

Christie Mill

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Christie Mills




As you gaze at the photographs of these old limestone ruins of the Christie Mill set amid the overgrown grass and foliage, pause for just a moment and imagine listening to the sound of the wind in the trees on a summer day. The aura of time past envelops you. Then, in another moment, think how different that scene would have been two centuries earlier. A site not yet in ruins but rather, a place alive with the sounds of a nineteenth-century white pioneer settlement: people, oxen, wagons, and sluicing water powering the machinery that would grind grain into meal for baking bread. Once a historic Cramahe landmark, Christie Mill, said to be named after the miller who operated it, is now but a place held in memory of the earliest years of Colborne and Lakeport, Ontario. Even the evocative stone ruins are gone, demolished over safety concerns in 2003 after a bid to preserve them was defeated. So it is only through sketches, photographs and words that the story of the mill's existence as a symbol of pioneer settlement will be kept alive.



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The Flour and Grist Mill

The flour and grist mill was built in the early years of the 1800s on land sold to Joseph Keeler in 1811, according to registry office records. Situated to the west of what is now Ontario Street in Colborne, the mill was thought to be at least two and a half storeys above ground and one and half below. It is likely that the mill had a "tub" wheel inside the building below ground level at the north end to drive the machinery.



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Joseph Keeler



Joseph Keeler, a United Empire Loyalist and land agent who brought 40 families with him from Vermont, settled in the area in 1793. The first 100 years of settlement in the Colborne – Lakeport area were dominated by the Keelers, father, son and grandson. The prominent Keeler names were Joseph Keeler, "Old Joe," 1763–1839; Joseph A. Keeler, "Young Joe," 1788–1855 and Joseph Keeler, MP, 1824–1881. Undaunted by the primeval forest that awaited them everywhere north of the shores of Lake Ontario, Joseph Keeler and his descendants were leaders in the establishment of the communities of Lakeport and Colborne, nearly midway between York (Toronto) and Kingston. Christie Mills was one of a number of flour and saw mills as well as other business ventures that the Keeler family built.



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