

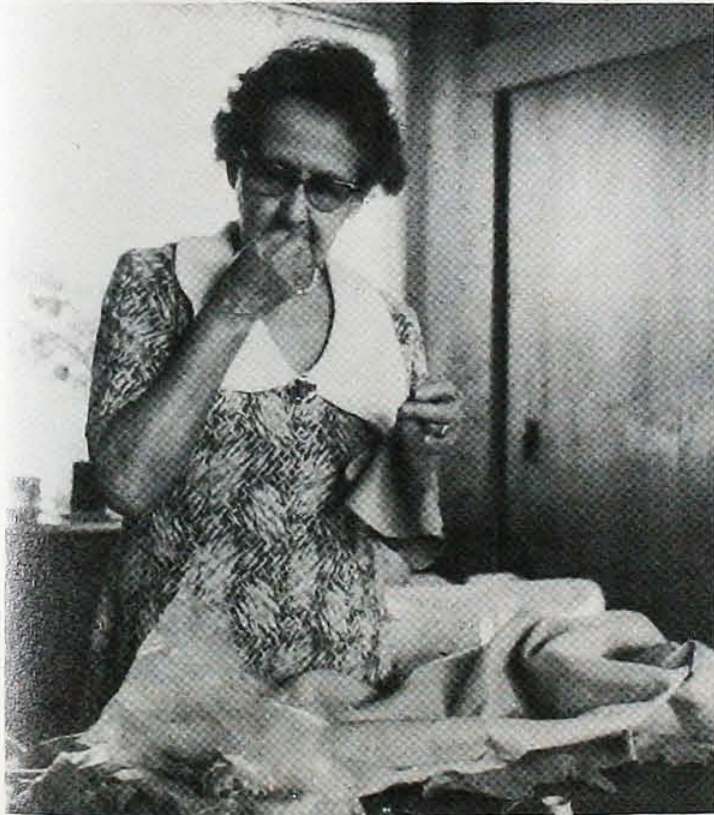
HOBBIES KEEP HER YOUNG

In September 1936 Mrs. Lila Steele bundled her 3 month old baby up and started out on a horse and buggy trek to the small eastern village of Lanark to take part in a Senior Project being taught by the Home Economics Branch. It's not unlikely she had doubts about how valuable the 3 day Training School would be and probably wondered if her time might not be better spent at home meeting the demands of her family of 11, but she realized her responsibilities too. The newly formed W.I. branch to which she belonged, was anxious to learn the skill of glovemaking and the Home Economics Branch was offering it the chance. Mrs. Steele, chosen to attend Training School was "the sewer in her group" and seemed like a likely leader. So she learned the craft, took her knowledge back to her branch and taught its members. End of story, not exactly for this one just happened to run full cycle.

40 years later Mrs. Steele had a chance to return the favour to the Home Economics Branch, by teaching the local Home Economist the art of glove making.

Mryna Hagarty happened to be attending a 4-H meeting at the home of Mrs. Steele when she became interested in some of the beautiful leather crafts the lady was working on. Inquiring if she might consider teaching her, the instant reaction, "We'll arrange a time to get together." Now several months later, Miss Hagarty is grateful to Mrs. Steele and has gloves to prove it.

While the story of Mrs. Steele's life may parallel the experience of many of the W.I. members, it would amaze the younger members and I'm sure be an impetus for both ages. Dedicated to the idea that only the body need age—not the mind, Mrs. Steele is certainly evidence of this.



Mrs. Lila Steele saves the scraps from leather glove making, to be used for other crafts.

Born in Mississippi, Ontario into a farm family of 5 Mrs. Steele learned the meaning of homemaking early when she was called upon to care for the family and

home after the death of her young mother. When her youngest sister entered high school she was relieved of these responsibilities and was able to marry at 21 and moved onto a nearby farm where she is presently living with her son and his family.

Over the years Mrs. Steele, like many Women's Institute members elsewhere has taken an active role in the community. When physicians were scarce she acted as a doctor to her neighbours and has assisted in delivering at last count 25 babies. An avid sewer since her childhood she is a seamstress for many and reveals that she has only bought one dress in her lifetime.

Her homemaking skills and concern for people probably fostered an interest in the Women's Institute. She recalls joining the Mississippi Branch on the night it was organized in June, 45 years ago. Still an active life member she reveals why her initial interest in it. "I joined because I felt it would improve my mind and keep in touch with my neighbours." After so many years and countless more meetings her attitude has changed little. She feels it "broadens your mind in so many ways and teaches you cooperation." You can go out to a meeting feeling tired and come home feeling twice as good." She points out the importance of attending meetings and the need of a social hour to foster this.

So the rough ride to Lanark 40 years ago has certainly proved worth it for Mrs. Steele. Today she makes leather products for all her family as well as many local people. Word of her skill is widespread and she has mailed her crafts in every direction throughout Canada.

Her latest business-hobby venture is the making of cushions of all sizes and material for customers far and wide. This being the result of taking a more recent Home Economics Branch course. Next she would like to learn how to crochet. And chances are that by the time this article is printed she'll be doing just that. At age 82 Mrs. Steele is looking forward to learning an ever growing list of skills and new experiences both inside and outside of Women's Institute work.

THE PAST HISTORY

Lucan WI, Tweedsmuir History Curator, Mrs. Frank Hardy and her committee planned a meeting to include pictures, displays and books.

Roll Call—"A business and owner in Lucan prior to 1950", information to be written which will be added to Tweedsmuir book.

Motto—History—mirror of the past, guide and inspiration for the present and future.

Meeting—Resumé of the history of the community since 1836 when surveyed by the Canada Company. Originally named "Marystown" after the surveyor's wife Mary McDonald the name was changed to "Lucan" after Lord Lucan of Ireland, and incorporated as a village in 1872.

Tweedsmuir History—is on display at the local library where the librarian frequently turns the pages and the book is available to the public during library hours.

Displays—of scrapbook and envelopes containing historical data along with a memorial book containing 738 historical obituaries and 98 names and dates of deaths of former residents.