

W.I. Born in Ontario Village On a February Day In 1897

BY LOUISE F. MCKAY

Women's Institutes expansion throughout the world. In Canada alone today under the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada there are more than 70,000 rural women in more than 3,000 local institutes.

In Many Countries

Because of the enforced silence during the war there are rural women's organizations with whom the Associated Countrywomen of the World has not been directly in touch, but Women's Institutes or their equivalent are active in Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, South Africa, Burma, Sweden, Switzerland, India, Palestine, France, Denmark, Ceylon and Estonia.

The Women's Institute movement was introduced to England, Scotland and Wales in 1915 by Mrs. Alfred Watt, M.A., M.B.E., then of British Columbia, and she and the late Miss Emily Guest, of London Township, helped to organize institutes there. Mrs. Watt is now president of the Associated Countrywomen of the World, which was formed in 1933.

At the last conference of the Associated Countrywomen of the World held in 1939, 30 countries were represented.

A report from the 1946 executive meeting of the A.C.W.W. states that, although some societies have been lost "owing to circumstances over which neither they nor we had any control, on the other hand we have gained three new constituent societies, two in the U.S.A. and one in France, and by the next annual meeting we expect to be able to report on at least two more." The report states also that the A.C.W.W. is taking its place among other international organizations in being represented at official international conferences and is among the voluntary organizations co-operating with the United Nations Organization and its subsidiary bodies.

Two Ontario women took the Women's Institute movement to Alberta. Mrs. Hugh C. Graham, of Ailsa Craig, went to Alberta with her husband in 1906 and two years later moved to a homestead north of Vermillion on the bank of the North Saskatchewan River. Her interest in Women's Institute work was keen. She had been secretary of the Ailsa Craig Institute and president of North Middlesex Institutes. When she met Mrs. John Johnson, who had been a member of Slate River W.I., near Fort William, these two institute members decided it was time to spread the movement to their new neighbors. So on February 3, 1909, all the women of the district were invited to Mrs. Johnson's home and the Lea Park W.I. was organized with Mrs. Graham as president. There were 38 members with two men as honorary members.

Tribute to Men

A history of the Alberta W. I. pays tribute to the men of rural Alberta, not only for their support in the early days of fording rivers, crossing mud-holes, and traveling slippery, snow-filled roads, but in later times when they assisted projects by giving of their labor and money.

As early as 1907 the Department of Agriculture of the Government of Alberta had held institute meetings (not Women's Institute) at different points, providing short courses in agriculture. When the Women's Institutes were organized the Government gave assistance and in 1912 Miss Georgina G. Stiven, a graduate of household science, Guelph Agricultural College, was appointed superintendent.

Even before this appointment instruction in home-making was given to Alberta rural women, as demonstration trains went through the province providing lectures and women spoke on foods and cookery.

Manitoba had its first Women's Institute in 1910 at Morris, and Saskatchewan formed its first Homemakers' Club in 1911. The new groups were modeled after those in Ontario, but to this day they continue to be called Saskatchewan Homemakers' Clubs.

The first Women's Institute of Nova Scotia was organized at Saltsprings, Pictou County, on July 17, 1913, but was disbanded in 1920, so to Scotsburn, in the same county, goes the honor of being the oldest institute in the province. It was organized on July 22, 1913.

Today in Canada member societies of the Associated Countrywomen of the World include Women's Institutes in British Columbia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Quebec, as well as those already mentioned. The Cercle des Fermieres de Quebec, is the French Canadian rural group represented and the Hadassah Organization of Canada also is a member.

First President

The Federated Women's Institutes of Canada came into being at Winnipeg in 1919 with that distinguished and beloved Canadian, Judge Emily Murphy, as president. Two war-time presidents were mentioned in the King's Honors List. In 1943 Mrs. H. A. Dunham, of Havelock, N.B. (now honorary president), was created a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and in 1946, her successor, Mrs. Cameron Dow, O.B.E., of Port Daniel, P.Q., was named an officer of the same order.

The F. W. I. C. at its biennial meeting in Halifax, N.S., June 9 to 13, will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Women's Institutes, and on the 18th of that month a golden jubilee celebration will be

TOMORROW is the 50th anniversary of Women's Institutes.

