

Skidmore in the War Years

When the United States was drawn into World War II, Skidmore students were keenly aware of its ramifications at home and abroad. The *Skidmore News* had been covering events in Germany and Italy throughout the 1930s, and students had raised money to support Hilda Hertz (Golden) '42, a refugee from Nazism who proved an exceptional student at Skidmore. Later, Skidmore would support and enroll a young Japanese-American whose family had been interned in California.

The impact of the war years on campus was profound, as several key faculty and staff joined the armed forces. Students signed up for courses in civilian defense, mechanical drawing, and aircraft maintenance, and practical majors such as business and first aid probably helped Skidmore fare better than other women's colleges in attracting and keeping students.

As a federal "Key Center of War Information and Training," Skidmore educated the public about the war through radio programs, lectures, discussions, and films. A War Activities Office at the college coordinated the student war effort, with activities from sewing and knitting for soldiers and refugees to airplane-spotting at the Saratoga Springs armory and selling war stamps and bonds. Home economics majors mastered the rationing point system in local grocery stores, and students planned a "victory garden." Working on a Schuylerville farm, twenty-two Skidmore students, along with eight from Smith College, produced two million pounds of food.

The immediate postwar period saw men at Skidmore, as returning veterans supported by the GI Bill enrolled on campus and at the new Glens Falls Division. That evening extension program served ex-GIs and local working men and women, and at its high point in 1949 and 1950, the division published its own yearbook and held its own junior prom. It operated until 1952, when the remaining forty students came to finish their degrees on the main campus in Saratoga Springs. ■

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TOP
Skidmore students harvest food at a Schuylerville farm to help ease the civilian labor shortage.

MIDDLE
In a precursor to coeducation at Skidmore, ex-GIs take a science class at the Glens Falls extension campus.

BOTTOM
Students fill the ranks as volunteer plane-spotters atop the armory in downtown Saratoga Springs.