

LIFE ON THE HOME FRONT

Women, North and South

Four women, two from the North and two from the South, share their memories in the years immediately following the war.

Southern Woman #1 - We both shared many of the same hardships, didn't we? We saw our husbands, brothers, and sons go off to war, we received the horrible news about casualties, and we shouldered the extra burdens of planting, tending, and harvesting crops.

Southern Woman #2 - And that was on top of our usual responsibilities of taking care of children and keeping the house in order.

Northern Woman #1 - For us in the north, women played an important role. We were so important as nurses – “Angels of the Battlefield”, they called us. We were seen as “out of place” and constantly harassed by doctors. Mostly working class ladies did the job. They wanted to help out their country, but also they needed the money. With men away, we had work in order to survive.

Northern Woman #2 – We sewed shirts, knitted socks, collected bandages, organized donations for the war cause. Don't forget about the Sanitary Commissions that we ran, sister. We helped the army in more ways than I can count. We provided food for the sick and wounded, collected wine and liquor as tonics for the injured, and even developed a hospital rail car so our poor injured soldiers would be able to return home in some comfort. We even figured out that eating raw potatoes and onions would help cure scurvy in the ranks of our men in uniform!

Northern Woman #1 – We women were so determined in the North – almost too determined! The press spurred us on, and we produced, sometimes too much. I remember one time when we made two thousand pillowcases, when what the men really needed were sheets? Still, the government couldn't keep up with the necessary production, so we did our best.

Southern Woman #1 - You know, in the South, we held our own too. We tended the fields, took over the farms, sewed uniforms for our boys, and also helped to care for our sick and wounded soldiers.

Southern Woman #2 - We gave it our all, didn't we? We even donated our dress silk for that balloon that gave some sky high views of the Union troops near Richmond. Oh, what a marvelous sight, that silk dress balloon up in the air ... until it was captured by the Federals. Oh, how sad it was in Richmond. The city swelled to twice the size, due to refugees, and almost all of the farmland around the city was devastated by the armies and the battles.

Southern Woman #1 – I also heard that some women picked up arms and charged into battle, my dears! They dressed as men, took the names of men, served as men. One rebel, Loretta Vasquez, even fooled her commanding officer – her husband!

Southern Woman #2 - I always felt for our boys in uniform But I wonder if they knew how bad we had it at home. We had to deal with inflation, and it was so hard to feed our families. We tried to keep up with our farms, but without the labor and the proper tools, many acres of our beautiful farmland were overgrown. That doesn't even count the land that was destroyed by ... (pausing, looking at the northern women) ... I hate to say it ...

Southern Woman #1 - Those awful Yankee troops that came into the beautiful South, destroyed our countryside, and ravaged our towns. It wasn't safe for a beautiful Southern belle like me!

Northern Woman #1 - I do have to say that we in the North never had to deal with such a fear. It must have been awful.

Southern Woman #1 - It was, my dear, and we had more to worry about than you in the North. As your Federals in blue came in to towns and cities, thousands of southern folk packed up everything they could and hit the road. Once we left our homes, the blue scoundrels pillaged our homes.

Northern Woman #2 - They were told not to do that! What an outrage!

Southern Woman #1 - I know, but they couldn't resist the abandoned homes. Household silver was the greatest prize. Some of my friends and myself hid our silver underground, in potato bins, even near our outhouses! You saw nothing like that up in the land of the Yankees.

Northern Woman #2 – At least the awful inflation is done with. Why, in the North, our prices almost doubled on some of the materials we needed to survive.

Southern Woman #2 – Doubled, my friend? Just doubled? In the south, our prices went up by nearly 9,000 percent! My family's food bill went from almost \$7 a month to nearly \$70 a month! And the shopkeepers began charging the most heinous prices for the necessities of life.

Northern Woman #1 – My dears, you must have suffered so much ... but then, we all suffered. Let's just thank the heavens that the horrible war is over and done with, and that we can live in peace again.

