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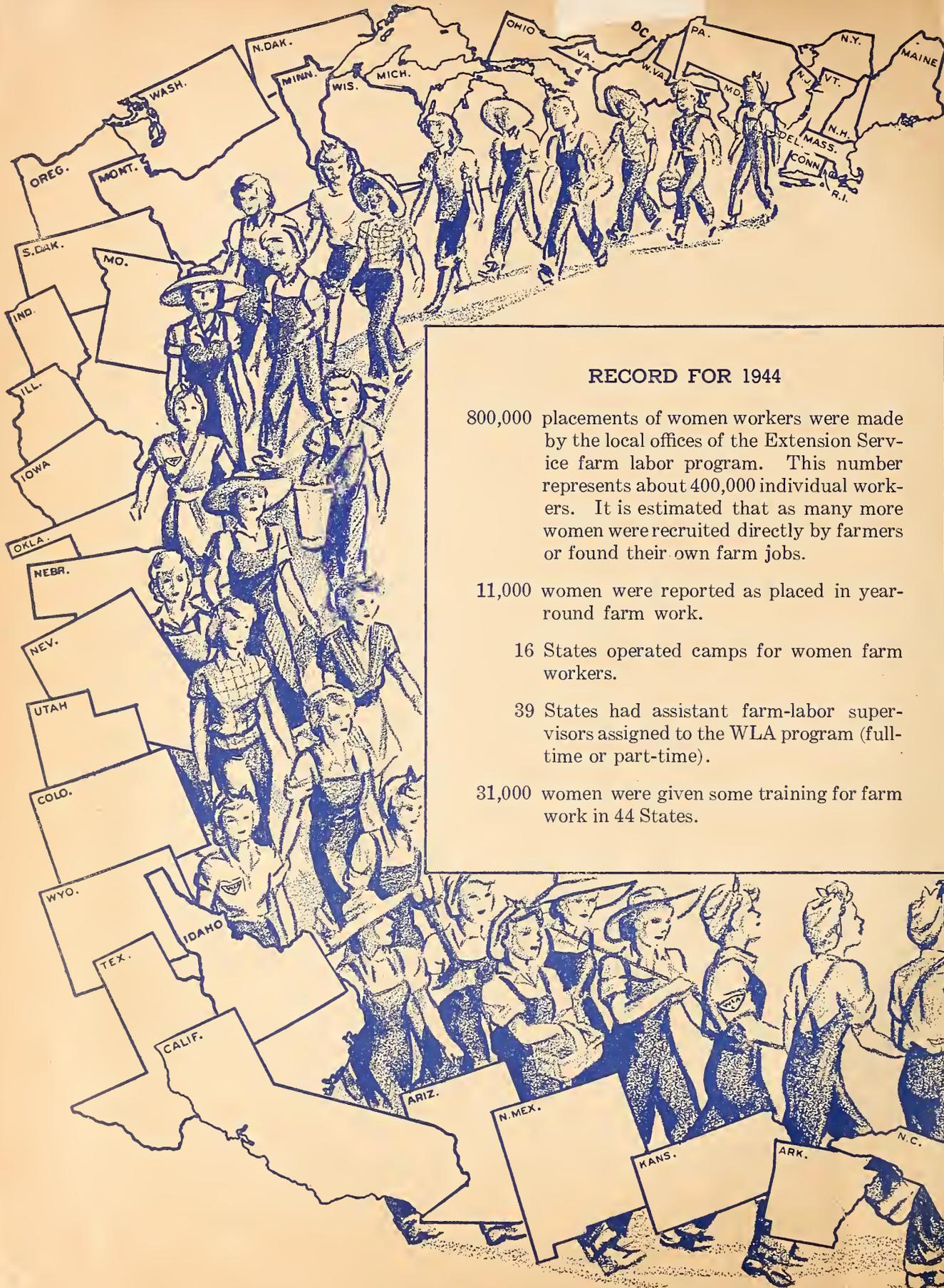


MAY 9 1945  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AWI-113

# THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY WORKS FOR VICTORY

EXTENSION SERVICE  
WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



### RECORD FOR 1944

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11,000 women were reported as placed in year-round farm work.

16 States operated camps for women farm workers.

39 States had assistant farm-labor supervisors assigned to the WLA program (full-time or part-time).

31,000 women were given some training for farm work in 44 States.

# THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY WORKS FOR VICTORY

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## NEEDS FOR 1945

Women are urgently needed again this year . . . three-fourths of a million of them—to help offset the greatest farm-labor shortage since this war began. A further shrinkage of farm labor is probable. Yet in this critical year of the war, our high rate of food production must continue.

