

MIDDLEMARCH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Following a course of lectures on Household Science given by Miss Grey of St. Thomas, the Middlemarch Branch of the Women's Institute was organized in February, 1918, at the Grange Hall. The first President was Mrs. C.S. Butler, and Mrs. Ross Tufford as Secretary. We have two Life Members, Mrs. C.S. Butler, and Mrs. J.R. Fatcher, who is also a Life Member of the Ontario Federation and the Dominion Federation.

Following is a list of some of the achievements we consider most outstanding; 1. We have beautified our school grounds and introduced music into the school. Public Speaking has been sponsored as well as many homemaking courses for Junior girls. 2. - We made an outstanding effort in our work - 3000 pounds of jam were made, 813 articles sewed, and working with the Red Cross knitting dozens of pairs of socks and scarves. We entertained the air force men and sent to England a great number of gifts to the bombed-out English people. Since the war we have adopted a war orphan and sent many articles to refugees overseas. 3. - We have worked steadily for the Elgin County Museum. 4.- We have given \$2,000.00 for the St. Thomas Hospitals. 5.- In 1937 the Middlemarch Branch was presented with a Hall - since that time we have repaired, landscaped, re-decorated, and refurnished it. 6.- We have assisted the Red Cross, Blood Clinics, T.B. and Cancer Clinics, and have given help to children and families in the community.

Mrs. N. A. (Hazel G.) Munro

Sept. 26, 1963

Convener of Tweedsmuir History

RIVER ROAD WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The River Road Women's Institute was organized in April of 1921 at the home of Mrs. J.A. Campbell. She, with her neighbour, Mrs. Geo. Campbell, had attended meetings at the neighbouring Institute at Middlemarch and so were interested in forming a branch in their own community. Mrs. McKillop and Mrs. McLevey, District President and Secretary, were present for the organization meeting. Mrs. Geo. Campbell was the first President and Mrs. W.A. Metler the first Secretary.

Our membership has usually been small, varying from fifteen to thirty members. Meetings have been held either in homes or in our only public building, the school. While held in former years in the afternoons, they are now held in the evenings with the programmes planned a year in advance.

Our Institute's first project was in improvement of school grounds and in buying equipment for the school. A piano was purchased as well as equipment for serving hot lunches and for sports.

Two hundred dollars was raised for the Memorial Hospital in St. Thomas when it was built. As the school became used more as a Community Centre, chairs, dishes, curtains, etc. were added. Treats for school children at Christmas, for shut-in's and the sick, and remembrances for the bereaved were among our early community activities. We have sponsored showers for brides, donated food and clothing to the needy, made layettes for northern children, contributed to the Sick Children's Hospital, T.B. work, the Blind, Cancer Funds, United Welfare, Elgin Manor and U.N.E.S.C.O., as well as many more. Funds were raised by teas, donations, card parties, dances,

During the War, the women were busy with Red Cross work, knitting and sewing which was given out at Fingal. To the boys who went overseas gifts were given on departure and parcels sent during the war's duration. The Institute was instrumental in having a beautifully printed Honor Roll placed in the school.

We had one group of girls obtain First Class Honors at Achievement Day and they were given a trip to Toronto. Our own members, as well as guest speakers, often with films, have provided many interesting programs. We have enjoyed many social activities, card parties, dinner parties, picnics, visits to parks and industrial plants, and have entertained, and been entertained by neighbouring branches.

Our Tweedsmuir History, begun in 1946 is still being compiled. Some of our members have participated in broadcasts over C.H.L.O. Radio. Gifts and letters have been exchanged with our adopted Institute in England. We have contributed to, and assisted at the Elgin County Museum.

Since 1955, five of our members have been honored by Life Memberships, namely: Mrs. George Campbell, Mrs. Fred Claus, Mrs. W.A. Metler, Mrs. S.A. Fulton, and Mrs. N.D. Campbell.

RODNEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The first Annual Meeting of West Elgin District of the Women's Institute was held in Dutton on May 28, 1909. Mesdames E.J. Schmid and M. Bisnett attended the meeting and invited the speaker, Miss Helen Wells, of Syracuse, N.Y. to come at her earliest convenience to organize a Rodney branch.

Miss Wells came early in June and the meeting was held in Whitton Hall. No minutes were taken but several ladies paid their 25¢ fee for membership and Mrs. E. J. Schmid was elected first President with Mrs. B.B. Graham as first Secretary Treasurer. Thus Rodney Women's Institute was born.

