

Many happy hours have been spent under its roof as it has been a gathering centre for community social activities, down through the long years since its erection.

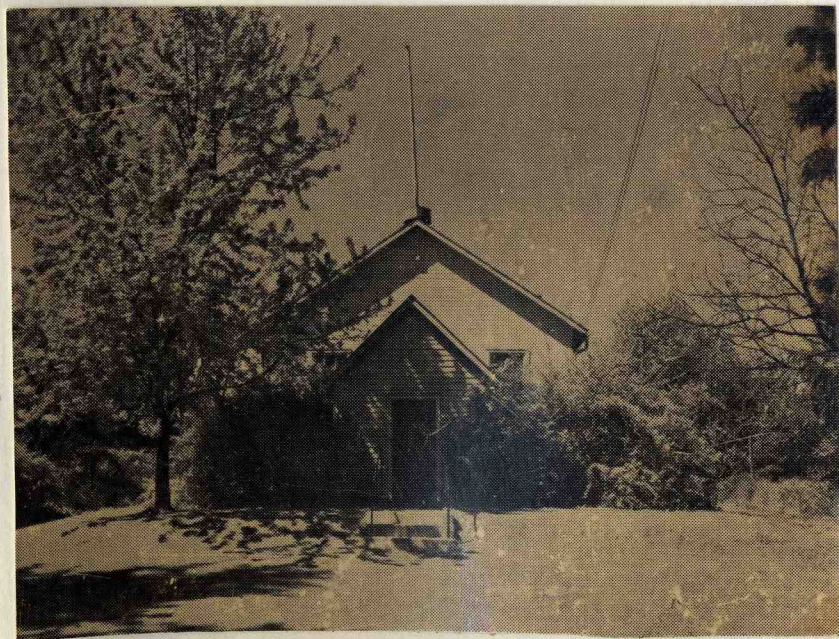
Ellen Russ

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In November of 1976 a Senior Citizens group was formed through the foresight of the Women's Institute president, Mrs. Clara Ingram. and the following spring applied for a New Horizon grant which was given. The Hall was given a face lift - a new furnace was installed, new fluroscnt lighting, storm windows and eave troughing, water system and decorating of walls and ceiling. Also recreation facilities of two shuffleboard courts, darts and card tables were installed. This was only accomplished with the dedicated hard work of a band of seniors, now known as Union, -South Yarmouth Senior Citizens. Later with the receipt of another New Horizons grant an extension was made to the rear of the hall which now houses twin washrooms facilities - also as an update to the kitchen srea attractive new cupboards were installed. These latter additions were only made possible by the many hours of most excellent work by a group of the Seniors men.

Now the hall has once again taken on a new lease of life with a ~~new~~ most active group of seniors as well as the Women Institute members.

Phyllis Shelley, June 1980



The following poem was composed by Mrs. Clara Mills Mc. Kenzie and read at an oyster supper which was held when the remodelling of our South Yarmouth Womens' Institute hall was completed in the year 1934.

