

The Story of The Institute.

Greatly marvelling because of the way in which the rural organization known as the Women's Institute has caught the imagination and guided the world, people have asked, — "What was its beginning? What gave it the impetus that sent it forward?" I feel that I shall not be far wrong with the answer.

"Because it was properly born — born as all best things are born of the fusion of the unselfish thought, vision and wisdom of a woman and a man."

For some years in the reign of Queen Victoria, Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless of Hamilton, Ontario, — a woman of beauty, charm and intellect, had spoken publicly on the need for fuller teaching of domestic science everywhere. She had urged her project privately. She even stormed high places. She sat, figuratively speaking, on the steps of the West House of Parliament, ready to lay her cause before every parliamentarian she met.

Same 1897. In that year a young man, Erland Lee heard Mrs. Hoodless give an address at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, and when he returned to his own little village of Stoney Creek in Wentworth County, he gave a great deal of thought to what she had said. A few days later there was a meeting of members of the Farmers Institute, long since rightly dead because it accomplished nothing. Along with the men came a bodyguard of devoted wives, to see that their lords and masters were well fed in the intervals of deliberation. Mr. Lee asked Mrs. Hoodless to come and talk to these women, — Stoney Creek is only a short distance from Hamilton, her home town. As she spoke to them she was seized with an idea: "What about forming an Institute for the women, similar to that of the men?" Was it not as necessary that the women on the farm should be given help in bringing up a healthy happy family, as that her husband should have assistance in the matter of taking care of calves and developing a worthwhile herd of cattle.

She gave her inspiration to the women and thirty five hands said "Aye", that day. When Mrs. Hoodless came later for the official organization the thirty five had increased to one hundred ladies who together with Mr. Erland Lee as Chairman, formed a "Women's Dept of Domestic Economy", affiliated with the Farmers Institute. This name was later changed to The Women's Institute of Saltfleet Township; in which Stoney Creek lies. Later still it took the name of the little village where the famous battle of 1812 was fought, and where the great monument to the heroes