

## WWII Italian-American Heroes: Italian "*Rosie The Riveters*"



### **Italian American Women On The Home Front In World War II**

*During World War II, America's women answered our nation's call to action.* Millions of American women went to work in the factories, shipyards, aircraft and other war industries in support of the war effort as millions of men shipped overseas for combat.

Recently, the federal government enacted the "*Rosie The Riveter Gold Medal Act*" to recognize the millions of women who served by awarding them a Collective Congressional Medal of Honor and declaring March 31 "National Rosie the Riveter Day."

*From the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 to the surrender of Japan in June 1945, more than 12 million men and women served in the nation's military. Among them were more than a million Italian-Americans who constituted some 10% of the American fighting force.*

*Italian-American women also played a large role in the war effort. Among them was Rosina Bonavita, the original Rosie the Riveter, who felt called to duty while her three brothers and fiancé served in combat.* During the war, 21 year old Rose Bonavita worked on an aircraft assembly line at the GM plant in Tarrytown, New York along with fellow Italian-American worker and cousin, 28 year old Jennie Florio.

Together, they set a record in putting 3,300 rivets in an airplane tail section in six hours in 1943. The two were recognized by President Franklin Roosevelt in honor of their outstanding work. Rosie went on to set a speed record in assembling a wing in four hours with another Italian-American woman, Susan Esposito.

*The iconic image of Rosie the Riveter is embodied in a famous poster with the "WE CAN DO IT" Slogan about winning the war. Rosie died in 1996.*

**Italian American welder, Rosalie Taggi, left her North Beach home in San Francisco every morning between 1943 and 1945 and walked to the Ferry Building where she caught the boat across San Francisco Bay for the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond, California.** She was often recognized for her outstanding welding skills at the plant. She donated her welding leathers and helmet to The Richmond, California Museum of History.

*Twenty year old Italian-American Peggy Citarella {aka Winnie The Welder} also had a knack for welding and spent two years as a first class welder at the Charleston Navy Yard working on submarines.* At the time, the navy yard employed 50,000 workers and Peggy was one of the first women to work there. Now 99 years old she resides in Burlington, Vermont.

These are but some of the many Italian-American women who helped win the war. Their stories should be remembered and told. The Rosie The Riveter World War II Home Front National Historic Park is located in Richmond, California at the site of the Kaiser Shipyards and contains a museum and educational center.





**ROSIE THE RIVETER PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

HEADING PHOTO:

World War II Rosie The Riveter Poster

ABOVE PHOTOS:

*(ABOVE CENTER)*: Rosalie Taggi {Rosalie The Welder} San Francisco, 1945

*(ABOVE LEFT)*: Peggy Merigo Citarella {Winnie The Welder} during World War II

*(ABOVE BOTTOM)*: Rosina {Rosie The Riveter} Bonavita , on right, with riveting partner Susan Esposito in 1944