"An old-fashioned building, all battered and brown,
Stood on a hilltop in old Union town;
It's sills were all crumbled, it's roof was decayed,
The chinks in it's windows, by children were made;
It's rickety steps, it's plaster so bare,
It's tumbled-down chimney, all stood in despair,
It chanced the 'Good Templars' once met in that hall
To plan better lives for the good of us all-
And we have to thank the benevolent donors
That of this fair landmark, we now are the owners.
We busy homemakers in this fair Township
Oft gathered to-gether, our tea for to sip.
The need of a home we had felt long past
To accomplish our work that was growing so fast;
So we viewed the old hall in it's tumbled-down state,
Said, 'We'll take our husbands the next time we meet.
If they think it will work, then we'll raise the dough
And see if we women can make this thing go'.
A Government grant we could have, if you please,
But grants are not needed by women like these.
Some meetings were held and new plans were laid
For there was much money now to be made.
We all used our talents, each one did her best;
We talked, dined and worked with a wonderful zest.
We bought pigs and sold lard, sausage made by the ton,
And for seasoning mixed in a measure of fun
We had suppers and concerts and plays by the score
And still making quilts to cover the poor.
They were never forgotten, 'though our treasury was low
And sometimes we had to borrow some dough;
But the men were all willing- they raised up the hall
And with horses and scrapers, shovels and maul
They dug out the earth and put in the wall,
The floor and the ceiling, the Hydro and all-
We scraped mouldy paper and then hung some new,
Bought second-hand chairs and fixed them with glue,
A real nice piano and some window drapes,
And treated the outside to some pretty cream paint;
The men levelled the lawn and terraced it too
And now we are feeling our hard work most through,
We have linen and china and silver galore,
But sadly we're feeling the need of a floor-
We hope with these oysters some money to raise
And to friend husband we'll give all the praise;
We'll continue to strive, for we're not weary yet
And the hope of our kitchen soon will be met.
We hope that our country some better will be
Our home life be richer and fuller and free
And may pictures hang thick on memory's wall
Of friends we have made in this Institute Hall."

The following article is the history of the South Yarmouth Womens' Institute, prepared for the 25th Anniversary of this Branch. Mrs. D.D.Finch of Mapleton who officiated at the organization of our Branch on May 27th 1920, was present at the anniversary services, when she planted a maple tree (assisted by Mrs. Stella Waite of St.Thomas, one of our charter members) in memory of our first beloved President, the late Mrs. Stephen Haight.



Mrs. Denzil Finch, with her husband, pictured in front of their farm home at Mapleton.

Finch
Mrs. was one of the early presidents of the East Elgin District, and during her term of office in the year 1920, organized the South Yarmouth Branch of the W. I. as well as many other branches in Elgin.

Mrs. Clara Ingram, who was president of the South Yarmouth Women's Institute for the years 1947--1949 is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Denzil Finch.

During the first World War, The South Yarmouth Patriotic Society was formed, with Mrs. George H. Jackson it's very capable President, and under whose leadership, from 1914 to 1918, the members did war work of all kinds and were a very energetic society. During the year 1918, Mrs. Jackson wishing to be relieved of office, Mrs. Stephen Haight was elected as President. After the close of the war and the erection of the Memorial Hospital, was definitely assured, the members decided to raise funds to furnish a room in the new hospital and two mammoth carnivals were held, one on the Mitchell F. Hepburn farm and the other on the Oliver Burgess farm, now the property of Mr. Arthur Robson. In 1920 a meeting was held when it was decided that the Patriotic Society would become a branch of The Womens' Institute, Mrs. Geo. H. Jackson making the motion, and Mrs. Haight continuing as President of the newly formed society. All of us who were privileged to know her, will remember Mrs. Haight as a woman of sterling qualities, possessed of the wit and wisdom of experience, but with the fresh and optimistic outlook of youth. In honouring her memory to-day, we also pay tribute to Mrs. D. D. Finch, at present a valued member of our society and who officiated at the organization of our Institute on May 27th 1920. Mrs. Finch, at that time being the Federation Representative for East Elgin, was accompanied by Mrs. Fred Haggan, Mrs. M. Griffin and Mrs. William Dunn, all of East Elgin.

NB: property mentioned as owned by Arthur Robson is now that of
Chas. Crevitt.

The following is the list of officers when our Institute was founded:-

President	-	Mrs. Stephen Haight
Ist Vice President	-	Mrs. Walton Owen
2nd Vice President	-	Mrs. J. Webster
Secretary	-	Mrs. Joseph O. King
Treasurer	-	Edna Scott
Pianist	-	Mrs. L. J. Bailey
Directors	-	Mrs. Wm. Dufty
		Mrs. Geo. Smith
		Mrs. T. H. Scott
Social Convenors	-	Mrs. C. Pettit
		Mrs. L. J. Bailey
Press Reporter	-	Mrs. Austin Smith
District Director	-	Mrs. Stella Waite
Representative to District Annual	-	Mrs. Austin Smith.

