

# CRINAN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

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Mrs. J. C. McMillan

10.

President of the Western Ontario  
Women's Institutes.  
1922.



Mrs. J.C. McMillan - First President  
of Crinon W.I. In 1922. President  
of Western Ontario Women's Institute.

1919 - 1969

The following have served as

	<u>Presidents</u>	and	<u>Secretary Treasurers</u>
1919 - 1924	Mrs. McMillan		Mrs. Geo. Carroll Miss Sara McColl Mrs. Jas. Andrews Mrs. Stanley Haines
1924	Mrs. Neil McEachren		"
to	Mrs. A. J. McMurchy		Miss Bessie Stalker
	Mrs. Frank McLarty		Mrs. Neil McEachren
	Mrs. Geo. Carroll		Miss Georgina McCallum
	Mrs. Jas. Andrews		Mrs. Geo. Carroll
1936	Mrs. Walter Cadogan		Mrs. M. B. McColl
1936 - 1937	Mrs. A. J. McMurchy		Mrs. Haines
1938 - 1939	Mrs. Henry Urquhart		Mrs. Jas. Andrews
1939 - 1940	Mrs. John McEachren		Mrs. M. B. McColl
1940 - 1942	Mrs. Walter Cadogan		Mrs. Henry Urquhart
1943 - 1945	Mrs. Neil McEachren		Mrs. Donalda McRae
1945 - 1946	Mrs. Walter Cadogan		"
1946 - 1948	Mrs. Gertrude McAlpine		"
1948 - 1950	Mrs. John Carmichael		"
1950 - 1952	Mrs. Neil McEachren		"
1952 - 1953	Mrs. E. Dawson		"
1953 - 1954	Mrs. D. McRae		Mrs. S. McIntyre
1954 - 1955	Mrs. Wm. Zoller		Mrs. A. Carmichael
1955 - 1957	Mrs. M. B. McColl		"
1957 - 1958	Mrs. Doug. McMurchy		Mrs. Gilbert Livingstone
1959 - 1960	Mrs. D. B. McCallum		"
1960 - 1961	Mrs. D. Livingstone		"
1961 - 1962	Mrs. D. Livingstone		Mrs. John Carmichael
1962 - 1963	Mrs. M. B. McColl		"
	Mrs. D. B. McCallum		"
1963 - 1964	Mrs. D. B. McCallum		"
1964 - 1965	Mrs. W. G. McCallum		Mrs. Harold Carroll
	Mrs. Ken McAlpine		"
1965 - 1966	Mrs. Ken McAlpine		"
1966 - 1967	Mrs. John Carmichael		Mrs. G. Livingstone
1967 - 1968	Mrs. Geo. Jamieson		"
1968 - 1969	"		"
1969 - 1970	"		Mrs. Frank Dewitte
1970-72	Mrs. Horald Carroll		Mrs. Frank Dewitte
1972-73	Mrs. Horald Carroll		Mrs. Doug. McMurchy (Sec.) Mrs. Geo. Jamieson (Treas.) Mrs. Doug. McMurchy (Sec.) Mrs. Geo. Jamieson (Treas.)
1973-74	Mrs. Duncan Tait		

## HISTORY OF CRINAN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Like any rural community, Crinan has a long tradition of friendly co-operation from the earliest days of bees for quilting, spinning, sewing, carpet rags, and wool picking. But it first took organized form, apart from church groups, in the Red Cross work of the first World War. When this work was ended, it seemed unfortunate to many of the members to lose the satisfaction of meeting and working together as an organized community group. The formation of the Women's Institute was suggested by several of the women, and particularly advocated by Mrs. J.C. McMillan, who was always keenly interested in the Crinan community and had become very enthusiastic about the Women's Institute movement.

At a meeting held in the classroom of Argyle Presbyterian Church, the C.W.I. was organized on April 24th, 1919. The meeting was attended by three representatives from the district - Mrs. Whiting, District President for West Elgin, Mrs. McLevey, District Secretary, and Mrs. A. D. McGeegan, all of Rodney.

Mrs. John C. McMillan was the natural choice as president of the new society, and her enthusiasm, diplomacy and wit guided it through its first five years. Mrs. George Carroll was first appointed the office of secretary, and when she was forced to resign because of family duties, Miss Sarah McColl was appointed.

The first meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Neil McEachren on May 19, 1919, with 17 members present. Since that time the monthly meetings have been held at the homes of the members, as we have no community hall or building.

In its first years, the host was not unscathed by the visit of the Women's meetings, since it usually involved stabling the horses and hitching them to their respective buggies. We even have had such snow that to attend meetings the sleigh teams were necessary to bring our ladies. Then came a period when we entertained the other men of the community who brought their wives in high square cars, and slithered up the greasy roads to call for them at the end of the meeting. Now, driving their good cars on good roads, the women are almost completely self-sufficient, and the family's only contact with the meeting is to hear the reports round the supper table and enjoy their results throughout the year.

