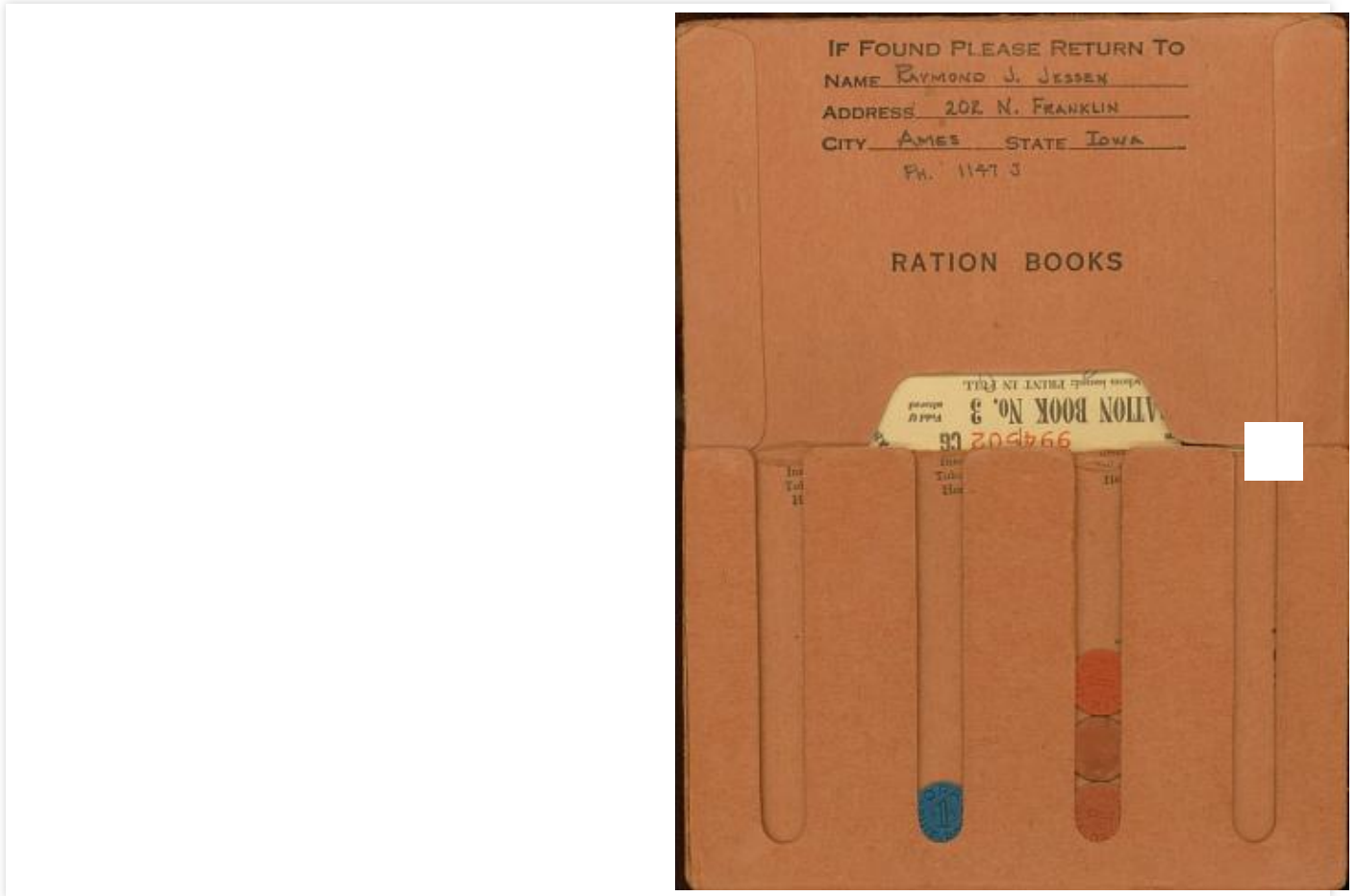


WORLD WAR II RATIONING ON THE U.S. HOMEFRONT



There's a War on, You Know!

