

DUTTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The beginnin of Dutton Women's Institute was instigated by a man, not a woman. Mr. Archie McColl was Secretary of the West Elgin Farmer's Institute and realized the benefit that a Women's Institute would be to Dutton and district. In order to create interest in the project he placed a large advertisement in the local paper requesting the attendance of the ladies at the next meeting of the Farmer's Institute on the afternoon of February 10th, 1905. East Elgin already had a thriving Institute and he felt that West Elgin should have the same.

Quite a number of ladies turned out for the meeting. Miss Maddock of Guelph was the special speaker for the ladies and spoke on the subject "The Science of better Homemaking." After the meeting she had a conference with the ladies in the council room of the hall, in which she pointed out the aims and objectives of the Women's Institute. As a result of this meeting the Dutton Women's Institute was organized with the following officers: President, Mrs. James Poole; Vice-Pres. Miss Flora McLean; Sec.-Treasurer, Miss Effie Graham, now Mrs. Garfield Ross.

Before the second meeting another advertisement was placed in the paper urging all the ladies in West Elgin to become members. A goodly number of women turned out to this meeting. Mrs. Pool never did act as President and Miss McLean took her place and did a splendid job. Miss Graham was forced through illness to relinquish her office and she was succeeded by Miss Minnie Gow.

In those days it took courage to belong to any organization outside of the home and the church, but the following women became charter members: Mrs. J.A. Campbell, Miss Nancy Kerr, Mrs. Archie McWilliams, Mrs. Duncan McCallum, Mrs. Edw. Docker, Mrs. Wm. Kendall, Mrs. J. Pool, Mrs. Peter Salmon, Mrs. Daniel Graham, Mrs. Alex McWilliams, Mrs. Duncan Graham, Mrs. L.C. Lanning. There were no minutes of the first meetings since the Department furnished the minute, cash, and membership books, and they had not yet arrived.

Two Department speakers held a series of meetings. Miss Mabel Gowenlock of Toronto, and Miss Rife of Helpeler, addressed over 100 ladies and later an evening meeting was addressed by Mr. C. St. Clare Leitch, with over 200 present. By the end of 1905 there 36 members. The first election of officers was held May 18, 1906 with the following elected: President, Mrs. Dan Graham; Vice-Pres. Mrs. Archie McWilliams; Sec-Treasurer Miss Minnie Gow.

As time went on there was confusion over their status, - were they a branch or district? They had been organized as a district with all funds going together. It was also discovered that the ladies of the village were not interested in the problems of the farm women and as most of the members came from Wallacetown, it was decided to disband the Dutton Institute in 1912. At the same time the Wallacetown Women's Institute was organized.

During the interval from 1912 to 1925, the I.O.D.E. held sway in Dutton, then came a season dissatisfaction, members became very "high-hat" and dues were increased with most of the money going to Toronto. Miss Minnie Gow was instrumental in the withdrawing from the I.O.D.E., and the re-organization of Dutton Women's Institute with the following officers: President, Miss Minnie Gow, and Sec.-Treasurer, Mrs. S.C. Kirkland.

The greatest work of the Institute was consummated during the years of the second World War. As soon as the soldiers were enlisted, boxes were sent to them and when they went overseas the motto was "A box a month for every Dutton boy overseas". The peak was 44 boxes a month, and in all 1322 boxes, valued at \$2,818.95 went overseas. Salvage was collected, over 74 tons, which realized \$729.23, all of which went into overseas boxes. Rummage sales were held and any left-over garments or shoes were sent to Russian or Greek relief. Contributions were made to seeds for Britain, Mobile Kitchens, furnishing wards in overseas hospital, etc. Tag days were held for various causes, and the Institute even presented a play "Sister Susie Swings it", in various places. They conducted food auctions, furniture auctions, held euchres, dances, street carnivals and one big furniture auction in which the whole town and district participated.

