

# The First Women's Institute Celebrates Its Seventieth Birthday

ON THE EVENING of February 19, 1897, Mr. Erland Lee, a young farmer in Wentworth County, Ontario welcomed Mrs. Adelaide Hunter Hoodless to Squire's Hall in Stoney Creek, Ontario. One hundred and one women were waiting to hear Mrs. Hoodless, and inspired by her enthusiasm, these women agreed to form the first Women's Institute.

On February 15, 1967 (February 19 was a Sunday), Mrs. Chester Nash, President of the Stoney Creek Women's Institute welcomed members, former members and distinguished guests to a celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of this same Stoney Creek Women's Institute. Among the guests were Mrs. J. Philip Matheson, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, and Mrs. Everett Small, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

This was not just another birthday being celebrated by a branch of the Women's Institute. This was a momentous occasion. This was the celebration of the founding of the most important rural women's organization in existence today. This organization, which had its start on a stormy February night in Stoney Creek, Ontario was also the start of a national organization, the F.W.I.C., and the start of an organization which became an important constituent society of the Associated Country Women of the World.

Greetings received for this occasion were read: from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, Premier Robarts of Ontario, families who have had someone connected with the early days of the Stoney Creek Women's Institute, and many others.

Mrs. McKinley Morden, ninety-one years of age, a charter member, was present and assisted in cutting the birthday cake. The other surviving charter member, Mrs. P. Van Wagner, ninety-nine years old, was unable to attend. Mrs. Marjorie Lee, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Erland Lee, attended the birthday luncheon. Also present were Mrs. Arthur Conant and Brigadier Smith, the son and daughter of the first president of Stoney Creek Women's Institute, Mrs. E. D. Smith.

Mrs. Everett Small congratulated the Stoney Creek branch of the Women's Institutes on their fine record of achievements during the past seventy years and introduced Mrs. J. Philip Matheson.



Presidents representing five levels of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada attended the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the Women's Institute of Stoney Creek. From left to right: Mrs. Harvey Eller, Hamilton Area Women's Institutes; Mrs. J. Philip Matheson, of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada; Mrs. Chester Nash, Stoney Creek Women's Institute; Mrs. Allen Stewart, District of South Wentworth Women's Institutes; Mrs. Everett Small, Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. Photo — courtesy the Stoney Creek News.

Mrs. Matheson in her address pointed out that Stoney Creek occupies a unique position in the history of the Women's Institutes. She said that attending the seventieth anniversary of Stoney Creek Women's Institute was one of the highlights of her term of office as President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

Mrs. Chester Nash was the master of ceremonies for this birthday celebration. She expressed, for the Stoney Creek Women's Institute a warm appreciation to the guests for attending and for the good wishes received. "The Women's Institute," said Mrs. Nash "in the past seventy years has been a tremendous influence in the lives of thousands of women and has instituted countless important movements for progress and the good of women, but we must always be alert to opportunities and obligations engendered in our reputation."

## WANTED

National Secretary for Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. Qualifications: Knowledge and experience in work of Women's Institute and office management. Send applications to National Office, Room 28, 46 Elgin St., Ottawa 4, Ontario. Duties to commence Sept. 15, 1967. State salary expected.