During the intervening years they have worked and donated to every worthy cause in the community. In 1909 they co-operated with the Fair Board and this has been an annual activity which resulted in a donation of \$500 toward building a grandstand, which is still in use. The same year a Tag Day was sponsored and the proceeds used toward purchasing fire-fighting equipment.

During the two World Wars they were in complete charge of Red Cross work in the community and money raised from various functions was almost unbelievable. Concerts were given as well as a variety of fund-raising activities. Money, clothing, jam, honey, and condensed milk, was sent to needy countries. During the half-hour between 8 and 8.30 a.m. the W.I. became a Prayer Circle when all branches of the armed services were presented before the Throne of Grace.

Since then such projects as the Public Library and Horticultural Society have been sponsored and are still supported liberally. In 1956 the Golden Jubilee Anniversary was celebrated and a banquet held with invitations going out to as many former members as could be located. An interesting programme was presented during the evening and it included a fine history of the branch as well as a fitting tribute to departed members. Six Life Memberships have been presented during the years, namely: Mrs. E. J. Schmid, Mrs. M. Bisnett, Mrs. B. McGuigan, Miss Margaret Gillies, Mrs. E. G. Lusty, and Mrs. W. B. McMillan.

Mrs. Alvin McLarty

Tweedsmuir Historian



Back row - l. to r.
Mrs. M. McLean, Mrs. D. Roe,
Mrs. C. Broom, Mrs. A. McLarty,
Mrs. H. DeGraw, Mrs. L. E.
Smith, Mrs. E. G. Lusty.
Front row - Mrs. C. Martini,
Mrs. A.W. Plyley, Mrs. F. Graham,
Mrs. W. McMillan, Mrs. C.A. Wray,
Mrs. J. Kruppe, Mrs. D.N. Walker.

Some Rodney W.I. members at
Aldbrough's Centennial
Reunion at Port Glasgow,
August, 1952.



Back row - l. to r.
Mrs. M. McLean, Mrs. D. Roe,
Mrs. C. Broom, Mrs. A. McLarty,
Mrs. H. DeGraw, Mrs. L. E.
Smith, Mrs. E. G. Lusty.
Front row - Mrs. C. Martini,
Mrs. A.W. Plyley, Mrs. F. Graham,
Mrs. W. McMillan, Mrs. C.A. Wray,
Mrs. J. Kruppe, Mrs. D.N. Walker.

Some Rodney W.I. members at
Aldbrough's Centennial
Reunion at Port Glasgow,
August, 1952.

SHEDDEN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Shedden Women's Institute was organized May 31, 1913, by Dr. Annie Backus of Aylmer. Fifteen joined and there are four charter members still living. The first President was Mrs. Wm. Guest, and Mrs. F. Trace the first Secretary. Life Members are as follows; Mrs. Frank Trace, Mrs. Leonard Moore, Miss Eva Morrison, Miss Elsie Hamilton, Mrs. Lloyd Atkinson, Mrs. Arthur McIntyre, and Mrs. A. E. Orchard. Regular meetings were held throughout the years - at first we sang O Canada, then the Institute Ode, and now use the Mary Stewart Collect.

Our attendance rose from fifteen to forty and more; at one time there were eighty-five members, - now the average is between thirty and forty. Many interesting talks and papers have been given, also demonstrations as well as fine music, and instructive contests enjoyed. Some of our work and projects included courses in Domestic Science as well as in the Arts and Crafts.

We contributed to the Red Cross work in both World Wars, both in money and sewing and knitted comforts. For many years a donation has been made to the library and many different appeals responded to. We had a child treated for a bone defect in Children's Hospital. The sum of one thousand dollars was given to the new hospital in St. Thomas and five hundred dollars to the Women's building at Shedden Fair. Prize money was donated for the Fair and meals served on Fair day in conjunction with the U.C.W. Our Well Baby Clinic has given help to many children through immunization and other ways. A child was adopted overseas and for many years we have sponsored 4H Clubs for girls and given leadership. Cards or flowers were sent to the sick or shut-in's, and a Tweedsmuir History has been compiled. We have enjoyed bus trips and have helped with both the Elgin County Museum and the St. Thomas - Elgin General Hospital



TALBOTVILLE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

A well attended meeting of the women of Talbotville and Paynes Mills was held at the home of Mrs. W. Sutton on April 29, 1927 to organize a branch of the Women's Institute. Mrs. J.H. Sells, of Shedden, President of the West Elgin District, presided and gave a brief outline of the growth of the Women's Institute since it was organized in 1897, thirty years before. It was decided to organize and the Talbotville-Paynes Mills Institute was formed with the following officers elected: - President, Mrs. J. McCormick; 1st Vice-Pres., Mrs. W. Sutton; 2nd Vice-Pres. Mrs. E.C. Gilbert; Sec.-Treasurer, Mrs. H. Appleford; District Director, Mrs. A.E. Thomas; Branch Directors, Mrs. F. Graham, Mrs. A.E. Thomas, Mrs. F. Knight; Pianists, Mrs. W. Meek, Miss I. Gilbert; Press Reporter, Mrs. W. Hicks.

