

# The Official Opening of the Erland Lee Home

by Mrs. H. L. Noblitt

Women's Institute history was made on August 9th when over 400 Women's Institute members from across the Province and interested friends from all over gathered at the Erland Lee Home, Ridge Road, Stoney Creek, for the official opening of the "Home". Eight bus loads came from as far away as 350 miles to be present for the memorable event. The occasion was to celebrate the acquisition of the property by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario in June, 1972, and to honour Erland and his wife Janet.

With Adelaide Hoodless providing the idea, and Erland Lee the stimulus, the first W.I. was founded in 1897. The original constitution was hand written by Janet Lee on the beautiful dining room table, still in the dining room of the Home.

The last of the Lees to reside in the house was Frank, son of Erland and his wife Katie. Among the special guests at the event were their daughters Mrs. R. L. Davis, Grimsby, Mrs. Frank Ryan, Oakville, Miss Alison Lee, Guelph, and Mrs. Leslie Tulk of Newfoundland, also his two sisters Miss Marjorie Lee, Hamilton and Mrs. H. C. Freal, Stoney Creek.

The crowd gathered at the front of the house for a brief ceremony in the shade under the tall trees. The Honourable William A. Stewart, Minister of Agriculture and Food, brought greetings from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and commended the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario for the great contribution it had made over the years toward the growth of the individual member, to the communities of Ontario, and now in acquiring the "Home" for members all over the world.

Greetings were extended from the Associated Country Women of the world by Deputy President, Dr. Irene Spry; and congratulations were read by Mrs. Austin Zoeller from Mrs. J. McLean of Nova Scotia, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

Mrs. H. L. Noblitt, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario was Chairman of the event. A short history of the Lee family from James, a staunch United Empire Loyalist who came to Canada from the United States in 1792, to the present, paying tribute to this progressive, public-spirited family who had played such a prominent part in the development of their community and especially to Erland and his wife for their initiative and support in the formation of the Women's Institute. Credit was also extended to the members of Wentworth County for their enthusiasm in accepting the idea introduced by Mrs. Hoodless, and for their efforts in promoting the idea which had spread in Ontario to a membership of 29,000 within fifteen years, and has subsequently encompassed the world.

Mrs. Gordon Conant of Oshawa, daughter of the first President Mrs. E. D. Smith shared some of her



Original Committee: Mrs. Russell Wise, Puslinch, Mrs. Allan Dickenson, Mount Hope, Mrs. Lilah Lumburner, Port Colborne.

memories of those days. Mrs. Leslie Tulk spoke for the Frank Lee family expressing their pleasure that their home is now being preserved by the Women's Institute. Mrs. Thomas McCreadie, President of Wentworth South District, recalled the day — May 28, 1961 — when the District erected a memorial plaque on a large boulder at the front of the house in recognition of Erland and Janet Lee. Mrs. Everett Small of Essex, a past President, told of the ceremony which took place at this identical site on October 1, 1967, when the Historic Sites Board, at the instigation of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, erected a plaque in honor of the part played by Erland and Janet Lee and Adelaide Hoodless.

The ribbon to officially open the "Home" was cut by Mrs. Russell Wise of Puslinch along with Mrs. Allan Dickenson, Mount Hope, both of whom were members of the Committee which was instrumental in initiating negotiations for the acquisition of the "Home", and by Mrs. Lilah Lymburner of Port Colborne, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario during the early period of negotiations.

Following the impressive ceremony the guests toured the house and Drive House and then enjoyed refreshments served beneath a large marquee erected at the back of the property by members of Wentworth County Women's Institutes.

## Wentworth County Day

The warm wishes of the guests was surpassed only by the warmth of the summer heat as Wentworth County officers gathered at the Erland Lee Home on August 8.

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