

MRS. JOHN ROBINSON FUTCHER

The Women's Institute of Ontario, organized since 1897, has had many wonderful women serve capably in varied positions. We, in Middlemarch branch of this great organization, are proud that one of our number has found time in her busy life as a farmer's wife, and mother, to be our President, - President of West Elgin District in 1949, F.W.I.O. Board member, and then chosen to become President of the F.W.I.O. This is Mrs. John Robinson Furcher, the former Dorothy E. Horton of St. Thomas.

Mrs. Furcher was born in St. Thomas, Ont., educated in public and secondary schools there - always a leader in literary pursuits. Following high school she attended O.E.C. in Toronto. Upon graduation she taught school at S.S.# 14, Southwold, at Middlemarch, and later at the Continuation School at Fingal.

Today many of her former pupils are appreciative of her help and influence during their formative years.

Mrs. Furcher was always interested in music and was a pupil of the late George C. Carrie of St. Thomas. A charter member of the St. Thomas Evening Music Club, she was always interested in its progress and was on the executive for many years. For three years Mrs. Furcher directed the Middlemarch choir, sponsored by the Women's Institute and led them to win the coveted silver cup when this festival was sponsored by the Junior Farmers of Elgin County.

In 1923 Miss Horton was married to John R. Furcher and came to live on a beautiful farm in Misslemarch district. Here she continued to take a very active part in all community activities and joined the Women's Institute which had been organized in February of 1918.

Mr. and Mrs. Furcher had a family of four - two daughters and two sons, all were devoted members of First United Church in St. Thomas.

When Mrs. Furcher was made President of Ontario Women's Institutes she was singularly honoured by the thirty-two branches of Elgin County. A banquet was held at the Masonic Temple in St. Thomas where she was presented with a suitably engraved silver service. The enthusiasm displayed by this great gathering was a tribute to the esteem in which Mrs. Furcher was held - there were 500 present.

She was very interested in compiling the Village Histories which had been promoted by Lord and Lady Tweedsmuir, and encouraged the writing of these as she travelled to the many Institutes throughout Ontario. A valuable article was written by Mrs. Furcher at this time - her account of the Canadian Triennial Conference held at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto in 1950.



Mrs. Futcher acted as hostess many times to visiting guests and speakers of the Provincial Institute, and frequently invited W.I. members to meet her guests. One of these occasions was to meet Lady Coomerasyroamy, the wife of Ceylon's envoy to Burma. She was a delegate to the Triennial Conference of the A.C.W.W., and a guest of Mrs. Futcher.

When St. Thomas held its centennial along with Elgin County, Mrs. Futcher again suggested an idea - she thought money could be raised for the Institute if each branch would help conduct a booth at the park where refreshments could be served - through this effort \$2000 was realized for the establishment of the Elgin County Scholarship. Ontario Institutes also honoured Mrs. Futcher with the Dorothy Futcher Scholarship.

She became interested in museums and started talking about such a venture for Elgin County. The Institutes of the county banded together and after much planning and many details had been worked out, the Elgin County Pioneer Museum came into being. This building was located on the outskirts of St. Thomas and was one of the original buildings in this part of Ontario. This museum rates as one of the best and is a gentle reminder of things past in Elgin County - since its inception Mrs. Futcher has been the very capable chairman.

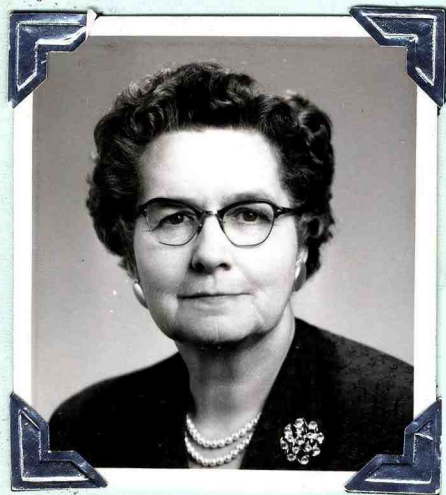
As a member of the Ontario Historical Sites Board, Mrs. Futcher has been instrumental in the placing of many historical plaques, some in Elgin County. One of these is in the Elgin Pioneer Museum. Each week in the local newspaper Mrs. Futcher writes a column headed "Museum News" which keeps all posted as to the interesting happenings at the museum - many visitors call from distant points.

During her term of office she was instrumental in starting the Provincial Conferences which continue to prosper and be of benefit to so many Institute members.

In closing may we refer to the book "Abroad with Me", edited by Mrs. Futcher on her return from the A.C.W.W. Conference in 1950, and its inscription on the front leaf:-
"With grateful acknowledgment to the members of my own family whose combined generosity and interest made this trip and my work in the Women's Institute possible."

Yes, we members of the Women's Institute of Elgin County are proud of Mrs. J.R. Futcher and her achievements as she placed "first things first" and as a leader has proved the common principals of the Women's Institute and its motto FOR HOME AND COUNTRY.

MRS. GEORGE SILCOX



Mrs. George Silcox was the former Viola Styles, daughter of the late Sarah and Arthur Styles, and was born east of Frome, at the Frome curve. She attended St. Thomas Collegiate Institute and the Business College there, where she taught shorthand and typing for a time.

In 1919 she married George Silcox of Shedden. They have one daughter, Marilyn Pauline who is on the staff of the Main Branch of the Bank of Montreal in St. Thomas.

