

An abbreviated history from Volume I Tweedsmuir A-1  
History

80th Anniversary Celebration .....Prince Edward District Women's Institute

Thursday, November 10, 1988.

Following is the text of the History of Women's Institute, in the District of Prince Edward, as presented by District Curator, Mrs. Marion Calnan, at the 80th Anniversary Celebration which was held in the Auditorium of Pinecrest School, Bloomfield.

Madam President, District Officers, Branch Members, Canada World Youth and Guests:

Thank you for inviting me as District Curator to bring along the District Tweedsmuir History and tell you the History of our Institute. The book is so large that I have taken it apart in sections for your perusal this evening.

It is truly a Treasure trove of Prince Edward County History, compiled so painstakingly through the years by all the Curators who have preceded me. If all Counties keep their Tweedsmuir History Books as meticulously as this copy, we can truthfully say that "History lives through Women's Institute".

This year of 1988 marks the Centennial of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Women's Institute over the years has co-operated with the Agricultural Ministry to accomplish their common goal, which was ---"The consideration of any problem or the carrying on of any line of work which has as its object the uplift of the home or the betterment of conditions surrounding community life".

The first Women's Institute in the world was organized in the village of Stoney Creek, Wentworth County, Ontario, on February 19th, 1897.

Because of the foresight of a Canadian man, Mr. Erland Lee and a Canadian Woman Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, thousands of women are now banded together all over the world. The purpose of the Women's Institute then as now was to raise the standard of homemaking-physically, intellectually and culturally.

The Constitution and by-laws were drafted with wisdom, vision and foresight, and the little Stoney Creek Society snowballed into an organization of world-wide proportions.

Mr. Lee listed the support of the Ontario Department of Agriculture and in 1899, several women were hired by the Ministry as speakers and organizers to promote this new movement. One woman hired was Laura Rose (Stephen), formerly a dairy instructor at the Agricultural College. She, along with other women hired at the same time ...Miss Blanche Maddock, Mrs A. Kinnet, Miss J.L. Smith, and Miss A. Hollingsworth were responsible for organizing 16 of the first 50 Institutes.

Women's Institutes have often been referred to as the "Rural Women's University".

In 1919 the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) and the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC) and in 1933 the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) were founded.

Membership in the Women's Institute is open to all women and girls over 16 years of age. In the conduct of its affairs it is non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-racial.

The Women's Institute Motto "For Home and Country", chosen in 1902 was the suggestion of Laura Rose. In 1903 she designed the Institute pin. The royal colours blue and gold were chosen as the W.I. colours.

In 1902 Women's Institutes were given Legislative recognition within the Department of Agriculture. The same year handbooks were published with sample programmes and topics for study. In 1902 the first W.I. Convention was held at the Agricultural College in Guelph.

In 1903 every W.I. in the province got an annual grant of \$ 10.00 but this had to be matched from the local municipality or Farmer's Institute. A speaker's service was initiated too. The Department paid the fee, but the Institute provided accommodation and paid the travel expenses.....and they usually visited in the summer.

By 1905 W.I. news took up 3-5 pages in the Canadian Home Journal. W.I. members then might subscribe to the magazine for a reduced rate.

1907... 400 branches had been formed.