

Lee and New Hampshire in World War I.

War gardens and voluntary conservation during World War I

April 6, 1917 the U.S. entered into WWI.. President Woodrow Willson appointed Herbert Hoover as the National Food Administrator. New Hampshire Governor Henry Keyes appointed a 100-member Committee of Public Safety to control all war activities in the state. The chair of the committee was Huntley Spaulding. Within months Hoover officially appointed Mr. Spaulding as the Federal Food Commissioner for the State of New Hampshire

He asked Mr. Spaulding to work toward three tasks,

1. To guide trade commodities, to eliminate speculation, extortion and wasteful practice in food and fuel;
2. Guard exports against world shortages, to prevent inflation and to attain sufficient supplies for our people, and,
3. Stimulate saving our food so we could increase exports to our allies.

The U.S. Senate immediately asked its citizens to practice economy of food.

It was feared that there would be a grain scarcity, especially as significant amounts of grain were already being shipped to our allies. We not only needed to feed our own citizens but to continue the support we were we already giving to our allies.

The first move towards this end was a resolution from the Senate to obtain cost estimates for turning back yards of the cities, and unused back lots of towns and villages converted into gardens to produce foodstuffs.

One Senator said, "I have not the slightest doubt, if the movement is carried on..there can be raised enough food supplies to very materially affect not only the price of food, but the convenience and happiness of the people."-Newmarket Advertiser, April 13, 1917.

Following the President's personal appeal to the nation there was a groundswell of support in and around Lee and especially at New Hampshire College next door in Durham. The plan was simple: encourage Americans to conserve food, especially wheat, and start their own "War gardens" to supply themselves and their community with food so that our excess went to the front.

Students of agriculture were dispersed around the state to assist with the planning and installation of these home gardens where ever they were needed. They received college credit for their work. In many instances, especially in the larger cities, some folks had never had a garden To them, the students were invaluable.

Thus began the "War Garden" movement of WWI

In order to get citizens to recognise the need for conservancy of any kind, we needed to learn why there was a need. That meant realizing that what we did on a daily basis--eat 2-3 meals a day--actually had an impact on a national level.. More importantly, **what** we ate, had a national

and a global impact. For the first time in our history, we were being identified as “consumers” of goods.

Since the first 500,000 men and boys were being sent to camps and training, we also had to realize the impact to those remaining.

A message from President Wilson stated,

“...to understand that hands hitherto unaccustomed to toil will be obliged to assume the task of labor, that the delicate fingers of many a woman scarcely ever been employed in [production] will be called upon...and the children ..may be called upon to do some work in the gardens to help raise something for families.” -Newmarket Advertiser, April 13, 1917.

This column appeared on April 20, 1917, just two weeks after entering the war.

[Committee of 100 of Public Safety] excerpt...Front page, Newmarket Advertiser, April 20, 1917.

Thus followed an enormous appeal through newspapers, by advertisers, and articles provided by the Department of Food Administration. An all out campaign,--nationwide--to increase production all all types of food stuffs. Grain primarily, corn, meat of all types, and locally sourcing of products.

All kinds of informational and educational articles appeared regularly in the newspapers following the weeks and months of our involvement in the war, all aimed to help the everyday citizen put into practice the “economies” ask of us by the President.

Thrift of all sorts was highly lauded, the same way we today tout “re-use, reduce, recycle, repair,” and as Calvin Coolidge later is quoted “Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.”

By participating in this appeal, saving wheat, eating potatoes and corn, reducing our sugar consumption, buying only what we need, and using everything up-without waste-was our “Patriotic Duty” doing our bit to win the war.

President Wilson, in a personal appeal stated, “What I want to say is that the men and women who devote their thought and their energy to these things will be serving the country and conducting the fight for peace and freedom just as truly and just as effectively as the men on the battlefield or in the trenches.” and “Let me suggest also that everyone who creates or cultivates a garden helps, and helps greatly, to solve the problem of the feeding of the nations; and that every housewife who practises strict economy puts herself in the ranks of those who serve the nation.--Newmarket Advertiser, April 20, 1917

One anecdote appeared-”So they are married, then?” Yes, they are married. “Where are they spending their honeymoon? “He’s spending his in the trenches, while she is spending hers in her war garden.”

Thus the new reality of life in the war.

The high schools of the state of New Hampshire were taking an active part in the "Back to the soil" movement, creating and caring for war gardens. By the end of summer 1917 they had raised crops with a value of over \$36,600. It was also noted that the grade school children had 17,000 small truck gardens that summer.