Mrs. Silcox joined the Iona Women's Institute in 1920, and the Shedden W.I. two years later. She was president of the Shedden branch in 1940 -1942 - convener of Agriculture and Canadian Industries for the Dis-

trict, and president of the District from 1947 -49. During this period Mrs. J.R. Fitcher, president of the F.W.I.O. was honored by the branches of Elgin County at a banquet at the Masonic Temple in St. Thomas, at which time Mrs. Silcox presided. She was also convener of Agriculture and Canadian Industries for the London Area.

MRS. RUSSELL KERR



Mrs. Russell Kerr was born at Paisley, Ont., and came to Iona Station as a bride in 1933. Previously she had spent some time in Toronto with her sisters, Prudence Kerr and Mrs. H. Towler. Mrs. Kerr was a talented soloist and a valued member of Knox Church choir at Dutton.

Soon after coming to the community she became interested in the Women's Institute, later filling many offices in the organization. Mrs. Kerr was convener of several W.I. committees, president and district director. In 1949 she became president of West Elgin W.I.

Her warm personality and sincere interest in matters pertaining to the W.I. and her community won for her a wide circle of friends.

In 1950 she suffered a coronary and was forced through this illness to give up many activities. She later entered hospital, and at St. Mary's Convalescent Hospital she passed away on December 23, 1960.

MRS. M. G. GRAHAM

Mrs. M. G. Graham (Beulah Jane) was born of Scottish ancestry in the Twp. of Sombra in Lambton County. Her childhood was a happy one - spent roaming fields and woods, driving and riding horses and loving the countryside.

She attended the country school and Collegiate Institute in Sarnia, and on completion of upper school attended Normal School in Toronto. Three years were spent in teaching public school followed by a summer course in Guelph. She then took a two-year Normal Course at Macdonald Institute at Guelph, followed by six months teaching in Saskatchewan. She came back to Ontario and took a dietician's course at Western Hospital, Toronto and then joined the staff of lecturers and demonstrators for the W.I. and in this capacity covered much of southern Ontario. On one of these trips she met Dr. M.G. Graham, of Exeter, who was to become her husband. Following their marriage they lived for a time at Exeter then went to the island of Formosa where they served for six years, with visits to Japan, Hong Kong and parts of China.

They returned to Canada and settled in Dutton and here again she picked up interest in the W.I. and the many phases of community work. Mrs. Graham served in many ways, as president, as well as on many committees, and later was president of West Elgin District Women's Institute.



MRS. STANLEY LYLE

Mrs. Stanley Lyle came to the office of President of West Elgin Women's Institute well-trained for such a task. Living on a large dairy farm - the mother of six children - she was well aware of agricultural conditions and problems.

Lena has always been an active member of the Middlemarch Women's Institute. No member has given more generously of time and talents. Her special abilities made many demands upon her and always these demands were met with affability and efficiency.

She was Vice-President of the District at the time of the County Centennial and was named West Elgin's Convener of the Women's Institute booth at Athletic Park. Because of good planning and hard work, the W.I.'s of the County raised \$2000 in one week - which gave us our Elgin County W.I. Centennial Scholarship - awarded each year to a deserving rural student to continue her education.

Lena has always been an active church worker and has served her church, First United in St. Thomas, in many ways. For two years she was chairman of the W.A. groups of the church - she has been leader of a unit and has served several years on the manse committee.

Her strong support, keen interest and hard work helped make possible our Elgin County Pioneer Museum. She was Vice-Chairman, and served on the museum executive in the important formative years.

No member of the Women's Institute has been more loyal to this organization, and no member has served the needs of her community more loyally than Mrs. Stanley Lyle.

I feel it is a privilege to write this tribute to a life-long friend and co-worker.

Dorothy E. Fletcher.



Pres 1953-54

MRS. ROY H. McNEIL

Mrs. Roy H. McNeil, formerly Margaret Grace Cole, was born on a farm in Southwold Twp. and attended Public School at Frome and High School at St. Thomas Collegiate Institute followed by a year at London Normal School, graduating in 1921.

The next two years were spent in teaching at Wallacetown Public School followed by five years at Iona Station. It was during these years that she became a member of the Elgin County Junior Institute and Junior Farmer Organization. She was a member of the team representing Elgin County at the judging competition held at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. The other members of the team were Catherine Turner, Sheddén, and Mary McTavish, Frome, and they were successful in winning the trophy.

In 1927 she became President of the Elgin County Junior Institute for one year. In 1928 she married Roy McNeil and lived on a farm in Dunwich Township near Dutton. Their family of four girls and one boy left little time for Institute work and it was not until 1942 that Mrs. McNeil became a member of the Dutton Women's Institute. Since then she has been a continuous member, Secretary for six years and President for two years.

This was followed by two years as President of West Elgin Eistrict from 1955 to 1957.

In 1963 she was elected board member of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, representing the Districts of South Oxford, East Elgin, and West Elgin. (Subdivision 21)



MRS. CHARLES COOPER

Mrs. Charles Cooper, formerly Bertha Brown, was born in West Lorne and lived there most of her life with the exception of a few years spent in London. She is a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles Brown and the wife of Charles Cooper. They have one son, Philip.

Mrs. Cooper joined the West Lorne Branch of the Women's Institute in 1948 and has filled the offices of Secretary and President of that branch. She was elected District President for the 1958 to 1960 term.

Mrs. Cooper has been active in West Lorne United Church, a Life Member and charter member of the United Church Women, and president of that group for some

years. Mrs. Cooper uses her musical talents as a choir member and pianist for Sunday School. She joined the Lorna Rebecca Lodge in 1946 - was Noble Grand in 1959 and 1960, also District Deputy of West St. Thomas District in 1961-62. In 1967 she is Vice Grand of Lorna Lodge.

