

1897 - 1947

Ontario Women's Institutes Celebrate 50th Anniversary In Colorful Assembly

One of the highlights of the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Women's Institutes of Ontario on June 18 was the message of congratulations and good wishes by Her Majesty the Queen, which appears on this page.

Congratulations and every best wish are extended by the staff of The Ottawa Farm Journal to the Women's Institutes of Ontario on this momentous occasion marking a milestone in the history of an organization which has seen a half century of progress far beyond the highest expectations of the little band of women of vision who, gathered at Stoney Creek on February 18, 1897, saw the blossoming forth of the first Women's Institute of the world.

"We Treasure the Past—We Face the Future"—In keeping with this anniversary theme of the Golden Jubilee of the Women's Institutes of Ontario, the momentous gathering assembled on the campus of the OAC on Wednesday last paid tribute to leaders of the past 50 years, and voiced a message of encouragement and stimulus to the institutes of the future.

Upwards of 6,000 institute members from all parts of Ontario, many prominent leaders in public life and visitors from practically every province of the Dominion joined in paying tribute to those who 50 years ago formed the first institute at Stoney Creek.

Although given on this page recently, it would seem fitting to repeat here the names of the first executive:

Hon. president—Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, Hamilton.

President—Mrs. E. D. Smith, Winona.

Vice-president—Mrs. S. Nelson, Stoney Creek.

Secretary—Mrs. M. Nash, Stoney Creek.

Treasurer—Mrs. J. McNeilly, Stoney Creek.

Greetings were extended from the Dominion Government, from Premier George A. Drew of Ontario, Hon. Thomas L. Kennedy,

Minister of Agriculture; W. R. Reek, acting president of the OAC, and Miss Anna P. Lewis, superintendent of Ontario Women's Institutes.

Mrs. Hugh Summers, president Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, was chairman for the official program.

Representatives were present from Federated Women's Institutes of Canada and all provinces of the Dominion. Mrs. A. E. Walker, past president of the FWIC and FWIC, brought greetings from the mother institute at Stoney Creek. Miss Laura Rose Stephens, first Government lecturer appointed for Women's Institutes, addressed the gathering. Mrs. Spencer Ewing represented the Associated Countrywomen of the World.

A magnificent climax to a gala day in the annals of institute work and development was the historical pageant "Let There Be Light". This colorful scene depicted the 50 years of history of the Women's Institutes. Members of the institutes and junior branches of Ontario took part in the many episodes which reveal the growth and achievements of the institute movement in Canada and throughout the world down the years.

Next issue will give more detailed account of this great event.

Once again congratulations and heartfelt wishes.

Gala Day at Stoney Creek On WI's Fiftieth Birthday

This being Golden Jubilee year for the Women's Institute of Canada we find a great deal of pleasure in referring frequently on this page devoted to women's interests to their various plans and celebrations. Our issue of February 21 carried a fairly complete review of the progress of the Institute from its inception in 1897 to the present day and a brief report of some of the main features of the program enjoyed by the distinctive gathering at the celebration of the 50th birthday at Stoney Creek on February 19.

We feel further reference to the highlights of the banquet featuring this Golden Jubilee would be of much interest to readers of the Ottawa Farm Journal, the majority of whom, if not all, are interested in Institute work.

This banquet was unique in many ways. Eleven of the charter members of the first Institute formed on that historic day, February 19, 1897, were present. Seven past presidents reviewed events of their tenure of office. Mrs. J. E. Goodswan of Norwich, Norfolk county, Eng., brought greetings from England and Wales. Miss Muriel Bostwick, Hamilton, granddaughter of Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, founder of Women's Institutes, was one of the special guests. The principal speaker was Mrs. Gordon D. Conant, daughter of the first president of the first Institute of the world, Mrs. E. D. Smith. Daughters of other former presidents spoke on behalf of their mothers.

A portrait of Mrs. Smith occupied a prominent place above the charter members' table and underneath it a bouquet of flowers, sent by Senator E. D. Smith, as a tribute to the memory of his late wife.

Mrs. Angus Jackson, the president now of Stoney Creek branch presided. The walls of the banquet hall were decorated with telegrams, letters and greeting cards, 2,179 messages in all, congratulating the Institute on its 50th birthday. Practically every country in the world in which there are Women's Institutes today sent greetings.

Mrs. Goodswan, representing the Institute of Great Britain, presented on their behalf a bouquet of flowers tied with red, white and blue ribbons to Mrs. Jackson, president.

A Challenge.

Miss Anna F. Lewis, director of the Women's Institute Branch and Home Economics Service, in bringing greetings from the Department of Agriculture, said that the achievements of the past constituted a challenge to the woman of today and tomorrow to build a living memorial of hundreds of thousands of institute members the world over to work in the cause of rural women.

The charter members, present as honored guests, were Mrs. H. P. Van Wagner, Mrs. McKinley Morden, Mrs. J. B. Davis, Mrs. Walter Ptolemy, Mrs. E. B. Thompson, Mrs. Murray Neil, Mrs. John Budge, Mrs. J. B. Smith, Mrs. George Millen, and Mrs. Selby Cornan.

all, I was quite young", she said. "But I do remember in later years my mother, Mrs. E. D. Smith, telling me she worried about neglecting her family of two children, my brother, Brig. Armand Smith, who is present, and myself, but Mrs. Hoodless, who was her personal friend, persuaded her to be the first president. She held that office in 1897, 1898 and 1900."

From that Stoney Creek organization of farm women the Institute movement had spread in Canada, where there are now 3,000 branches, and to the United States, as well as to many other countries of the world.

Distress in Europe.

Telling of a trip she made to Europe last year, Mrs. Conant spoke of the distress she saw there, and graphically told stories of the misery of the displaced persons and the children who were without homes or hope.

Canadian women, Mrs. Conant said, could help relieve the distress in Europe by pressing for admission to this country of European girls and women to work as domestics and hospital assistants. "Canadian homes at present are suffering from lack of domestic help, one outcome of which is our shortage of voluntary workers and leaders in all our organizations", she said. "Our young mothers are so tied with housework that small families will result, and more population is a crying need of Canada. Europe is full of desirable female persons who would make good Canadian citizens and who would be grateful for the work Canadian women can provide. This action would aid in Europe's displaced persons' problem and extend a hand of friendship to those in need."

The women of Britain, Mrs. Goodswan said, could never repay the Institutes of Canada for their help and support in the war years, citing specially the supplies of vegetable and flower seeds and of clothing sent overseas. She also thanked those Canadian women who had opened their homes and hearts to English children during the war.

Early Recollections.

Mrs. G. D. Conant, the principal speaker, was introduced by Mrs. A. B. Walker. Mrs. Conant gave her recollections of the early days of the Stoney Creek Institute. As a child she had lived 4 miles from the place where it was organized. "I do not remember that first meeting—after

Message From Queen Elizabeth

"It is a great pleasure to me to send greetings and congratulations to the members of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario on the occasion of their Fiftieth Anniversary celebration, with all my good wishes for a useful and happy future.

"The opening of Stoney Creek Women's Institute in 1897 is a landmark in the history of rural life, and I am glad to send this message because I know of the thankfulness of my fellow-members for their institutes. Besides those in Great Britain, I have lately seen members in South Africa and Rhodesia, enjoying and valuing the opportunities for service, mutual help, education and fun which membership brings and which we owe to the Stoney Creek women, 50 years ago.

"My thoughts are with you on this great day, and I wish each one of you happiness and prosperity.

"ELIZABETH R."