The Economy Cafe, 1534 South Main, Ottawa, Kansas, December 8, 1941.

"Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan." When President Franklin D. Roosevelt uttered these words and proceeded to ask Congress for a declaration of war, at 11:30 A.M. (CST), Monday, December 8, 1941, the customers at this Ottawa diner, their fellow Kansans and the entire nation, listened with trepidation. But, despite some anxiety and regardless of their political persuasion or previous attitude toward the ongoing "European war," Americans overwhelmingly supported their president in his call to arms. With confidence and determination, they joined him in making "certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again."

This milestone of a half-century past, along with the other events that unfolded over the next three and a half years, profoundly changed the lives of those who experienced it, and altered the course of human history as few single events have. In observation of the war's fiftieth anniversary, each issue of Kansas History during 1992 will devote this space and additional pages to preserving in photographs some of the moments and memories that Kansas and the rest of America experienced during World War II. "Kansas At War: The Call To Arms," the first of four installments, begins in this issue on page 36.

The photograph above is reprinted courtesy of Lowell Fouts (far left), who managed the Economy Cafe when this photo was taken. Soon after, he joined the military service, as did many of his contemporaries. He returned safely to Ottawa and to the restaurant business at war's end.
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