

The Farmer's Institute and Women's Institute

The Ontario Department of Agriculture was responsible for an "Act Respecting Agricultural Societies" which provided for the organization of both "Farmers' and Womens'" groups.

There is no recorded account of the Farmers' Institute which is known to have existed in East Hastings during the latter part of the past century and the early years of the present one. The only information provided by the Provincial Archives is statistical - "----- in 1906 there was a membership of 159 and in 1907 the membership was 137. There were nine meetings in 1907 with a total attendance of 961. There were 34 papers read and the members' fees amounted to \$33.75. Other similar statistics are available but no officers names are given."

In the history of the Denyes family, however, it is recorded that from 1907 - 1909 Mr. Henry Denyes was President of the East Hastings District of the Farmers' Institute. We know nothing regarding the organization of local groups within the District.

We do know that the men met about once a month at some designated place. One of these meeting places was at the Forrester's Hall on the 9th of Thurlow. Meetings were also held in Foxboro.

The purpose of the Farmer's Institute was to discuss better methods of farming and of easing the condition for the farmer from an economic stand point. Men were asked to prepare papers dealing with control of weeds, soil preparation for various crops, the correct proportion of seed grain per acre, drainage, preservation and feeding of root crops. Discussions took place on the care of live stock and doctoring of sick animals. Almost anything pertaining to farm husbandry was brought out at these meetings. Often some good agriculturalist or veterinarian was a guest speaker.

In time the interest began to wane and attendance dropped. Leaders were concerned and considered bringing in entertainment to create interest in the hopes of increasing membership.

But this did not work so well!

Often the entertainment was a chap from the city dressed in "city clothes" while the farmers attending the meeting often arrived wearing overalls and barn boots and smelling of the cow stable. They all felt out of place! --The city chap especially did not enjoy himself when he sat among these men and had to sit through a topic under discussion which did not interest him like - "The best utilization of barnyard manure."

When an "imported entertainer" did not work to bolster the attendance the wives were often