

During the First World War 1914 - 18 , we held Garden Parties, Food Sales and Canvassed everyone in the Community to raise money for Patriotic Purposes, and to send boxes to the boys Overseas . One of the Special Garden Parties was held in July 1918 and Dr. Frank Benner gave a special talk on the "War Service he seen in Egypt" .

In March 1918 the 91st Battalion marched on foot from St. Thomas to Port Burwell, stopping at Richmond at noon and the Women's Institute served them Hot Coffee, Sandwiches and Cakes .

All the Women of the Community were busy knitting and Mrs. John Moore knit over 100 Pairs of Socks . A Knitting Contest was held with Mrs. Young and Mrs. Crawford as Captains . The Judges were Mrs. Laing, Mrs. Scanlan and Grace Laur, who decided in favor of Mrs. Young's side .

One Meeting was held in the Church on October, 1918, when 24 Boxes were packed and sent Overseas .

A Donation was made of \$2.50 each month to a Prisoner of War who was adopted by our Institute . Other donations were made to the Famine Fund, Armenian Relief, Navy League, the Greek and Russian Relief .

After the Armistice was signed we erected a Memorial Monument at the front of the Cemetery in Memory of the 12 boys from this Community who did not return .

The cost of this Monument was \$225.00, purchased from Atkinson Marble Company, Simcoe . Mr. George Carter, Mr. Harry Godwin and Mr. Will Green were ask to draw the gravel and dirt for the Plot and Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Godwin volunteered to oversee the work . The unveiling of the Monument took place on Sunday, September 26th, 1919, and a Memorial Service has been held annually ever since .

In July, 1920, we started to build Cement Side Walks in the Village, from the Store West was put down first .

In August, 1919, a Campaign for New Members was Organized with Miss Erie Haines and Miss Evelyn McConkey as Captains .

At the end of the Contest there were 69 Members .

As Miss Erie Haines was the Captain of the loosing side they planned a Halloween Party for the close of the Contest .

In 1919 Medical Inspection of Schools was urged and we met with the Trustees and arranged to have this done . Mrs. Bagshaw was the Nurse . This was an Institute work for 2 years and later taken over by the Township Board of Health .

We also helped with the Musical Festival for Elgin County held in St. Thomas; The Byron Sanitorium in London, and the Indian Reserve in Manitoba . We packed fruit, Jams and Vegetables for the Childrens Shelter in St. Thomas, sent fruit to the Sick Childrens Hospital in Toronto and sewed Childrens Nighties for Memorial Childrens Hospital, London .

Donations of Money was given to the Memorial Hospital, St. Thomas, and the Sick Childrens Hospital in London .

The exchange of Visits from the Neighboring Institutes was always a high light and one which we still continue .

During the depression years Christmas Baskets were given to the Shut-ins and the Needy families in the Community , Clothing, Quilts and Fruit were sent to families who had been burned out and a box was packed and sent to the Indian Reserve in North Bruce County .

In 1930 we voted \$10.00 yearly to help clean the West Cemetery . It has been increased to \$15.00 and in July, 1950, it was raised to \$25.00 .

In 1936 we assisted in the Districts first project of the Co-operative Programs by sending, Mrs. Stanley Simpson, as representative to the Convention, "Refinishing Furniture" ; The following years, Mrs. Geo. Procnier on, "Buymanship" ; Mrs. Von Brown and Mrs. Arthur Benner on "Vegetables" ; Mrs. Lorne Laing and Miss Bertha Orton on "Meats" . As the District work was changed to Lectures and Officers and Members Rallies we always attended these Meetings .

We also take an active part in the Winter Picnic and the Oratorical Contest for Public School Children .

When War was declared again in 1939, our Members went to work . Knitting, Sewing, Canvassing and Canning Jam . A Red Cross Society was organized in Aylmer and we worked with them . Our Knitting consisted of Socks, Sweaters, Mitts, and Cardigans for all branches of the Service . In the Sewing we did Hospital Gowns, Sheets, Bed Jackets, Handkerchieves and Towels and all kinds of Clothing for Adults and Children amounting to over 2000 articles and several Ditty Bags to the Armed Forces .

