

Wellington WI celebrates 95 years

Prince Edward County's first branch struggles to exist with small membership

By Rick Fralck
Gazette Staff

The Wellington Women's Institute – the first branch established in Prince Edward County – celebrated its 95th anniversary last Tuesday, determined to celebrate a 100th in five years, despite declining membership.

Currently, there are only eight members in Wellington WI, including president Iris Walker.

"We're certainly hoping for more," she said, as she busied herself cutting an enormous birthday cake during an afternoon picnic at lakeside park. "If you look at the minutes of meetings from the 1930s, for example, there were lots more members then."

But Walker acknowledges that attracting members in the modern era, when most women work full-time outside the home, is difficult.

In January of 1908, the Wellington WI became the first branch in Prince Edward County.

Organized in the Masonic Hall, the first meetings were

See WI page 3



Gazette photo by Rick Fralck

Hee Haw – Hazel Conley, as Grand Ole Opry legend Minnie Pearl, got lots of laughs at the Wellington Women's Institute 95th anniversary celebration last Tuesday at Lakeside Park.

WI from page 1

held in the Fitzgerald Block, later in the Alexander Hotel, until that was destroyed by fire, and then in Wellington Consolidated School, after it opened in 1922.

They rented a shop for \$60 a year, and supplied the community with a travelling library filled with \$200 worth of donated books.

After the municipal library was built in 1928, WI began meeting there, until 1939, when the room was needed for military purposes during the Second World War.

Village council offered the town hall rent free, and they have met there ever since, although the facility is no longer rent free.

In 1919, Wellington WI donated \$1,000 to the Prince Edward Hospital to help furnish the operating room. In 1954, \$900 was donated toward furnishing a semi-private room at the hospital.

In 1921, they paid for the beautiful gates to the cemetery in Wellington and also equipped the domestic science room at the school. Radios were purchased for the school and the salary of a school nurse was paid for one year. Linen supplies were also purchased for the health unit.

In 1941, the Tweedsmuir Book – the history of commerce, farming, etc. in Wellington – was started by Mrs. Ellie Philips. It is now on microfilm at the Ameliasburgh Museum.

In 1962, evening classes were started by WI in the town hall, and were very popular on Wednesday evenings. They were cancelled in later years due to a lack of provincial support.

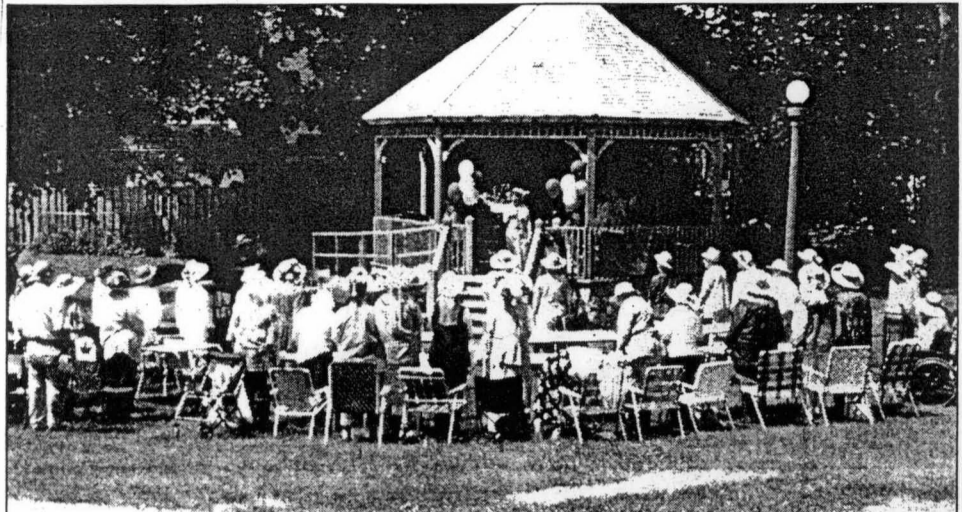
Though small in number, Walker says there is a strong will to continue until at least the 100th anniversary. Many donations are still given by WI to the same groups that benefited in earlier years.

Women interested in joining WI are invited to contact Mary Ellen Closson at 968-3320. She's in charge of membership for the whole of Prince Edward County.

A local WI website is expected to be up and running in the near future.

And don't forget the much-anticipated annual WI craft show at the Prince Edward Community Centre, this year on Thursday, July 31. 06-20-03

Wellington W.I. Marks 95th



Wellington Women's Institute President Iris Walker, welcomes W.I. members to the 95th anniversary celebration which was held yesterday at the Wellington Park. THE TIMES 06-18-03

In January 1908 the Wellington W.I. was the first branch to come into existence in Prince Edward County. Organized in the Masonic Hall, the first meetings were held in the Fitzgerald Block, later in the Alexander Hotel, until that was destroyed by fire, then they met in the Consolidated School.

They rented a shop for \$60 a year, and supplied the community with a travelling Library, then donated books valued at \$200. After the library was built, in 1928, they

met there until 1939. With the start of World War II, the room was needed for military purposes. The Town Council offered the Town Hall "free" of rent, and they have met there ever since ... though not free of rent now.

In 1919 they donated \$1,000 to the Prince Edward Hospital to help furnish the operating room. In 1954 \$900 was donated towards furnishing a semi-private room in the hospital.

In 1921 they paid for the beautiful gates to the Cemetery, also equipment for the school domestic Science room. Radios were purchased for the School, and the salary of a school nurse was paid for one year, and also linen supplies for the health unit.

In 1941 the Tweedsmuir book, the history of Commerce, farming, etc. in Wellington, was started

by Mrs. Ellie Philips. It is now on microfilm in the Ameliasburgh Museum.

In 1962 evening classes were started by the W.I. in the Town Hall, and were very popular on a Wednesday evening. Due to lack of provincial Support in later years they were stopped.

Although we are small in numbers in 2003, there is a strong will to continue until at least our 100th anniversary, and many donations are given to the same groups, as in earlier years. We have fun too!

95 Candles – Wellington Women's Institute president Iris Walker cuts the remainder of the 95th anniversary birthday cake during a celebration last Tuesday at the lakeside park.

