

1. Contributions by a city and its environs to the World War II home-front war effort, such as contributions related to:
 - Adaptations to wartime survival
 - Civil defense preparedness
 - Defense manufacturing, such as ships, aircraft, uniforms, and equipment
 - Production of foodstuffs and consumer items for Armed Forces and home consumption
 - Volunteer participation
 - War bond drives
 - Personnel serving in the Armed Forces, their achievements, and facilities for their rest and recreation, or
 - The presence of Armed Forces camps, bases, airfields, harbors, repair facilities, and other installations within or in its environs.

Sumter's Shaw Field opened in August 1941, prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, to train pilots for World War II. This flying school trained over 8,600 student pilots on BT-13s during the War. In addition to American cadets, Sumter witnessed British, Canadian, and French cadets come through the area for training. Shaw's Friendship Chapel was built in 1941 as a semi-permanent structure to meet Shaw's needs during the War. It is still standing today as the oldest building on base. Shaw also served as a German prisoner-of-war campsite from March 1945-1946 with about four hundred prisoners. After the War, Shaw was used as a separation center for thousands of soldiers being discharged from the military.

During the War, Shaw was also home to thirteen women in the Women's Army Service Pilots (WASP) program. With a critical shortage of pilots at the beginning of the War, the Army Air Corps recruited women to serve. These women paid their own way to go into training and received little credit during and after the War. The first two assigned to Shaw were Ethel Meyer and Marjorie Poppell. They found assignments within the operations and engineering section of the flight lines. Thirty-eight women nationwide in the WASP program were killed in action including Shaw's Jeanne Lewellen Norbeck. She was killed near Shaw on October 16, 1944 while flight testing a BT-13.

Just a few years after the War, the U.S. Air Force officially renamed Shaw Field, Shaw Air Force Base. It soon became home to the Ninth Air Force and Tactical Air Command, playing major roles in the reconnaissance patrols over Cuba in the 1962 Missile Crisis and later actively participated in the Vietnam conflict and Gulf Wars, before becoming the permanent home of the Twentieth Fighter Wing in 1993. Shaw Air Force Base continues to grow and serve the United States of America as it is now home to over 8,200 active-duty military members, 1,200 civilian employees, and approximately 12,000 family members with an annual payroll of \$625 million that significantly impacts the City of Sumter's economy.

None of this would have happened if Sumter citizens didn't recognize the need for their hometown to serve the war effort at the start of World War II. Sumter worked hard to prove their worthiness and military support during the War, leading to the permanent

establishment of Shaw Air Force Base. This nomination includes a letter from B.M. Hovey, Colonel of the Air Corps stating his “belief that at no other station in the Eastern Flying Training Command did there exist as fine a relationship between the military personnel and the local civilian population as at Shaw Field.” This reputation that started during World War II continues today, making Shaw Air Force Base a truly unique operation. Additionally, Shaw is now home to the headquarters of United States Army Central, formerly known as the Third Army, which was led by Lt. General George Patton, well-known for his service and leadership in World War II.

Sumter’s current motto, “Uncommon Patriotism,” can be reflected in the area’s sense of duty to one’s country since revolutionary war days. Sumter’s World War II memorial on the county courthouse grounds lists the names of 132 individuals who gave their lives during the War. Around 5,000 Sumter residents actively participated in the War. Medal of Honor recipient Major General George L. Mabry, Jr. hailed from Sumter. He was awarded the Silver Star and the Distinguished Service Cross for his efforts on D-Day. He received the Medal of Honor, particularly thanks to his heroics during the push to Berlin in the Battle of Hurtgen Forest. When Mabry returned home, he was active in the community and often spoke publically about his time in World War II.

The longtime photographer for Sumter’s local newspaper, *Sumter Daily Item*, Heyward Crowson left the paper to enlist in the Marine Corps in 1944. He saw his first major action on the island of Iwo Jima. He also served as the combat photographer in China. Thanks to this participation, he brought home thousands of negatives and films depicting images from World War II that museums in Sumter preserve.

Sumter’s list of World War II veterans also includes many women like Rebecca H. Kolb, Eugenia Mabry, Cecile Moise, and Sally Nash Wilson who served with the Red Cross. Their uniforms are currently on display at museums in Sumter. Sumter women also served in diverse military branches. Mary Ellen Brown served in the Navy during the War. Similarly, her uniform is on display for residents and visitors to see. Our local hospital, Tuomey Hospital held classes for women to become Red Cross Aide’s during the War.