When hostilities ended there were \$800 in the fund. Fifty-three boys were presented with a \$15.00 Savings Certificate and a plaque was placed in the Dutton High School in memory of the nine boys who did not return. Each returned boy also received "The Book of Valour" with the picture and brief write-up of all the Dutton boys who went overseas, as well as a fountain pen. The small amount still left in the fund was donated to the Memorial Hospital in St. Thomas.

From then on the Institute has proceeded through the years along the even tenor of its way. Miss Minnie Gow is the only member who has been presented with a Life Membership - it was given in 1961. Mrs. M. Gilroy, who has been a member of the Dutton Women's Institute for many years is also a Life Member, but it was presented by Iona Station W.I.

The present officers of the Institute are: President, Mrs. R.C. Drager; 1st Vice-Pres. Mrs. Herb. Bentley, 2nd Vice-Pres. Miss Margaret Leitch, and Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. David Saunders.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
DUTTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The fiftieth anniversary of the Dutton Women's Institute was celebrated on July 15, 1975 in the Memorial Hall, Dutton, Ontario.

Members and friends from all branches of Elgin West District as well as the Kensington Club of Lawrence Station attended.

The President, Mrs. Isabel Percival, presided and opened the meeting with the Institute Ode, the Mary Stewart Collect and the Lord's Prayer.

Mrs. Roy McNeil read a history of the Dutton Women's Institute from the time of its first formation on February 10, 1905 until the branch was disbanded in 1912. It was reformed on March 6, 1925.

The highlight of the celebration was the presentation of life membership certificates to Mrs. J. U. Brown, Mrs. Florence Bennett, and Mrs. Erie McCallum by Miss Margaret Leitch and Mrs. Agnes Hales.

Tribute was paid to Miss Minnie Gow who was unable to be present. Miss Gow was the first president and has been a life member for more than twenty years. Two other valued members of many years, Mrs. Naomi Green and Mrs. Katie McCallum were also unable to be present but were remembered with gifts.

Mrs. Donald Forsyth introduced the guest speaker, Miss Marietta Roberts, a lawyer from St. Thomas, and Mrs. Jack McNeill thanked her for her interesting address.

Music was provided by two groups of young people from the district, the Three A's and the Dutton Lassies. Mrs. George Corneil, a member of our Institute, sang several songs from the 1920's.

Greetings were brought from the Provincial Board by Mrs. Gordon Gow and from the President of Elgin West District, Mrs. Elias Reck. Mrs. Lorna Tripp thanked those taking part in the programme which was brought to a close with "O Canada".

On display were posters containing the names of the branch officers from 1925 to 1975 and also some old photographs. One of particular interest was taken on July 15, 1950 when the branch celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.

A beautifully decorated anniversary cake was served to all present.

IONA WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The Iona Women's Institute was the second branch to be instituted in West Elgin District. On June 16, 1909, Dr. Anna Backus of the Woodstock area, assisted by Mrs. E.V. Docker, District President, and Miss Minnie Gow, District Sec-Treasurer, instituted the branch with Mrs. Duncan Brown as the first President, and Miss Tena McAlpine (now Mrs. Peter McPherson) as Secretary-Treasurer.

The branch had twelve charter members, this membership increased to fifty and is now down to twenty. A much larger area was served formerly and this fact, together with the organization of the Iona Station branch, is partly accountable for the decline.

Iona Institute history is tied closely to the Iona Community Hall. The first meeting was held there and that has remained its home all through the years. The fortieth, forty-fifth, and fiftieth anniversaries have been celebrated there. This building was the first of the four original churches of the village, being erected in 1862 by pioneer builders, to whom many of our members can trace kinship. It closed its doors to church services in 1908 and the Iona Institute began its life there in 1909.

Much money has been raised and invested in its maintenance and improvement and it continues as the centre of the social life of Iona under the sponsorship of this Institute. For many years Iona Hall was forbidden ground for dancing, cards and the like, because of an understanding with an older generation who had worshipped there and wished it to be so during their lifetime. In the past few years dances for the young and card parties for their elders have proved to be a wholesome and profitable form of entertainment under the sponsorship of the Institute. Garden parties and concerts were among activities popular once, now discontinued because of changing times.

