

# The Jubilee Guilds of Newfoundland and Labrador



Delegates representing the Jubilee Guilds of Newfoundland, attending the F.W.I.C. convention in Guelph, Ontario. Front left to right—Mrs. A. W. Parsons, St. John's; Mrs. Wells, Gander; back, left to right—Mrs. Huxter Springale; Mrs. George Clark, St. John's; Mrs. Harvey Pryer, Gander; Mrs. Rorke, Carbonear. Photo courtesy Ontario Dept. of Agriculture and Food.

ON THE 18 OF NOVEMBER 1930, the people of the outports along the south shore of Newfoundland suffered from a disaster from which they were many years recovering. This disaster gave warning of its approach by an earthquake which rocked the houses and sent dishes flying from kitchen shelves. Shortly an enormous tidal wave rolled in from the sea. Now, the houses were lifted from their foundations, fish flakes, boats and equipment were tugged from their moorings, and all went floating away on the gigantic crest of muddy water.

This was disaster! Some people were drowned, many were homeless and almost all had lost their means of livelihood.

Lady Anderson wife of the lieutenant governor was much concerned with the plight of the people of the South Shore. She suggested that women of other parts of Newfoundland form groups to help provide clothing and food for the victims of the disaster.

Later when the emergency had passed Lady Anderson, who had known of the Women's Institutes in England, suggested that these groups keep together to form organizations similar to the Women's Institutes. This was done in 1935 but the women of Newfoundland decided to call their organization The Jubilee Guilds, since they came into being in the year of the Silver Jubilee, the 25th year of His Majesty, King George's reign in Great Britain.

The direction of the Jubilee Guilds was placed in the hands of a Board of Directors. These were women from the City of St. John's who voluntarily gave their time to the interests of the new organization. Lady Anderson became the first president, and an Organizing Secretary Miss Elizabeth McMillan was engaged. Later Miss McMillan was succeeded by Miss Anna Templeton.

The Jubilee Guilds of Newfoundland and Labrador took for their motto, Courage, Confidence and Unity. Primarily the work of the Jubilee Guilds down through the years, has been the promotion of handicrafts, mostly weaving and knitting. The Jubilee Guilds provided field workers to train the women, material with which to work, and a store through which the handiwork could be sold. The cost of the material was deducted from the turns from the work and so women could make clothing for their own families and add to the family income.

In 1945 the Jubilee Guilds affiliated with the Associated Country Women of the World and in 1951 they became part of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

Affiliation with the National Organization has broadened the work of the Jubilee Guilds and their programs are now set up along the lines suggested by the F.W.I.C. This has brought the Jubilee Guilds of Newfoundland and Labrador in contact with the Women's Institutes of the other provinces and women from Newfoundland are welcomed at the National Board meetings and Conventions.

Miss Anna Templeton, who was for many years Organizing Secretary for the Jubilee Guilds, travelled all over the province, teaching, organizing and encouraging. She is now Director of Craft Training for the Department of Vocational Education for the Newfoundland Government. The Jubilee Guilds are now under the direction of the Provincial Board of Directors, the president being Mrs. John Dea of St. John's and the Provincial Secretary is Mrs. A. W. Parsons, also of St. John's.

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MRS. MARY DURDLE was a little English woman who lived near the village of Mapleton in Elgin County, in the early days. She was a widow with three grown children and eked out a living from the products of her garden and by helping busy women with their knitting and sewing. She also made the large straw hats used by the men and children for days in the hot sun.

After the wheat was garnered in, Mrs. Durdle would visit the barn to get small bundles of the straw to use for the hats. The heads were chopped off to save the grain. The straw was unjointed at the first joint and soaked in the rain barrel until it was soft. Then with flying fingers Mrs. Durdle would braid and sew the straw into serviceable hats.