A spirited membership campaign was conducted, Mrs. Wm. Dufty and Mrs. L. J. Bailey as Captains, against Mrs. Austin Smith and Mrs. Stella Waite. The winners were Mrs. Dufty and Mrs. Bailey, at the close of the campaign our membership totalling 175.

In 1922 it was decided to raise funds to furnish a second room in the new hospital and a canvass was made of the entire district, the necessary \$1,000.00 being contributed, so that when The Memorial Hospital was completed, there was a room bearing the name of "South Yarmouth Patriotic Society" and one to be called the "South Yarmouth Womens' Institute," these gifts being South Yarmouth's tribute to the memory of her boys who served, many making the supreme sacrifice in the First World War and whose names are inscribed in Elgin's beautiful "Book of Remembrance".

It was Mrs. Haight's suggestion that the East Elgin branches hold a Winter Picnic, which events in following years have proven most enjoyable. In 1924 prizes were first given for Oratorical Contests in the South Yarmouth schools and also prizes awarded at school fairs.

In 1924 Mrs. Haight retired as President, Mrs. Jos. O. King accepting the office. In June of that year, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Fish held a most successful garden party and in October, the Institute members provided a refreshment booth, for the first time, at the County Plowing Match. Mrs. Stella Waite became President in 1929. An evening which provided plenty of entertainment, was the skit presented called "A Mock Marriage", which was very humorous and also remunerative. If I remember rightly, Mr. Robert Waite (the husband of our President), was the blushing bride, attired in the customary wedding gown. Two lace curtains formed a flowing veil, while his bevy of bridesmaids were suitably gowned. The cast, by the way, was comprised entirely of gentlemen.

In 1930 our first donation was made for the Elgin Musical Festival, which was continued each year, so long as the Festival was held. Mrs. Flora Sanders succeeded Mrs. Waite as President in 1931, an outstanding event that year, being a Handicraft Exhibit at the Y.W.C.A. in St. Thomas, to which our members contributed many priceless treasures of handwork, daguerreotypes, old china, pewter, exquisite needlepoint, hooked rugs and heirloom quilts.

Mrs. Leonard Fish became our President in 1933 and it was in November that a special meeting was held to consider the advisability of renovating the old Forresters' Hall for the use of the Institute. Those who attended that meeting, held here in the hall, will recall the chilly Autumn atmosphere, as gathered around the table, which held one small coal-oil lamp for illumination, discussions got underway. Directly overhead, there was a large hole in the roof, through which the moon shone in, which did help considerably to brighten up the dark corners. The place really looked pretty hopeless,

but every-one was most enthusiastic and committees were formed and the work begun. The Institute members were divided into three groups, one sponsoring a play, another a quilt, and several of the ladies, with the help of their husbands, going into the retail pork business, all of the groups earning substantial sums for the remodelling. Some very generous contributions were also received and most of the rebuilding was done by the men of the community, who had several bees and finally the work was completed and on Feb. 15th, 1934 the new Hall was officially opened when a very successful oyster supper was held, and later that month, a banquet was tendered the members of the Kiwanis Club, followed soon after, by a mother and daughter banquet.

Mrs. C. C. Jolley succeeded Mrs. Fish as President in 1934. During Mrs. Jolley's Presidency, great strides were made to earn money to buy furnishings and equipment for the Hall- a number of plays were given by outside talent, catering was done for several banquets, a kitchen shower was held, an oyster supper, to say nothing of the splendid sum turned in by the busy quilt committee, with the result that very soon the Hall was fully equipped and is a place for meeting to-gether of which I think we may be justly proud and through the years has been the scene of many pleasant social gatherings for members and their families.

Miss. Lillian Freeman became our President in 1936, when a new hardwood floor was laid and platform built in the Hall and the members had an Arbor Day and planted several shrubs on the grounds. In June 1936 a number of the members enjoyed a trip to the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph, when a conference was held by the United Country Women of the World, several foreign delegates addressing the huge gathering.