Additionally, there were four Tuskegee Airmen from Sumter. These were Willie T. Ashley, Jr., Leroy Bowman, James Philip Rembert, and Emmett Rice. Despite growing up in segregation and facing injustices, these men fought valiantly during the War and most of them returned to Sumter. Willie T. Ashley, Jr. distinguished himself as the first in his class to fly solo, the first to receive his pilot’s wing, and the first to earn the gold bars of a Second Lieutenant. He flew 77 combat missions in 14 months over North Africa, Sicily, and France. After the War, Leroy Bowman returned to the army until his retirement in 1968. He taught in schools in N.Y. before returning to Sumter, making a point to share his Tuskegee story with students in Sumter schools until his recent death. James Philip Rembert served on the county council from 1974 to his death in 1987, making him the longest serving black official in the state at that time. His portrait hangs in the Sumter County Cultural Center where a conference room is named after him. Emmett Rice also made a national impact after the war as a member of the Federal

Reserve Board. His daughter, Susan Rice, also served as the former US Ambassador to the United Nations and the country's former National Security Advisor.

There were significant civilian activities around Sumter as well. Service groups like the Kiwanis sponsored paper drives and collected scrap metal. Local high school students raised funds to purchase twenty-one jeeps for the army. This was part of the school's "at war" program which was conducted in cooperation with the U.S. Treasury's national program. Civilians volunteered in numerous ways through participation in Civil Defense programs. An observation tower was built on Sumter's only "skyscraper," the City National Bank Building" downtown as part of a larger air raid system established in the city.

These are just a few of the stories of the valiant efforts our local community made to help lead the Allies to victory in World War II. Sumter remains truly indebted to them and grateful for the relationship with Shaw Air Force Base that evolved thanks to the forethought of local individuals eager to help our country.

2. Achievements by a city and its environs to preserve the heritage and legacy of the city's contributions to the war effort and to preserve World War II history, such as contributions related to: *

- Establishment of memorials to area men who lost their lives in service
- Establishment of museums, parks, and markers
- Organizing groups of veterans and home-front workers and their recognition
- Presentation of cultural events such as dances, plays, and lectures
- The identification, preservation, restoration, and interpretation of World War II-related structures, facilities, and sites
- Public relations outreach through the print and electronic media, and books, and
- Recognition and ceremonies remembering wartime event anniversaries

Sumter has honored local veterans and the city's role in supporting World War II efforts since the days following the victory. In 1949, a large memorial made of white marble was erected by "the Grateful Citizens of Sumter County" in the memory of the men of Sumter County who made "the supreme sacrifice" during World War II. This memorial sits on the county courthouse lawn. While new administration and judicial facilities have been built in recent years, the building is still used and the lawn remains an active center of community events ensuring Sumter residents and visitors continue to engage with this memorial for generations to come.

Sumter continues to erect memorials in honor of its residents who participated in World War II so that our community can remember its legacy of uncommon patriotism. Just this past February, the city of Sumter dedicated its new monument to Tuskegee Airmen right outside the Shaw Air Force Base grounds featuring a replica P-51 Mustang. The monument particularly remembers the service of the four Tuskegee Airmen from

Sumter: Willie T. Ashley, Jr., Leroy Bowman, James Philip Rembert, and Emmett Rice. At the dedication, Shaw Air Force base men and women came alongside Sumter community members to embrace this new monument and remember the service of Tuskegee Airmen. General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., the nation's highest ranking military officer as 21st Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, served as the event's keynote speaker. General Brown had been through Sumter before during his time at Shaw Air Force Base twenty years earlier and expressed excitement in returning to this uniquely patriotic area. A video featuring highlights from the dedication program can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxfBdJsHSBY>

This Tuskegee Airmen Monument sits in Veterans Park, a park right outside of Shaw Air Force Base established to remember and honor "the brave men and women in uniform" who served in all military branches. The park was first developed in 1990 as a memorial for Major General George L. Mabry, Jr., a Sumter native who received the Medal of Honor during World War II. A plaque with his name and service information sits in the park next to a War Memorial that lists the names of all of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in each conflict including World War II.

Veterans Park was expanded in 2016, a project coinciding with Shaw's 75th anniversary, with plans to unveil multiple military memorials and monuments in the near future. The Sumter County Veterans Association maintains the flags that sit in the middle of the park in perpetuity. These include flags representing all branches of the United States military. The addition of the Tuskegee Monument makes this park the only one in the country to feature a full-scale model of a P-51 Mustang Red Tail that the public can visit for free. The city is now working on phase two of the monument which will include a life-size bronze sculpture of Tuskegee Airmen with story walls that share those veterans from S.C. who served under various Tuskegee units. In discussing the layout of Veterans Park, Former Mayor, Joseph T. McElveen, explained, "the design allows for a mix of gathering space and areas for quiet reflection" to honor and remember those who served.

Sumter's largest cemetery, Sumter Cemetery, dedicated a new Veterans Monument on its grounds on May 28, 2024. This new monument features the dates of each military conflict those buried in Sumter Cemetery participated in including World War II. Over 200 individuals buried in the cemetery served in the military.