So the Women's Land Army urges women everywhere to join the 4 million emergency farm workers needed to help farmers reach crop goals to produce our country's food, a basic weapon of war.

Last year, these local placement offices . . . 8,700 over the country . . . placed about 400,000 women in farm work, and about as many others were recruited directly by farmers or found their own jobs. These women receive prevailing farm wages for the amount and type of work done. Besides these, a great many farm women worked on their own and neighboring farms.

## WHO WLA WORKERS ARE

All women who help in wartime production of food, feed, or fiber are part of the Women's Land Army. Women from farms, cities, and towns . . . farm women who work longer hours than ever before; women from offices, factories, and stores; women whose husbands are overseas; housewives, college girls, and teachers. They are women of all ages who spend the entire summer, the whole year, or only a few hours, a week end, or a vacation period helping to bring through the farm crops our country must have.





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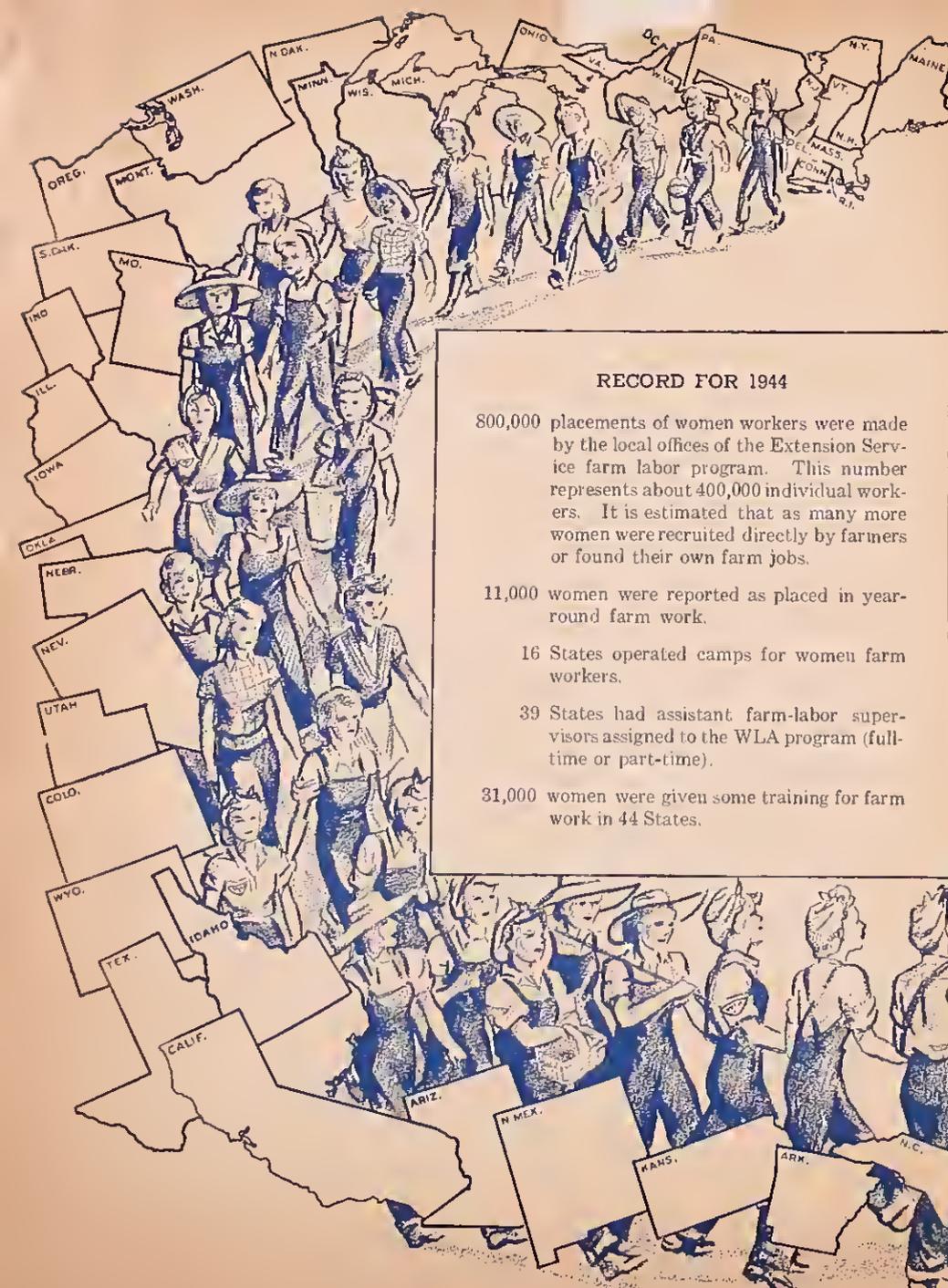
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# WHAT WLA