Many worthy causes have been supported and at the present time we share with Iona Station W.I. in the care of a Korean child. In the war effort of 1914 - 18 Iona supplied a large amount of knitted and other material, being the second largest source of comfort and necessities for the young army, navy and airforce in the London area.



Extension courses given by the Home Economics service have been a help to members and have been enthusiastically received. We have supported a 4H Homemaking Club for many years. Although the members of Iona W.I. are few, it continues to be a "going concern."

There have been two life members in our branch, both now deceased, namely, Mrs. Luke Brown, and Miss Victoria Munroe

Mrs. R. Johnson,

Tweedsmuir History Curator



Iona Women's Institute

50th Anniversary, June 16, 1959

IONA STATION WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Iona Station Women's Institute was instituted October 18, 1928 in the Iona Station Community Hall. Taking leading roles in the ceremony were Mrs. Hugh McKillop, District President, (later Mrs. Walter Becker) - and Miss Eva Morrison, Secretary of the West Elgin District W.I., also District Director Mrs. J.C. McMillan.

The Institute grew from the Iona Station Community Club. This group met each month with the purpose of service to the community and had a rule that only two items could be served with a cup of tea. Membership fees were 25¢ per year. This club was active in raising money by tea meetings, concerts, plays, selling autographs for quilts, making and selling cook books, and other ideas. A piano was bought for the hall and money spent on its upkeep and that of the hall.

The women of the new group felt that much could be accomplished by organizing as an Institute and linking up with other such branches. The first President was Mrs. Leslie Kendall, the first Secretary Treasurer, Mrs. Wm. Paterson. This organization continued to help with the community hall maintenance and assisted the trustees in building a kitchen to the hall.

Turning to other interests, the members entered the musical festival at that time sponsored by the Elgin Girls Institute and Junior Farmers of Elgin County. Mr. James Medlyn was the leader of this group which took fourth place.

Included in the charity work done by this branch was jam and jelly sent to the Children's Aid Society, sick and shut-in's remembered with flowers, fruit, and cards. A piano was put in the school. Prizes are given the school children for their picnics and candy is given at Christmas. The Iona Station school was affiliated with the Dutton Red Cross during the war years and did much worth-while work in sewing, knitting, and sending boxes of comforts overseas.

Delegates have attended the Guelph Conferences, the A.C.W.W. in Toronto, and the fiftieth anniversary at Guelph. Members have attended conferences for Historical Research and officers conferences.

The branch has favoured special courses given by the Department of Agriculture and derived much benefit from them. Over a period of years this branch has furnished club leaders for girls work. These leaders took the leadership courses staged by the Dept. of Economics.

Money is raised by teas, food sales, garden parties, card parties, sponsoring plays, fashion shows - hair and hats, and paper and paint demonstrations.

The Iona Station Branch of the Women's Institute celebrated its 25th anniversary with services in the local Baptist Church, October 18, 1953, and a silver anniversary tea the following Wednesday afternoon.

IONA STATION WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

These women helped the District raise money for the building of the St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital. They also aided with building the Elgin County Museum and assist with its maintenance at teas and at the open house events at Colonel Talbot's historic home at Port Talbot - now owned by Mr. John Ker.

The Institute assists the White Cross Auxiliary of the Mental Hospital, the Friendship School for retarded children. They are members of the Bobier Home Auxiliary, and the Elgin Manor Auxiliary.

Officers for the District have been found in this branch, and one Life Member, Mrs. R. N. McLellan, served as Provincial Board Member for a term of three years. Mrs. Russell Kerr served as District President and Mrs. J. D. Galbraith was a District President and Rally Chairman in 1961.

Mrs. J. D. Galbraith

Iona Station W.I. Curator