

# THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES IN THE REGIONS...

# February 2012

A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

## *The Coupon Craze of the 1940s*

By Katie Dishman

The economy, as well as peoples' thoughts, has been at the top of the newscasts for several years now. Although we've enjoyed general prosperity since World War II, during the difficult war years the Government worked to keep the economy under control. At the forefront of its efforts was the Office of Price Administration (OPA) (Record Group 188). And Government-issued coupons played a considerable role.

A continuation of the many agencies established during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Depression-era tenure, the OPA was established in 1941. Its main functions were to stabilize prices and rents by setting maximum prices for commodities, except on agricultural products, and maximum rents in defense areas to prevent price gouging and inflation.

One of the most notable actions was the introduction of rationing, including a system of points and stamps. Black market and stolen coupons and stamps were frequent concerns. People were employed to check the authenticity of what was submitted. Coupons and stamps were so valuable that vaults were used at local boards to house the reserves of "ration currency."

Although many people have been forced to cut back on purchases in recent years, at least they have not had to worry about a dearth of available goods. Nor have consumers had to make sure they have enough coupons to cover their purchases. The war-time point system included many food items; sugar and butter were especially missed.

Shoes, too, were another item on the ration list. However, dispensations were made for special types of shoes; for instance, people needing shoes for work may have been granted shoe stamps for nursing or construction jobs that were necessary for the war effort.

According to a 1944 document from the Cleveland office, the OPA administered prices and rent that were set by Federal

laws. The regulations covered "nearly everything the typical American family buys, eats, wears, and uses, and [applies] to some 8,000,000 different commodities and services to commodities at all levels from the producer to the consumer."

The 13 main rationed commodity groups were tires, automobiles, typewriters, sugar, gasoline, bicycles, men's rubber boots and work shoes, fuel oil, coffee, stoves, shoes, processed foods, and meats and fats.

In 1944, there were approximately 10 rationing programs administered by the OPA. This involved the printing and distribution of from 128 to 131 million copies of each of four war ration books, millions of mileage rationing (gasoline) and fuel oil rationing books, and hundreds of thousands of purchase certificates for automobiles, tires, and other rationed goods.

Of course, administering this huge operation was onerous. The OPA had almost 60,000 paid employees at that time in its various offices. In addition, there were more than 195,000 volunteers.

Most Americans were willing to make sacrifices for the war effort, although it did take its toll on some people. For instance, the Royal Oak, Michigan, branch compiled a year-end summary of happenings at its office in December 1946. People showed up with various requests. One mother came in with her barefoot child demanding a coupon for shoes so she could

attend school. One man hauled in his car tire that had blown out to prove he needed a "Certificate III" for a new one.

Indeed, people should be thankful that there have been so few restrictions placed on purchases since then. During the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, Americans have been fortunate to not have experienced the hardships of rationing or hassle of coupons.

Center: Chart disseminated to aid consumers on when they could use their stamps. National Archives at Chicago.

RATION STAMPS GOOD									
JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.			
<b>RED STAMPS</b> RETAILERS PAY 4 POINTS A POUND FOR USED HOUSEHOLD FATS									
A 1	B 1	C 1	D 1	E 1	THRU OCT. 31				
F 1			G 1	H 1	J 1	K 1	THRU NOV. 30		
L 1				M 1	N 1	P 1	Q 1	THRU DEC 31	
R 1					S 1	T 1	U 1	V 1	THRU JAN. 31
Next stamps become good Nov. 1									
<b>SUGAR STAMPS</b>									
38 SUGAR			THRU DEC. 31						
<b>SHOE STAMPS</b> BOOK NO. 3									
1	2	3	4	GOOD INDEFINITELY					
FOR RELEASE ON OR AFTER OCTOBER 1									
GLIP THIS CHART FOR FUTURE REFERENCE									
OPA									

# NARA WestCoast February 2012

Workmen cutting ice around a raft of wood piling, showing the thickness of ice that formed during February.

February 19, 1936

Records of the Bureau of Reclamation, RG 115  
National Archives at Denver



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY			
			1	2	3	4			
5	6	7	<p>Anchorage, AK <b>State Archives Boot Camp</b> 1-4 P.M. Genealogists Workshop 907-261-7800</p> <p>Seattle, WA <b>1940 U.S. Census Preparation</b> 10:30 A.M.-Noon Genealogists Workshop 206-336-5115</p>	8	<p>Seattle, WA <b>Tour for 'Historic Seattle'</b> 10-11:30 A.M. General Public/Tour 206-336-5115</p> <p>Seattle, WA <b>'Brick Wall'</b> Genealogical Discussion Group 11:30 A.M.-1 P.M. Genealogists/Workshop 206-336-5115</p>	9	10	11	
12	<p>Denver, CO <b>1940 Census Workshop</b> 10 A.M. General Public Workshop and Tour 303-407-5749</p>	13	14	15	16	<p>Anchorage, AK <b>U.S. Citizenship Swearing-in Ceremony</b> 11 A.M.-Noon General Public 907-261-7800</p>	17	18	<p>Port Townsend, WA <b>1940 U.S. Census Preparation</b> Genealogical Discussion Group 9:30-11 A.M. Genealogists Workshop 206-336-5115</p>
19	20	<p>Denver, CO <b>1940 Census Workshop</b> 12:30 P.M. General Public Workshop 303-407-5749</p>	21	22	23	24	25		
26	27	28	29	<p><b>Exhibit: Seattle, WA 'Faces of the Pacific Northwest' Ongoing</b></p>					

