

## THE HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

I will begin by telling you of the "birth" of the movement and follow with the development.

The impulse of the founding of an organization of rural women came from the grief of a young mother over the loss of a child, her first born, whose death at eighteen months was attributed to lack of knowledge regarding proper infant feeding.

This mother's name was Mrs. John Hoodless, Wentworth County, Ontario. She found out too late that the milk being fed to her child was unfit for human consumption and she felt that she should have known.

The opportunity to put into effect her desire to contribute to human happiness, soon presented itself in the Annual Meeting in 1896 of what was then the known as the Farmer's Experimental Union.

At this time Mr. Erland Lee a prominent, broad minded, young farmer, who had attended Ontario Agriculture College at Guelph, and a member of the Farmer's Institute at Salt-Fleet heard Mrs. Hoodless deliver a stirring address on the value and need of Domestic Science and sewing in our public schools. Mr. Lee was so impressed with this address that he thought he would like to have Mrs. Hoodless speak some time to the women in Stoney Creek. In the following February 1897, the Farmer's Institute held a meeting in Stoney Creek and the women attended in the evening. Mr. Lee invited Mrs. Hoodless to come to this meeting to speak and she graciously consented. In her address she suggested that the women have an organization similar to the Farmer's Institute, to assist them in ministering to the health and comfort and general welfare of the family in the rural home.

The Chairman asked how many women could come out the following Friday evening to a meeting to decide whether or not they would form an Institute. Thirty five women promised to attend this meeting.

On Friday, February 19th, 1897, Mrs. Hoodless, to her amazement, found on her arrival at "Squire Hall", Stoney Creek, one hundred and one women and one man. Mr. Lee acted as chairman for the evening, which was organized the first Women's Institute in the world.