It was estimated that thousands of war gardens were planted by citizens throughout the state. The 1919 Granite Monthly magazine reported New Hampshire showed an increase in crop acreage from 1916 to 1917 by 35% while the value of those crops went from 4.3M in 1916 to 6.6M in 1917.

The Central Food Committee, an organization under the Department of Public Safety, recruited 31 women from the teachers of Household Arts in the state high schools of New Hampshire. They were sent to the State College for a week of intensive training prior to sending them throughout the state to give lessons and demonstrations in canning and conservation. A local committee was appointed to coordinate these demonstrations.

As part of this program, the women of Lee attended several canning demonstrations at the town hall. The first of which in June 1917 on canning rhubarb, asparagus and strawberries. In July one on squash, peas and pineapple. In August a third highlighting string beans, cherries, blueberries and chicken.

At this same time, there continued many tidbits and stories in the papers to support the aims of the nation in conserving, saving, planting, and other tips for the home maker.

One local news article, "How to select foods and get the most for your money" had tips like, "Use cereals, Plan carefully in buying and serving, Do not be ashamed to plan closely, Notice how much staples like flour, sugar, cooking fats etc..are being used each week, and only buy what you need, buy non-perishable items in bulk for a cost savings, don't waste anything, try preparing meals so that there is just enough.

A column called "Home Cookery" heralded, recipes for using alternatives for wheat in everyday dishes, like Corn Bread, Spanish Rice, Potato Souffle, Rice Pudding and Baked Tomatoes. A very helpful list of vegetables to plant in the garden was offered in June 1917.

Just like today's celebrity endorsements, Florence La Badie, celebrated Actress of 1917 was out showing how she was "doing her bit" by creating and tending to her War Gardens.

Within months of our entering the war, women were beginning to be employed in production. Bakers in Washington were beginning to hire women due to the labor shortage. In August the first mention of an "Eat Potatoes" campaign was mentioned. Since the scarcity of local wheat, potatoes were offered as a mainstay in the meal plan.

Sugar was the next item put on the conservation list, but for making preserves its use was encouraged. This was because it was felt that the conservation of butter and other fats was more important than conserving sugar. Jams and jellies were the lure!

Canning and preserving the harvest was a major focus on the advertisements and columns. In an article provided by the Department of Agriculture on fruit preserving, there are listed several varieties of sirups for the fruit, including recipes for Watermelon rind, gingered watermelon and peach preserves.

One corner of the newspaper held an advertisement of sorts:

Sugar mean Ships
Ships mean Soldiers
Soldiers mean Victory

On your honor as a woman, how much sugar do you need?
Every pound of sugar means cargo space and cargo space is precious now,
“Maximum Canning with Minimum Sugar” -the summer slogan
The famous Bar le Duc preserves and jellies are made with honey, not
sugar.-Newmarket Advertiser, July , 1918.

In October 1917, there was a call by the U.S. government to have Wednesday and Thursday as wheatless, meaning no wheat bread on those days.

[Save Wheat-Meat-Fats-Sugar] flyer

Later in the fall of 1917 there were planned an additional 3 demonstrations for the women of Lee. One on suitable war substitutes and fats, another for War breads. At this demonstrations the women were asked to bring in a sample of their war bread along with a recipe card for sharing with others. The third demonstration on the uses of cornmeal was not held-- the women of Lee encouraged to attend a demonstration instead at the Congregational Church in Durham. I suspect that the farmer's wives and women of Lee already excelled in canning and preservation.

A series of one-page bulletins on the latest methods of canning with a special leaflet on thrift were printed and distributed through the Central Food Committee to the local committees. Sure enough, in December 1917 we learn--through the Newmarket Advertiser--that leaflets would be distributed to the ladies of Lee on that topic. It was reported that all-in-all 36,000 ladies attended these demonstrations in New Hampshire.

[Christmas Dinner, 1917]

Business advertising continued to do their bit to help the thrift aspect of life during the war. Columns on reusing old materials, buying second hand building materials and other helpful column inches ran throughout the war years.

[Post Toasties]

U.S. Food Administration regularly placed articles touting “voluntary effort to provide the food that the world needs.” -Newmarket Advertiser, January 25, 1918.

New England Telephone and Telegraph advertising "A Man Famine" and conservation being the answer. Utilize your telephone as a way to conserve time and travelling expenses.

Lucky Strike Cigarettes--Baked Potato: big, white mealy, with butter melting on it.....mmmm. And you like it because it is baked! Same with Lucky Strike Cigarette-- "It's Toasted" Cooking makes things delicious, toasting the tobacco has made the Lucky Strike Cigarette famous.

