

HOME & COUNTRY



Adelaide Hoodless blazed a trail

"In the midst of an address in the interest of a cause so near and dear to her heart - the advancement of the welfare of the women of Canada - Mrs. John Hoodless of this city was suddenly called to the great beyond ... on Saturday afternoon."

- Hamilton Times, Feb. 28, 1910

Born in a farmhouse between Brantford and the Village of St. George, Adelaide Hunter was the youngest of 12 children. In 1881, at the age of 24, she married a well-to-do Hamilton business man, John Hoodless.

Adelaide Hoodless might have led a relatively unremarkable life were it not for a devastating family tragedy. At the tender age of 18 months, the youngest member of the Hoodless household died after drinking contaminated milk.

Rather than giving in to despair, the death of her precious child galvanized Hoodless into action. Beginning by campaigning for pure milk, she soon expanded her focus.

Adopting the motto, "You purify society when you purify the home," Adelaide Hoodless felt that the education system did not adequately prepare women for the responsibilities of household management.

As first President of the Hamilton Young Women's Christian Association, [her] crusade for better training of women in homemaking skills led to the formation of a school for instruction on scientific household management in 1893. When the YWCA School of Domestic Science opened, ... Adelaide Hoodless was criticized severely for suggesting that the school should be financed by the Board of Education.

As components of her tireless campaign for better education for women, Adelaide Hoodless was actively involved in the formation of a number of [other] organizations, including the National Council of Women, the Victorian Order of Nurses and the Women's Institutes.

Hoodless threw herself into all her endeavours with the greatest energy, but that took its toll. Tragedy struck on February 28, 1910, when in the middle of a speech in Toronto the 53-year-old crusader suffered a massive heart attack and died instantly.

On November 1, 1911, a group of Hamilton citizens gathered to lay the cornerstone for the Adelaide Hoodless School.

This article - written by Brian Henley, a reporter with the Hamilton Spectator - was reprinted in part from an article that appeared in the March 6, 1993 edition.



On March 8, 1993 - International Women's Day - Canada Post unveiled the first issue of four commemorative stamps honouring prominent Canadian women. The Hoodless stamp was issued in honour of the centennial anniversaries of the National Council of Women and the National Office of the YWCA. Adelaide was a founding member of these organizations. She also helped draft the charter for the Women's Institute movement and organize the first Institute at Stoney Creek, Ontario, in 1897.

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