Rural women all over the world, whether they look out on the white fields of northern countries, or the rice fields of Burma, must now find their thoughts turning to a little Ontario village, where on February 19, 1897, there came into being an organization which has brought new life to many an isolated farm home.

At Stoney Creek a little group of 101 women and one man—not so little considering the size of the village—had their imaginations kindled by a Hamilton woman, Mrs. John Hoodless (better known to posterity as Adelaide Hoodless). The death of her infant son as a result of being fed impure milk had spurred her to find some way of saving other babies from a similar fate. A daughter of the farm, she saw a need for bringing scientific home management to rural homemakers and suggested formation of a women's organization to provide for women what the Farmers' Institutes gave in scientific knowledge to the men.

The first Women's Institute was organized with Mrs. E. D. Smith, of Winona, as president, and Mrs. Hoodless as honorary president. First known as Saltfleet Township Women's Institute, it later was called Stoney Creek, W.I. The one man present at the organization meeting was Erland Lee, member of the Farmer's Institute in Saltfleet, who had been instrumental in having Mrs. Hoodless address a meeting of his Institute. It was at that meeting Mrs. Hoodless suggested formation of a women's group.

From that small beginning this rural women's movement has spread across Canada and into England and other countries.

Quick growth of the movement in its early days was, perhaps, an omen of the way it was to bring new knowledge and happy fellowship to women the world over.

A second Women's Institute, known as the Women's Institute of Southern Ontario was formed at Whitby on June 29, 1897 and it was not long before there was a third organization at Kemble, known as the Women's Institute of North Grey.

Of the first Institute, Miss Laura Rose (later Mrs. W. F. Stephen, of Ottawa), first government lecturer and organizer for the Women's Institutes wrote: "At first the members were diffident about taking part in their meetings but now excellent papers are prepared and most interesting discussions take place." She visited South Ontario W.I. also and in 1900 wrote of this district: "There are now 4 or 5 branches in neighboring localities. At one place the hall was so full I could not find a chair when my address was finished."

Mrs. Hoodless' aim was to give women knowledge which would help them to improve their homes and also to take away the inevitable loneliness of isolated rural homes by providing fellowship with other women. Through their study and interest in community life they would help to raise the standard of living.

These aims were well defined in the minutes of the first meeting.

The original minutes, kept at Stoney Creek, have been copied at the Parliament buildings by the Women's Institute Branch, Ontario Department of Agriculture. As adopted at the first meeting after organization February 25, 1897 the constitution stated the object to be: "To promote that knowledge of household science which shall lead to improvement in household architecture with special attention to home sanitation, to a better understanding of the economic and hygienic value of foods and fuels and to a more scientific care of children with a view to raising the general standard of the health of our people."

In later years this was added to as follows: "In the carrying on of any line of work which has for its objects the uplift of the home, or the betterment of conditions surrounding community life."

The first Institute decided to meet once a fortnight and subjects discussed during those first meetings had a wide range of interest. On March 11 it was decided to conduct a question drawer and papers were presented on the following subjects: "Proper Food for Children," "Art" and "God Save the Queen." Later that month Dr. Mabel Henderson gave an address on "The Child in Health and in Disease," and there was a paper on "Women on the Farm." Forerunner of the present Junior Institute programs was the paper given on April 27 dealing with "Home Decorations by Girls."

By the end of the year members had had a lecture by a graduate of a cookery school, and the following year both monetary assistance and lectures were provided from the Ontario Department of Agriculture.

In 1899 Miss Laura Rose was appointed first Government lecturer and organizer for the Women's Institutes and the same year the Institutes asked the Government to make provision for scientific education in home-making at Guelph. This was given impetus by the success of Mrs. Hoodless in securing \$200,000 from Sir William Macdonald of Montreal as a con-

tribution towards Macdonald Institute, Guelph.

Today Ontario Women's Institutes are contributing to an Adelaide Hoodless Fund with an objective of \$36,000 to provide scholarships to enable girls from Ontario farms to study home economics at the provincial Agricultural College.

