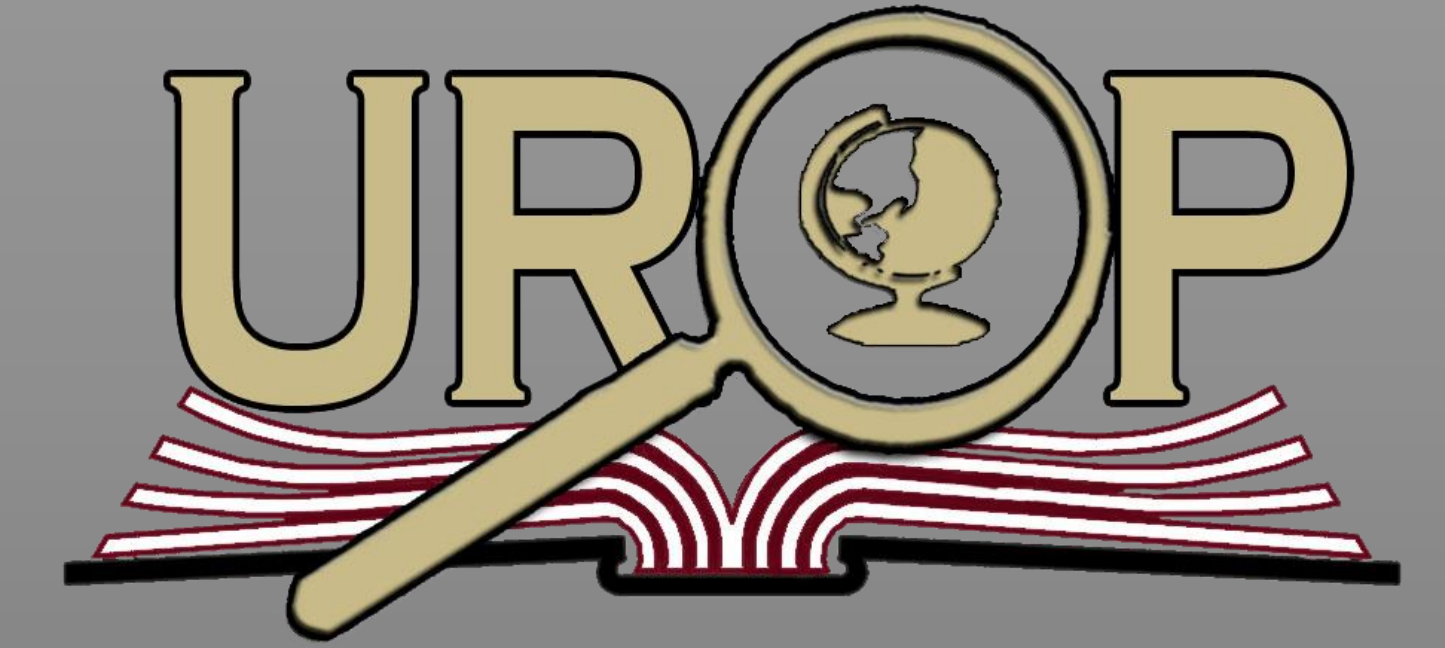




Life in Havana, Florida during World War II: Home Demonstration and Havanans in War



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Abstract

World War Two uprooted the lives of millions of Americans, whether they be going abroad in the fight against fascism or adapting to wartime needs at home. Havana, Florida, located about 15 miles northwest of Tallahassee in Gadsden County, adapted to wartime using the common "Home Demonstration" movement. Havana, a town famous for its production of shade tobacco, took a drastic turn in its history during World War II. Home Demonstration taught rural women to can foods, take care of household tasks, and run victory gardens while many of Havana's men were off at war. To research Home Demonstration, as well as Havana men in the war, I utilized a scrapbook digitized by Florida State University, as well as newspaper records in and around Gadsden County to have an insight as to what the war struggle was like. These documents reveal a unified effort to adapt to harsh wartime conditions, led by organizations like 4H, the Florida Home Demonstration Office, and Florida State College for Women (what became FSU). The response to wartime in Havana shows how a community can adapt to a major change in everyday life, even in a rural, labor-driven economy. Havana is significant because despite only having a population of less than 1500, it had a disproportionate affect on the war at home and abroad.

