"Newspaper, Resident Recall Rationing During World War II" Carroll County Times article for 1 August 2010 By Mary Ann Ashcraft

Scrapple must have been one of the unrationed meats during World War II because my family certainly ate a lot of it – so much that I couldn't look at a slice for years no matter how thoroughly it was covered with syrup, catsup or apple butter.

Rationing and serious shortages of many items affected American families from 1942 until the end of the war, and sugar was still being rationed in 1947. Issues of the Union Bridge Pilot from the first few months of 1944 reveal what Carroll County was experiencing. Most of the information was straightforward: "Low-priced dresses will be released soon;" "Failure to mark license nos. on gasoline coupons may result in loss of ration;" "Automobiles will have one tag this year." However, some stories were amusing and shed new light on steps the government was taking to supply people at home, troops overseas and the countries we were helping through the Lend-Lease Act of 1941.

A resourceful woman in Reading, PA saved her butter rationing points by churning cream with a jig saw. Her husband devised a method to attach a can of cream to his saw so the motion turned the cream into butter. A butcher in Batesville, Arkansas, proclaimed that goat meat made a tasty meal...as long as the goats were not eating tin cans or weeds!

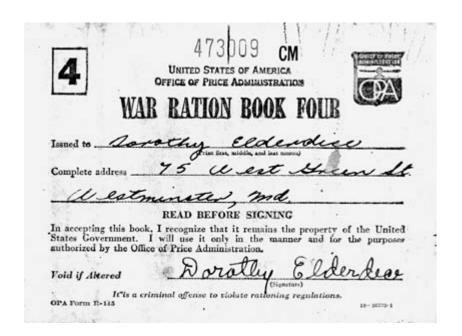
Due to a shortage of yarn, the underwear institute announced a contradiction in terms – "long undies" might be in short supply! Obviously our soldiers fighting in cold climates needed warm clothing, but America was also sending this kind of aid to lend-lease partners such as England and Russia.

Older Times readers remember food stamps well, but my friend Virginia Hierstetter reminded me about shoe rationing. "Shoe Stamp 18 Still is Valid Indefinitely" read one headline, although people were warned that counterfeiting of the stamps might cause officials to change that policy. The Government Printing Office must have been a busy place with all the ration booklets it printed and distributed. Mrs. Hierstetter noted that, in general, people respected government authority throughout the war and obeyed its orders no matter how much they might grumble at the grocery store.

Many products, though not rationed, were nearly impossible to buy. An article on "The Prospects for Store Shelves" in early 1944 covered the expected availability of steel goods. "Fifty thousand bathtubs will be made for war housing only. No bobbie pins. More razor blades. Safety razors to be made again, limited only by amount of material that can be allotted. No washing machines, sewing machines, or vacuum cleaners."

The resourceful U.S. government turned a surplus of 18,000,000 bushels of lower grade white potatoes from the bumper 1943 crop into industrial alcohol for use in manufacture of munitions and other war materials.

In spite of the many deprivations experienced on the homefront during the war years, Thanksgiving and Christmas were probably times when most tables still sank under the weight of good food. Mrs. Hierstetter's father Clyde Ecker raised and sold over a thousand turkeys locally each year, chiefly during the holidays. No food stamps required!



During World War II, Americans of all ages received books containing ration coupons good for specific quantities of specific products. Once a consumer had used all their ration points, they could not purchase any more of those products until the next ration book was issued. Prices were also tightly controlled and official prices for goods such as meats were posted at local stores. From the collection of the Historical Society of Carroll County.

You Can Help Kill The Meat Black Market

PAY NO MORE THAN PRICES ON THESE LISTS

REPORT OVER CHARGES TO OPA LOCAL BOARD

Who is a meat Black Marketeer? Any farmer, meat packer, wholesaler, retailer or housewife who buys or sells meat at higher than the prices on this list, the legal ceiling price, or without proper red ration points.

Who gets hurt? Everybody—wives and children of servicemen and all other families whose fair share of meat is stolen from them by the cheat who pays more than ceiling prices. . The big majority of honest retailers who lose business to chiseling retailers. Everybody will be but if prices are allowed to creep up and up until they crash into a disastrous depression like the one after the last war.

Why shouldn't I get mine at any price? If you buy in the black market, prices will go up, and you'll be worse off than before, with no more meat. It won't work. So help clean up the black market, and you'll get your share at a fair price.

What is the Government doing about it? Enforcement is being stepped up. Congress has granted OPA funds for more investigators.

What can 1 do? (a) Use this list. Check meat prices every time you shop. (b) If you are over-charged, notify the Price Panel of your Local War Price and Rationing Board immediately. If you wish, your same will not be used in investigation. (c) Never buy meat without giving up the proper number of red points.

How do I report to the price panel? Find the address or telephone number of your Local War Price and Rationing Board in your telephone book under the heading "U. S. Government." Just report the overcharge and store to the Price Clerk.

(Beef, Veal, Lamb, Mutton Prices-Over)

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Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County. Return to "Carroll Yesteryears" 2010 Index