

Stoney Creek Celebrates 50th Birthday of W.I.

Original Minutes and Constitutions
Reveal Foresight—Mammoth Golden Jubilee
Planned for June 19 at Guelph

HALF a century of progress and experience gratifying far beyond the hopes and vision of a group of enterprising pioneers goes back over that long span of time to a small gathering of public-spirited women in the now world-known Saltfleet district. Commemorating the birth on Feb. 19, 1897, of the first Women's Institute in the world, Stoney Creek welcomed on Wednesday of this week a momentous gathering to a celebration that will take a proud place in the annals of history for all time.

To readers of the Ottawa Farm Journal is well known the story of the event that has recorded Stoney Creek as the famed setting for the beginning of an organization that is now influencing the lives of rural women the world over and a large following of urban folk as well. The infant of 1897 now stands as a glowing monument to the foresight and faith of those who launched into the unknown in a great cause.

But though familiar to readers there are some facts about the doings fifty years ago at that small gathering of far-sighted women which all will find interesting.

The mammoth celebration of this Golden Jubilee is being planned for June 19 at the OAC, Guelph. More details will be given of the plans from time to time in the Ottawa Farm Journal.

First Minute Book.

One of the interesting moments of the beginning of Women's Institutes brought to light in the planning for the anniversary celebration is the first minute book of the first Women's Institute. This book, still in excellent condition, is in the possession of the Stoney Creek Women's Institute, still going strong after 50 years of earnest endeavor and hard work.

In plain and simple language, as recorded by the first secretary, Miss M. E. Nash, the story of how the Institutes came into being and planned their early activities and programs, is recorded for posterity, and at this time, when Women's Institutes have become practically world-wide in their scope, it is of special significance.

The simple story of the organization meeting is told in few words, because the following extract from the original minute book gives all that appears in connection with what is now an historic meeting;

"Organization meeting held February 19, 1897."

"Mrs. Erland Lee was chairman of the meeting and an address was given by Mrs. John Hoodless.

"Moved by Mrs. Melson, seconded by Mrs. E. Lee that we organize a women's department of Domestic Economy in affiliation with the Farmers' Institute. Carried.

"It was decided that the name should be the Woman's Depart-

ment of the Farmers' Institute of South Wentworth'.

First Officers.

"The following officers were elected: Honorary president, Mrs. John Hoodless; president, Mrs. E. D. Smith; 1st vice-president, Mrs. Melson; 2nd vice-president, Mrs. J. Dean; secretary, Miss M. Nash; treasurer, Mrs. J. H. McNeilly."

Given Its Name.

Less than a week after the organization meeting, another meeting of the new organization was held. It was at this meeting that the present name of "Women's Institutes" was adopted. The minutes of this meeting are recorded in the old minute book as follows:

"Meeting held at Squires' Hall, February 25, 1897.

"Name of society discussed. Moved by Mrs. F. H. Carpenter, seconded by Mrs. Melson, that the name be changed to 'The Women's Institute of Saltfleet'. Carried."

Other regular business usual at just such inauguration meetings comprised the minutes of this second gathering of the infant organization.

Thus were Women's Institutes started, and a program launched that had so broad an appeal to rural women that it could not be kept within the confines of the original organization, but in the years to come spread all over Ontario, then all over Canada and across the seven seas to many other lands.

The Pattern.

The pattern of the meetings and the type of subjects to be studied by the women soon became apparent and it is interesting to note, from the minutes, that many of the topics considered vital fifty years ago still have a large place in Women's Institute activities to-day.

For instance, it is recorded that on March 11, 1897, Mrs. McNeilly gave an interesting and instructive paper on "Proper Food for Children", and at a meeting on

March 25 Dr. Mabel Henderson gave a paper on "The Child in Health and Disease". Thus from the outset, health and nutrition were the subjects which commanded the attention of the organization.

The constitution having provided that the annual meeting be held in June of each year, the first annual meeting was held on June 3, 1897. At that meeting the original officers and directors were re-elected, and a paper on "Child Culture" was given by Mrs. McNeilly.

The year 1899 saw the advent of the second Women's Institute, that of South Ontario, organized at a meeting held in Whitby on June 29. It is perhaps somewhat of a coincidence that while Mrs. E. D. Smith was president of the first Women's Institute, the second was organized in Ontario county, in which her daughter, Mrs. G. D. Conant, has made her home since her marriage, and of which her husband, Hon. G. I. Conant, was for some years the representative in the Ontario Legislature.