The National Archives at

Riverside  
951-956-2000  
riverside.archives@nara.gov

San Francisco  
650-238-3501  
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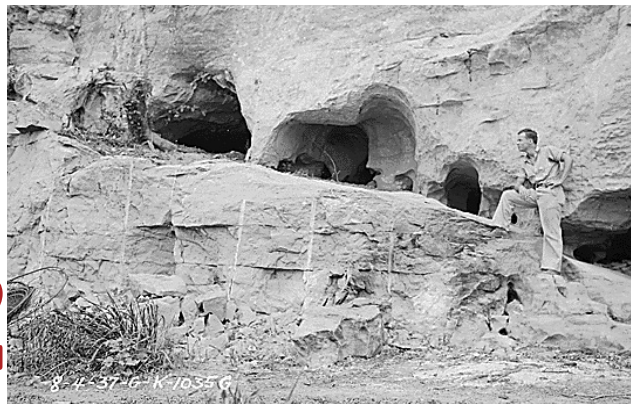
Denver  
303-407-5740  
denver.archives@nara.gov

Seattle  
206-336-5115  
seattle.archives@nara.gov

Anchorage  
907-261-7800  
alaska.archives@nara.gov

# NARA EastCoast February 2012

**Honeycomb Bluff Caverns, 1937**  
Records of the Tennessee Valley Authority,  
Record Group 142  
National Archives at Atlanta



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
<b>Exhibit:</b> <b>Boston, MA</b> <b>"Documented Rights"</b> <b>Ongoing</b>			<b>Waltham, MA</b> <b>Strategies for a Successful Federal Job Search</b> 9:30 A.M. General Public Workshop and Tour 866-406-2379	<b>Waltham, MA</b> <b>Teach the Constitution: It's the Law!</b> 6 P.M. K-12 Teachers Workshop 866-406-2379	<b>Philadelphia, PA</b> <b>First Friday Genealogy Open House</b> Noon Genealogists Open House 215-606-0100	<b>Morrow, GA</b> <b>Military Academy Reception</b> 8:15 A.M. General Public Open House 770-968-2555
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		<b>Waltham, MA</b> <b>Researching African American Roots</b> 2 P.M. General Public Workshop and Tour 866-406-2379				
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		<b>Morrow, GA</b> <b>Home School History</b> 10 A.M. K-12 Students Guided Group Research Visit 770-968-2530		<b>Waltham, MA</b> <b>They Came from Canada</b> 6 P.M. General Public Workshop and Tour 866-406-2379	<b>New York, NY</b> <b>New York's National Treasures</b> Noon-2 P.M. General Public Workshop 866-840-1752	<b>Morrow, GA</b> <b>African American Heritage Symposium</b> 8 A.M. General Public Symposium 770-968-2555
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
			<b>Philadelphia, PA</b> <b>Genealogical Resources for African-American Research</b> Noon Genealogists Workshop 215-606-0100			<b>Morrow, GA</b> <b>African American Historical &amp; Genealogical Society</b> 9 A.M. General Public Symposium 770-968-2555
26	27	28	29	<b>Exhibit:</b> <b>Philadelphia, PA</b> <b>"Libro Curio: Reconstructing the Book"</b> <b>9/27/11-3/31/12</b>		

The National Archives at

Boston  
866-406-2379  
waltham.archives@nara.gov

New York City  
866-840-1752  
newyork.archives@nara.gov

Philadelphia  
215-606-0100  
philadelphia.archives@nara.gov

Atlanta  
770-968-2100  
atlanta.archives@nara.gov

# NARA Midwest February 2012

**Pupils at Brave Heart Day School, Porcupine, South Dakota.**  
Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs,  
Record Group 75  
National Archives at Kansas City



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
					Fort Worth, TX <b>1940 Federal Population Census</b> Noon-1 P.M. Genealogists Workshop 817-831-5620	
	<b>Exhibit: Chicago, IL</b> "Becoming American: Immigrants, the Federal Courts in Chicago, and the Expansion of Citizenship, 1872-1991" Ongoing					
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	<b>Exhibit: Kansas City, MO</b> "They're Not Going to Get Me: Crime in the 1930s" 2/7-8/18/12	Kansas City, MO <b>Election Day</b> 6 A.M. General Public Polling Site 816-268-8000				Chicago, IL <b>Hidden Treasures at Ancestry.com</b> 9 A.M. Genealogists Workshop 773-948-9010
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			Kansas City, MO <b>Naturalization Records</b> 10 A.M. Genealogists Workshop 816-268-8000			
			Lee's Summit, MO <b>1940 Census</b> Noon Genealogists Lecture 816-268-8000	St. Louis, MO <b>Emancipation Proclamation: 150 Years Later</b> 7 P.M. General Public Symposium 314-801-0847		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
			Kansas City, MO <b>"Pendleton Heights: Then and Now"</b> 6:30 P.M. General Public Lecture 816-268-8000		Kansas City, MO <b>Alien Case Files</b> 1 P.M. Genealogists Workshop 816-268-8000	
			Kansas City, MO <b>"On Slavery's Border"</b> 6:30 P.M. General Public Lecture 816-268-8000	Topeka, KS <b>Introduction to the 1940 Census</b> 7 P.M. Genealogists Lecture 816-268-8000	Jefferson City, MO <b>Information Booth</b> 8 A.M. K-12 Teachers 816-268-8000	Jefferson City, MO <b>Information Booth</b> 8 A.M. K-12 Teachers 816-268-8000
26	27	28	29			
			Chicago, IL <b>Burnside School Sit-in</b> 10 A.M. General Public Lecture 773-948-9010	<b>Exhibit: Kansas City, MO</b> "Divided Loyalties" 12/27/11-4/28/12	<b>Exhibit: St. Louis, MO</b> "Documented Rights" 10/3/11-4/15/12	