

Army &

I was going through my Military collection some time ago and was struck by the Army & Navy Club covers. Why, I'm not sure, but these, and the YMCA/YWCA covers of the time just seem to be calling to be collected!

The distinction and logistical position of the Army & Navy Clubs within the overall picture of service organizations is somewhat nebulous. The United Service Organizations (USO) was formed in the months before the United States entered World War II by a coalition of six civilian agencies to coordinate their civilian war efforts: the Salvation Army, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Knights of Columbus, National Travelers Aid Association, National Jewish Welfare Board, and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The YMCA and other welfare agencies had already been seeking ways to serve the morale needs of the increasing number of young men entering military training. With the September 1940 enactment of the Selective Service and Training Act, the military buildup accelerated, but the federal government had no plan for the provision of recreation facilities and activities in training camp communities. After a series of conference between representatives of the six welfare organization and several government agencies, a plan of cooperation was worked out with the endorsement of the President, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Federal Security Administrator. In January, 1941, the USO was incorporated to provide religious, recreational, welfare, and educational activities for men and women in the armed forces and in the defense industries. By the time of the United States' entry into the war in December, the USO had opened 139 clubs and 35 other units located in 98 towns and cities throughout the country.

The YMCA's contributions to the establishment of the USO and to its performance as a war-service



Navy Clubs

organization were of major importance.

With its experience in previous wars, the YMCA brought crucial resources to the new organization's start-up efforts, including a history of good relations with the officers and enlisted men of the Army and Navy, long experience mobilizing volunteers, buildings, and endowment funding. At the time the USO was incorporated, the YMCA already had 69 Army and Navy branches and other operations in place, staffed by 135 professional workers. Many of these operations could be immediately turned over to the joint enterprise as "ready-made" USO clubs. At the peak period in 1944, the YMCA Army and Navy Department had under its administration 464 USO operations (not including the sixty USO industrial units which were under the direction of the YMCA's Industrial Department). During the period from 1942 to 1947, nearly 460,000,000 visits were made to the YMCA-operated USO clubs and Army and Navy branches.

Offerings were varied and included religious programs, forums, lectures, athletics, parties, dances, dramatics, movies, sightseeing, and special events. Also available were personal services such as counseling, and help with matters such as housing, travel, community resources, locating persons, etc. Facilities and equipment provided included showers, swimming, shaving, sports, art, handicraft, photography, games, music, records, dormitories, gymnasiums, and more. In keeping with its historic concern for the religious needs of individuals, the YMCA offered chapel services, fostered relations with local churches and clergy, and developed a program to distribute religious, patriotic, and educational literature prepared especially for the men in the armed forces. The organization also designed a program of counseling seminars to assist ministers, chaplains and USO staff in dealing helpfully with the needs of servicemen. [<http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/html/ymca/yusa0004-2.phtml>]

