

## Helping Those in Need During World War II by Alan F. Rumrill

We recently shared a story about Cheshire County residents offering help in a time of need by donating materials to assist those serving in the military during the Civil War. Local residents offered similar support for the war effort during WWII. Two ways that local residents expressed their patriotism and became involved on the home front were through scrap drives and by selling and buying Defense Stamps that could be used to purchase U.S. Defense Savings Bonds.

Keene residents were very active in the collection of scrap that could be used to support the war effort. Rubber, metal and paper became scarce because imports were interrupted or because the government needed huge supplies of them for the war effort. These types of items often ended up in the trash on the home front, so the government began to encourage scrap drives to gather materials that were needed. Tin, steel and copper were melted down and reused. Paper was needed as packaging for supplies, as well as for military paperwork and letters written to home by soldiers. Rubber was used for a variety of military applications.

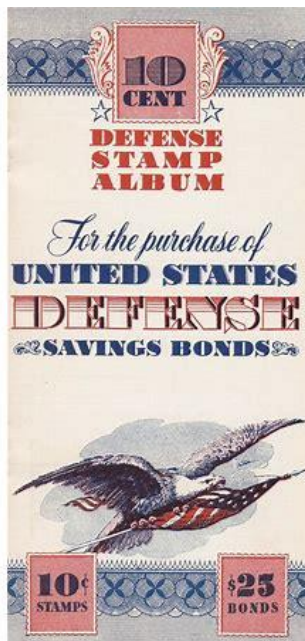


Scrap drives became important community events and competitions were held to determine which towns and states could collect the most. Keene became very involved in these efforts. One hundred thirty tons of scrap collected in local drives was shipped out from Keene in January of 1943. A local sale of salvaged scrap metal in the city brought in \$700 during October of the same year. Some of the items donated included metal fences from front yards and antique cannons and fountains from the region's town commons.

Keene residents young and old also collected tons of paper and loaded it on railroad freight cars to be sent to mills to be prepared for reuse elsewhere. Scrap drives were an important part of the war effort. This was true not only because they provided needed material, but also because they helped make those on the home front feel like they were playing a role in winning the war. The purchase of Defense Stamps was another initiative that allowed regular citizens to help fund the war effort. Individual stamps could



be purchased and placed in a stamp album. When the albums were full, they could be used toward the purchase of Defense Savings Bonds.



Various groups worked to sell the stamps locally for Uncle Sam. One such group was the youngsters who sold and delivered the Keene Sentinel to their neighbors. In mid-March of 1942 the Sentinel reported that the newspaper's leading Defense Stamp salesman was Robert Rumrill. Fifteenyear old Rumrill had sold 575 stamps in the previous week and a grand total of 1,870 stamps during the five weeks of the sale. All of the Sentinel salesmen had sold a total of 17,177 stamps. Rumrill's service to the country changed in the years to come. Three years later, at age 18, he was on a U.S. Navy battleship as it plowed through the waves of the Atlantic Ocean - on its way to war.