

Our Institute year begins after the District Annual Convention, so that the first District centennial events began in January of 1967. There are fifteen Institute Branches in West Elgin and these each have a representative to our County Museum, and each Branch is an Auxiliary of the Museum. A year of activities was planned by the Executive of the Museum to celebrate "Centennial Year". Some of these were exhibits set up by special Committees in - old glass, buttons, antique china, a display of paintings of "Historical Places", and antique furniture belonging to members. Social affairs were an "Old Time Tea" at which an antique white china tea service was used. Large old fashioned cookies were served. The Ladies serving wore their "Centennial costumes". An "Old Time Party with old time games was held on another evening. The Institutes of Elgin County carried out these affairs.

West Elgin held a Christmas Teas in Anderson's store, St. Thomas. The ladies again wore their centennial costumes. It was the day of the Santa Claus Parade and a good crowd came in for a cup of tea and toasted scones in the morning. In the afternoon Christmas cake with a cup of tea was served. A bake table was a feature, and such foods as home made bread, home made jams and jellies, mince meat and christmas cake were sold. Proceeds amounted to \$370.00. This was for the barn fund. The Museum Committee accepted the gift of a barn from Mr. Scott McKay. This is to be placed on a foundation on the Museum grounds to provide accommodation for antique farm equipment. The Rotarians of St. Thomas gave \$1,500.00 toward the project.

The annual Cancer Tea of West Elgin was held at Middlemarch, and was carried out by the co-operation of the various branches. A good sum was realized for the Cancer Cupboard. This is a yearly event of the West Elgin District Institutes.

At the Winter Picnic at Wallactown, the Cowal Institute put on a skit depicting "A Yearly Institute Meeting". Eight ladies wore centennial costumes. Each told a little about her dress.

The District Annual Convention at Crinan featured a dress show of "Centennial Costumes". Many members attended the meeting in costume to give a "Centennial" atmosphere.

Some Branches planted trees, renovated their Community Hall, and improved their own farms and homes as a "Centennial" project.

At Christmas time "Christmas 1967" was the theme for a Christmas setting in the office window of the Bell Telephone Company in St. Thomas, arranged by the District of West Elgin. The "Old Time" toys and articles were on loan from the Elgin County Museum. A Christmas Tree featured the old time paper decorations, and little wax candles in clip on holders, and strung pop corn. There was a hand made rug on the floor and an

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antique rocking chair and throw, a rocking horse (hand made), a doll cradle and doll. The Curator of Histories, the District President and the Assistant Curator had charge of setting up the display.

At the London Area Convention, held at the Carousel Motel, London, the theme for the program was "Centennial Year". Mrs. George Wilson showed recent slides of activities held in the ten Districts of the London Area. The ten Districts took part in portraying the History of Canada of the past one hundred years. Each District had ten years to depict, and ten minutes to perform their skit.

West Elgin had the years 1927-37, and it took the form of a radio broadcast, high lighting the outstanding events of that period.

The Dionne Quintuplets were there, all five of them, in their bassenette.

The Broadcaster wore a Centennial dress. Three West Elgin ladies wore costumes of that period. One modeled a wedding dress worn in 1928 by her mother-in-law. She carried a bouquet of Old Time Roses and looked lovely; another lady wore her "Going Away Dress" of 1928, and it too was most attractive. The third costume was a dressy outfit. It was a long lace dress and with it the model wore a large picture hat.

This skit, though simple, was most effective and interesting.

In all Branches historic events of the day were recorded. Several Branches made "Centennial Quilts", and the Dunwich Institutes displayed their quilts at the Wallacetown Fair. Cowal had the first prize quilt, and Iona Station the second prize one.

In all Branches the yearly programs centred around the "Centennial Year". Histories of the province were given. Prime Ministers of the past were studied. Some Branches reviewed their own Branch histories.

More than two hundred persons from West Elgin attended Expo -67 on Institute sponsored and arranged trips. Truly it was a wonderful year - a good preparation for the beginning of - A NEW CENTURY OF PROGRESS.

BRANCH INSTITUTES OF WEST ELGIN

BOXALL

RIVER ROAD

CLACHAN

RODNEY

CRINAN

SHEDDEN

COWAL

TALBOTVILLE

DUTTON

PAYNE'S MILLS

IONA

TYRCONNEL

IONA STATION

WALLACETOWN

MIDDLEMARCH

WEST LORNE

BOXALL WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

At a meeting held in Boxall School on April 10th, 1941, it was decided to form a branch of the Women's Institute, to be known as Boxall Women's Institute. Mrs. J. R. Futcher and Miss Margaret Lyle of Middlemarch instituted our branch. Miss Lyle presided for the election of officers which included Mrs. D. B. McKinley as the first president, and Mrs. John Carter as the first secretary-treasurer.

During the second world war, the members made 621 pounds of jam for Britain, numerous quilts for refugees, and sent parcels to local boys overseas as well as to the prisoners of war. A great deal of sewing and knitting was done for the Red Cross.

Through the years the school pupils have been supplied with Sunday School papers, and received Christmas candy treats. Our Institute has also sponsored the Hallowe'en U.N.I.C.E.F. Fund in our community for the past five years. Other activities include assisting at the local Well Baby Clinic; canvassing for the United Welfare Services; starting bank accounts of \$1 for babies of members; yearly support of the local Fair; remembering the shut-in's, and faithfully supporting all Institute projects.

CLACHAN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The Clachan Branch of Women's Institutes was organized by Miss B. Gilholm of Bright, Ontario, January 14th, 1914. Just a few women were present at the first meeting but interest was soon aroused and during the first year there was a membership of forty-one. In that year the first World War broke out and the W.I. undertook Red Cross work and many ways and means were found to bring the women of the community together and of instilling a spirit of co-operation.

