



ON THE BRINK: ACROSS THE HAWTHORN HEDGE



# MAKING A LIVING

Across the hawthorn hedge the noise of bugles. Flares across the night. Somewhere on the lough was a prison ship for Germans. A cage across their sight.

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Home resources were piled into the war effort. A strong economy at home was essential to support this. While there were challenges for both agriculture and industry, there were also opportunities.

## TRADE & INDUSTRY

The linen industry was crucial to the local economy. The sudden loss of imported flax from Russia and Belgium was a threat, forcing prices up and drastically cutting working hours. However, by January 1915, the *Colborne Chronicle* market news reported that "the high prices achieved a few weeks ago were not reached."

The *Colborne Weekly Telegraph* reported that most workers in the cotton manufacturing factories owned by shell firms in their European homelands had defaulted on their payments. However, the plant was short lived. New sources were found and government orders were placed for uniforms, munitions, ships and other supplies for the War.



Gore Mills, Colborne, Ontario, 1915

When the mills, Colborne, Ontario, were built in 1850, they were the largest in the world. The Colborne supported the entire and regional cotton industry until it was to be used in any branch of the War's manufacture.



## THE LAND

A series of Land Acts from 1870-1893 had made it possible for tenants to purchase land. About one million acres were transferred to former tenants. They took their place in the economy of the country. As supplies from Europe were cut off, Ireland became Britain's larder.



James J. Conroy, 1890s, with his family on the farm. He was one of the many who had purchased land under the Land Acts of the late 19th century.

## FOOD SUPPLY

People, fearing shortages, began to stockpile goods. This inflated supply and pushed up prices. Newspapers reported the rising price of food.

The *Colborne Advertiser* carried inspiration on "How to Increase the Food Supply" by planting vegetables on "bits of land to use at once."



## Workers

Recruitment led to a shortage of skilled workers in many industries. The *Colborne Weekly Telegraph* of 12th December 1914 reported a shortage of trained scotch mill workers. Mill labor mills were short of hands.



James Smith with another worker, 1914.

The hiring fair was traditionally the place where unskilled workers signed up to work. Army recruiters turned up at the fairs encouraging men into uniform. The *Colborne Chronicle* in May 1915 noted that "the attendance was not at all up to that of previous hiring fairs." This meant that "wages naturally had an upward tendency."

Regulations regarding school attendance were relaxed for school children to work on the farms. This meant that "wages naturally had an upward tendency."



Recruitment fair in the Millinery, 1914.

Right: Army recruiters turned up at the fairs encouraging men into uniform.

Below: School children were relaxed for school children to work on the farms.

