

a gathering of people in this township. They had come to see for themselves such evidence of the prosperity and agricultural enterprise of the farmers of this rich township as this exhibition could afford."

It was a wonderful fair and not the first to be held. The prize list was amazing in its many classes for horses, cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, grain, roots and vegetables. The dairy and domestic gave prizes for butter, cheese, maple sugar, linen yarn, horseblankets, carpet sewing and knitting, wax fruit and feather flowers. Even in the prize results of this class the men were given all the credit! while in the mechanical class, entries were made for machinery, harness, corn brooms and ox yokes.

I wondered how the prize winners felt when they read this notice on the next page of the Journal--"We are requested by the secretary of the Yarmouth Agriculture Society, to state, that owing to not having received the Government grant yet, he is not able to appoint the day for the distribution of prize money, but notice will be given at an early day through the columns of this paper."--

The next fair is heard of in Yarmouth Centre. Mr. Andrew Mills and Mr. Alfred Buck, Yarmouth, recall vividly the Yarmouth Centre Fair. Mr. Mills estimated they were held there for about 25 years. Fair day was September 1st.

The grounds were 20 or 30 rods north of Talbot Street behind the old church on the west side of the crossing sideroad.

The Crystal Palace was a frame building where the exhibits were displayed--fine needlework, knitting, quilts, mats, butter, homemade cheese, "lovely apples", also cattle, sheep and hogs. Mr. Buck recalled vividly the side show man and the candy man from Port Stanley (Taffy Laur) who made pull taffy on the spot. He recalls how the McIntyre girls, Isabelle (later Mrs. Buck) and her sister, then 16 and 15 years of age, walked from their home west of St. James church to the fair, resting midway at their sisters who lived near the Glen school.

Mr. Mills termed it as quite a fair for those days, 1876. Recalling the racetrack, he said the main attraction for years were the Russ twins, Orrin and Warren, who hailed from the Russ' Corners. They were identical twins. They drove a spanking outfit, a team of dapple greys, as identical as they were, hitched to a white geared buggy with a black box. The twins, full-bearded at 25 and never having cut their wavy curls, wore white shirts, white pants, white plug hats and black Prince Albert coats, and always stole the show. They attended all the fairs (including Belmont) and always won first prize for their fancy carriage outfit. Whether it was the men or the horses who actually won, no one knew. This was in the 1870's and 80's.

The Yarmouth Centre event was a one day affair. Mr. Buck describes it as an encouragement to farmers to do better farming. The prizes were not large, and in time it was cancelled due to its nearness to St. Thomas which started their fairs about the middle of the century.

The St. Thomas Fair was first called the "East Elgin Riding Society Fair" then the "East Elgin Show". We are told they had a fine fair in 1866 but by 1872, it was losing in attendance and entries, while the West Elgin Fair at Wallacetown was attracting thousands, to its horse show. Later it was the "Southern County Fair" and in 1881 was "more successful than usual". The fair ran a week. Ten thousand people attended and the stables were soon packed full of teams.

The Lieutenant-Governor was there too, having come in on the new Credit Valley Railway which he describes as the band of iron between Toronto and St. Thomas.

This was an annual fair but gave up due to bad weather, small attendance and inability to pay the prize money. It was revived and is recalled by Archie Coulter in about 1897. Mr. Coulter described it as "a carnival type of fair." It also petered out from lack of interest by St. Thomas people. It is believed by some, that St. Thomas and Yarmouth joined in this fair, and it might be, because Mr. William Wickett, a bachelor lawyer was secretary of both groups about 1895. The fair was held behind Still's Mill on the site of the Elmdale Memorial Cemetery.

From here on there is no record of the Yarmouth Agriculture Society. They had been included in the Departmental annual reports, Toronto from 1854 to 1906. W. G. Sanders was secretary from 1897 to 1906. He lived south of Yarmouth Centre on Concession 7. The farm is now owned by his grandson, Dr. Kenneth

Penhale. Mr. Sanders was a good farmer, well known locally and showed beef cattle at many fairs. Later he was reeve of the township and died at the homestead.

The Agriculture Society disappeared from the Department Records, September 1st, 1906 with 176 members and a grant of \$64.

Now may I say in closing:

Be a participant rather than an onlooker in this Centennial Year. You will be happier for it and Canada better because of it.

Oh the ecstasy of Creativity

It lends luster to life and longevity,

A literary gem or a sculptured piece,

A failed endeavour or a masterpiece,

There always something new under the sun,

To invent or undertake to be done,

Kindle and re-ignite the fire of desire

To create and re-create, but quench not the fire.

...written by Mrs. Russell Axford
(February 24, 1967)

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PORT STANLEY BRANCH OF

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

1929 - 1954

Realizing there was a need for a community organization, women of Port Stanley decided to organize a Women's Institute Branch. The motto "For Home and Country", the reasonableness of the fee, the fact that all money raised remained in the local treasury to be spent as the members wished, were all contributing factors leading to the choice of the Institute.

On May 29, 1929, Mrs. T. G. Winder of Aylmer organized the Port Stanley Branch with Mrs. George Jackson as president and Mrs. George Smith as secretary.

Unfortunately the first minute book has been lost so this history must start with May 1934. During that year the Ball Team with its executive were entertained and they were helped financially as well. Members worked with a committee to sponsor a Hobby Fair. A cookie contest was sponsored and the recipes for same were printed and sold. Members made a layette to have on hand in case of emergency. This was repeated many times.

During 1935-36, we supported the School Fair. We made our first donation to the War Memorial Children's Hospital, which has become an annual gift. Each Christmas we send toys to the little patients in the Hospital.

