

Women's Land Army

By Unknown

This 1944 photograph shows Mabel Mack, supervisor of the Oregon branch of the Women's Land Army (WLA). The WLA was part of a World War II national effort to supply desperately needed laborers to U.S. farms. Locally, the Oregon State College Extension Service established the Emergency Farm Labor Service to place women, children, and Mexican nationals on Oregon farms to thin and harvest crops. The state also paid Japanese American internees and German prisoners-of-war to work as farm laborers.

During the war, farmers throughout the Pacific Northwest and the nation experienced a serious labor shortage. Farmers increased production to meet the demands of European allies and American troops. At the same time, many people who had been farm laborers were offered higher paying jobs in the national defense industry — building ships and airplanes for the war effort — or joined the military service.

In 1943, more than 15,000 women worked as seasonal laborers on Oregon's farms. Many Oregon women also found work in the shipbuilding companies in Portland and Vancouver, Washington.

Further Reading: Carpenter, Stephanie Ann. "Regular Farm Girl: The Women's Land Army in World War II." *Agricultural History* 71, 1997: 162-185.

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