

The Women's Army Invades Nacogdoches

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Why was the WAAC formed?

As Mattie Treadwell explains in her book *The Women's Army Corps*, one of the main factors motivating Edith Rogers, the Congresswoman who introduced the bill to create the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, was her experiences in World War I. She had seen women working with the armed services go overseas and contract health problems related to their service but not receive any of the benefits or care that men in the Army received after the war was over (17). Rogers told the Chief of Staff, General Marshall, that she was planning on introducing a bill to allow women to be a part of the Army (Treadwell, 17). Rogers was, unfortunately, unable to secure the protection she sought for women in the end because of so much opposition to her idea; only a compromise, the bill which the War Department authored, was accepted, which did not include official Army status for the women (Treadwell, 18). The final result was a force of women explicitly authorized to serve with the Army but not in it, and serve in noncombat jobs only (Treadwell, 19). Most women who joined were to be trained to perform clerical and administrative duties.



SFA is Converted into an Army School

In January 1943, the number of students attending SFA had dropped to only 348 (Craddock, 53). This was a result of the war, as many male students had gone off to fight. Craddock summarizes Dr. Boynton's efforts nicely:

In order to save the college, something had to be done- and fast. Having the insight that survival for the school depended largely on service to the nation, Dr. Boynton conferred directly with officials in Washington, D.C. Because of Dr. Boynton's foresight, SFA was able to secure the first Women's Army Air [Auxiliary] Corps training school in Texas (53).

SFA was converted into an administrative training school, and officially opened on February 12, 1943, when the first WAAC company arrived (Kaemmerling, 66). Most of the buildings on SFA campus were given to the WAAC to use, including the Austin Building, Science Building, Band Hall, two dormitories, and the Women's Recreation Center (Craddock, 53). Classes continued, but the college students that were attending SFA were moved to houses in town (Craddock, 53).

Significance

The administration school only operated for about a year, but it had a significant impact (*Women's Army Corps Scrapbook*). Because enrollment at SFA had dropped so low during World War II, there is a high probability that the school would have just fizzled out in the 1940s and never recovered. However, due to Dr. Boynton's efforts and the WAAC who lived, worked, and learned on campus during this crucial time in history, this was not the case. We are proud to be a large, thriving university today. By providing a place for the WAAC to conduct their administration school, SFA was supporting the WAAC. In a way, SFA was at the same time supporting a greater cause, because the WAAC was an organization which represented a step towards greater equality for women and an effort that helped bring about the end of the war. Although SFA might have hosted the WAAC administration school for economic reasons, there were greater consequences that changed American society. This was SFA's contribution to the war effort, which was mutually beneficial to the university, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, and the country.