During the Second World War, you couldn't just walk into a shop and buy as much sugar or butter or meat as you wanted, nor could you fill up your car with gasoline whenever you liked. All these things were rationed, which meant you were only allowed to buy a small amount (even if you could afford more). The government introduced rationing because certain things were in short supply during the war, and rationing was the only way to make sure everyone got their fair share.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor dramatically ended the debate over America's entrance into the war that raged around the world. As eager volunteers flooded local draft board offices ordinary citizens soon felt the impact of the war. Almost overnight the economy shifted to war production. Consumer goods now took a back seat to military production as nationwide rationing began almost immediately. In May of 1942, the U.S. Office of Price Administration (OPA) froze prices on practically all everyday goods, starting with sugar and coffee.

War ration books and tokens were issued to each American family, dictating how much gasoline, tires, sugar, meat, silk, shoes, nylon and other items any one person could buy. View a listing of [all rationed items](#). Across the country 8000 rationing boards were created to administer these restrictions. A [wartime edition](#) of the American Woman's Cook Book contained revised recipes and gave advice on dealing with food shortages.

Types of rationing included: *Uniform coupon rationing* (sugar is an example) provided equal shares of a single commodity to all consumers; *Point rationing* provided equivalent shares of commodities by coupons issued for points which could be spent for any combination of items in the group (processed foods, meats, fats, cheese); *Differential coupon rationing* provided shares of a single product according to varying needs (gasoline, fuel oil); and *Certificate rationing* allowed individuals products only after an application demonstrated need (tires, cars, stoves, typewriters).

The first nonfood item rationed was rubber. The Japanese had seized plantations in the Dutch East Indies that produced 90% of America's raw rubber. President Roosevelt called on citizens to help by contributing scrap rubber to be recycled, *old tires, old rubber raincoats, garden hose, rubber shoes, bathing caps*.

The OPA established the *Idle Tire Purchase Plan*, and could deny mileage rations to anyone owning passenger tires not in use. Voluntary gas rationing proved ineffective and by the spring of 1942 mandatory rationing was needed. To get your classification and ration stamps, you had to certify to a local board that you needed gas and owned no more than five tires.

The following is from *An Emergency Statement to the People of the United States* published by the U.S. War Production Board in the Des Moines Register on April 20, 1942.

The steel industry has been rapidly stepping up its production..., but we need to get production up to the industry's full capacity of 90,000,000 tons - a total equal to the output of the rest of the world combined. This volume of production cannot be attained or increased unless an additional 6,000,000 tons of scrap iron and steel is obtained promptly. We are faced with the fact that some steel furnaces have been allowed to cool down and that many of them are operating from day to day and hand to mouth, due only to the lack of scrap.

The rubber situation is also critical. In spite of the recent rubber drive, there is a continuing need for large quantities of scrap rubber. We are collecting every possible pound from the factories, arsenals and shipyards; we are speeding up the flow of material from automobile graveyards; we are tearing up abandoned railroad tracks and bridges, but unless we dig out an additional 6,000,000 tons of steel and great quantities of rubber, copper, brass, zinc and tin, our boys may not get all the fighting weapons they need in time... Even one old shovel will help make 4 hand grenades.

The national maximum *Victory Speed* was 35 miles an hour, and *driving clubs* or carpools were encouraged. The main idea was to conserve rubber, not gasoline. The interior side of the sticker issued for the car's windshield instructed the driver on this point. Every citizen, military or civilian, was to do their part. Even in the popular Warner Brothers cartoons, Daffy Duck exhorts the audience to *Keep it under 40!* Bugs Bunny's plunging airplane halts just before impact, out of gas as a consequence of the 'A' sticker on its windshield.

