



INDIANA  
COMMISSION  
for women

*Writing Her Story*

## Rosie the Riveter

Rosie the Riveter has become a cultural icon in the United States, representing American women who worked in factories and shipyards during World War II. There are two iconic paintings depicting Rosie the Riveter. The first was painted by Norman Rockwell for the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*, which is now headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 29, 1943, became a symbol for wartime solidarity. The second, *We Can Do It! Poster*, painted by J. Howard Miller for Westinghouse Electric, was created to boost worker morale. It endures today and has become a symbol of civil rights and feminism due in part because it lacked copyright protection.

Models for these iconic images were based on a composite of experiences of many real women. One such model was Rose Will Monroe. Like many “Rosies,” Monroe fled rural poverty in Kentucky. When a car accident claimed the life of her first husband in 1942, Monroe and her two young children traveled north to a Michigan factory. This factory trained female pilots to fly armaments around the country, and she hoped to be chosen for this program. Because she was a single mother, however, she was not selected. Instead, she had to settle on assembling planes. While working in the factory, Monroe was discovered by an actor who was visiting the factory to shoot footage for films promoting the sale of war bonds. At the time, she was working on the assembly line as a riveter of B-24 and B-49 bombers. Because she had appeared as a Rosie the Riveter in these films, she is most often identified as the real Rosie.

At the end of World War II, Monroe moved to Clarksville, Indiana, with her children. As a single mother, she continued to work outside the home for the rest of her life. After working as a real-estate agent, she founded Rose Builders, a construction company that specialized in luxury homes. At the age of fifty, she earned her pilot’s license and became the only woman in her local aeronautics club. .

- For more information about the real Rosie the Riveters, go to: <http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01920.html>.
- For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

*Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women’s History Month*