Methodology

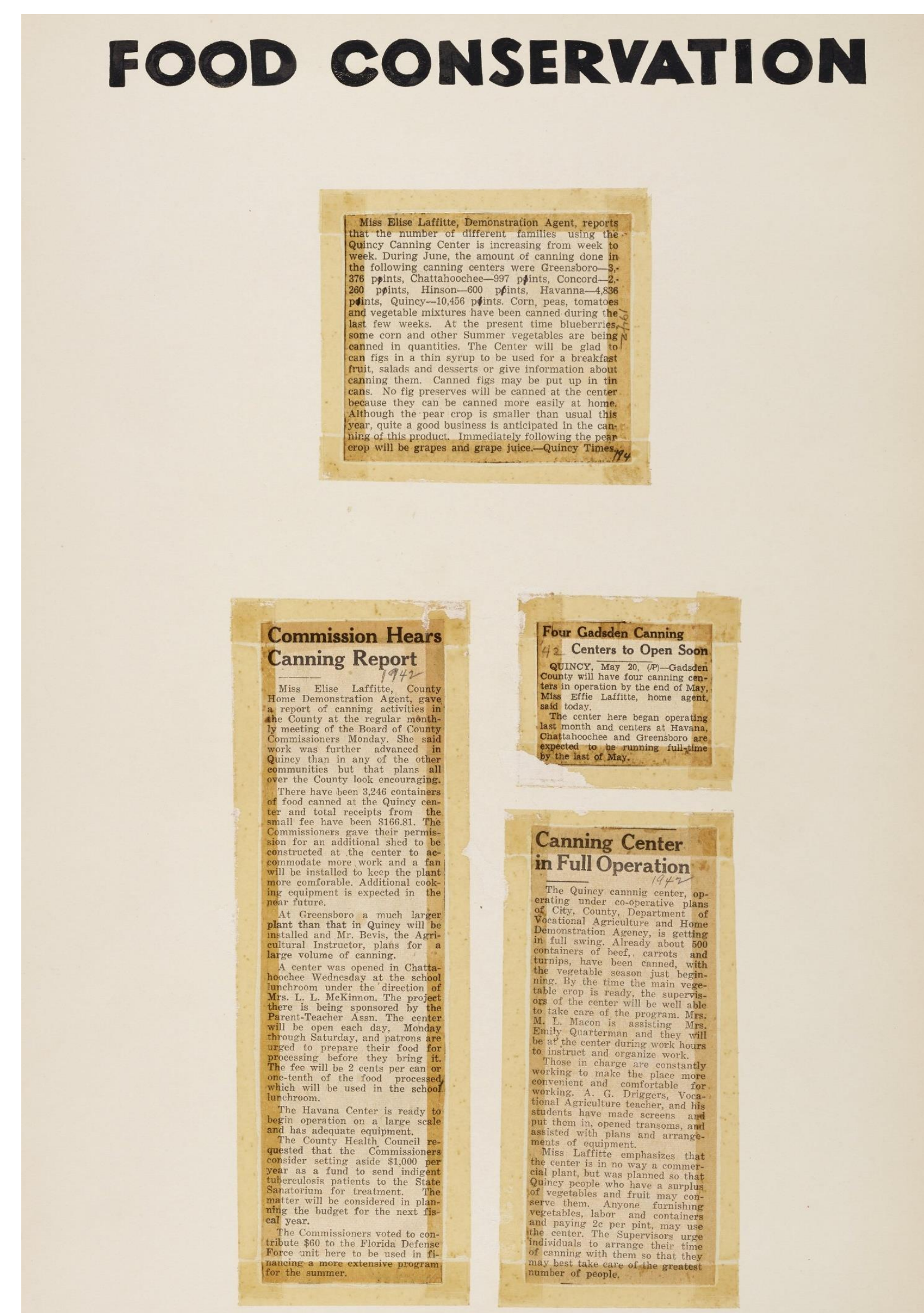
For research into Home Demonstration in Havana, I utilized sources such as the Home Demonstration Scrapbook 1942-46, which contained documents on Home Demonstration projects in Gadsden County, as well as photos and roster lists of such programs. To research soldiers from Havana, I utilized newspapers.com, which had articles on Havana soldiers in the Miami Herald, Tampa Times, Tallahassee Democrat, and Miami Daily Times. Both sources show how residents of Havana accommodated for the war, whether they were directly involved the war effort, or engaged in Home Demonstration in Gadsden.



