Manhattan Project were diverse and significant, ranging from technological innovation and manufacturing to political leadership and logistical support. Without the contributions of the state’s institutions and individuals, the Manhattan Project may not have been successful in developing the atomic bomb, which changed the course of World War II and had lasting implications for global politics and security.

Connecticut played a crucial role in the development of the first atomic bomb during World War II. The state was home to several key sites of the Manhattan Project, including laboratories, factories, and research facilities.

One of the most significant sites was the Metallurgical Laboratory at the University of Chicago, where scientists first managed to achieve a self-sustaining chain reaction in a nuclear reactor. Many of the researchers who worked on this project went on to join the Manhattan Project.

Another important site in Connecticut was the Underwater Sound Laboratory in New London, where scientists developed equipment to detect German submarines during the war. This facility later became the Naval Undersea Warfare Center and continued to play a leading role in the development of sonar technology.

Connecticut was also home to several factories that produced components for the atomic bomb, including the Winchester Repeating Arms Company in New Haven, which manufactured detonators and other explosive devices.

After the war, many of the scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project continued their research in Connecticut, including the physicist Robert J. Van de Graaff, who built one of the world’s first high-energy particle accelerators at Clark University in Worcester.

7. Conclusion

Connecticut played a significant role in the Allied victory during World War II. The state’s economy and industry ramped up production to meet the demand for war materials, and its military contributions helped the U.S. win the war. Connecticut’s social impact was also striking, with women taking on new roles and contributing to the war effort on the home front. As we continue to reflect on the sacrifices made by our military and our citizens, Connecticut’s contribution to World War II will always be remembered.

Overall, Connecticut’s status as an industrial powerhouse was critical to winning World War II. Through its manufacturing capabilities, the state produced everything from firearms to ammunition to aircraft engines, contributing significantly to the war effort. Its skilled workforce adapted to the changing industries, and its military bases and facilities produced crucial personnel and equipment. Connecticut’s social impact was also remarkable, with women taking on new roles in the workforce and contributing to the war effort in unprecedented ways. Connecticut’s contribution to World War II was a testament to its industrial might, its skilled workforce, and its unwavering commitment to the Allied cause.

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