During World War II, thousands of people relocated to the Washington, D.C., area to fill the government and private sector jobs that supported the war effort. Alexandria, home to the U.S. Naval Torpedo Station and in close proximity to the newly opened Pentagon, saw tremendous growth. At the torpedo plant, women filled jobs once held by men as so many of them were away in the service. For the first time, large numbers of men and women worked closely together and the factory’s newsletter, The Torp, offered female workers this “Sweater Warning: If the sweater is too big for you, look out for the machines. If you’re too big for the sweater, look out for the men.”

Women were also allowed to enter military service, though not in combat roles.

A permanent exhibition at the Lyceum, Building a Community: Alexandria Past to Present, features local artifacts from the World War II era. The Lyceum is open seven days a week and has free off-street parking.