The Department of Women's Institute, Toronto, sent our Recipes and Instructions for making Jams and Jellies to ship Overseas . Mrs. Arthur Benner kindly opened her home for the Women to make Jam and all the ladies who could go, with their Kettles, Pans and Spoons would take their lunch and spend the day, washing and crushing fruit, weighing and stirring, carrying wood and making hot fires until they came home with burned fingers and aching feet, but feeling good because they had made several hundred pounds of delicious Jam . Then the next day they would go back and put the labels and tops on the Cans . The Red Cross furnished the 4 lb. Cans with 12 Cans in each Cartoon and we would have to take these to Aylmer for shipment .

We sent 16 cases of Commercial Jam .

We made 720 lbs. in 1940 - 41, 2052 lbs. in 1941 - 42,

2344 lbs. in 1942- 43 , 1336 lbs. in 1943 - 44

and 252 lbs. in 1944 - 45 . Consisting of Strawberry, Raspberry, Plum, Peach and Grape Jam .

The Apple Jelly turned out to be the best Apple Taffy in Elgin County , Making a grand total of 6704 lbs. of Jam .

Besides all this work, we gave money to the Red Cross, Central Fund, Finnish Relief, Russian and Chinese Relief, Boxes for the Boys and Active Service Room .

We gathered Salvage and sold; Served Lunches for the Blood Donars and held teas, Suppers and Auction Sales to raise funds . In fact the 4 years of War 1939 - 1943 were the busiest years of our Institute .

As the boys returned home they were presented with Leather Bill Folds and Belts for their War Services .

After all this War Activity we seem to take more interest in regular Institute Work, such as the projects given to us in the Co-operative program from the Department of Women's Institute in Toronto , the Winter Picnics of the East Elgin District; and the Oratorical Contest held each year for Public School Children . In 1940 a Girls Club was Organized with a Senior Leader and we still have a very Active Club . In 1947 Life Membership was given to Mrs. George Orton and Mrs. Lorne Iaing . We have taken several interesting Bus trips where we visited important Industries .

We have Social Evenings, Bingos, Penny Sales and Card Parties to raise funds for the New Hospital in St. Thomas, the Arena in Aylmer and local Community work .

The Institute purchased 25 folding chairs to be used at our meetings and will also be used by the whole community when wanted.

We decided to have correspondence with a Friendship Branch of the W.I. in England and the Merstham W.I. at Merestham, Surrey, England was chosen and Mrs. George A. Procunier was to be our correspondent. We have sent them boxes of food and sweets for their Christmas meetings ever since. At that time a lot of this stuff was rationed. One Christmas they sent us a beautiful Walnut Gavel and stand which we prize very much.

In Aug. 1948 one of our outstanding meetings was held on the spacious lawn of Mrs. Wray Miller when Mrs. Braine of England was our guest and spoke on "England to-day and the activities of their Institute". Neighboring institutes were also invited to join with us. She lived a few miles from Merstham but told us about the place. At the close of the program she was presented with a pearl necklace by Mrs. Arthur Benner and Mrs. Leon Carter and we also gave her \$10.00 in cash so she could buy something personal for herself as everything along that line was rationed in England. She stated she was going to buy nylons and take them back with her.

Some of the other outstanding programmes during the past few years were, Mr. Spencer McConnell of McConnell Nursery spoke on flowers, shrubs, bulbs and care of roses for the winter.

Mrs. Von Brown gave a very interesting account of her trip to England and also showed a number of snapshots. While there she had the pleasure of visiting the Merstham W.I.

Mrs. Clifford Ellis gave an account of her trip to Washington D.C.

Mrs. Fred Shively of Springfield spoke on her trip to Mexico.
of Calton

Mrs. Ray Baxter-told us about her trip to England and attending the Coronation while there.

