

Summit Historical Minute
Women in World War One
Presented by Sophie Reitz-Bouren
Council Meeting of February 14, 2017

The women of Summit started participating in the World War One effort before the war even started. In 1915 Miss Hilda Osborne* of the National Special Aid Society started canteen cooking to preserve food for rations. This department was later merged into the Red Cross.

In December of 1917 the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense organized a meeting at the Women's Institute which was located in Summit. They organized the Food Conservation Committee branch for Summit. Ester White was the chair for the unit and controlled rationing wheat, sugar and canned goods. 1918 the Speakers Bureau opened a division in Summit for women. The women would give 3 minute speeches in public places around Summit convincing Summit citizens to buy war bonds. They also created the Woman's Land Army which allied with the Union Division. The Women's Army was inspired from the British version of the unit and they opened plots of land to grow food. However, the Red Cross effort was by far the largest. Women in Summit made medical dressings and helmets, knitted sweaters and socks and mended uniforms at the local YMCA.

The women of Summit played a role in supporting our nation's war effort and were determined not to sit on the sidelines and let history pass them by.

* The Jersey Journal, Feb. 3, 1916, pg 2, col 6 --

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