

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

North Kingstown Designated World War II Heritage City by National Park Service

NORTH KINGSTOWN -- In recognition of its historic contributions to the war effort during World War II and continued patriotism, the Town of North Kingstown is being honored by the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) with the prestigious designation of being named an American World War II Heritage City.

The American World War II Heritage Cities program honors the contributions of towns, cities, counties and their citizens who stepped into the workforce to support America's war effort during World War II. Only one American World War II Heritage City can be designated in each state or territory.

The Town of North Kingstown, applied from Rhode Island, and was one of eight communities nationwide to earn the distinction this week, joining a total of 38 American World War II Heritage Cities recognized nationwide.

U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), a member of the Appropriations Committee who supported North Kingstown's application, stated: "Rhode Island may be small, but communities across the state made a big impact during World War II. On the home front and across the sea, North Kingstown's unique contributions to the war effort stood out. The birthplace of the Seabees, cradle of the Quonset Hut, and so much more, I am pleased that North Kingstown is being recognized on the national stage for playing a critical role throughout the course of World War II. And as the town celebrates its 350th anniversary, I urge people to visit North Kingstown to see how it continues to support our troops and veterans and pay a visit to the Seabee Museum and Memorial Park, which attracts and educates visitors about the courage, resolve and ingenuity of the Seabees during war and peacetime."

"The Town of North Kingstown was quickly and forever transformed by its accommodation of the war demands of WWII. We are humbled to be selected as Rhode Island's only American World War II Heritage City by the U.S. National Park Service for significant contributions to our nation's history," states **A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager of the Town of North Kingstown**. "Receiving this distinction in the same year that we celebrate our 350th Anniversary and the U.S. Navy Seabees mark their 82nd Anniversary allows our residents and those with ties to our community to celebrate this significant designation at a unique time. I appreciate the work of those that contributed to our application and thank Senator Reed for his support."

Reed noted that prior to and during wartime, North Kingstown was home to Naval Air Station Quonset Point and Camp Endicott at Davisville. It was also the birthplace of the U.S. Navy Construction Battalions (popularly known as the "Seabees"). Seabees trained alongside pilots and combat information officers and became an invaluable asset, developing important combat infrastructure for the U.S. and Allied Forces. Additionally, it was right here in Quonset Point that the famed Quonset Hut was first developed. The Quonset Hut was manufactured as a mobile and easily-assembled building that could support the versatile needs of soldiers and military personnel, even in remote locations.

Today, parts of the base continue to function as the home of the Rhode Island Air National Guard 143rd Airlift Wing.

"World War II not only impacted those who went to war, but also those who carried on the life and work of the home front" said **National Park Service Director Chuck Sams**. "It's important we remember that cities and towns both big and small made major contributions at home to the war effort, all of which helped Allied forces defeat the Axis powers."

Along with North Kingstown, the seven other communities to receive the designation today include:

- Calhoun and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas
- Plymouth Township, Michigan
- Valley City, North Dakota
- Municipality of Tinian & Aguiguan, Northern Mariana Islands
- Ponca City and Kay County, Oklahoma
- Sumter City and County, South Carolina
- Ogden, Utah

World War II permeated every aspect of American life and resulted in a large migration of people within the United States, according to NPS. During the war, Rhode Island workers from all over the state—including many women who joined the workforce for the first time—made major contributions to the war effort by manufacturing military supplies and equipment -- including torpedoes built at the Navy Torpedo Station in Newport -- and building warships, most notably the "Liberty Ships" produced at Providence Shipyard. Additionally, more than 500,000 U.S. Navy recruits were trained at the Newport Naval Training Station.

The World War II Heritage Cities program was established by the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019, which Senator Reed voted for, to recognize the historic importance of the United States' domestic involvement in World War II and ensure the continued preservation of a defining period in American history.

Other localities that previously received the World War II Heritage Cities designation from NPS include:

- Foley, Alabama
- Tempe, Arizona
- Richmond, California
- East Hartford, Connecticut
- Wilmington, Delaware
- Pensacola & Escambia County, Florida
- Savannah & Chatham County, Georgia
- Evansville, Indiana
- Waterloo, Iowa
- Wichita, Kansas
- New Orleans, Louisiana
- Baltimore County, Maryland
- Springfield, Massachusetts
- Pascagoula, Mississippi
- Johnson County and Warrensburg, Missouri
- Lewistown, Montana
- Hastings, Nebraska
- Boulder City and Henderson, Nevada
- Paterson, New Jersey
- Los Alamos County, New Mexico
- Yonkers, New York
- Wilmington, North Carolina
- Montgomery County (Dayton), Ohio
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Oak Ridge, Tennessee
- South Texas Coastal Bend Area & Corpus Christi, Texas
- Bedford County, Virginia
- Tri-Cities, Washington
- Manitowoc, Wisconsin
- Casper & Natrona County, Wyoming