

For It's About Time Column

Written by Susan Parsons

Rationing

During World War II buyers could not just go into a store and buy as much sugar or butter or coffee or meat as they might like, nor fill up with gas whenever they wanted. Rationing was put into place by a government program--the Office of Price Administration-- to ensure that all people purchasing certain items got their fair share, even though some could afford more. Along with the soldiers who volunteered or were drafted into the military, people on the home front sacrificed for the war effort as well. Military production took priority over consumer demand. Every American family was issued war ration books. These dictated how much a person could buy, based on family size.

Registration for rationing often took place in local schools, such as Fair Haven High School. The *Fair Haven Register* (6/18/1942) stated that "The sugar rationing for canning will be held at the local High School on Tuesday from 9AM to 4 PM." The same paper printed the following on 2/11/1943: "Fair Haven School Notes: Rationing for War Book No. 2 will be held during the week of Feb. 22-28. Only those people possessing Ration Book No. 1 will be issued War Book 2."

The Stamps contained in this Book are valid only after the lawful holder of this Book has signed the certificate below, and are void if detached contrary to the Regulations. (A father, mother, or guardian may sign the name of a person under 18.) In case of questions, difficulties, or complaints, consult your local Ration Board.

Certificate of Book Holder

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I have observed all the conditions and regulations governing the issuance of this War Ration Book; that the "Description of Book Holder" contained herein is correct; that an application for issuance of this book has been duly made by me or on my behalf; and that the statements contained in said application are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Virginia Mae Ingersoll [Book Holder's Own Name]

(Signature of, or on behalf of, Book Holder)

Any person signing on behalf of Book Holder must sign his or her own name below and indicate relationship to Book Holder _____

(Father, Mother, or Guardian)

★ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1942 16-20651-1 OPA Form No. R-302

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

War Ration Book One

WARNING

- 1 Punishments ranging as high as *Ten Years' Imprisonment or \$10,000 Fine, or Both*, may be imposed under United States Statutes for violations thereof arising out of infractions of Rationing Orders and Regulations.
- 2 This book must not be transferred. It must be held and used only by or on behalf of the person to whom it has been issued, and anyone presenting it thereby represents to the Office of Price Administration, an agency of the United States Government, that it is being so held and so used. For any misuse of this book it may be taken from the holder by the Office of Price Administration.
- 3 In the event either of the departure from the United States of the person to whom this book is issued, or his or her death, the book must be surrendered in accordance with the Regulations.
- 4 Any person finding a lost book must deliver it promptly to the nearest Ration Board.

OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION

MIG 9 - 1943

No. 678384

6-16-42 94

Ration Book One, World War II

398842 AZ UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION

WAR RATION BOOK TWO
IDENTIFICATION

Ingersoll, Dorothy Mae
(Name of person to whom book is issued)

R. F. D. 1
(Street number or rural route)

Sterling Station N. Y. *36 F* *398842*
(City or post office) (State) (Age) (Sex)

ISSUED BY LOCAL BOARD NO. *256-2 Cayuga N. Y.*
(County) (State)

Auburn
(City)

By *Dorothy Ingersoll*
(Signature of issuing officer)

SIGNATURE *Dorothy Ingersoll*
(To be signed by the person to whom this book is issued. If such person is unable to sign because of age or incapacity, another may sign in his behalf)

WARNING

- 1 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.
- 2 This book must be returned to the War Price and Rationing Board which issued it, if the person to whom it was issued is inducted into the armed services of the United States, or leaves the country for more than 30 days, or dies. The address of the Board appears above.
- 3 A person who finds a lost War Ration Book must return it to the War Price and Rationing Board which issued it.
- 4 PERSONS WHO VIOLATE RATIONING REGULATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO \$10,000 FINE OR IMPRISONMENT, OR BOTH.

OPA FORM NO. R-121 16-20853-1

Ration Book Two

Both documents are property of the Sterling Historical Society

The government used propaganda tools to urge compliance with the rules of rationing, such as ads, radio shows, posters and pamphlets. Having a ration coupon did not necessarily guarantee that a product would be available, to the disappointment of some.

Three types of rationing existed:

Uniform coupon rationing--equal shares of an item could be sold to all

Point rationing--some items cost more points. •

Differential coupon rationing--individuals could prove a need to purchase certain items, such as cars, gas, stoves, and typewriters, while those unable to prove need went without.

ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT
Form OPA R-504		UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION			B-3
BUY UNITED STATES WAR BONDS STAMPS	GASOLINE RATION CARD				
No. 425873					
THE ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF THIS CARD CONSTITUTE AN AGREEMENT THAT THE HOLDER WILL OBSERVE THE RULES AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING GASOLINE RATIONING AS ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION					
OWNER'S NAME	Robert Ingersoll				
STREET ADDRESS	R.F.D. 1				
CITY OR POST OFFICE	Sterling Sta.			STATE	N.Y.
MAKE	Ford		BODY STYLE	Two door Sedan	
VEHICLE REGISTRATION NO.	9S7303		STATE OF REGISTRATION	N.Y.	
READ INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE SIDE OF THIS CARD					
ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT	ONE UNIT

Robert Ingersoll
(SIGNATURE)

Gasoline Ration Card

The government even restricted the amount of yard goods in women's clothing, limiting hems and belts to a width of two inches and eliminating sleeve cuffs.

