

## **The Ontario Dairy Industry and the Home Front - War Era Milk Bottles** **By Paul Huntley**

During the Second World War years from 1939 to 1945, the Canadian dairy industry began patriotic initiatives to support the war effort on the Home Front. Perhaps one of the most successful campaigns was the use of Applied Colour Label or Pyro-glazed milk bottles. These graphically appealing milk containers with their coloured script writings, catchy phrases and images had been introduced to Canada after a similar U.S. Launch of the ACL milk by both the Owens and Thatcher glass companies in 1937. The new era milk bottles had been introduced to replace the previous design embossed milk bottles with cap seat first introduced by the glass manufacturers in the 1900's. These new "silk screened" milk bottles and soda bottles were still relatively costly containers to manufacture due to the work required annealing paint to glass under high temperature, but reduced the previously labour intensive process of stamping the dairy name and graphics into the glass or "embossing" each milk bottle. The containers issued from 1939, in addition to identifying the dairy and its quality products, the new food vessels now took on additional role of supporting wartime contributions to victory loans and health campaigns.

Victory Loans were Canadian government appeals for money to finance the war effort in WWI and WWII. The 9 Victory Loan campaigns of the Second World War used advertising focused on using vibrant graphics, patriotic fund pleas and a vast accompanying sales apparatus to raise Victory Loan funds from both the private and public sectors. The nine Victory Loans dating from June 15, 1941 to November 1, 1945 raised total cash sales of almost \$12 billion, about 52% from corporations and the rest from individuals including both adults and children.



A set of Royal Oak Dairy embossed and ACL bottles from the Second World War.

Dairy owners took a leadership role in raising funds for the war effort. One example is Fred Hamilton, owner of Royal Oak Dairy of Hamilton, who presided over several Home Front organizations including the local war board. Hamilton donated property on the dairy site to be used as a victory garden as well as encouraging employees to participate and contribute to war loan drives. He was the leading force behind Hamilton's "Milk for Britain" campaign. Perhaps because of Hamilton's involvement Royal Oak issued several different wartime slogan war milk bottles that encourage health and fitness and support victory loan drive campaigns.

## MILK . . . FIRST AID TO NATIONAL FITNESS



**"Milk a duty? Why, it's a pleasure!"  
"You said it, keeps you feeling tops"**

• Much more than any other single item of food, milk brings you a goodly supply of the essential elements needed daily for active bodies, alert brains, stamina — to get things done! Milk provides:

VITAMIN "A" TO BUILD UP RESISTANCE,  
VITAMIN "B2" FOR HEALTHY EYES  
CALCIUM FOR SOUND TEETH  
PROTEIN FOR BODY-BUILDING  
CALORIES TO POSTPONE FATIGUE

No other food is so economical, so rich in life-giving elements as milk. It provides sustained energy — and strength. Help yourself! Help your Empire! Join the thousands who keep fit with milk — enjoy at least three glasses every day!

THE MILK FOUNDATION OF TORONTO

**KEEP FIT! — DRINK THREE GLASSES EVERY DAY**

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Newspaper advertisements and media aimed at raising Home Front participation mirrored milk bottle slogans of the period. This specific example shows an ad issued by the Milk Foundation indicating their participation along with the local dairy in promoting milk as both a quality food product and an aid to national fitness in a time of increased rationing.



Examples of war era milk bottles from across Ontario.

***A Patriotic Appeal to Every Citizen!***

# MILK BOTTLE SHORTAGE!

*By Order of the Glass Administrator*

**ALL MILK BOTTLES ARE RATIONED!**

Your Route Salesman is anxious to pick up ALL EXTRA MILK BOTTLES from your home, garage or other buildings. We urgently request that you place out for collection all the empty milk bottles in your possession, no matter what their condition.

**SEE YOUR MILK SALESMAN  
...or PHONE YOUR DAIRY**

*Janitors, caretakers, and homes and public buildings without regular calls of a milk salesman, please call*

**MILK BOTTLE EXCHANGE—2-4448**

War milk bottles were probably issued in the first years of the Second World War period. In 1942 when glass rationing and cost reduction initiatives were put in place for dairies by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, Dairies were encouraged to keep using their supply of existing bottles rather than reissuing new delivery containers. This allowed new raw glass supplies to be used and diverted for critical wartime production needs. Fortunately for dairy collectors, these once reused bottles still exist in limited numbers and are highly prized by those in the dairy collecting hobby due to their rarity.