Sumter is also home to the Temple Sinai Jewish History Center which provides a unique perspective on WWII. The Center, which opened in 2018, includes a large section on the Holocaust. The exhibit contains an area on Abe Stern, a beloved member of the Sumter community who was a Holocaust survivor. Visitors can listen to an interview with Stern to learn what it was like to be separated from his family, about life in Auschwitz, and his experiences with liberation and coming to America and later

Sumter. This connection and personal experience helps to bring the atrocities of World War II to life for students who visit the Center. The exhibit also includes a replica of a banner that was created following the War, to honor all of the Jewish residents of Sumter that served in World War II along with some dog tags of these individuals. Hundreds of school children visit this Center annually and learn about World War II.

A local history teacher and archivist for Sumter's local newspaper, Dr. Sammy Way, genuinely cared that his students gathered a deeper understanding and appreciation of what servicemen and women went through in each major conflict. After World War II, the City of Sumter started a street sign ordinance to name streets after those killed in action. Dr. Way took this project a step further in the 1990s-2000s and got his students actively involved in this process which required that they fully grasp the individual's role in the military. Thanks to him, over 200 streets are named after Sumter residents who fought valiantly in military conflicts, a large number of which were WWII. The families of these individuals were contacted and participated in special ceremonies for the formal placing of the new street signs. Now, the legacy of these men and women are preserved within the city's landscape. Recently, a street at Shaw Air Force Base was renamed Ashley-Bowman Boulevard in honor of Willie T. Ashley, Jr. and Leroy Bowman, two Tuskegee Airmen from Sumter.

Dr. Way's love of preserving our local military history didn't stop there. He soon started a collection of military items that spoke to the significant role Sumter residents played in world conflicts. He opened a small display honoring Sumter veterans to showcase these items. This collection quickly multiplied as more people learned about his display. He now has a space of over 2,000 square feet to exhibit uniforms, personal letters, field items, and other unique artifacts related to these individuals. A significant portion of this display highlights World War II. He showcases photos of 2,500 to 3,000 showing those who participated in the War from Sumter. He continues to delight in sharing these stories with students of all ages as he often welcomes school groups to his facility.

Dr. Way's display has garnered so much attention that through the help of the City of Sumter, the local Sumter Museum, and state funding, a new facility will break ground this September to provide a larger space to more adequately show off this impressive collection and ensure that it is taken care of for years to come. The building's main feature will be its military museum which will encompass almost 6,000 square feet. The museum will start with World War I and go through each conflict, but World War II will stand out with the largest amount of space because his collection includes so many unique World War II artifacts that bring Sumter's service and that of its residents to life. This new building, estimated to be complete in 2026, will be located right downtown, enhancing the landscape and ensuring the memories of World War II servicemen and women are preserved. Our South Carolina House representative, Murrell Smith, who is

also Speaker of the House, helped champion this project through the state budget allowing us a significant amount of funding for the project and statewide attention on Sumter's support of the military and its history.

The City of Sumter and Sumter County are recognized as a Purple Heart City and County. Sumter's local Purple Heart chapter was renamed to honor the late Major General George L. Mabry, Jr. The General George L. Mabry, Jr. Chapter 817 Military Order of the Purple Heart meets at the Sumter Military Museum to fellowship and discuss veterans' affairs in our community. Mayor David Merchant signed an official proclamation in 2022 declaring August 7th Purple Heart Day in the City of Sumter. He continued this in 2023 as well.

The City of Sumter also hosts annual Veterans Day programs as well as Memorial Day events. They have a Veterans Day parade featuring local organizations, schools, scouting groups, and others who all take an active role in honoring those who served in our community. World War II remains a significant component of these honor and memorial events. As the segment of the population alive during that time continues to decline, it has become a priority locally to learn from them and preserve their legacy for future generations.

Recent census data has shown that Sumter County is home to the most veterans per capita out of all the counties in the state. Sumter County can claim 76,401 veterans, a per capita rate of 13.2%. A local news outlet, WLTX, recently ran a story on this statistic and interviewed Sumter American Legion District 11 Commander Peter St. Onge. His reasoning for this large number of veterans is "Because the way they cater to the military around here, programs, VA clinic... the city itself, the civilians, they serve the military and the veterans. And it is uncommon to find that. There is a lot of towns where the veteran community just falls into the background, but here at Sumter, Shaw having a big impact in the Sumter economic plan; they kind of cater to each other."

There is no doubt that many of these veterans living in Sumter participated in World War II. Our community goes out of its way to honor and remember these individuals while supporting current servicemen and women. With the upcoming military museum and recently unveiled Tuskegee Airmen monument, this uncommon patriotism will only increase as will the education of our local students on the military service of its community.