

BRUCE COUNTY TARTAN

The History of Bruce County Tartan as told by Mrs. Jean Fenton, FWIO Board Director, Subdivision 16.

Bruce County has it's own Tartan!

Believed to be one of five Canadian Territorial Tartans duly registered at Her Majesty's Registry House in Edinburgh, Scotland.

It was Dr. J. F. Morton, Southampton who suggested "we have a Bruce Tartan for our Centennial to promote Bruce County."

Where do people turn when they want something done? Women's Institute. . . .

Mrs. Mary Gateman, a devoted W I member, presented the idea of sponsorship to the Bruce County Women's Institute Rally at Park Head in October 1962. In January 1963 the WI's reported to Bruce County Council they were ready to take on this project. County Council passed a by-law to establish a committee. From the four Districts within the Rally each chose a representative, Mrs. Gateman became the Secretary representing Bruce Centre, Mrs. J. E Rowe, Bruce South; Mrs. Gordon Hepburn, Bruce North; Mrs. Kathleen Jacklin, Bruce East, the remainder of the committee Dr. J. F. Morton, Chairman, Mrs. Tessie Greig, Warden of Bruce, Mrs. Dorothy Wimperley and Mr. Norman McLeod.

Weeks of work and many meetings later, ideas and thoughts of a design were taking shape. It was hoped originally that the tartan would have a blue background representing the 367 miles of shore line. However, that was not to be! A letter was sent to Lord Lyon, King-of-Arms in Scotland who replied "that under no consideration would a Tartan be approved for an organization and that the request must come from County Council and that only variations of the Bruce Clan Tartan would be considered". What to do now?

It was then that Mr. Norman McLeod, a former Bruce County son and personal acquaintance of Lord Bruce asked assistance from this noble Lord, grandson of a former Governor General. Lord Bruce conferred with his father the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, head of the Bruce Clan, for consent of modifications of the Bruce Family Tartan. This was granted and the committee sent suggestions as to color and design.

The committee requests were not all granted, but with modifications the suggestion of a deep blue line on each side of the white line and using red instead of scarlet for the background. Excitement mounted, wheels were set in motion, a sample piece was sent to Scotland.

Yes, approval had been granted.

The County of Bruce had their own Tartan registered in Edinburgh, Scotland on January 19th, 1965 and in Canada on July 13, 1966.

The next step was to have the Tartan woven and the first five hundred yards were cut into bolts and distributed throughout the County. This was not done without some expense and again the Women's Institutes of Bruce County donated money which was given with the understanding that at such time as the Tartan Committee was financially able, the money would be repaid to each Branch. It wasn't too long before each Branch was notified "if they wanted their money returned the Tartan Committee was now in a position to do so". By this time all the W I members were so proud of the part played in obtaining "our own" Tartan, very few asked for their money back.

The next thought for consideration was the appointment of a Business agent, Mr. James Meyer received that honour in August 1965 and in November 1968 Anna Meyer became promotion manager. A gala evening was held in Southampton and the Tartan was launched commercially. There was a Tartan Show of men's jackets, vests, ties and ladies suits, capes and even children's wear.

Mr. and Mrs. Meyer's efforts proved most successful, however they decided to go into other fields with the result that in November 1975 County Council passed a by-law giving Bruce County Women's Institute Rally the exclusive rights to promote and sell the Tartan. The four Districts again appointed representatives, a secretary was named from this group and Mr. Cliff Buckingham as Treasurer.

When Bruce County hosted the 1976 International Plowing Match, one other lady was appointed to help with the heavy work load. They geared to meet the demand, and anyone who attended the Match saw the Tartan everywhere. This was financially so successful that \$8000.00 was invested and at the 1976 Rally the members voted to use the interest to provide two awards.

One, for a resident of Bruce County who has contributed the most to Agriculture in the past year.

The second, to a resident of Bruce County who has contributed the most to their Community in the past year.

The terms of reference — each resident is to be between 16-30 years of age. \$300.00 and a trophy to each winner and to the three finalists in each category \$25.00 cheque. A review of terms every five years.

County Council has renewed the W I Rally term for a second five-year period to promote and sell the Tartan. Wherever you see W I members from Bruce County you are sure to see a piece of jewelery, a suit, a skirt or tie.

The first Committee was a devoted and energetic group, however there are many members who have worked over the years, giving of their energies, time and talent who will remain the unsung heroes of a most worthy project.



ROSEDENE W I, LINCOLN DISTRICT celebrated their 70th Anniversary Tea in the Silverdale Centennial Hall. Pictured are the executive and members.