

# An Institute Rest Room

By Mrs. W. A. Clayton

AT THE July, 1911 meeting of the Norwich Women's Institute it was reported that "the value of having a definite object in view was stressed." In June, 1912 it was pointed out that Norwich now had a public library, which had been one of the popular projects of other Institutes, and it was decided that as a special work the financing and furnishing of a Ladies Rest Room would be a worth-while undertaking. In those days of horse-drawn vehicles it would be a real convenience to have a heated waiting-room where women could wait after shopping until the menfolk were ready to go home.

Another report announces that "on Saturday, March 8, 1913 the Rest Room will be opened in rented space in the Brown House, lunch to be served from 3.00 p.m. until 8 o'clock at a fee of 10 cents. The Institute is commended for securing very comfortable quarters in the old Brown House, well fitted with conveniences, and it is hoped that the opening will be a grand success. The cause is a worthy one and congratulations are due to the Institute for their undertaking."

At practically every meeting since that time, small or large needs for upkeep and improvement of the Rest Room have been discussed and arranged for. The rent was \$6.00 a month from 1913 to 1926 when it became the Institute's own property.

In 1915 water was installed at a cost of \$12.76. One entry in the same year mentions the cost of repairs to the stove as 92 cents for polish, brush, pipe and micas. Coal for heating was \$15.00. In September, 1921 a public telephone was installed, but was removed because of abuse in May, 1922.

On August 28, 1926 the Women's Institute purchased the building and land on the site of the present property, which included upstairs living quarters for a caretaker, from Mr. Arthur Catton for \$700.00, Mr. Catton making a donation of \$100.00 and accepting a mortgage for \$500.00 with ten years to pay. In 1929 a wash-room with plumbing was installed.

On September 10, 1929 the Institute, as a non-incorporated body, considered it wise to ask the Norwich Village Council to assume partial ownership of the Rest Room. This was done and the deed was drawn to the Village in trust with the Norwich Branch of the Women's Institute, with the President, Mrs. Letitia Palmer and the Secretary, Miss Martha Lees as co-signatories.



Norwich Women's Institute Rest Room.

Through the years 1921-32 grants of \$25.00 yearly from the municipalities of Norwich Village and North Norwich Township aided in the project. There is also a record of donations from various organizations from surrounding communities. In January, 1932 at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary celebration of the Norwich Women's Institute the mortgage was burned, having been paid off in five years.

The Institute has been responsible for the fire insurance premiums throughout the years and will continue to accept that responsibility.

In 1954 the Reeve of the Village and a councillor interviewed the Institute about the condition of the Rest Room: the sewage disposal was in poor condition, needing frequent repairs. In June, 1955 a small Women's Institute Rest Room Committee met with the Village Council and discussed tentative plans for a new Rest Room. In 1956 the new Reeve made the new Rest Room for the Village a clear project for the Council and they took the initiative in having the old building removed and contracts let for a fine new one-story cement block structure with brick front and two large windows facing the street from the waiting room. This is now completed. The room is nicely decorated and furniture has been provided by Institute funds. There are two lavatories and wash basins, an outside entrance having been provided for the men.

The Lion's Club of Norwich and surrounding communities has given a large donation and the Institute has taken the lead in soliciting support from other local organizations besides giving \$500.00 itself toward the building. The women have also furnished the waiting-room and supplied necessary incidentals to its general care and appearance.

The members of the Norwich Branch have raised their funds in various ways: bake sales, catering, talent money, giving bridge parties in their own homes, also holding a series of public card parties where each one who attended paid a fee. Prizes for these parties were all donated. Members also contributed 50 cents or more according to years as their birthdays came around.

Many of the villagers including proprietors and employees of the stores and residents