"The Kitchen Cabinet" column lists recipes for meatless days, soybean loaf served with tomato sauce, walnut croquettes and curried chestnuts. Recipes for Brown vegetable stew, scalloped corn and soy beans, potato pancakes and bread crumb griddle cakes.

"Economize on Clothes: buy what you need; Be sure they're Good" Nichols & Morse advertisement. -Newmarket Advertiser, May 10, 1918

[Wheatless Biscuits and Delicious Corn Muffins recipes] -Newmarket Advertiser, February 1, 1918

In Tilton, N.H. a 90 year old Veteran at the Soldier's Home had a $\frac{3}{8}$ acre garden where he raised vegetables enough to supply the 100 inmates of the home. He gets no extra wage, they report, but enjoys the outdoor exercise." Newmarket Advertiser, August 17, 1917.

Encouraging articles like this one started appearing

"Don't Be Satisfied with doing your "Bit", Do your utmost"-Newmarket Advertiser, March 22, 1918.

"If you work upon a farm, do your utmost to make every moment count for its best. Cut wood when other work permits, Every stick will soon be needed. Your woodpile, however small, may prevent suffering next winter.

"Produce all you can, there is nothing that you can do that will go more directly to the heart of our needs.

"If you are a clerk in an office or store, do not think of the fixed number of hours you put in, but serve willingly and helpfully-

"All house-wives should follow earnestly and intelligently the rules of the Food Administration"

"Teach your children thrift and the value of money, every little helps.

During all the lectures, demonstrations, watching pennies and the family menus, the people of Lee were still going out and about in the community.

Where the townspeople regularly held whist and dance parties throughout the year, the only noticeable change after war was declared, was that they dances only and sponsored the local Red Cross effort.

In November 1917, the whist and dance party held at town hall had 100 present and raised \$25.00 for the Red Cross.

Three whist and dance parties in December all reported good attendance and monies raised.

Starting in January 1918 there were dances held almost weekly all in aid of the Red Cross. One dance in February was for the Salvation Army and raised \$18.00

One note in March 1918, stated "The dances held for the benefit of the Red Cross are very popular, people coming from all the surrounding towns."

Boy Scouts were active in selling Liberty Bonds and collecting for the Red Cross.

A note from the Newmarket Advertiser states, "Lee's quota for the Red Cross drive this week is \$300. We went "over the top" raising \$315.00

"The total amount collected in Lee for the Liberty Loan was \$11,100, the quota being \$6,900. As there are only 112 families in town, we think it a pretty good showing for such a small place."--Newmarket Advertiser, May 17, 1918, p.4

Boy Scouts were asked to be responsible to work on the Scout's garden, or a troupe garden or a local council garden and to secure one adult to help him with this task until the crops were harvested.--Newmarket Advertiser, July, 1918.

April 15 through May 15 1918 was the Food Administration's "**Big Potato Eating Campaign.**"

A big drive to increase the consumption of potatoes. There was in the nation a 95M bushel surplus of potatoes, and in New Hampshire many potatoes which must be consumed at once if they are not to be wasted. This was to help conserve wheat for the war.

New Hampshire adopted a slogan for this potato campaign of "Buy and Eat Potatoes Now"--not very original, but effective. The campaign was a rousing success, not only consuming our excess potatoes, but those of western Maine as well.

April 19, 1918 Hotels in New Hampshire voluntarily pledge to remove wheat from their menus until after the next harvest.

Beginning of May 1918 in the middle of the "Big Potato Eating Campaign" a contest for wheatless bread by the New Hampshire Restaurant and Food Committee for hotel and restaurant bakers. The winner of the best wheatless and ryeless sandwich bread that is the whitest, the most palatable, and can be produced at a moderate price would receive \$500.

Directly after the big potato drive followed a big corn meal drive and a push to eat corn meal to keep the excess corn meal in the nation from becoming a total loss. Again, New Hampshire's slogan for this campaign was "A Pound of Corn used is a Pound of Wheat Saved".

[Home Cards] in Stores-May 24, 1918

A Home Card was issued with an explanation of our problem in feeding our allies, our solution in conserving what we are consuming, and further explanation on how to do this.

-Breads and cereals-have at least one wheatless meal a day

-Meat, use more poultry, rabbits and fish and less beef, mutton and pork.

-Milk-use all milk don't waste any

-Fats, butter, etc-use as little as possible in cooking, use alternative oils, corn, vegetable etc.