Mrs. McCormick was unable to carry on as President so Mrs. Sutton filled the office. The two communities carried on as one Institute until 1946 when due to such a large membership, it was decided to re-organize and form separate branches. Mrs. J.R. Fatcher, Regional Vice President of F.W.I.O. conducted the elections for both Institutes. The first officers for the Talbotville Women's Institute were: - President, Mrs. H. Clarke, Vice-President, Mrs. H. Appleford, Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. A.E. Thomas; District Director, Mrs. J. McCormick.

Some of the outstanding projects and achievements of our branch include - renovating and beautifying the Talbotville Cemetery, petitioning for and getting lights for the village, providing music in the school, catering to school banquets, helping with the Elgin Pioneer Museum, petitioning for and receiving speed signs limiting the speed through the village, as well as many other worth-while projects.

In 1947 we received first prize for our Tweedsmuir History in the West Elgin District competition.

During the years we have presented three Life Memberships as follows:- Mrs. R. Boothman, Mrs. R. Waite, and Mrs. John McCormick, who was the woman responsible for the Instituting of this branch and is now the Tweedsmuir History Curator.

PAYNES MILLS WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

On April 29, 1927, a group of women of Talbotville and its neighbouring community of Paynes Mills met at the home of Mrs. W.H. Sutton to consider the organization of a local branch of the Women's Institute. Mrs. J.H. Sells, District President, was in the chair. The election of officers followed opening exercises, and although Mrs. J. McCormick was elected President, she declined to act in that capacity, so Mrs. W.H. Sutton became the first President of the organization. It was decided to hold the regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month and all subsequent meetings were held at the homes of members. The membership fee was 25¢ per year and by July of that year there were 25 paid up members. Money was raised in many ways - food sales, concerts, the making and selling of quilts, etc. Mrs. W.H. Sutton was instrumental in bringing in the first dollar for the organization when she made and sold for one dollar a loaf of salt yeast bread.

These meetings were held regularly and the women of the two communities carried on jointly until February 21, 1946, when it was decided that, due to the great number of members, and that the organization represented two school sections, two branches be formed. At the home of Mrs. H.G. Lewis, Paynes Mills, on the above date, Mrs. J.R. Fatcher, Middlemarch, vice-regional president of F.W.I.O. addressed the meeting and organized the separate branches to be known as Talbotville Women's Institute and Paynes Mills Women's Institute. Mrs. W.H. Sutton again became the first president of the newly formed Paynes Mills branch. Mrs. Sherman Dawdy was the first Secretary Treasurer. The meetings continued to be held at the homes of different members and the date chosen was the second Thursday of each month.

Money was raised in many different ways and until 1950 the funds were used mainly in making donations to all charitable organizations and in sponsoring children's activities in the school. Cards were sent to all who were ill in the community and flowers were sent to all members who were sick. During the Christmas season all sick and shut-ins in the community were remembered with a basket of fruit or flowers. In 1950 the branch acquired a hall at Paynes Mills and since that time a considerable amount of what is made is used to improve and maintain this building. A new roof, furnace, and a kitchen were added, to name but a few of the necessary improvements.

A turkey supper held in the hall became a very popular annual event, attracting over 400 people from the cities and surrounding neighbourhoods. An annual tea was held either in the spring or fall and neighbouring women's groups were invited. The teas are still held annually, but the turkey supper was replaced in 1956 by a Chicken Barbeque in August. This was held in the school yard at first but now in our own back yard, and it is enjoyed by all. For the last ten years we have held an Oyster Supper in February or March and this too is much enjoyed and a financial success. For a number of years we have catered to the Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs of St. Thomas on the invitation of Scott McKay Q.C. when he entertains these groups on the lawn of his ancestral home, Selldon.

On February 19, 1947, at a regular meeting, this branch celebrated the Fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Women's Institute, as did many others across the continent