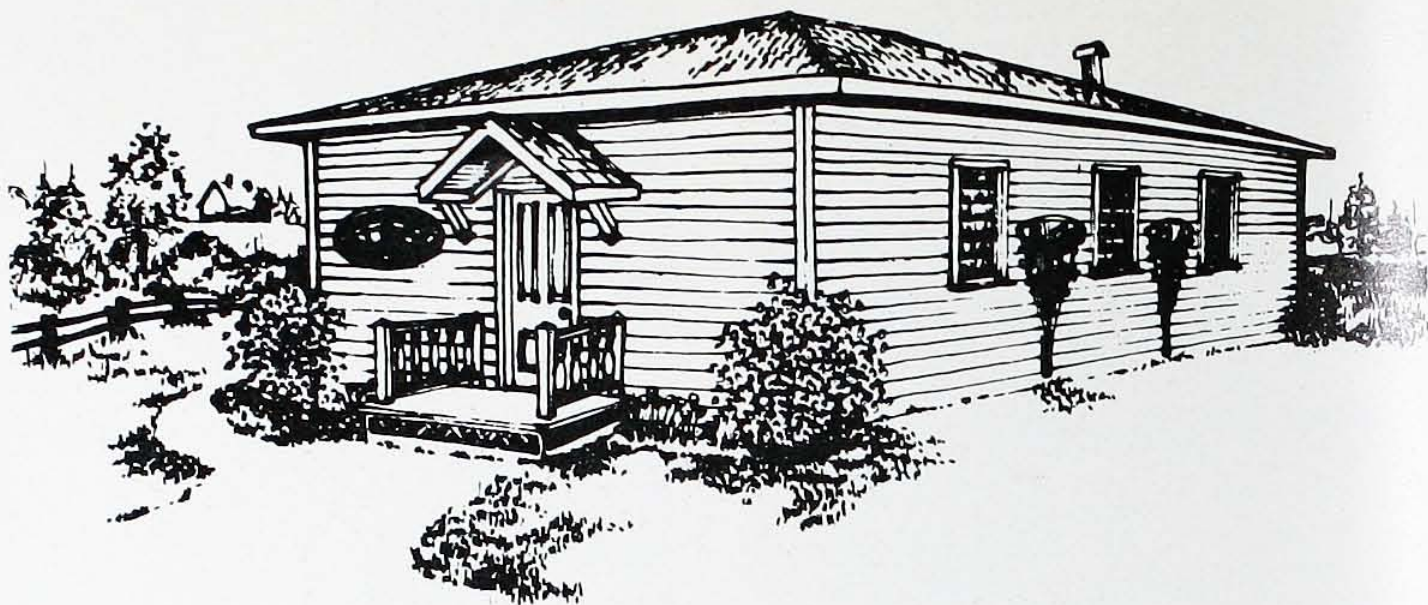


## *Early Ontario Church to become Women's Institute Hall*



A 156 year old building, one of the first rural churches in Central Ontario will shortly become a gathering place for Women's Institute members of the Province at the Ontario Agricultural Museum at Milton. Arrangements have now been completed between the F.W.I.O. and the Ontario Agricultural Museum which will ensure that the Women's Institute movement will have its own place on the 92 acre Ontario Agricultural Museum site. The move follows discussions that have been held with the Museum, and work will begin shortly to bring the plans to fruition.

The building to be used for this purpose is the former Sheridan Methodist Church which was built in 1820 on the corner of what is now Winston Churchill Boulevard and the South Service Road of the Queen Elizabeth Highway in Oakville. In those early years it served as a meeting place for all denominations in the community of Hammondville (later to become Sheridan). After 49 years of service as a church and meeting place, the building became too small for the growing community and in 1869 it was replaced by a larger, brick church which still stands. When it was closed as a church in 1869 it was sold to the Lawrence family who lived on the adjacent farm and moved there where it served as an ice house until 1914. In 1914 Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Lawrence used it as a temporary residence while they were building the large red brick house in which the family continues to reside. Since the Lawrences moved into that new house in 1914, the old building has served as a storage area and workshop. Now after 156 years of multiple service to the

community this weathered old building will be given a new life to serve the general public in yet another way.

Recently the Lawrence family offered this old building, now covered with grapevines and ivy, with sagging floors and broken windows to the Ontario Agricultural Museum.

It will be dismantled shortly and moved to the Museum site where it will be re-erected and restored as the "Women's Institute Hall". Commenting on this project, the O.A.M. General Manager, R. W. Carbert said, "We feel very fortunate to have been able to acquire this unique old structure, which has so many roots in the early days of rural Ontario. We are pleased that the Lawrence family realized the significance of this building and made it available to us. We will be placing it on a solid foundation, and using the original hand-hewn timber frame, reconstructing it as accurately as we possibly can. When we have finished, it will be turned over to the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario to use as their "home" on our site. We expect they will utilize it for demonstrations of domestic crafts, as a show-place for Institute exhibits, and as a central meeting place for farm women who visit the Museum site. In many ways this building is symbolic of Ontario Agricultural Museum's central theme, to depict the continuing changes that have taken place in rural Ontario and in farming practices."

Hopefully the Sheridan Church Women's Institute Hall will be completed by mid-summer, and ready for use by local W.I. Branches.