The results, as we survey the thirty-four years, have been both varied and extensive. In them we see the three-fold pattern of any healthy organization, as we find the Women's Institute preserving the past, serving the present, and building the future.

Most of the Crinan district was settled by Highland Scots more than 100 years ago. Scottish names still predominate; and at special programs, Scottish tunes are always most frequently played and most heartily applauded. This is particularly true of the

Grandmothers' Meeting, the annual occasion on which the Institute entertains the grandmothers of the district. Old time costumes are worn, antiques are sometimes displayed, and the program, frequently provided by the grandmothers, has for many years been enlivened by the music of Mrs. John McPherson, still youngest of them all at eighty-nine. For this meeting the traditional recipes of oatcakes, gingerbread and marble cake are revived, as well as soda biscuits and cheese, and the lunch is as bountiful as pioneer standards demand.

As well as this annual recognition of the early days of Crinan, the preservation of their history has also been ensured by the Institute. Since for so many of its members family history has been closely intertwined with the entire history of the community, the Institute has always been keenly interested in local history, and welcomed the opportunity of compiling it in the Tweedsmuir Book. It also was typical of Crinan that their radio program over CHLO should take the form of a sketch of the community history compiled and read by Mrs. W.G. McCallum.

One highlight along the way was the observing of the 25th Anniversary of our branch of the Women's Institute on April 13th, 1944. This was held in the school house U.S.S. No. 3, with the president, Mrs. N. McEachren, presiding. It was also through the activity of the Institute that a fence with stone posts and iron gates was built around the Simpson's Cemetery, the first cemetery in the district. Although it is in Mosa Township, it was used by the Crinan settlers.

As we look through the Minute Books for the Institute services to the present, we find a remarkable record of local, nation and international events of the past 34 years. It is recorded in the most practical possible, by action and contributions in response to urgent human need. Sickness and death in the community are recalled because of the Institute's gifts and remembrances. Families who had losses from fire or accident were given timely and practical help. To Argyle Church, which has provided a meeting place and facilities for special meetings and projects, the Institute donated linen for the Communion Table and Baptismal Bowl and an oil stove.

In the history of the Institute's contributions outside the community there is equal variety. We find such names as "Save the Children Fund", "Red Cross", "Cancer Fund", "Navy League", "British War Victims Fund", the Blind, Tornado, Children Shelter in St. Thomas, War Memorial Hospital, and Aid to Greece. Quantities of honey and other food were sent to Britain at intervals during the war.

It is natural that the Institute's greatest activity should be in response to the most urgent need - for clothing, food and money during the Second World War. Red Cross work was carried on in conjunction with the West Lorne Red Cross Society. The Institute's minutes for 1939-45 are a record of constant activity in sewing, knitting, quilting and jam making and raising funds. The records show 1337 knitted articles and 2414 pieces of sewing. The difficult task of convenorship of the Red Cross Work was shared by Mrs. J.M. McGill, Convenor of Knitting, Mrs. D.M. McCallum, Convenor of Sewing, and Mrs. Philip McCallum, Convenor of Quilt-

making. A large number of quilts were made and quilted in members' homes. The school rooms of U.S.S.No.3 and 9, Alborough, were also available for the Institute for quilting bees and for social evenings to raise money for war purposes in these years.

The particular interest of the Institute was in sending boxes to the eighteen local boys serving in the Armed Forces. Boxes were sent regularly, and at the War's close \$150 was on hand. This money was donated to Wooden Camp as a memorial. The inscription was as follows: Crinan W.I. in honour of our returned soldiers and those sleeping in foreign soil.

In 1944 the Institute was able to make a practical contribution to the health services of the community. Following an explanation of the Ontario Hospital Association Plan (later called the Blue Cross) by Dr. Frank Brent, the Institute decided to make the plan available to its members - Mrs. George Johnson being the secretary since its formation.

Probably the Institute's most immediate results in building the future can be seen in the effect of its programs upon its members. The ability to conduct a business meeting correctly and to take part in discussion is a skill which many women owe to their participation in Institute work. Each program is arranged by a convener of one of the Standing Committees, and the members have found the preparations of papers and the organization of programs on the various themes an interesting and educational experience. Occasionally, outside speakers have given talks on health, law and other subjects. From among its own members the Institute remembers with pride and gratitude and work of Mrs. Agnes McLean, whose thoughtful papers and stimulating programs set a very high standard for our meetings.

