



Before returning to England at the close of the Governor General's term of office Lady Tweedsmuir addressed the Federated Women's Institute at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

In recognition of her service to the Canadian Women's Institutes she was presented at this time with a portrait of herself. The artist - Mrs. R. B. Cumming, a well known painter of miniatures, and a former member of Sparta Women's Institute, made the presentation.

Hill House,
Burford,
Oxfordshire.

13th July, 1957.

Dear Members of the Sparta Women's Institute,

I would like to send you so many congratulations on all that you have done and are doing. I am deeply interested in the vivid account of the re-conditioning of the Sparta Blacksmith's Shop, and it is delightful that you should have won a prize at Toronto for your Sparta Tweedsmuir Book.

I am a great believer in the value of recording past history and putting down on to paper the many events which all too easily become lost or forgotten.

All these records of past ^{history} ~~hisotry~~ deepen and enrich the minds of those who read them. Yesterday should be remembered by us always, in any present or future time.

May I again congratulate you on the excellence of your work.

Yours very sincerely

Susan Tweedsmuir

HISTORY OF SPARTA WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The earliest records of the East Elgin District Institute show that a branch of the Women's Institute was organized in Sparta in 1907, one year after the District was formed.

Mrs. F. Oille was the president and Miss Etta Fishleigh the secretary.

Some of the early District officers remember Sparta as a strong Farmer's and Women's Institute but, for reasons now unknown, the organization did not continue to function for more than a year or two.

The next community organization was a Patriotic Society which was organized during World War I.

Sewing and knitting were done through the St. Thomas Red Cross rooms, boxes were sent to boys overseas and money raised in various ways.

As one project, a large collection of farm produce was brought to the home of Mr. Earl Cole where it was sorted and repacked, then taken to market and sold, the proceeds going to the Red Cross.

Following the Armistice in 1919 the Patriotic Society was disbanded and for a time there were no organizations in the community apart from church groups.

In the early twenties the women of Cole's school section were stirred with the desire to meet together as an organized body, which would be a source of inspiration and uplift to its members, as well as a benefit to others.

Mrs. Isaac Millman, who was the leading spirit in this movement, called a meeting for the purpose of organizing and naming the society. This first meeting was held at the home of Mrs. John Burton. Mrs. Millman had previously invited Mr. Edward Witty, the teacher at Cole's School, to suggest an appropriate name. Mr. Witty chose the name "Sorosis", a latin word meaning "Sisterhood". This name was approved by the meeting and so the Sorosis Society was formed with Mrs. Millman the first president. During the years that followed Mrs. E. Cole, Mrs. C. H. Minard, Mrs. D. McKenzie and Mrs. S. Russ filled the office in the order named and the secretaries were Mrs. McKenzie, Mrs. J. Burton, Mrs. R. Tansley, and Mrs. N. Cloes.

The membership grew to include many women from Sparta and district. Meetings were held monthly in the homes and programmes were of a high order. Talks on the fine arts and travel appeared frequently and sometimes speakers were invited from other districts. Besides local acts of helpfulness, the Sorosis Society should be remembered for two worthy achievements. In 1925 \$250.00 was given to the new War Memorial Hospital, St. Thomas, to endow a bed in the maternity ward in honour of "Pioneer Mothers of Yarmouth". A bronze plaque, suitably engraved and bearing the name of the Sorosis Society, was placed over the bed. Part of the sum required was donated by descendants of the pioneer mothers.

HISTORY OF SPARTA WOMEN'S INSTITUTE (Cont'd.)

In 1926 the Sorosis Society was again busy building a fund for the Dr. Shannon Memorial. Money for this purpose, apart from donations, was raised in various ways, one being a box social held in Mrs. Cole's spacious home with prices on the boxes unlimited. A room on the main floor of the new hospital was chosen as a memorial and a bronze plaque was placed on its door bearing the inscription "In loving memory of Dr. Shannon from the Sorosis Society of Sparta and Friends".

The Sorosis Society continued to function until 1930 when some became interested again in the larger organization of Women's Institutes. On March 13th, 1930, a meeting of the Sorosis Society and others interested was held in the Sparta Continuation School auditorium to consider the organization of a Women's Institute. Mrs. S. Russ, who was then president of the Sorosis Society, presided. Three members of the East Elgin District Institute attended to explain the aims and ideals of Women's Institutes. A ballot vote at this meeting resulted in a Women's Institute branch being organized once more in Sparta. In order to incorporate the Sorosis Society in this organization, it was decided to name the branch the Sparta Sorosis Women's Institute. From that date the branch has continued to function without interruption. The membership began with thirty-four and continued to grow until a peak of sixty was reached in 1932.