Mrs. J. H. Trestain held the honour of being the first President, and Miss Cassie McLarty (Mrs. J.W. Campbell) the first Secretary-Treasurer.

The regular monthly meetings have been held in Clachan Hall, or in members' homes on the 4th Thursday of the month. Good programmes of general interest have sustained the membership through the years. Worthy projects both at home and afar benefit materially and financially through our efforts.

During the two World Wars many a quilting party produced warm bedding and clothing for the unfortunate people of other lands. Boxes were packed with treats and comforts for our local boys in service. Each Christmas season the aged and indisposed of the community are remembered with food or flowers.

Being the social centre of our community, our local hall commands our physical and financial efforts. Through the years we have added a kitchen and rest rooms; improved the stage and did much painting and repairs. Sheds were built to shelter the horses until the automobile outnumbered them. Then the proceeds of the sale of the sheds was used to install hydro. The hall has been our main source of income when we put on Suppers, National Film Board Concerts, and catered for Wedding parties. Our W.I. short courses, Hallowe'en Parties, Card Parties and dances, liven up our winter activities. Our annual Family Night brings out our friends and neighbours to hear guest speakers who tell of journeys they have taken and show us their picture slides. A study of Public Speaking has been a school project, as well as school beautification and bird life. A refreshment booth at Rodney Fair has been an annual event for seven years, where we welcome friends and make new ones. Another pleasure is our Bus Trips through our beautiful and fertile countryside.

In February of 1964 we celebrated fifty years of organization that has benefited not only the individual members but every family in the community of the little village of Clachan.

CRINAN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Crinan Women's Institute was organized on April 24th, 1919, at a meeting held in the classroom of Argyle Presbyterian Church, Crinan. Mrs. J.C. McMillan had advocated the formation of a Women's Institute as she had become very enthusiastic about the movement. The meeting was attended by three representatives of the District; - Mrs. Whiting, District President, Mrs. G.A. McLevey, Secretary, and Mrs. A.D. McGugan, all of Rodney.

Mrs. J. C. McMillan was first President of the organization and guided it through its first five years. Mrs. George Carroll was first appointed to 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 19th, 1919 with seventeen 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.

One highlight along the way was the observance of the 25th Anniversary of Crinan W.I. on April 13th, 1944. This was held in U.S.S. No. 3 with the president Mrs. Neil McEachren presiding.

It was 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. To Argyle Church, which has provided a meeting place and facilities for special meetings and projects, the Institute has donated linen for the Communion Table, a Baptismal Bowl, and an oil stove.

During the second World War, Red Cross work was carried on in conjunction with the West Lorne Red Cross Society. The Institute's minutes from 1939 - 1945 are a record of constant activity in sewing, knitting, quilting, jam-making, and raising funds. The particular interest of the Institute was in sending boxes to the eighteen boys from this community who were serving in the armed forces. Boxes were sent regularly and at the close of the war \$150 was on hand, this was donated to Woodeden Camp as a memorial to our boys.

On April 22nd, 1954, the thirty-fifth Anniversary of Crinan W.I. was held at Argyle Church (Presbyterian) with eighty-one guests registering. On April 16, 1959, Crinan W.I. celebrated their fortieth anniversary at the home of Mrs. Geo. Johnston.

Some of our activities at the present time include sponsoring a Korean child in co-operation with neighbouring Institutes, through the Save the Children Fund, and the compilation of our Tweedsmuir History Book.

COWAL WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

On May 5th, 1925, the Cowal Women's Institute was organized with the aid of Mrs. Luke Brown of Iona, and Mrs. John Sells of Shedden. A slate of officers was drawn up at that time as follows: President, Mrs. D.E. Carroll; 1st Vice-Pres., Mrs. Gordon Little; 2nd Vice-Pres. Miss Stella Smith; Sec.-Treas. Miss Jeanie Campbell; Asst. Sec-Treas. Miss Anna B. Murray; Directors, Mrs. Alex McLachlin, Mrs. A.M. Campbell, Mrs. Robt. Campbell; District Director, Miss Jean Campbell.

Through the years the Cowal branch has worked in the community for the benefit of the community and its members. They have helped to maintain the community hall, furnishing it with equipment, dishes, silverware, etc. They have been very active in sponsoring the local 4H Homemaking Clubs, - the first such Club was sponsored in 1938. Since that time they have seen many of their girls go on to greater things as a result of their training. We now have a long list of provincial honor girls.

During the war years every home was affected and every woman did some kind of war work. Boxes were sent regularly to our local boys overseas. When all our boys came home safely they were presented with \$25 or an equivalent gift to show our appreciation. Boxes were sent after the war through C A R E to the people of Britain.

In 1952 the "Morning Glory" quilt was made and entered in the Salada Tea contest and displayed in one of the department stores in St. Thomas during Elgin's Centennial. Money raised by its sale was given to the Elgin County W'I. Centennial Scholarship Fund.

In 1950 the Bobier Convalescent Home was furnished in Dutton. We have a member on the Auxiliary Board and our branch furnished a room, - recently money has been donated to redecorate it.

In 1951 a new cookbook was compiled, replacing the original one of 1928.

We serve meals at different functions in our township and community to assist with finances. We also have card parties in the winter when people of the community and surrounding area get together and enjoy "500".

Our meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month. The "Grandmothers Meeting" is always a special occasion when we honor all the grandmothers in the community. Family Night is another special time when all the members and their families get together for an evening of fun and entertainment. Members take turns with the responsibilities of regular meetings and many an enjoyable evening of fellowship has been spent together. There are no life members in our branch.