War Ration Book One - 1942

The following is a set of instructions that came with every ration book:

Your first ration book has been issued to you, originally containing 28 war ration stamps. Other books may be issued at later dates. The following instructions apply to your first book and will apply to any later books, unless otherwise ordered by the Office of Price administration. In order to obtain a later book, the first book must be turned in. You should preserve War Rations Books with the greatest possible care.

1 - From the time the Office of Price Administration may issue orders rationing certain products. After the dates indicated by such orders, these products can be purchased only through the use of War rations Books containing valid War Ration Stamps.

- 2 - The orders of the Office of Price Administration will designate the stamps to be used for the purchase of a particular rationed product, the period during which each of these stamps may be used, and the amounts which may be bought with each stamp.
- 3 - Stamps become valid for use only when and as directed by the Orders of the Office of Price Administration.
- 4 - Unless otherwise announced, the Ration Week is from Saturday midnight to the following Saturday midnight.
- 5 - War Ration stamps may be used in any retail store in the United States.
- 6 - War Ration Stamps may be used only by or for the person named and described in the War Ration Book.
- 7 - Every person must see that this War Ration Book is kept in a safe place and properly used. Parents are responsible for the safekeeping and use of their children's War Ration Book.
- 8 - When you buy any rationed product, the proper stamp must be detached in the presence of the storekeeper, his employee, or the person making the delivery on his behalf. If a stamp is torn out of the War Ration Book in any other way than above indicated, it becomes void. If a stamp is partly torn or mutilated and more than one half of it remains in the book, it is valid. Otherwise it becomes void.
- 9 - If your War Ration Book is lost, destroyed, stolen or mutilated, you should report that fact to the local Ration Board.
- 10 - If you enter a hospital, or other institution, and expect to be there for more than 10 days, you must turn your War Ration Book over to the person in charge. It will be returned to you upon your request when you leave.
- 11 - When a person dies, his War Ration Book must be returned to the local Ration Board, in accordance with the regulations.
- 12 - If you have any complaints, questions, or difficulties regarding your War Ration Book, consult your local Ration Board.

NOTE

The first stamps in War Ration Book One will be used for the purchase of sugar. When this book was issued, the registrar asked you, or the person who applied for your book, how much sugar you owned on that date. If you had any sugar, you were allowed to keep it, but stamps representing this quantity were torn from your group (except for a small amount which you were allowed to keep without losing any stamps). If your War Ration Book one was issued to you on application by a member of your family, the number of stamps torn from the books of the family was based on the amount of sugar owned by the family, and was divided as equally as possible among all the books.

War Ration Book Two - January, 1943

This book is the property of the United States Government. It is unlawful to sell or give it to any other person or to use it or permit anyone else to use it, except to obtain rationed goods for the person to whom it was issued. Persons who violate Rationing Regulations are subject to \$10,000 fine or imprisonment, or both.

By 1944, whisky had disappeared from liquor store shelves as distilleries converted to the production of industrial alcohol. New car production was banned beginning January 1, 1942 as former auto plants switched to the production of military vehicles. Thirty percent of all cigarettes produced were allocated for service men, making cigarettes a scarce commodity on the home front by 1944. By the end of the war, rationing limited consumption of almost every product with the exception of eggs and dairy foods.

Most rationing restrictions ended in August of 1945 except for sugar rationing, which lasted until 1947 in some parts of the country.

For many who served on the home front, rationing may be the most remembered daily aspect of the war.

You also serve -- you who stand behind the plow, pledged to feed the Soldier, the Worker, the Ally, and, with God's help, all the hungry victims of this war! You also serve -- you who farm, you who pray and sacrifice. You'll feed the World even if it means plowing by lantern light, and harvesting by hand -- even children's hands -- even if it means putting up the trucks and going back to covered wagons once again...

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Urges you to:

See your County USDA War Board

Meet your 1943 farm goals

Keep tractors working

Take good care of your machinery

Conserve your trucks

Turn in your scrap

Buy War Bonds

Farmers must win the Battle of the Land with the machinery they already have.