

Home & Country: Past, Present and Future

By Janine Roelens-Grant

The Women's Institute News Bulletin

The first Women's Institute News Bulletin was published in 1924. The 4-page Bulletin was produced by the Women's Institute Branch of the Ontario Department of Agriculture. Three copies were sent to each Branch: one to the President; one to the Secretary; and one to the Convenors.

There was no Editor listed in this Bulletin. But the name of Mr. Putnam appeared as the Superintendent of Women's Institutes, with Ethel Chapman as the Assistant Superintendent.

The Home and Country

In 1933, a new 4-page publication called the Home and Country replaced the News Bulletin. It too was published by the Women's Institute Branch in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, and through contributions from the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO). Again, there was no Editor named; but an Editorial Committee of four had been established.

The purpose of the Home and Country was outlined in 1933 as follows:

- to stimulate a keener interest in the general work of the Institutes;
- to assist the officers in making the activities of each Branch of real educational value to the members;
- to encourage wholesome social undertakings;
- and, to enable the members to render worthwhile service to the community.

The circulation of the Home and Country was limited. Copies were sent free to each Branch and District President and Secretary, the officers of the provincial Board, the convention area Chairmen and Secretaries, Chairmen of the standing committees for the various conventions, and the leaders of rural women's organizations in other provinces and countries. Branch Secretaries could obtain extra copies of the Home and Country for individual members from the Parliament Buildings in Toronto for a nominal fee of 10 cents each.

The Home and Country was printed on an irregular basis the first few years. Its format was oversized - 10 1/2 x 13 3/4 inches - and it was printed in black and white. In the November/December 1933 issue the first photograph appeared; a picture of the Women's Institute Provincial Board of course.

A notice published in the August 1934 edition of the Home and Country stated that Branch Secretaries should have received

enough copies to give to each individual member. But, it is not clear when this practice became widespread.

Beginning in 1935, the decision was made to publish the Home and Country as a quarterly, with issues in January, April, July, and October. It remained much the same - a 4-page quarterly, oversized in format, with few photographs - until the mid-1940s. At this time it increased to an 8-page quarterly with several photographs. There were no radical changes in the Home and Country until 1952.

An Editor, separate from the Editorial Committee, was named for the first time in 1952. Miss Ethel Chapman, who began with the Women's Institute Branch in 1922, was now welcomed as Editor of the Home and Country. And under Miss Chapman a "new look" commenced with the Summer issue.

This "new look" included 24 pages, a smaller magazine format - 6 3/4 x 9 3/4 inches in size, the use of a cover with color on it, and lots of photographs. The Home and Country was now issued three times a year - winter, summer and fall. It remained a joint publication of the FWIO, the Women's Institute Branch and the Ontario Department of Agriculture until 1957. Beginning with the Winter 1957 issue, however, it was published by the Ontario Department of Agriculture in the interests of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

With a few exceptions - the inclusion of more pages, up to 56 at times, and the appointment of Maryn Parly in 1967 as Editor - there was little change in the production of the Home and Country until 1974.

After the sudden death of Maryn Parly in the early fall of 1973, Margaret Zoeller became Editor. Once again, the Home & Country took on a different look. The Fall 1973 issue became larger in size - 8 1/2 x 11 inches - and a slightly different nameplate was designed for the front cover. The new 32-page publication continued to be printed three times a year.

In the late 1970s, there were a few more changes. In 1978 the use of color appeared on the inside of the magazine. In 1979 the number of pages decreased to 24. And in 1980, the Home & Country returned to being a quarterly publication.

Carol Stewart-Kirkby took on the job as Editor in 1983. The Home & Country was now published by the Rural Organizations and Services Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF).

By the mid-1980s a more fundamental change in the Home & Country took place.

To address the need for "a provincial networking tool for all rural/farm women" OMAF outlined the objectives of the Home & Country as follows:

1. to provide a communications link between rural women's groups in Ontario;
2. and, to provide educational material relating to organizational and individual leadership development.

To accommodate all rural women's organizations, the Home & Country Editorial Committee was revived to include representatives from each group.

In the last five years the format of the magazine has undergone several changes. Beginning with the spring issue in 1988, the first French language article appeared. That fall, due to budget cuts, the magazine decreased to a 16-page publication and the use of color was discontinued. The Home & Country took on the look it has today.

Women's Institute work was extensively documented in the Home & Country, especially in the earlier decades. Annual meetings, committee and officers' reports, and program planning ideas were outlined in detail over the years. One issue lists all of the WI contributions during the WW II effort, for instance. The WI member on this page has gathered the harvest from her Victory Garden. For their Golden Anniversary, WI members celebrated with a poster competition. Then there was the first Officers' Conference in 1949. But the Home &

continued on page 6