Demonstrations of new methods of home making show their results in the homes of the community. Institute members have also benefitted individually by learning special skills through courses offered by the Department. Courses in home nursing, sewing, furniture refinishing, meat cooking and rug making have been taken. On one occasion the Institute paid the expenses of two local girls attending a short course at MacDonald Hall, Guelph. In recent years, annual bus trips have provided educational holidays for the women of the community.

In recent years many of the Crinan Institute members were able to appreciate the fusion of the past and present in attending two events of historic significance - the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the W.I. at Guelph in 1947, and the convention of the A.C.W.W. in Toronto on August 22nd, 1953. It is perhaps a special satisfaction to recall that it all began 56 years ago from a group of Canadian women no larger than theirs.

As they remember their own history, they recall again Mrs. J.C.McMillan who first made them feel, not officially, but personally a part of the larger group. In her first year as President of the local branch, she was appointed 2nd Vice-President of West Elgin District. In 1921 she became District President. Their personal interest was extended farther when she later became Chairman of the London Convention Area. The Crinan branch will

always be proud that their president was the first woman from Elgin to hold this office.

This year (1953) Mrs. Donaldda McRae is president, and Mrs. Stewart McIntyre secretary-treasurer of the C.W.I. It has not always been easy to find women who could take time from their busy personal lives to accept the additional responsibility of office. Yet, in the list of officers from 1919 to 1953, we find the names of most of the busiest women of the community. During the years between 1919 and the present, the following women have served as presidents: Mrs. J. MacMillan, Mrs. Neil McEachren, Mrs. A. J. McMurchy, Mrs. Frank McLarty, Mrs. George Carroll, Mrs. Jas. Andrews, Mrs. Walter Cadogan, Mrs. John McEachren, Mrs. Earl Dawson, Mrs. Gertrude McAlpine, Mrs. John Carmichael, and Mrs. Donaldda McRae.

Those who filled the secretary-treasurer position are as follows: Mrs. George Carroll, Miss Sarah McColl, Miss Jessie McColl, Mrs. James Andrews, Mrs. Stanley Haines, Miss Bessie Stalker, Mrs. Neil McEachren, Mrs. Douglas Livingston, Mrs. M.B. McColl, Mrs. Henry Urquart, Mrs. Donaldda McRae for six years, and Mrs. Stewart McIntyre.

Some of the activities of the present time are sewing for the new St. Thomas Hospital and the Tweedsmuir Book, the history of the farms in our community.

Crinan Women's Institute.

- It is to be noted the following article was written at the time the Crinan Women's Institute attained its 25th birthday April, 1944.

Celebrations were held in Union S. S. No.3. A number were present that day who were present at the organization of the Institute in April 24th 1919, when the late Mrs. Whiting, Rodney, District President and Organizer, Mrs. McLewey, Rodney District Secretary with Mrs. McGugan also in attendance launched this organization on its way at a meeting held in Argyle Presbyterian church, Crinan. They have had a part in its achievements from the beginning, and so, today as is usual on anniversaries let us review briefly and, as far as our records will permit, the history and activities of our society, recalling the names of some who have shouldered responsibility during these 25 years and telling something of what has been accomplished.

During the first World War the Crinan women had a Red Cross Society functioning. When the war ended and there was no further need for Red Cross work it was decided not to disband, but to continue as a Women's Institute, hence the organization Meeting referred to above.

The first regular Meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Neil McEachren on May 19th, 1919, with 17 present. Mrs. J. C. McMillan, the first President held office from 1919 to 1924. Miss Sara McColl, Mrs. G. Carroll and Mrs. Jas. Andrews serving as secretaries during this time. Mrs. Neil McEachren was second President, Mrs. Stanley Haines acting as secretary. Mrs. A. J. McMurphy was the third President, Mrs. Haines continuing as secretary. Mrs. F. McLarty was next President and Bessie Stalker secretary. Mrs. Geo. Carroll followed with Mrs. Neil McEachren, secretary. Then came Mrs. Jas. Andrews as President with Mrs. Douglas Livingstone as secretary. Mrs. W. Cadogan followed with Mrs. Carroll as secretary. Mrs. McMurphy was next with Mrs. M.B. McColl, secretary. Mrs. J. McEachren followed with Mrs. Jas. Andrews, secretary. Mrs. W. Cadogan again was President with Mrs. M.B. McColl, secretary. That brings us down to the present with Mrs. Neil McEachren President, and Mrs. Henry Urquhart, secretary.

In the course of these 25 years the Institute has engaged in varied activities. The first money earned and contributed was spent for linen covers for the Communion Table, - the old ones having been made into bandages for the war. A baptismal bowl and coal oil stove were also purchased for the church. During Mrs. J.C. McMillan's presidency the present fence was built around Simpson's Cemetery.