Mrs. Donald McKenzie was elected the first president and Mrs. Charles Minard, secretary. The second Thursday in each month was the day chosen for regular meetings. During the years from 1930 to 1949 the following members have in turn been president -

Mrs. D. McKenzie - 2 years
Mrs. Harvey Lawton - 2 years
Mrs. C. Minard - 1 year
Mrs. J. Millman Jr. - 1 year
Mrs. C. Donnelly - 3 years
Mrs. H. Nichols - 2 years
Mrs. G. Prior - 3 years
Mrs. G. Wetherelt - 3 years
Miss Helen Martyn - 1 year
Mrs. R. Mills, now completing
her first year.

Those acting as secretary during the same period were -

Mrs. C. Minard - 4 years
Mrs. H. Nichols - 5 years
Mrs. C. Greer - 2 years
Mrs. Weir - 1 year
Miss H. Martyn - 1 year
Mrs. P. Denniss - 1 year
Miss F. Rogers - 4 months
Mrs. H. Nichols - 3 years
Mrs. R. Burton - now completing
her second year.

HISTORY OF SPARTA WOMEN'S INSTITUTE (Cont'd.)

During the years a number of projects have been undertaken and successfully completed. For four years, beginning with 1931, girls from the community attended the Girls' Conference at Guelph, their expenses being paid by the Institute. For three successive years a framed print of a famous painting was presented to the school having the highest standing at the School Fair.

In 1931-32 short courses in Handicrafts and Nutrition were held with an attendance of thirty and twenty-eight.

In 1932 a "Home Garden and Beautification" contest was held, six prizes going to the village homes and six to the country. The first prize winners were Mrs. J. Turrill for Sparta and Mrs. W. Arthur for the rural home.

In 1933 a play "The Red-Headed Step-child" was very ably presented at Sparta, Union and Vienna by members of the Institute under the direction of Rev. R. B. Cumming. Miss Grace Follette played the leading role.

A number of successful Girls' Clubs has been held with members of the Institute acting as leaders.

The Women's Institute introduced the teaching of music in four schools of the district with Miss Elaine Grandy as teacher. It was not long after this that music became a compulsory subject on the school curriculum.

The month of November, 1940, when the Provincial Ploughing Match was held on the Mental Hospital property, proved a busy time for Institute members. The Baptist and United Churches and the Women's Institute joined forces to have a tent on the grounds from which lunches, hot dogs, etc. were sold. In addition to this, they also contracted to serve lunches to the contesting ploughmen. They were indeed busy days but the Women's Institute realized \$199.00 as their share of the profits.

A bus trip to Guelph to attend a World Conference of Women's Institutes held at the Agricultural College was a highlight in the year 1938. A bus was chartered by the Sparta branch and the twenty-five members who attended have memories of a jolly time.

During the years of World War II the Institute members served their country in various ways, details of which form another chapter in our book.

A second bus trip to Guelph was enjoyed on June 19th, 1947, when again a bus was chartered and members attended the Golden Jubilee of the founding of Women's Institutes which was held on the spacious grounds of the College of Agriculture.

Since 1944 the chief activity of the Sparta Women's Institute has been the restoration of the old mud shop which was a gift from Mr. E. A. Smith on condition that it be restored and perpetuated for the community. Many difficulties and delays were met with owing to war conditions, however the building is now sufficiently restored to be used as an Institute Hall. The name "Ye Olde Forge and Anvil" was chosen by the members. Further plans for improvement will form a part of the Institute programme in the future.

'In Flanders Fields the Poppies
Grow''

Lt. Col. John McCrae.

In Flanders fields the poppies grow,
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard among the guns below.

We are the dead; short days ago,
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset's glow,
Loved and were loved, but now we lie
In Flanders fields.

To you from failing hand we throw
The torch. Be yours to lift it high.
*If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies blow
In Flanders fields.*

A SOLDIER-POET



LIEUT.-COL. JOHN McCRAE.

Author of widely known war poem, "In Flanders Fields" (son of Col. David McCrae of Guelph), who died of pneumonia at Beaulieu on Monday.



World War I 1914 - 1918

Private Charles Haight
4th Canadian Mounted Rifles
Died Oct. 27, 1918. Age 21.



Private Guy Haight
91st Batallion
Born Aug. 23, 1899