—Photo by Ben L. Kerce
CORP. WALTER H. (BUBBA) TRULUCK. 32-year-old survivor of the Bataan March of Death, shown riding in a parade staged in his home town of Havana, Fla., where 1,500 townspeople turned out in a rainstorm to roar a welcome. He was with General Wainwright when he surrendered to the Japanese in 1941.

Left: Corporal Walter H. "Bubba" Truluck was a Havana native who served in the Second World War. As a member of the US Army, Truluck was a prisoner of war from 1942 to 1945. During his time as a POW, Truluck was forced to march in the infamous "Bataan Death March," being among one of the 987 Americans who survived the march and prison camp. Upon his return to Havana following the war, he was given a hero's welcome with a parade in downtown Havana.
Photo Source: The Miami Herald, 1945, Ben L Kerce.

Right: A map of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines. This is the location of the infamous Bataan Death March that Walter H. Truluck was forced to take part in while imprisoned by the Japanese. The march was about 60-miles. Marchers were subject to physical abuse, malnutrition, and torture along the journey.
Source: Dept. of Defense



Left: Three news articles from the *Gadsden County Times* speaking of the food conservation efforts in Havana and throughout the county. These specific documents are from the canning efforts that arose throughout the county early in the war effort, specifically 1942 when four new canning centers opened up. Canning was an essential skill taught by Home Demonstration clubs throughout the county, as food preservation was enacted for the war effort.
Source: Gadsden County Scrapbook 1942-1946

Findings

- Multiple residents of Havana, Florida joined the Armed forces to take part in the war effort of WWII
- Corporal Walter H. "Bubba" Truluck of Havana gained national attention and hero status for his imprisonment at the hands of the Japanese. While imprisoned in the Philippines, Truluck walked in the Bataan Death March, a 60-mile forced transfer of American and other allied forces by foot. Death estimates of the march range in between 5,500 and 18,650 American and Filipino POWs.
- On the home front, many Havana women participated in the Home Demonstration movement, where they were taught canning, sewing, farm-tending, and other essential skills during the war effort. These skills kept the town afloat while many of its men were off at war, as well as donating essential goods to the American Red Cross.
- Home Demonstration was a collective effort between organizations such as the Home Demonstration Office and 4-H. Home Demonstration clubs existed all throughout Gadsden County, including Havana.

Conclusion

The town of Havana is an example of how small rural areas were immensely invested in the war effort. The efforts of rural areas like Gadsden County are often overlooked when compared to larger metropolises. The residents of Havana had a great impact on the war, whether it be at home with the Home Demonstration movement, or abroad, with the efforts of American heroes like Walter L Truluck. Home Demonstration classes within the county served to not only help with the war effort but give rural woman a level of agency they had never experienced. The government of Florida and institutions like 4H, Florida State College for Women, and local Home Demonstration Clubs all made this possible. Havana is also unique in the sense that two of its residents survived the Bataan Death March in the Philippines, giving the ultimate sacrifice for their county in a time of war. As rural war history is often overlooked in favor of the efforts abroad and in larger cities, there is vast amounts of research to be done into the topic. Havana itself serves as an example of how a small, rural town can make an impact on the global scale.

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