

T W E E D S M U I R H I S T O R Y
O F
W E S T B R U C E D I S T R I C T W O M E N ' S I N S T I T U T E

"Origin and Growth of Women's Institutes in Ontario"

Mr. F.W. Hodson, first superintendent of the Farmer's Institutes of Ontario, reported in 1895-6 as follows:-

"In addition to the meetings noted of Farmer's Institutes, Miss Bessie Livingston and Miss Mary E. Miller, teachers in the Ottawa School of Cookery, were employed to visit meetings in twenty counties in Ontario. Questions on domestic economics were discussed. These were the first meetings held in Ontario under the auspices of the Farmer's Institutes or any branch of the Agricultural Department where trained teachers were employed to deliver addresses. The venture was a pronounced success. "

This interest was not recognized in organized form until February 19, 1897, when the Stoney Creek Women's Institute was established in Saltfleet township, Wentworth County with the object of providing a means for farm and village women to meet regularly to discuss problems and to acquire information concerning their responsibilities as homemakers and citizens. The Charter Members of this organization were encouraged and assisted by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless of Hamilton and Mr. Erland Lee.

The purposes of the new organization were somewhat similar to those of the Farmer's Institutes organized in Ontario in 1885. The 'Act respecting Agricultural Societies' provided for women's Institutes as well as Farmer's Institutes.

To summarize, the objectives were:-

- (1) To help women acquire sound and approved practices of greater home efficiency.
- (11) To discover, stimulate and train leadership

Origin and Growth of Women's Institutes in Bruce County

- with special interest in West Bruce District, later to become BRUCE EAST DISTRICT.

" In 1885 the Provincial Commissioner of Agriculture sent a circular to the various County Councils offering a grant of \$25.00 and asking a similar amount from each County Council to establish Farmer's Institutes in each electoral district.

In 1887, these Farmer's Institutes were organized in Bruce.

In 1896, a fourth Farmer's Institute was organized for that part of the county north of Hepworth to be known as the North Bruce Farmer's Institute. What remained of the north riding had an Institute known as that of West Bruce. "

Of the 33 Women's Institutes, with a membership of 1,602, functioning in Ontario in 1900, one of these was the Port Elgin and District Institute, organized in Port Elgin on November 17, 1898, by the Farmer's Institute. Officers were, President; Mrs. D. McTavish; Secretary: Mrs. J.H. Wismer.

This branch was recorded in Provincial records as a District Institute on November 17, 1900 and continued as such while additional branches were formed as follows:

Tara- - - organized January 13, 1902 by Mrs. Colin Campbell and Mrs. Wismer of Port Elgin.
Officers: President:- Mrs. Duncan Sinclair
Secretary:- Miss Christine Smith

' ' Handbook, Ontario Women's Institutes, 1936, page 3 and 4.

" Robertson's The History of the County of Bruce page 133, 135