1937-38 Coronation Year. Free ice-cream was given school children and members worked with the Chamber of Commerce and Village Council in a programme of celebration. The first tag day for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind was undertaken and became an annual project until 1953. Cash donations were made also.

1938-39 we catered for the Eightieth Anniversary of the Masonic Order: sponsored a scrap book competition, giving a prize to each grade of the Public School in commemoration of the Royal Visit; catered for the supper and joined the Chamber of Commerce and Village Council in ceremonies opening the King George VI Bridge: affiliated with the Local Council of Women, a practice which was continued for many years.

During the War Years we worked as a unit within the Red Cross Society. With the exception of convenors of sewing the staff of the local Branch of the Red Cross were

Institute members. Hundreds of articles were sewn, thousands knitted. We undertook the registration of women for the Canadian Women's Volunteer Service; financially supported the Canadian Red Cross Society; the F.W.I.O. War Charities Fund; the Mobile Kitchen Fund; gave money for sugar to make jam for Britain; Navy League of Canada. We supported the Elgin Regimental Fund; Russian War Relief; Chinese War Relief; honey and maple syrup for Britain. We sent 121 boxes to local boys serving in the Armed Forces. Each box contained a pair of hand knitted socks. The wool was purchased by our Branch and knitted by members. Good used clothing was sent to Britain and to Russia; jams, jellies and soups were given for Canteen work through the Committee for Auxiliary War Services; we helped at Hostess House at the Fingal Bombing School. We sponsored collection of scrap; donated books and magazines to the Air Training School at St. Thomas; sent toys to the British Isles to be used by Merchant Seamen as Christmas gifts for their children. A house to house canvass was made for blood donors. Four blood clinics were held in Port Stanley, the W.I. serving hot drinks and aiding with the clinics. We sponsored a Home Nursing and First Aid course under the St. John's Ambulance Association.

During all the years the Institute has co-operated with the Board of Education, the Village Council and the Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis Club of St. Thomas get-together. We donated a piano to the Public School and have been a force behind the teaching of music in the school. In 1952 we presented a framed portrait of Queen Elizabeth II to the school in commemoration of the Coronation.

Food parcels were sent monthly to three different Institute Branches in the British Isles. Two of these Branches have sent us a thank you box, one of which contained a beautiful linen tea cloth.

From 1934 to 1940 Christmas Cheer baskets were packed and sent to the needy, the sick and shut-ins. Members of our Branch, who are confined to hospital during the holiday period are remembered with a small gift. Cards of sympathy, get well wishes and congratulations are sent to members and non-members alike.

In 1944 we started our Tweedsmuir History, the compilation being done by Miss Agnes Hepburn. For this book Miss Hepburn compiled a short Historical Sketch of the Village of Port Stanley. Over 400 copies have been sold and copies can be found in public and

University Libraries in Britain, the United States of America and in Canada from ocean to ocean. We are very proud of this achievement and of having so talented a member. This project was a part of the Centennial Celebrations in 1952.

In 1948 the Branch sponsored a Well-Baby Clinic. Before the days of the Elgin County Health Unit, we sponsored a dental survey in the school and later a health survey. We have been alert in promoting health by means of literature, keeping the streets clean, moral support of immunization and supporting all agencies which strive to improve the health and social welfare of the village.

We have supported the Community Hall Board, where we hold our meetings, by gifts of cash, china, silver and glassware sufficient to serve 150 people, two dozen card tables and chairs, cash to help redecorate, put blinds on the windows, screen the windows, and kitchen equipment. Each year we donate plants for flower beds in front of the Community Hall and Public Library.

The Public Library has been another interest. Each year we give subscriptions for good magazines for the reading room and on the completion of our new Library in 1948, placed a table and accessories below the memorial window.

Every year good clean warm clothing is sent to "Save the Children Fund" in Toronto as well as cash donations. Baby bonds were sold for the Children's Aid Society.

The Memorial Hospital has been supported. Sun-Glo Jell was sold, the money going to the erection of the Nurses' Residence on St. George St. A goodly sum was donated to the new St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital and members assisted in sewing for the same. One of our members helps regularly in the Tuck Shop.

A cash donation was made to the Elgin Memorial Centre.

We have supported all County, Ontario and National projects such as the Adelaide Hoodless Fund, Princess Alice Foundation Fund, Tractors for Greece, Korean Relief for War Widows, Elgin County Scholarship Fund, Museum Fund and a television for Elgin Manor.

Each year we have supported the St. John's Ambulance Association. Two of our members helped with the first aid station at the beach during the summer months.

We are the sponsors for the Girl Guides and Brownies. We purchased two dozen chairs to equip their room in the Public School. Once a year they have provided an enjoyable

programme for one of our meetings.

We have helped fire and disaster victims, sponsoring showers of clothing, provisions and fruit. We have also established a fund whereby residents of the village could give and we also gave cash donations to the fund. We have helped buy clothing for needy children. One of our local boys was chosen to attend the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II as a Boy Scout representative. We gave \$25.00 toward his expense.

Christ Church has built two cottages for aged people, where they may live rent free. The sum of \$25.00 was voted for this work.

For a few years we fostered the Blue Cross Hospital Plan.

We have not forgotten the social side of our programme. The June meeting is always a picnic meeting held at the home of one of our members. Periodically we have a family night; have observed two of our anniversaries and always enjoy a social and friendly time at each meeting. After the war we entertained the war brides who came to our village and presented each with a small gift.

We have completed twenty-five years of worth-while service. There is still much to do. We look forward to being even a greater force for good, not only in our municipality but in the world at large.

Written by (Mrs. W. C.) Beatrice Wheaton
Secretary.