When the Experimental Union met at Guelph in 1902 in annual session 24 Institutes were represented and, the following year the first Women's Institute convention was held there with delegates present from the 53 Institutes, representing a membership of 6,000.

By 1911 at the ninth annual convention held in Toronto, the Institutes had grown to 600 branches with a membership of more than 16,000.

Welcoming the delegates to this convention, Mrs. A. M. Huestis of Toronto suggested that scientific knowledge of home subjects lifted the commonplace round.

"When mother knows why she cares for baby and baby's food in the most approved method, she no longer rebels over the time required to sterilize milk receptacles or to persuade father that the barn needs white-washing, cement flooring and window space to meet health requirements and make a modern cow barn. She even rejoices that she is permitted to look into the source of water supplied to the cattle and the water used to boil the vessels and when an epidemic such as typhoid strikes its deadly poison in her neighborhood, it will be the modern Institute woman who will lead in the reform to prevent such a dire calamity happening again."

Mrs. Huestis went on to refer to "municipal and rural housekeeping," a practice which Institutes over the years have faithfully carried on through their welfare work and community activities.

"If our civic and district fathers do not know how to housekeep and we do, it is ours to point the way to the needed cleaning and to help secure a department of public health to control by preventive means all these questions of a conservation of life," said Mrs. Huestis.

This was in 1911. In the fall of 1913 the Institutes in convention passed a resolution requesting the Department of Education to take steps for establishment of a provincial system of medical and dental inspection of school children. As this met with the approval of the Minister of Education, he established this work under department supervision, in cooperation with the Minister of Health. Medical clinics followed in 1918, and later dental clinics.

This was but one of many projects which the Institutes have instigated and carried forward through the years. This year establishment of school clinics, measures for the control of tuberculosis, cancer and venereal disease and immunization of children against infectious diseases are being stressed. In many districts Institutes are seeing to it that school lunches are provided.

Although few present institute members may remember the first superintendents of the Women's Institute Branch, Ontario Department of Agriculture, many will recall the days when the late George Putnam came to their conventions, a lone man in the midst of hundreds of women. But they knew he had their interests at heart and was indefatigable in giving advice and implementing their aims.

The first superintendent was F. W. Hodson, from 1897 to 1900, followed by Dr. G. C. Creelman, 1900 to 1904. Mr. Putnam served from 1904 to 1934 to be followed by Miss B. C. McDermand and Miss M. A. Clarke. The present director is Miss Anna P. Lewis, of Newmarket.

Capable and gifted women have guided the work of the Women's Institutes of Ontario since their federation in 1919. Mrs. William Todd, of Orillia, was the first provincial president, and the second was a Western Ontario resident, Mrs. George Edwards, of Komoka, now of London.

Other presidents have been: Mrs. C. Field Robertson, of Lanark; Mrs. W. J. Stone, of Newton Robinson; Mrs. A. E. Walker, of Bartonville; Mrs. R. B. Colloton, of Lorne Park; Mrs. T. J. McDowell, of Milverton; Mrs. Ernest Duke, of Port Carling; Mrs. Clarence Holmes, of Belleville, and the present head, Mrs. Hugh Summers, of Fonthill, elected in 1944.

Public services which have been

Women's Institutes Golden Jubilee 1947 Touches Rural Groups of World

In Canada Alone Membership
Now 70,000 in More Than
3,000 Branches

By L. F. M.

Associated Countrywomen of the World are to meet in Amsterdam in September.

What stories there will be to tell, of the toll of war years in European countries, of hopes and aims for the future, of the growth of rural women's organizations in America where they could develop at the same time they were bending every effort to help those suffering directly because of war.

Will there be talk of peace and the ways to build it and maintain it? In this 50th anniversary year of the founding of Women's Institutes will rural women see Stoney Creek, that small Ontario town where the movement was born, as a symbol of how men and women united may spare the world the agony of another conflict?

