

The Women's Institute...Do you know that...?

Person 1: The author and origin of the Institute Ode are unknown. It has been reported that it was used by the "Sons of Temperance" Lodge in Stroud, Simcoe County in the late 70's.

Person 2: "We thank Thee Father for Thy Care  
Food, Friends, and kindness we share.  
May we forever mindful be  
Of Home and Country and of Thee."

This grace was composed by Mrs. Clara Lintell of City View and Merivale Institute. The tune is "Old Hundred". It was submitted to the Provincial Board by the Ottawa Area for consideration at the Annual Meeting November 1950. The Board recommended that this Grace be used at Women's Institute functions.

Person 3: Mary Stewart, author of the Collect, was born in 1876, in the State of Ohio, and moved with her parents to Georgetown, Colorado when quite young. She wrote the Collect as a prayer for the day, and later in 1904 she offered it for publication. It was first printed in the "Delineator" a women's magazine nationally popular at the time. Miss Stewart called it a "Collect for Club Women" because she felt that women working together with wide interests for large ends was a new thing. While visiting in England, she spent some time with Mrs. Alfred Watt, president of the Associated Country Women of the World. In the studio of Robin Watt, the artist son of Mrs. Watt, Miss Stewart personally supervised his work of copying out the prayer.

Person 4: In the early days of the organization, the Women's Institute conventions were held at Guelph known as the Royal City because Guelph was the family name of Queen Victoria. For this reason, purple and gold, the royal colours, symbolizing loyalty and royalty, were chosen for the Women's Institute. Through the years, it was found that the purple colour was difficult to obtain in ribbon or paper, so blue often had to be substituted and the purple was gradually replaced by blue. Now blue and gold are accepted as the official colours of the Women's Institutes in Ontario. The dark blue of the cornflower is considered the nearest shade in blue.

Person 5: In February, 1903, a committee was appointed to arrange for an emblematic badge for Institute members. Again, Laura Rose Stephen provided the idea. She drew a sketch from a signet ring which she wore and said, "If we could have the initials of our institute, O.W.I., in the centre, it would be fine". The maple leaves were not included. This sketch was sent to Ryries, who made two or three designs. From these our badge was selected so we have our Institute pin, a small oval in blue and gold with a small maple leaf at each end and the words of our motto engraved on the oval banding. The National badge of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada is a square badge with the design enamelled on it. The badge of the Associated Country Women of the World - the international organization has four points which represent the North, South, East and West.

Person 6: At a convention held at Guelph, the subject of a motto was discussed and several members were asked to submit a suitable one. Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless and Miss Urie Watson, Dean of Macdonald Institute were chosen to be the judges. Laura Rose Stephen relates that, as she sat in the back of the parlor of her mother's home, in Guelph, that evening, she penned four words "For Home and Country". Later it was the decision of the judges that these four words be our motto. This was in 1902. Speaking at a later time, Mrs. Stephen said, "Do not stray too far from the first phrase of our motto - For Home- and devote too much time to the second phrase -and Country. The first is the foundation on which the second is built.

Person 7: From 1923 to 1930, Annual Reports of Women's Institute work were printed and distributed to the Branches. Also News Bulletins and circulars were sent out. The first edition of Home and Country appeared in May, 1933. It was a four page bulletin. With Volume 18, Summer 1952, our official publication assumed "A New Look" and Miss Chapman was welcomed back as editor of Home and Country. She continued with this important work for many years and our members are justly proud of our fine magazine and of the valuable contribution which Miss Chapman has made to the Ontario Women's Institute. The fall of 1992 issue of the Home & Country was the first issue published by the FWIO, independently of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The editor is Janine Roelens-Grant.

Person 8: Lady Tweedsmuir was the wife of a Governor-General of Canada. She was extremely interested in the work of the Women's Institute and had been president of a branch in England and also a County president. While in Canada, she attended Branch meetings and conventions and frequently gave talks to the members. She accepted the office of Honourary President of F.W.I.O. and was later made an Honourary Life Member. Speaking at the biennial meeting of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada in Toronto in 1937, she said, "The Women's Institutes are not relief or welfare agencies and should not be used by every institution that wants money. Keep your money for your own work, let it come first." She also said that Women's Institute members have a part to play in promoting peace. She suggested that the Branches compile Community Histories. Later, at the request of the Provincial Board, she suggested that they be called Tweedsmuir Histories, and she wrote the Foreword for the books