North, South, East, and West, women do all kinds of farm work. They plant beans, tomatoes, and other vegetables. They pack and pack berries, apples, peaches, grapes, other fruits, and flax; drive tractors, farm trucks, and combine harvesters, brief, as and where needed, women help to plant, cul- ture, and care for the livestock—all so necessary in the war program.

## FARM WOMEN

Farm wives and daughters, hundreds of thousands of them, do a magnificent job, helping with haying, milking, feeding livestock. They handle just about every farm task, many of which they have never done before, putting in long hours at the double job of housework and farm work.

Typical is one Midwestern farm woman who, during corn-planting time, drove a tractor from 4 to 8 a. m. each day, and then did the farm chores before starting her regular housework, which she does without benefit of electricity or running water.

A Georgia woman has added to her housework and canning chores the job of milking, caring for the chickens, and working in a 2-acre vegetable garden, which she plows herself. She also averages 250 pounds of cotton a day in cotton-picking time.

Farm women usually work on their own farms, helping to fill vacancies left by their menfolk and hired hands. But many also help their neighbors, after their home tasks are finished. One family in South Dakota, working together as a crew, helps neighbors at threshing-time.

A New Hampshire farm daughter hired out to another farm family after her father finally succeeded in getting a hired man. She says, "I decided not to join the WACS or the WAVES, but to do farm work and help in food production. I believe this is just as important to the men in the armed forces."

Members of a home demonstration club in rural Mississippi use their meeting days for group field work on farms in the community.



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## TOWN WOMEN

Even though accepted reluctantly at first by many farmers, town women have now proved themselves in farm work. Their help is especially valuable at harvesttime for crops such as apples, peaches, and other fruit; for beans, tomatoes, potatoes, peanuts, and cotton. Teachers and college girls often spend 2 or 3 summer months in farm work. Businesswomen work part of their vacation time, evenings, and week ends harvesting tomatoes, beans, and carrots, detasseling corn, and picking apples, peaches, and grapes.

Homemakers also answer the local call for peak-season harvesting. In an Oregon county last year, for example, 500 homemakers helped to save the bean crop. Each day they boarded the Housewives' Special—busses leaving for the field at 8:30 a. m. and returning at 3 p. m. This gave them time to get the family breakfast before leaving and to market for supper in the late afternoon. In Washington, as in other States, women joined groups of "twilight" pickers, who worked evenings harvesting the big berry crop. And in a California county, women, working from 7 to 11 p. m. as peach cutters to help save 20,000 tons of peaches by drying, were known as the Victory Shift.

Women's underlying motive for doing farm work is, for the most part, patriotism—a deep desire to help, to have a part in feeding our soldiers and our allies—and an intense conviction that no food should go to waste. As a 60-year-old woman said, after picking 3 tons of beans, "I'm glad to do it! You see, I have a son in the Air Corps."





# WHAT WLA WORKERS DO

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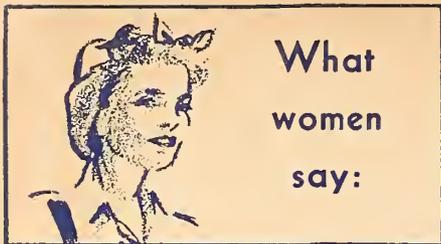
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What  
women  
say:

*"I like farming so well, my husband and I are planning to get a poultry farm this next April."*

*"I had a magnificent time doing WLA work this summer. I met everybody."*

*"They [the farm family] treated me as their own. I'm going back there next year."*

*"I learned so much from farmers. I hope they learned some good things about city people from me."*

*"The work was hard, but I'm going back again."*

*"I'm there [on the farm] for the duration."*

*"Of the different jobs I've had, farming is tops."*

*"I hoed 750 miles this summer."*

*"I know now why farm people go to bed at 9 p. m."*

*"Besides earning my room and board and spending money, I feel that I had a paid vacation."*

*"The WLA program goes back to pioneer principles of neighborliness."*

*"When women from town, city, and hamlet work side by side, they reach an understanding of each other that brings real comradeship."*

