

Hoodless Homestead preserves WI history



Sue Dorion, curator of the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Home in St. George, stands beside a portrait of Women's Institute co-founder Adelaide Hunter Hoodless.

Story and photo
by JILL CLEAVER
Farming Today Staff

ST. GEORGE — Almost 100 years ago Adelaide Hunter Hoodless and Erland Lee founded the world's first Women's Institute.

Today, both their former homes are preserving the rich history of the international group.

Both Lee's home in Stoney Creek and the Hoodless homestead here have been converted into museums.

The Hoodless home, located north of Brantford on Blue Lake Road (west of Highway 24), is open to visitors Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays, 12 noon to 5 p.m.

The homestead has been open to the public since 1959 when the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada purchased it.

Homestead curator Sue Dorion says the home was purchased to honor Hoodless, who was born in 1857 and died in 1910. She helped establish the W.I. as a group providing a place for women to improve their homemaking standards.

This stems from Hoodless's own experience of having her fourth child die from impure milk. And today that motto has extended to include a variety of things, such as "recycling, and anything that is the continuation of life on this earth."

The WI has a long list of accomplishments.

In the early years, the WI was responsible for having bread wrapped. In 1937 it advocated the implementation of music in the school curriculum. It also was responsible for mandatory breathalyser and blood tests for

motorists, sex education in schools, and the law which forces traffic to stop when school buses do. And the list goes on.

The home, which annually attracts as many as 1,500 visitors, symbolizes WI ideals.

The home welcomes people from all over the world, including Australia, Africa and New Zealand, and plays host to many visitors from the immediate area.

The home also invites the public to take part in special events, such as the "Strawberry and Roses Social," held on June 23 and a family picnic scheduled for July 21.

The picnic will feature crafters, quilters, and spinners,

as well as lemonade and watermelon. Guests are asked to bring their own lawn chairs and

a picnic lunch. Admission to the home is free, but donations are accepted.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE They've Made A Big Difference

Pasteurized milk, wrapped bread among Institute's accomplishments

by SUSAN McCONNELL
Staff Writer

A lot of things we take for granted were once the rallying cry of the Women's Institute.

To its credit, the W.I. was responsible for having bread wrapped, the painting of white lines on highways, use of fluorescent paint on railway cars and stop signs at crossings, labelling of garments, poultry grading, having staples abolished on packaged foods, banning sales of mineral-based detergents, dental and medical

inspections in schools, requiring persons handling food to have T.B. tests, and making it mandatory for traffic to stop when a school bus is picking up or discharging passengers.

Perhaps the most famous project the W.I.-spearheaded was pasteurization of milk. The Institute also lists sex education in school and making the legal marriage age 16 with parents' consent (1937) as projects.

W.I. projects are a mirror of the times. In 1985 they pushed, among other issues, public washroom cubicles for the hand-

icapped, enforcement of handicapped parking regulations, and safety precautions for manure-holding tanks; in 1986 they rallied for all pop and alcoholic beverages to be refundable and the banning of liquor commercials on Ontario television; in 1987 they took on three-point type rear seat belts and the inclusion of houseworkers in the Canada Pension Plan; the following year there was testing of a new pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine, mandatory food labelling in restaurants, catering and fast food outlets, scheduled government inspections of nursing homes; in 1989 there was more funding for health care support persons and

In the 1990s, the group turned its attention to the environment — not a new topic of concern for the Institute which had already pushed reduction of styrofoam and plastic packaging, reduction of packaging, reduction of acid rain and making recycling mandatory in Canada.

Work performed by the 20,000 Ontario members in over 1,000 branches was valued at \$6 million and estimated volunteer man houses in one year were 492,168.