-Sugar-use less candy and sweet drinks, tea and coffee. Use alternatives like honey and sirup

- Vegetable and Fruits-we have abundance, Double their use. Use potatoes
- Fuel-use less coal, burn fewer fires, use wood if you can get it.

The need to conserve these things was so great that the Food Administration gave an explanation on the need for the savings. This was printed on the back of the Home Card:

“Food has now taken a dominant position in the war, and we must ask the American people to sacrifice more than was at first thought necessary.... We have exported the whole of the surplus of the wheat from this harvest after reserving for ourselves an amount sufficient for our normal consumption of seed and flour until the next harvest, and therefore the amount of wheat flour that the United States can contribute to mix with the war bread of the Allies during this winter will be exactly the amount which our people have saved each month on their behalf.”

A message from Herbert Hoover read in pulpits on May 26, 1918 was a call to New Hampshire (and the United States), to save food, wheat, meat and sugar.

To this end, the Town of Lee reacted:

“The following resolutions were introduced and unanimously adopted. We, the people of Lee, at a patriotic mass meeting held in the town hall, Sunday, May 26, 1918, realizing the great crisis that we and our allies are facing with regard to food, do hereby resolve: First, that we shall abstain as far as possible from eating wheat and wheat products until the next harvest. Second, that we shall reduce our consumption of meat, including poultry, so that we shall not average more than two pounds per person over four years of age. Third, that we shall conserve sugar.”-Newmarket Advertiser, May 31, 1918.

That same month the Food Administration initiated a 50/50 plan with retailers in regards to the sale of wheat flour. This meant that for every pound of wheat flour sold an equal amount of alternative flour must also be purchased. Alternative flours consisted of corn flour, corn meal, edible corn starch, hominy, corn grits, barley flour, potato flour, sweet potato flour, soy bean flour, and meals, rice, rice flour, oatmeal, rolled oats, and buckwheat flour. This applied to everyone, even bakers. This was when the “Victory Bread Loaf” prepared by the nation’s bakers first was presented. Victory Bread required 80% wheat flour, the final 20% was an alternative flour.

Since we had just agreed to abstain from wheat and wheat products, we also found that alternative flours, like corn and buckwheat flour were appearing in our pantries. Concurrently, we were buying only what we needed and pledging to use what we have and not waste anything. Corn muffins, corn bread, corn cakes, potato bread, potato croquettes, drop scones made with mashed potatoes, all recipes could be found in the newspapers of the day!

There were penalties on businesses who did not conform with the Food Administration’s regulations. In Concord, several bakers were cited. One baker for not using the proper amount of substitutes in biscuits, using too much shortening and sugar in rolls and failure to make

required weekly reports. He was ordered to close the bakery for 10 days and place a sign in his window stating that he violated the regulations.

In Dover, a baker was fined \$250 to be paid to the Red Cross or have his license revoked. He chose to pay the fine. He had overcharged the cost of his retail bread by 1 cent.

Although canning was encouraged of every household, it was further reminded that home canning was only for civilian use. It could not be purchased or accepted as gifts for the army or navy. Because of the differing sizes of home canned goods, it could not be shipped

[A Box From Home] -Newmarket Advertiser August 23, 1918

In the April, 1919 Granite Monthly magazine an overview of the success of New Hampshire Food Administration during the War

“In the Hoover Pledge Card Campaign, New Hampshire stood among the leaders, with 80% of the families signing the pledges voluntarily and in the work accomplished by the Hotel and Restaurant Committee, the state was rated among the first five in the country. Other successful achievements were the small gardens throughout the state, the work of the school boys with a production in 1917 and 1918 of crops to the value of \$150,000.” and “The cost to the United States of the work of the New Hampshire Food Administration was the lowest in the country, not only actually, but relatively.”

New Hampshire, even during difficult times, those of World War One, still maintains her frugal Yankee Spirit.

We may have woken to the fact that we are consumers, but we still have the ability to guide where we go from here.

The fine print on the first Home Card is still relevant today:

- Buy less, cook no more than necessary, serve smaller portions.
- Use local and seasonable supplies.
- Patronize you local producers and lessen the need of transportation.
- Preach and practice the “gospel of the clean plate”.
- We do not ask people to starve themselves. Eat plenty, but wisely, and without waste
- Do not limit the food of growing children.
- Do not eat between meals.
- Watch out for the waste in the community.
- You can yourself devise other methods of saving. Under various circumstances and with varying conditions you can vary the methods of economizing.

The lessons learned during the war years, about conservation of foods and fuel, thrift in all things, recognizing that our part locally can affect us nationally, and globally, can hold us in good stead for centuries!

Thank you.