*"No matter how heavy the hay we pitched, how our backs ached from weeding, or how stubborn the team we were driving, we always had the secret joy that we were helping the war effort."*

*"The most worth-while vacation I've ever had."*

*"I enjoyed every minute in the WLA camp."*

## Where Town Women Help

### SEASONAL FARM WORK

#### *Living at Home—*

Of women who do farm work, by far the greatest number live at home and work by the day or part time on farms nearby. Included are women who go out to do emergency farm work as daily needs are announced; and business and factory women, who spend evenings, week ends, or some vacation time helping in the harvest. Their effort, altogether, often makes the difference in food saved that would otherwise have been wasted. Says a county agent in Georgia, "Throughout the entire harvest season, most of the work has been done by women and children."

#### *A Working Vacation in Camp—*

Some women, especially college girls, teachers, and business-women, spend part of their vacation time in labor-supply camps, working on surrounding farms. For 1 or 2 weeks, or the entire summer, they cultivate and pick vegetables, or harvest fruit. Many Smith College students, as a part of their college's summer plan of work or study, formed groups that lived as one household in the farming area where they worked.

Camps for women workers are operated in many States. Last year, New York State's WLA camps included about 3,000 New York City women and girls on their vacation time. Life in camp is not all work, but interesting and broadening as well, with the companionship of other women from many different places. As one worker said, after an evening of recreation in camp, "We're all friends, and that's what we're fighting for, isn't it?"

Even more interesting than picking cherries was the "contact with different people," wrote another camp worker on returning home. Her fellow campers included an Italian teacher, a woman who had fled Germany, college students, a librarian, a magazine writer, a governess, and a mother of 12 children.

#### *Living With a Farm Family—*

Some women live right on the farm for the summer. They do such work as taking care of the garden; planting; hoeing and harvesting onions, carrots, or other vegetables; or helping to do a hired man's job. Typical of such workers are a serviceman's wife who has full care of the poultry flock on a large general farm and a woman who has charge of the milk room on a dairy farm.

### YEAR-ROUND FARM WORK

Women serve as hired hands on some farms. They milk, take care of the poultry flock, feed livestock, and work in the field. Of the approximately 11,000 women placed for year-round work in 1944, many were wives of men working on the same farm. Others were like a girl with 4 brothers in the armed services who is doing farm work as her job; a woman who left a \$65 a week position to "render a greater patriotic service in farm work"; a woman who hopes to farm with her sailor husband after the war, and is now learning how.

# What Makes a Good Farm Worker?

## THE WORKER'S PART

Eagerness to learn, willingness to follow instructions carefully, concentration on the job until it is finished, all make a big difference in a worker's production. Important, too, are her open-mindedness toward different ways of thinking and doing, her cooperation with fellow workers and employers, her sportsmanship in accepting hardships without complaint. Said a grateful farmer about one WLA group, "These girls are worth 10 to 1 of any other help I have. They wouldn't leave me in the lurch. \* \* \* They have kept me from being snowed under." Another said, "I never saw harder workers. \* \* \* They looked worn out by noon the first day, but they rallied in the afternoon and haven't complained since. I hope they will help me again."

## THE FARMER'S PART

How much work a woman does, particularly if she is a green hand, depends to a large extent upon her employer. Feeling useful and part of an important job has a lot to do with her efficiency. A farmer who shows her how to do the job, is patient and exact in explaining, and ready to give a helping hand until she can work "on her own," gets results that more than repay him. Some WLA girls wrote "their" farmer as follows: "We want to express our gratitude for having you as our boss. Some of us are accepting responsibility for the first time in our lives. \* \* \* For your patience we want to thank you. You have been more than thoughtful."

## SUPERVISION

The real key to success with emergency farm workers is adequate supervision or management of the group. Sometimes this is done best by the farmer himself, at other times by a work leader who acts as connecting link between the farmer and his workers. Such supervision helps to maintain a spirit of teamwork and progress within the group. The manager of several large farms gives much of the credit of his WLA production to his field supervisor, who shows the women how to do a job efficiently and at the same time how to protect their health. These leaders give some training to workers on the job and need special training themselves to do it.

## TRAINING

Mostly, women are trained on the job by farmers. However, some States give concentrated courses—training periods of a few days or a few weeks for special kinds of farm work. For instance, Michigan held a 5-day training period last year for work leaders and camp supervisors. New York has a 2-week intensive WLA course for women and girls who agree to work for at least 3 months on farms there. Several States have short tractor-driving schools for both farm and town women.

