

Collection #
SC 2795

WORLD WAR II RATION BOOKS, 1943–45

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 folder

COLLECTION
DATES: 1943–45

PROVENANCE: Ruth E. Kirkman, Jeffersonville, IN, February 2002

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2002.0314

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

During World War II rationing was designed primarily to distribute scarce goods reasonably equitably. The mechanics of the rationing programs changed over time but remained replete with red tape, including coupons, certificates, stamps, stickers, and a changing point system.

Sugar, the first item rationed nationwide in May 1942, started the process, followed by coffee. People lined up at public places staffed by volunteers who took depositions on how much sugar each family already had at home and then issued ration books containing coupons good for a year's supply. Over time the number of rationed items grew as did the red tape. Eventually three billion ration stamps a month would be passed from the consumer to the retailer, who passed them on to the wholesaler, who sent them to the manufacturer, who had to account for them to the federal government.

Soon other items were rationed as well, including processed goods such as canned, jarred, dried, frozen, and bottled products, followed by meat, fish, and dairy items. Two ration books were distributed to every eligible man, woman, child, and baby in the United States. One contained blue coupons for processed goods while the other contained red coupons for meat, fish, and dairy products. Each person started with 48 blue points and 64 red points each month. Thus, the shopper for a family of four had a total of 192 points for processed food and 256 points for meats, fish, and dairy products. Each month brought new ration stamps as the old ones expired. Each stamp had a number on it designating the points it was worth as well as a letter showing which "rationing period" the stamp could be used. Each rationed product had a point value assigned to it that was independent of the price.

The point value could fluctuate depending on scarcity and grocers were required to keep current official point lists posted. Thus, a scarce can of beans might have a point value of 14 while a more plentiful can of corn might have a value of 8. At the checkout counter, the shopper was to remove the proper amount of stamps in the presence of the clerk. Point management was critical to effective shopping since the number of points available was limited by the rationing period. Moreover, grocers could not make change so shoppers were advised to use high-point stamps first. By 1944 constantly evolving regulations resulted in a simplified plan that, among other things, introduced one point tokens to be given as change.

Sources:

Library of Congress, 2006 [cited 28 August 2006]. (<http://www.loc.gov/>)

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Collection includes eight ration books from 1943 to 1944. The books are for members of the Kirkwood family,

including the three children whose ages range from 2 to 6 years old. Two of the books still have stamps in them. There is also an application for a Ration Book No. 3, and a sheet of mileage ration stamps.

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2795).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.