

## # 3 – The Significance of Flax Pulling



A vertical promotional graphic for Historic Hensall. At the top is a black and white architectural drawing of a large, multi-story building with many windows and a central entrance. Below this is the text "Historic HENSALL" in a stylized font, with "Historic" in script and "HENSALL" in bold, block letters. Underneath is a black and white photograph of several people in a field, engaged in pulling flax stalks. At the bottom of the graphic, it says "Sponsored by" followed by the Metzger logo, which includes the text "FINE QUALITY MEAT", "METZGER", and "[EST. 1990]". Below the logo, it says "See item #3 at" and "www.VillageofHensall.com".

Historic  
**HENSALL**

Sponsored by

FINE QUALITY MEAT  
**METZGER**  
[EST. 1990]

See item #3 at  
[www.VillageofHensall.com](http://www.VillageofHensall.com)

About 1888, George McEwan and Owen Geiger built a flax mill and two 40 x 100-foot storage barns on land adjacent to the salt works. The salt works had been established in 1879 behind what is now Thompson's Mill.

After threshing, the flax stalks were spread and allowed to ret or become pliable.

Many hands were necessary each harvest to hand pull the flax grown by area farmers. The pay for pulling the flax was \$5 an acre or from 50 cents to \$1.25, according to one's ability. Indians from nearby reserves were also brought in to pull and spread the flax, camping on the flax grounds or nearby fields.

The products of the mill were flax seed and tow.

In 1896, fire struck again in Hensall when an upset lantern started a fire that destroyed two barns full of unthreshed flax, ten stacks of processed flax, 1,000 cords of wood real cordwood and a house.

The mill was saved through the efforts of firemen who only had a hand machine to work with. One barn was rebuilt and destroyed by lightning. It was then rebuilt for the third time and along with the mill were used as chicken barns for over 15 years.

