

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

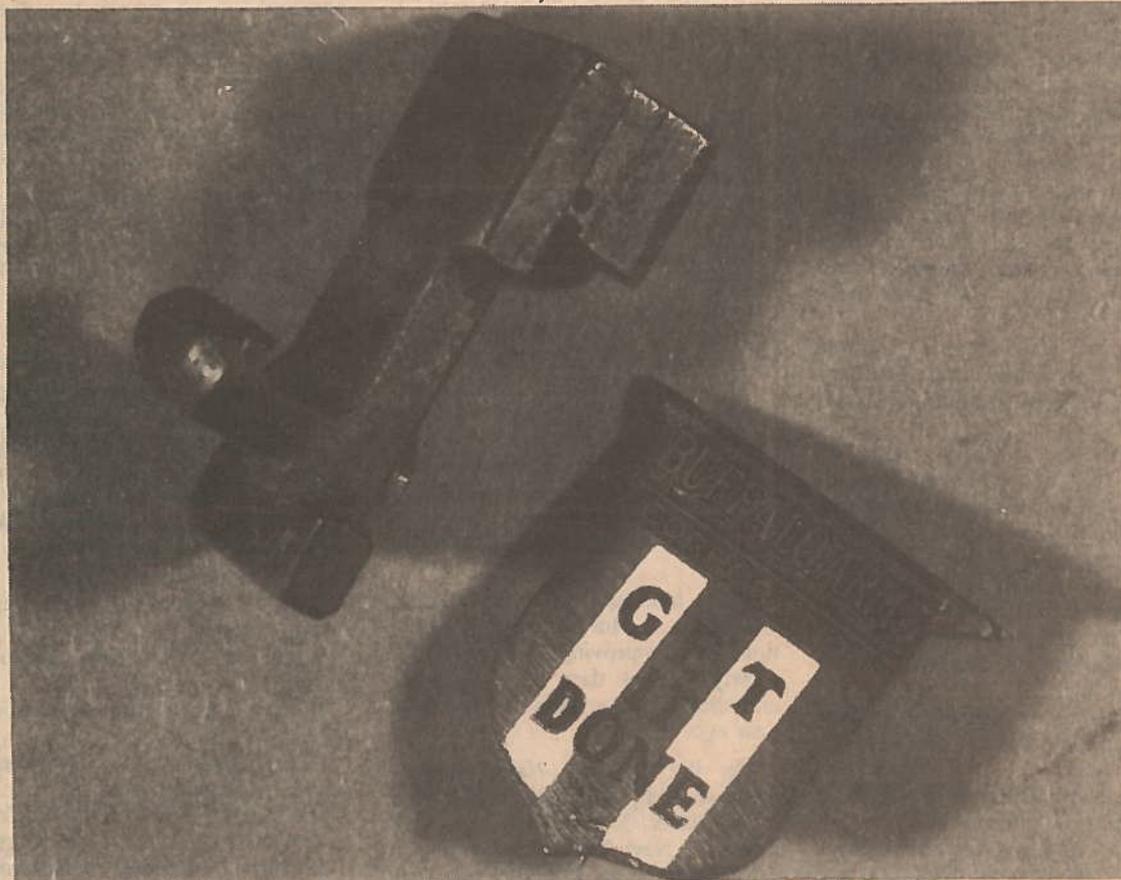
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“ROSIE THE RIVETER”

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By Helen Basinait Mathes  
Historian, Town of Barre



The Historians of Orleans County meet bi-monthly at the Swan Library in Albion. At the last meeting we were discussing World War II and what we should do to commemorate it. We each decided to write an article for the paper. My part is to relate my experience as a Rosie The Riveter. For the present generation I should explain that the name Rosie The Riveter comes from a wartime government media campaign to encourage women to enter the work force. The campaign was successful, but most Rosie The Riveters lost their jobs as soon as the war ended.

After graduating from high school I hadn't the money to go on to college, so I was working at Reed's Paper Factory in Albion for 25¢ an hour. Soon after Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941 my friends and I heard about jobs at Buffalo Arms, Cheektowaga paying 75¢ an hour. We were hired immediately. They were always happy to hire country people because they were better workers. My job was to work on the Sear part of the Machine Gun. Mostly I ran a drill press and sometimes a lathe. At first there were only a couple of girls in my department. As the war progressed more men were drafted and eventually it was more like 50-50 men and women. They let me learn each of the machines in our department so when the others had their day off I could change each day, by that way I did not get bored doing the same thing all the time. The Sear part is not very large but it took 23

people and a foreman to finish one. We started out working the day shift 8 hours. Soon after our jobs at Buffalo Arms we decided we should volunteer as nurses aides under the Citizens Defense Corps. After taking a 10 week course we were issued uniforms and started working at the Meyer Memorial Hospital, Buffalo. They were very short of help due to the war. We would work evenings and weekends after our 8 hours at Buffalo Arms. I can remember working on a 40 patient ward with one nurse and just aides to help. When Buffalo Arms switched to a 10 hour day we had to give up the volunteer work. We would work 5 days and then have one day off.

I never got to see a finished gun. We had to stay just in the department we were working in and not allowed to walk around in the factory. On entering in the morning we had to show our passes to a guard. It was always said that when the soldiers had to leave their guns in a hurry they took the Sear part with them as the gun would not work without it. This was my part for the war effort.  
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The photo here shows the Sear part which Helen worked on. She drilled the small hole into it which had to be carefully done. The pin "Get It Done" she received while working at Buffalo Arms Corp.

C.W.Z.