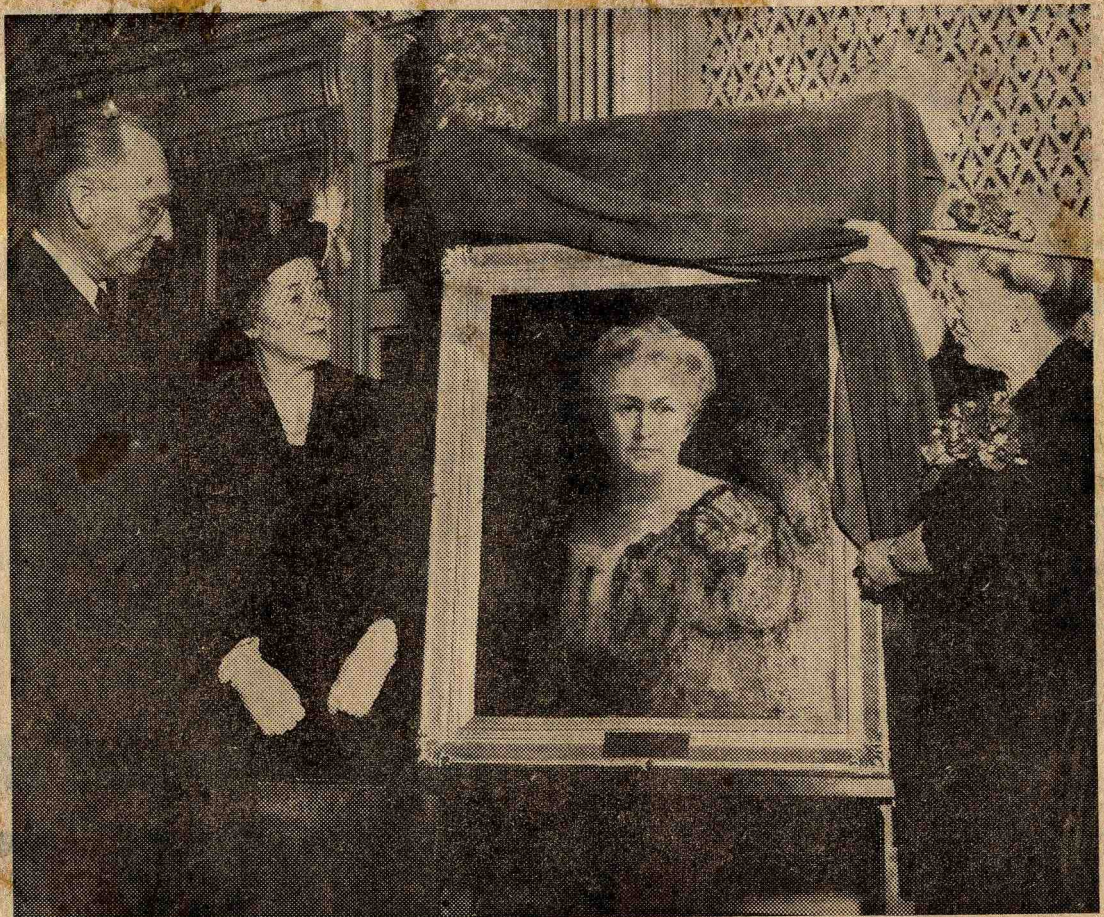
Stoney Creek was once famous as a battleground. Its second claim to fame may be the one remembered in history.

At Stoney Creek on February 19, a special broadcast will inform Canadians from coast to coast of the origin of the Women's Institutes and its ex-



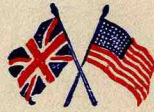
Mrs. Hugh Summers, of Fonthill (left), president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, elected in 1944; and Mrs. Cameron Dow, of Port Daniel, P.Q., (right) president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

Portrait of W.I. Founder Unveiled



State Secretary Bradley is shown at the unveiling of a portrait of Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, founder of the first Women's Institute at Stoney Creek, Ont., in 1897. Mrs. J. B. Peck, of Montreal, daughter of Mrs. Hoodless, looks on as the portrait is unveiled by Mrs. Raymond Sayre, of Ackworth, Iowa, world president of the Association Country Women of the World which grew out of the W.I. The portrait later was presented to the Dominion Archives. (CP Photo.)

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Welcome Home Banquet

to

The Boys and Girls

of

West Lorne and S. S. No. 6

who served in the

Armed Forces

COMMUNITY HALL - WEST LORNE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

1947