

OUR SUPERINTENDENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

MR. JOHN I. HODSON, 1897-1899

Mr. John I. Hodson was the Superintendent of Farmers' Institutes in Ontario when the formation of the first Women's Institute was authorized as given in schedule A. of the Act and Rules Governing Farmers' Institutes and automatically became the first Superintendent of Women's Institutes.

For many years Mr. Hodson had been prominent in Municipal and Agricultural matters, being an examiner in Agriculture and Live Stock at the Ontario Agriculture College in Guelph and chairman of the College Board.

For fourteen years Mr. Hodson had been a most acceptable lecturer at Farmers' Institute meetings and was aware of the growing interest shown by rural women in community affairs and had often expressed the hope that the day was not far distant when each Farmers' Institute would have a Women's Institute affiliated with it, and that young women as well as young men might receive special training to prepare them for life on the farm at a Provincial School where farmers' daughters would be taught Home Economics.

Mr. Hodson only lived to see the organization of two more Institutes, that of South Ontario at Whitby and Grey North at Kemble.

DR. GEORGE C. CREELMAN, 1899-1904

Professor George C. Creelman was appointed to succeed Mr. Hodson in 1899 and remained Superintendent of Institutes until 1904. When he retired to assume his duties as President of the Agricultural College in Guelph he retained his keen interest in the growth of Women's Institutes.

In addressing the Women's Institute delegates at the Third Annual Convention in Guelph in 1904 the Macdonald Institute course in Home Economics was introduced. Dr. Creelman, as President of the College, said, "I welcome you here with a full heart, because I feel in a sense you are my children.

"I have felt ever since I graduated from this institution (O.A.C.) that while we had met with success in bringing about improved conditions of agriculture, there was a want in the farm home that was not being touched. When I was Superintendent of Farmers' Institutes I felt there was something lacking. The delegates reported improvements in silos, in farm buildings, in stock, machinery and implements but there was no one to tell me that the farm home was better ventilated, and the homestead growing more attractive and convenient so I thought 'Young man, here is an opportunity for you to do something in this line. If you do not undertake it you will not be doing your duty to the State' ". Thus Dr. Creelman aided in setting up the Home Economics course for girls.

MR. GEORGE A. PUTNAM, 1904-1934

The name of George A. Putnam B.S.A. became closely interwoven into the story of Women's Institutes during the thirty years from 1904 to 1934 in which he was its Superintendent. In his long term of office he saw the gradual development of the organization grow in numbers from 5,433 to 42,000 members.

Mr. Putnam was a native of Elgin County and after his graduation from Aylmer High School took a business course and later joined the staff of the Ontario Agricultural College as registrar, and secretary to the President of that institution. He remained at the College for twelve years until his appointment as Superintendent of Women's Institutes of Ontario.

The Institute was originally a rural homemakers' organization, but it was not long before women of vision and earnestness saw that they had a responsibility and opportunity in addition to their home duties. Community-housekeeping demanded their attention, and they began to take an active interest in schools, libraries, neglected cemeteries, relief, civic improvement and other projects which require the co-operation of the whole community.

The greatest latitude was allowed the officers and members with the result that many original ideas were developed into fine community enterprises.

Mr. Putnam very wisely used the information coming to his office as a basis for special consideration. He excelled in program planning and secured for the local Institutes and conventions qualified instructors and lecturers, thus developing through this method an organization which provided an opportunity for individual growth, increasing home efficiency; introducing co-operative methods, establishing high standards for community activities and providing better facilities for education, amusement and social intercourse and service.



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1904-1934

CONTINUED ON next Page