

READYING FOR WAR, SUMMER, 1941

In the summer of 1941, York County citizens were aware of the war in Europe and the possibility that the United States would become directly involved.

Young men were registering for the draft and a few had already been called into service—presumably for one year only.

Women's organizations began to organize for defense training.

Jac Feinberg Hosiery Mill in Rock Hill could not get raw silk. The United States government had stopped buying silk from Japan.

Gasoline was scarce enough to put a 7 p.m. curfew on all sales.

Daylight saving time went into effect in order to save electricity.

On June 1, Elliott White Springs, president of Springs Cotton Mills and a World War I flying-ace, was placed in charge of the Charlotte Air Base.

The Rock Hill Body Company, known throughout the southeast for its school bus bodies, was busy building field canteen trucks. James C. Hardin, Jr.'s original design featured steel bodies on hardwood frames and was used in the Louisiana maneuvers. Hardin also designed portable service stations and portable homes.

While all of the above, plus the noticeable increases in food prices, were topics of conversation, none quite so fascinated the people as the announcement that York County would be one of 16 counties involved in the Carolina Maneuvers in the fall of 1941.

All of that summer, representatives of the U. S. Army criss-crossed the county, checking out the roads and getting permission from the local farmers to "fight" on their fields. By June 25, over 1300 farmers had given their permission; only two farmers refused. The army promised the two objecting farmers that they would not trespass.

Not all of the county was to be directly involved in the maneuvers. The land marked off was east of Lockhart, Sharon, York, and Buster Boyd Bridge road. The South Carolina State Highway Department furnished the army with road maps and promised that 75 to 100 troopers would be assigned to the First Army maneuvers for the purpose of reporting road and bridge conditions. Special highway signs were made for the maneuver area.

The maneuvers were officially to begin on October 6. Two months earlier, on August 6, a vanguard rolled through the town of York headed for Kings Mountain. A Fort Jackson unit with machine guns mounted on scout cars, led by a motorcycle troop, rolled through Main Street at 40 miles per hour. The unit was checking the condition of roads and bridges and would spend the night at the Kings Mountain Park. An old-timer remarked, "If they go through Germany like they did York, we're all right."

By the end of August every motel and boarding house room in the county was reported to have been rented by relatives of men who would be involved in the fall maneuvers.

Plans for the upcoming maneuvers put a strain on the area's

already reduced gasoline supply. When Congressman J. P. Richards got word that the government was further reducing gasoline by 10 per cent in the maneuver area, he protested vigorously, saying that a half million soldiers were inconvenience enough. Richards was able to halt the planned further reduction.

The first troops to arrive in Rock Hill to begin preparation for the upcoming maneuvers came on September 13. The Ninth Infantry and the 15th Engineers from Fort Bragg set up field camps at Leslie and Harmony communities, south east of Rock Hill.

Three days later, more than 300 additional truckloads of uniformed men from the 47th Infantry rolled down Rock Hill's Main Street on their way to the Leslie and Harmony encampments. A week later the entire 9th Division with 15,000 men joined the early groups.

Patriotism was in the air. The "invading" army was cheered. Everywhere, people waved and smiled at the sight of the uniformed young men who came to an area chosen because its rolling hills were deemed perfect for practicing the art of warfare..