We also have some of the Contestants in the Oratorical contests give their speech on our programs.

A book on the life of Dr. Banting was placed in the Richmond library in memory of Dr. H.J. Hart.

In 1949 Mrs. Ward Benner brought honor to our Institute by being a member of the Provincial Board, which position she held for three years. The Institute presented her with an Ontario Board Member Badge at the August meeting held at the home of her daughter Mrs. Max Mitchell.

In March 1950 we took hospitalization as a group in the Elgin Co-operative Medical Service with Mrs. Leon Carter as Secretary.

For a number of years we have entered exhibits at the Aylmer Fair and have won a number of prizes.

We made a quilt and entered it in the Salada Tea Co. contest. We were second with it at the District Annual that spring. At the same time we also made a quilt for the Centennial display of quilts at Anderson's store in St. Thomas. We sold tickets on these during the summer and made \$241.25. We also decorated a car and drove it in the parade for the Centennial ~~parade~~ for St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Other means of making money the last few years are "Catered to a wedding" held "food sales", "Mystery Parcels", "Birthday boxes and envelopes", "penny sales", "Plant, seed, bulbs sales", and "Surprise Tubs".

A few years ago we helped a new Canadian family who had been out only a couple of years when the man of the house passed away. This kindness gave the remainder of the family a new interest in friends in this country. We also helped a family when their house was destroyed by fire. We also have kept up our donations to The Navy League, Cancer Fund, St. John's Ambulance Corps, Can. National Institute for the Blind, Mental Health Assoc. ("Penny Round Bags), Manitoba Relief Fund, Hurricane Relief Flood Fund, the Unesco fund to help equip kitchen units in Ceylon, and the latest will be our ^{building} Museum-which the Institutes of Elgin County have purchased in St. Thomas.

In 1953 we helped the Richmond (West) Cemetery Board purchase a power mower and the back part of the cemetery has all been cleaned up, which was a great improvement. We still continue to have Decoration Day Sunday service in memory of our boys who did not return home from the past wars.

Mrs. H.L. Godwin and Mrs. George A. Procnier were also made life members, Mrs. Procnier has since passed away.

Our bus trips have been continued, a couple of years ago we all gathered by the bus in front of the Laing store in the morning and had our picture taken before leaving and also had the picture taken of our three living life members, the pictures are placed in this book.

Late years we have a picnic for either the July or August meeting going to St. Thomas Parks or to Tillsonburg Park.

We attended the 50th Anniversary of the Institutes of Ontario held at the O.A.C. Guelph and also a number attended the A.C.W.W. held in the Maple Leaf Gardens at Toronto in August of 1953.

In January of 1955 we are making plans to help pay our share on the new building which has been purchased in St. Thomas by the Institutes of Elgin County for a "County Museum"

Since January 1955- Some of the main work done by our members includes the distribution of cards for the T.B. X Ray Clinic. Each year some of our members help at the Well Baby Clinic at Aylmer and Strathville. We all met one afternoon and cut and sewed wollen rags for carpet for the Elgin County Pioneer Museum floors. Helped buy a Ventilator Fan for the Recreation Room at Elgin Manor.

A number of our members canvassed for funds for the Museum, and for the United Welfare Service for Elgin County.

We generally try to have a couple of quiltings with Pot Luck dinners at noon during the winter, these quilts are generally donated to the Elgin Manor or Salvation Army, or wherever the need is the greatest.

We have also had some very interesting programs including guest speakers, Mr. Clarke McDougall, artist of St. Thomas, demonstrating paintings.

Fred Barnim, barrister of Aylmer, on Wills.

Mrs. Kent Griffen, Aylmer, on Recreation Work.

Dr. C.A. Cleland, Supt. of Ont. Hospital, St. Thomas, we also made a tour of the hospital at a later date.

Tour of the Tobacco factory, Aylmer.

Mrs. Fred Clarke, Supt. of Mayberry Sanitorium, Northville, Mich.