What  
farmers  
say:



*"First, I was in an awful jam or I would never have tried them. Now, I will say that they were eminently successful, and helped me get the job done."*  
—Illinois.

*"The WLA girls pull their weight just like our regular farm help. They do good business for us, for themselves, and for the war."*—New York.

*"They sure know how to work, and they're fun to have around. Even got me to singing with them, picking beans!"*—Maine.

*"Louise takes charge of the milkhouse (40 cows), drives milk truck to St. Paul daily \* \* \* hadn't driven a car before coming here. State inspector says, 'Milkhouse is in best condition it ever has been.' She's good."*  
—Minnesota.

*"These town women had to do their morning work before coming out here. They didn't complain about heat or wasp stings. Having them on the farm was a rich experience."*—Texas.

*"They were quick to learn, had dogged perseverance, and were conscientious."*—Virginia.

*"They are doing a good, clean job topping onions—and I don't know what we'd have done without them."*—Oregon.

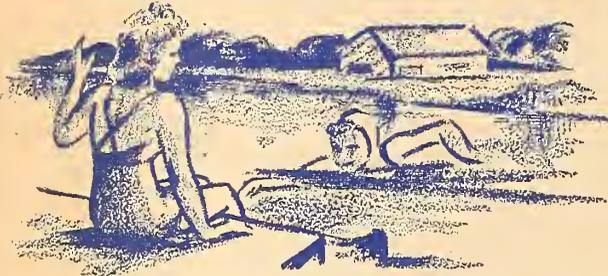
*"Girls are just fine. They do good work. Some are fast, some slow, but that's true everywhere."*—Michigan.

*"I like women for this work (driving trucks). They take safety precautions and follow directions."*—California.

*"The biggest factor in their success is their patriotic attitude. \* \* \* The boys in the armed forces should know of the remarkable work done by women."*—Illinois.

## FUN, TOO

"All work and no play" usually makes Jill, as well as Jack, dull and unhappy, and so not up to her best work. Planned recreation, including swimming, games, music, a "show," put on by the workers, are most helpful. Books and magazines and a comfortable place to read also are assets to any camp. Workers at a WLA camp for detaseling hybrid corn in Illinois put on a home-talent



show for themselves and the community, which is typical of many others. A Russian did a Russian dance, some girls put on a tumbling and acrobatic act, others wrote and acted a skit about their work, bringing in jokes about everybody. There was singing. Besides being fun, the show created much friendliness among townspeople and campers. On leaving a WLA camp in the Midwest one night, a physical-education and recreation worker said, "This is a happy camp. I can tell by the kind of noise coming from it."

## WHAT TO WEAR

The right clothes for farm work depend on the climate and the season, but they should be clothes that protect. Sunburn can cause serious illness as well as acute discomfort, and a stony field can make deep bruises on flimsily shod feet. Slacks or overalls, a cotton shirt, a wide-brimmed hat, and low-heeled shoes with thick soles make a good outfit. All work clothes should be comfortable, easy to wash, and without frills.

## HOW TO GET A FARM JOB

A woman who can work for the entire summer or for several weeks should consult her county extension agent or local farm employment office immediately. These offices usually are located in the county courthouse or Federal (post office) building. If she cannot find this local office, she may write to the Women's Land Army supervisor at her State agricultural college, or to Women's Land Army, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.

A woman who can work for only short periods of time should stand by for the call in her community. It will come through her local newspapers and over the radio. She will then be told when and where to apply.

## RETURNS FROM WLA WORK

### *Immediate Values—*

The outstanding value of the Women's Land Army to our Nation is the help its members are giving farmers in producing our wartime food supply. Gains to the individual woman are: Satisfaction in doing essential war work while receiving prevailing farm wages, improved physical condition from outdoor work, and a deeper understanding of other ways of living. Said one town girl after her summer's work on a farm, "The thing I like to remember most and liked the best was the beautiful ride in the early morning to the farm and back at night." Another, impressed by her new knowledge of the amount of work necessary to get milk from the cow to the city doorstep, said, "A bottle of milk will never be just a bottle of milk to me again."

### *Long-Time Values—*

Probably never since pioneer times have so many town and farm people all over the country worked so closely together for a common goal. This cooperation brings unusual opportunities for promoting better rural-urban understanding. One agricultural leader called WLA town girls "ambassadors of good will." He said, "You girls can do a great deal to carry understanding both of farm economics and of farm people's ways of life to people in your home towns and cities. Better understanding between farm and city people means better working together and living together, and this means a fuller life for both."



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