COUNTY LADIES ATTENDED W.I. ANNIVERSARY

On Wednesday, June 18th, the 50th anniversary of Federated Women's Institute of Canada was held at Guelph. There were 10,000 present for this grand occasion and among them 30 Prince Edward ladies. The latter chartered a Blackburn bus, leaving at 6 a.m. and returning the next day. The ladies attending were:

Wellington — Mrs. C. Blakely, Mrs. W. Callow, Mrs. E. B. Phillips.

Greenbush — Mrs. Earl Hicks, Mrs. G. McCaw, Mrs. Percy Anderson.

Bloomfield — Mrs. Morley Jackson, Miss Marjorie Gough.

Consecon — Mrs. Ross Bush, Mrs. Robin Adair, Mrs. Ray Jackson and Mrs. Geo. Harris.

Hillier — Mrs. S. Wood, Mrs. Sherman Foster, Mrs. Thomas Mindle, Mrs. Norris Dafoe.

Demorestville — Mrs. Elgin Gorsline, Mrs. Geo. Dyson.

Gilbert Mills — Mrs. Harold Noxon

Cherry Valley — Mrs. J. A. Beckwith, Mrs. M. Flake,

Mrs. W. Metcalfe, Mrs. E. Brummell.

Picton — Miss Helen Kelly.

Rednersville — Mrs. Lorne Brickman, Miss Audra Brickman, Mrs. Earl Fox, Mrs. Bert Redner.

Mrs. Elmer Young and Mrs. Harold Motley, Mt. View, represented the Junior Women's Institute.

Peace! Independence! Truth! go forth earths compass round;
And your high priesthood shall make earth All hallowed ground!"
May we the daughters and granddaughters of the first Institute women go forward with dauntless courage, determination and faith to help bring "Peace! Independence! Truth!" to all mankind.

Matthew Arnold has said, "If ever the world sees a day when women shall work together purely and simply for the benefit of mankind, it will be a power such as the world has never known".

Surely this is our Women's Institute challenge today. With chaotic conditions as they still exist throughout the world it will take all the power we possess and can create to build right principles and relieve human misery. As our organization has expanded so also our responsibilities have increased. We have accepted the countries of the world as our neighbours. Are we ready to perform the neighbourly acts of kindness, understanding, tolerance and mutual help in order that we may live in harmony with our neighbours? This is a challenge which must be met if we are to help bring true peace to our world.

"And is he dead whose glorious mind

Lifts thine on high?
To live in hearts we leave behind
Is not to die!"

Are they dead whose "glorious minds" have lifted ours on high? Have we not been stimulated to greater and nobler thoughts and deeds because our early Institute women lived and had a vision?

Are we, the young women, measuring up? Does this same courageous unselfish spirit and will to serve live in the hearts of all Institute women today? Let this be our aim. May our ever increasing membership follow on to greater accomplishments because this Institute idea was born and because these noble women lived and inspired us.

Truly WE TREASURE THE PAST. We pay high tribute to our Mother Institute, to those who helped with its organization and to our charter members (several of whom, we are happy to say, are still with us to celebrate this great occasion).

The finest tribute we could pay is our assurance that we shall go on, keeping our standards high, to build our great Women's Institute super structure on the firm foundation already laid. The thousands and thousands of Institute members regardless of colour, creed or politics who go about doing good the world over form a living memorial to the great Women's Institute idea originated at Stoney Creek.

WE FACE THE FUTURE keeping ever before us our great motto "For Home and Country" and the words of our Ode "Each shall seek the common weal—the Good of All Mankind".

A. P. L.

TRIBUTE TO STONEY CREEK 1897 INSTITUTE 1947

It is with deep and sincere gratitude that we pay tribute to our Mother Institute, Stoney Creek.

Little did our first members realize that out of that memorable meeting held fifty years ago would develop our vast Women's Institute organization as we know it to-day.

What an inspiration and thrill it has been to read and re-read the early records and follow through the accomplishments of our women throughout the years.

When we meet and talk with our charter members and read their first much treasured minute book, Thomas Campbell's poem "Hallowed Ground" comes to mind.

"What's hallowed ground? 'Tis what gives birth
To sacred thoughts in souls of worth!"

Surely Stoney Creek is hallowed ground in Institute history! Have not "Sacred thoughts in souls of worth" been born in this village? To think that from this nucleus Women's Institutes have spread until now, fifty years later, instead of 76 members as there were in the first year of Institute history, Ontario now has 36,000 members, Canada 70,000 and Institutes have spread throughout Ontario and Canada to Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Ceylon, Africa as well as other countries. And from the idea of Country-women meeting together our far reaching organization, The Associated Country Women of the World, has developed and thrived; the will to do good has prevailed.

"What's hallowed ground? 'Tis what gives birth
To sacred thoughts in souls of worth!"