

1945 February 12-18

Waste Paper for War

Today nearly all of us recycle at least some items to save space in our landfills and reuse natural resources. We may think of recycling as something that started with the environmental movement in the 1970s. But recycling became a necessity during World War II when sources of raw materials were occupied by the Axis powers or constricted because of war necessities.

The war effort made great demands on many raw materials, including paper.

All record-keeping was done on paper, and massive military forces used a lot of paper.

Paper was also used in containers for war materials and food. Shortages of manpower and transportation decreased the amount of wood pulp brought in from Canada. With so much paper going toward the war effort, lack of paper for food containers threatened to create a food shortage in the United States.¹

In the 1940s, paper, glass jars, and tin cans dominated the grocery aisles. World War II created a great demand for plastic, but nearly all of it was used for war materials. Plastic packaging did not become common for consumer goods until after World War II.²

Paper drives had been going on before 1945. The monthly drive in January 1945 by the Boy Scouts had collected 60 tons of paper just in the city of La Crosse.³ The local Committee for Victory, however, stated that less than half of the homes in La Crosse were contributing paper.⁴

The need for paper was so critical that the effort to collect waste paper for recycling was being expanded. Up until now, just the Boy Scouts had conducted monthly paper drives. Starting this month, the La Crosse County Salvage Committee enlisted the help of all elementary and junior high school children in the county. With children going door to door, the collection would be easier for residents and more comprehensive.⁵

School Children, Scouts Take Part In Saturday Paper Drive

Demands of the army and navy for increased civilian waste paper collections have been met by the La Crosse county salvage committee, according to Harold R. Cram, county salvage chairman.

An enlarged committee for the salvage of paper has been formed, with E. P. Hartl as general chairman. Members of the committee include representatives of the public and parochial schools of the city, county superintendent of schools, county agent, Boy Scout executive, chairman of women's activities and representatives of the press and radio.

Under the new and enlarged program, all elementary and junior high schools of the city and all village schools and rural schools will participate in monthly collections.

The first collection to be made in the city of La Crosse will be Saturday. It is expected some 3,000 youngsters will participate in the drive and will go from door to door in the city to see that the paper is put out for the trucks. These youngsters will be equipped with twine and will assist any householder who is unable to get paper bundled for collection.

Collections will be made by the

Scouts with trucks donated by patriotic La Crosse industries as in past months.

Details of the collection plans for various villages and rural areas of the county will be announced.

Get Out Paper For Collection Saturday, Plea To Residents

Once again, all La Crosse is urged to "Get in the scrap with your waste paper!"

City Recreation Director E. P. Hartl has announced that beginning with the present drive, the Boy Scouts of the city aren't going to have to shoulder all the responsibility of collecting waste paper as in the past—for school children are going to do their bit, too.

According to Hartl, boys and girls of the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grades of all public and parochial schools and the state teachers college training school have been enlisted by the La Crosse county salvage committee to aid in this monthly drive for waste paper.

Schedule Definite Dates

These drives have been scheduled to take place on the third Saturday of each month, and it is the job of the school children of La Crosse to "ring every doorbell" of the city and to lend assistance in the tying up of waste paper, Hartl said.

Boy Scouts are continuing to handle the truck collection of all waste paper which will be assembled at street intersections by the school children.

"With everybody engaged either directly or indirectly in war work to speed victory, the boys and girls of city wanted an important war job too." Hartl said,

adding, "there is nothing more important right now than the collection of waste paper."

"The situation is so critical," he said, "that some mills producing containers for war supplies as well as containers for food shipments in the United States, have been forced to shut down because of the lack of material."

"The shortage of manpower and transportation facilities have made it impossible to use the normal supplies of wood pulp from Canadian forests too, and unless housewives of La Crosse and every other city help the school children in the effort to salvage every ounce of waste paper, the food situation may become critical in a matter of months," he added.

Supply Is Limited

Hartl pointed out that many mills manufacturing paper products have a supply of waste paper on hand that will last no more than a week, and must have a vast increase in salvaged paper or shut down.

Every householder is urged to turn in all waste paper by placing scraps in a paper bag, and tying all magazines or newspapers in a neat, compact bundle.

School children will begin their part in the drive after school this afternoon, and will continue Saturday morning. The Boy Scouts will do the actual truck collecting all day Saturday, Hartl said.



Basements And Attics were invaded by school children, with the assistance of housewives, in quest of salvage paper. Here Mrs. William L. Stiles, 810 South 19th, hands James Wartinbee, 815 South 17th, Hogan school, bundles of magazines to tie up in the basement of her home.

—Tribune Photo



School Children Assembled Waste Paper throughout La Crosse Friday afternoon for collection Saturday. Making house to house and store to store calls, helping package the salvage material and then stacking it on street corners. Here students of St. John's school are assembling a huge pile collected from one block. Left to right they are Donald Flottmeier, 616 Hagar; Robert Hart, 733 Avon; David Ritter, 727 Avon, and Rita Mosser, 717 Avon. —Tribune Photo

La Crosse Tribune, 1945 February 17, page 8

Jeff Rand
Adult Services Librarian
La Crosse Public Library

Sources & Notes:

¹ "Get Out Paper For Collection on Saturday, Plea to Residents," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 16, page 16.

² "History and Future of Plastics," *Science History Institute*, accessed 2020 February 13, <https://www.sciencehistory.org/the-history-and-future-of-plastics>.

³ "Boy Scouts Collect 60 Tons Of Waste Paper in La Crosse," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 January 16, page 2.

⁴ "Less Than Half," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 16, page 7.

⁵ "School Children, Scouts Take Part in Saturday Paper Drive," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 February 14, page 5.