

Camilia London ~WWI Yeomanette

Shortages in the labor force during WWI affected all parts of American society--including the US Navy. A call went out for women volunteers to serve as administrators, or "yeomanettes." Approximately two hundred of the more than eleven thousand women who served as clerks, storekeepers, and stenographers in the Navy during the war were North Carolinians.

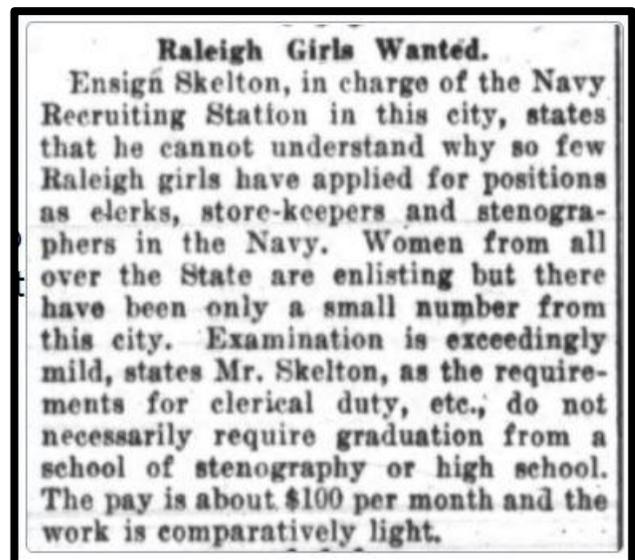


One of that small number was Chatham County native Camelia Rutherford London, who joined the Navy Reserve Force in December 1917. The twenty-one-year-old served the entirety of her term at the Navy recruiting office in Raleigh. Initially, Camelia reported to her brother, Lt. John Jackson London, who managed recruiting efforts at the office, but he was reassigned the following month, leaving Camelia behind to carry on with administrative work.

Camila earned approximately \$100 a month, a sum that included allowances for uniforms, medical care, housing, and insurance. Remarkably, the pay for women was equal to that of men of the same rating. Secretary Daniels had mandated that any woman "who works as well as a man ought to receive the same pay" —an astonishing development at the time, given that women did not yet even have the right to vote and that gender equity respective to pay remains elusive to this day. According to her obituary, Camila rose to the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

Following the armistice in November 1918, Camelia was placed on inactive status, and was discharged on May 19, 1920. In October 1922, she married Fred Duncan Jerome, who had served in the Student Army Training Corps at North Carolina State University during the war. The couple had three children: Fred Jr. and twins John London Jerome and Henry London Jerome. Fred and Henry followed in their mother's footsteps and served in the navy during World War II.

Camilia was the daughter of Henry Armand and Bettie Jackson London. She grew up in Pittsboro and lived there for part of her adult life. She is buried in St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church Cemetery.



Adapted from a blog article by Jessica A. Bandel. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/blog/2017/04/27/portraits-war-camelia-rutherford-london>