



I'd like to know

By Emmie Oddie

Old fashioned Christmas

*Western Producer
Nov 20/80*

I am now on my way to the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Home at St. George, Ontario, the childhood home of the founder of the Women's Institute which is now a museum owned and maintained by the Women's Institute of Canada.

The Women's Institute of Ontario maintain yet another museum, the Erland Lee Home that looks over the escarpment and the town of Stoney Creek and beautiful blue Lake Ontario. Erland Lee, like Adelaide Hoodless, is an important figure in WI history.

Should you be in Ontario in December you might be fortunate enough to search out both the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Home and the Erland Lee Home, for the distance between may be travelled in just an hour.

Members of Ontario Women's Institute spend many hours preparing a very special day, Christmas at the Lee.

If you wish to have an old fashioned Christmas at home, you might like to follow the instructions as given by Hilde Morden, secretary-treasurer of the Erland Lee Home in her address to London Area Conference of Ontario Women's Institutes.

"Come with me now to Christmas at the Lee — December 3 and 4, this year; when the age-old home is decorated in the 1860-1897 era. Cedar garlands frame the doorways, windows, mantle and sideboard. These garlands are entwined with strings of popped corn and cranberries. Did you know, to be authentic, it takes five popcorn and one cranberry as you make these strings? Bright red velvet bows and small reflecting mirrors complete the garland decoration.

"In the parlour bay window over the built-in red velvet cushioned window seat hangs the traditional Kissing Ball. This ball has eight wire hoops covered with cedar, trimmed with bows and mirrors, it is highlighted with white candles. I know of one museum that actually lit their candles, but then they actually had a fire from it too, and can show you the charred beams. But back to the kissing part. A piece of mistletoe was hung from the middle of the ball — and then the fun began.

"The cedar centrepiece on the parlour table, with tiny real pine cones found on the property, and topped with wee feathered birds takes you back in time, when materials at hand made your decoration.

"The apple pyramid on the famous Constitution Table in the dining room, is accented with sprigs of cedar and sticks of cinnamon. Those apples are so shiny they glisten and their secret is — a drop of glycerin rubbed over them. To make the pyramid, start the bottom with one complete layer of apples and fasten together each layer with toothpicks!

"In the pioneer kitchen, the harvest table is laden with samples of Christmas fare. Mince pie, mince-meat in a quart sealer, homemade bread, a tub of butter, maple syrup in its special tall glass jug, that's fruit cake on the pedestal plate and Dundee Cake on the oblong platter. A bowl of cranberries, a bowl of English walnuts also taken from the property, apple butter in the pint sealer, Thimble Cookies in the glass cookie jar, Turkish Delight in the

candy jar, dried apples made on the pipe rack over the cook stove, and under the cover of the cheese dish a large slice of cheddar. The aroma throughout the home is coming from the oven — home baked bread and there — just for you — the visitor — is a piece warm from the oven, freshly buttered and waiting to be tasted. In the corner of the kitchen, rocking contently, is a descendant of the Lee family Ruby Williams telling tales of bygone days and life as it was when the Lees lived here.

"Come upstairs, now and see the women, in their old fashioned dresses preparing for Christmas in the sewing room. Look closely at the lady spinning — recognize her? We know she is much too young to be from bygone days, but she has learned and mastered the skill of spinning, nevertheless.

"Quickly now — we are going outside — cross the driveway to the Drive House and upon opening the door, another tantalizing aroma, this time it is mulled cider and cookies. Here, too, garlands of cedar frame windows, encircle posts and in the corner, we've

updated a bit you'll find a cedar tree decorated with white crocheted stars, red bows and twirling mirrors. Parcels under the tree are wrapped in cloth tied with ribbon or spun wool.

Upstairs we find the china painters doing their delicate work; a lady making bobbin lace, and another doing fine needlepoint. You won't forget to look at the quilt case with its versatile display of many different quilts.

Come to the Erland Lee Home — your Women's Institute Museum and let us weave and fill you with the magic of Christmas as it was in 1897, the founding year of the organization.