By 1943, the usual limit on gasoline purchases was 3-4 gallons per week, with 8 gallons per week for those involved in the war effort--for example, those driving to work in war production plants. Truckers could buy unlimited amounts of gasoline (differential coupon rationing).

The maximum national speed limit, called "Victory Speed," was 35 mph, more to preserve rubber than gas. The Japanese controlled the Dutch East Indies where most of the world's rubber was produced. (Used rubber was collected as was scrap metal in scrap drives. In terms of the scrap metal portion, it was said that one old shovel could help make four hand-grenades.)



E NONHIGHWAY RATATIONS
MILEAGE RATIONING PROGRAM U. S. A. OPA **No. 311521 A**

NAME OF APPLICANT:

Robert Marshall

COMPLETE ADDRESS:

*Stirling Station
N Y*

VALID FROM DATE BELOW:

11, 22, 43

(P-1335)

EARLIEST RENEWAL DATE:

R, 22, 44

THIS RATION BOOK IS GOOD FOR OBTAINING GASOLINE ONLY FOR NONHIGHWAY EQUIPMENT AND USES

Non-highway gas ration stamps

The *Fair Haven Register* noted 9/3/1943: “OPA announces that effective next Sunday butter will cost 16 ration points per pound--a week’s allotment of red ration stamps for one person.”

“The increase of four points from the present value of 12 points per pound brings the ration coupon cost of butter up to twice the level it was when rationing started...”

“Margarine remains unchanged at four points.”

“Eighteen variety meat items such as brains and kidneys will be removed from rationing.” •

Besides the items mentioned above some items that were rationed included: bicycles, stoves, canned milk, ketchup, dry beans, rubber footwear, canned peas, corn, tomatoes and peaches, juices, soups, coffee, shoes, fuel oil and women’s stockings. Sugar remained rationed until 1947, almost two years after the end of the war. Reasons for the continued sugar rationing were that the military need was high, ships that imported sugar were hauling supplies to and from battle fronts, manpower at sugar refineries and ports was scarce, sugar beet production was short, and sugar stocks were low.

From the *Fair Haven Register*, May 3, 1945:

Sugar Ration Slashed by 25%.

Home canners will feel the pinch.

“The new sugar stamp (No. 35) good for five lbs. and valid May 1, must last four months instead of three. Only 70 % of last year’s amount (1944) will be available. Maximum canning allotment will drop to 15 lbs. [It] was 20 in 1944. No family no matter how large can receive more than 120 lbs. In 1944 it was 160...”

“Restaurants, schools, hotels (are) also cut. Industrial canners and bakers should expect a reduction.”

The black market was one side effect of the rationing system. Those who tried their best to comply were distressed with those who profited from illegal commerce. The most common black marketed commodities were sugar, meat and gasoline. Mostly, though, Americans knew the greater sacrifice the men and women in uniform were making so they also tried to sacrifice as well.

A few more notes about products of the day: Kraft Macaroni and Cheese became popular as a meat substitute during the war years as did cottage cheese. Oleomargarine replaced butter. Capsules of color were included with the oleo which the cook had to stir in the make the white margarine turn yellow. Spam and fried bologna were popular meat dishes. Coca Cola was not made during World War II because of the scarcity of sugar.

One individual wrote a letter of complaint to the *Syracuse Post Standard*:

“On the whole, we have tried honestly to co-operate with the merchants and rules and regulations of the Food Braintrust, and I think we have tried to be fair. Many, I agree, used only a small part of their ration coupons, while others have need of every one of them.

“We have trailed along with OPA thru unsliced bread, pickled pigs’ tails, etc.; then at Christmas time as a gift we have our precious 33 sugar stamp lopped off... [S]ome of use may not see very much sugar until we have to beg and lie to get our next canning allowance...”

“Now they tell us we are to blame because the housewives cashed in their ration...

“Nothing was said by the “powers” about the sugar used in making cigarets and the enormous amount used in whisky making when they called a month out to make whisky last fall.

“At that time many of us were using a substitute sugar made from corn. But when the month to make whisky started there was no more substitute nor no corn to be had for poultry. I happen to know this as we are feed dealers and the chickens were so long without [corn] they refused to eat corn for a while when it was recently put on the market again.” •

From *The Palladium Times*, June 5, 1945:

“The chicken or the egg--which comes first? The supply of eggs in 1945 is much larger and would feed more people. One and ½ lbs. of eggs--one dozen eggs-- is much cheaper than a lb. of chicken and eggs can be stored in a water glass for several months. Boil the water and put it in a water glass or crock. Store the eggs standing up perpendicularly against each other. One can use lots of eggs and no butter, being patriotic, making a sponge cake.” •

In January of 1946 rationing of tires came to an end. All tire stocks had been frozen on December 8, 1941 and rationing had begun on January 5, 1942. Upon the end of rationing dealers were urged not to sell full sets of tires to those who could get along with fewer tires for the next several months. New cars that began coming off the assembly lines had no spare tires and white-walls were banned.

Sources:

The Post Standard

The Fair Haven Register

Oswego Palladium Times

u-history.com

waverly info.com

americanhistoricalsociety.org

Sterling Historical Society