



Gazette photo by Rick Fralick

From Small Things...Irene Alyea, Ruth Crawford and Hilda Alyea pose with the "small table" commissioned and paid for in 1923 by the Hillier Women's Institute for the Hillier Town Hall. The table was repaired and refinished this year as one of the projects undertaken by Hillier WI in celebration of the organization's centenary. The two Mrs. Alyeas were both members of the Hillier WI in 1923 while Mrs. Crawford, whose grandmother Miriam Foster was president that year, is the current president.

Small table symbolizes big gestures in Hillier

Women's Institute reaches 100th anniversary, local groups celebrate

By Rick Fralick
Gazette Staff

The town hall in Hillier became the focal point last Wednesday for three branches of the Women's Institute as the organization celebrates its 100th year of existence.

Hillier WI, founded in 1914, hosted a meeting and luncheon with members of the branches in Wellington and Consecon, founded in 1908 and 1913, respectively.

Inside the municipal hall decorated with WI memorabilia, Hillier president Ruth Crawford welcomed some four score members and guests, including District President Mary Ellen Closson and Hillier Township reeve Vic Coghlan.

Mrs. Closson thanked the three branches and, referring to the importance of the occasion, mentioned that she had heard about it

on CBC radio that morning.

She also announced that Hillier WI member and secretary Phyllis Wight was among 100 women across Ontario to be honored this year at the provincial level. The actual award is to be presented at a later date.

"We certainly appreciate all the hard work they put into the things they do for the community," noted Mr. Coghlan.

"There's a lot of things

luncheon, the Hillier WI also undertook to provide the hall with new curtains as one of its centennial projects.

Some 360 hours of work went into making and hanging the new curtains, according to program coordinator Peggy Burreis.

In terms of historical significance, Hillier WI's most important centennial project is probably the restoration of the "small

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we wouldn't have without them."

The reeve is particularly grateful for the new curtains in the town hall and its adjoining rooms.

Besides the 100th anniversary meeting and

table."

Commissioned and paid for in 1923 by Hillier WI, the table was built that year by Tom Smith at a cost of \$2 and given to the township hall.

Interestingly, the president that year was Miriam Foster, grandmother of current president Ruth Crawford.

The motto for the Women's Institute in this centennial year is: "Celebrate the past, challenge the future."

In a special program, common to all branches celebrating the 100th anniversary, a special centennial song was sung, followed by a reading of the minutes of the very first meeting of Women's Institute held in Stoney Creek, Ontario on Feb. 19, 1897.

A candle was then lit in celebration of 100 years of WI.

Founded by Adelaide Hoodless, the Women's Institute is an educational organization for personal growth, self improvement, leadership development and community action.

It is linked provincially through the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario; nationally through the Federated Institutes of Canada; and worldwide through the Associated Country Women of the World.

Some WI accomplishments over the years include: pasteurization of milk; clear markings on poison containers; word recognition and phonetic programs for Grades 1 and

4; traffic lights at dangerous intersections; best before dates on prepackaged foods; flashing lights on school buses; music in elementary schools; brighter lines on highways; living wills; wrapped bread in plastic bags; the formation of the Brock University and MacDonald Institute at the University of Guelph; and scholarships and bursaries for university education and opportunities for third-world citizens to study in Canada.

Perhaps the best known ongoing activity of WI is the famous Tweedsmuir History Book, which records the farm histories and community developments of those areas served by WI branches. Other activities include environmental concerns, especially recycling; emphasis on mammograms for women over 50; identifying and resolving community needs; greening of towns and tree planting; and the prevention of violence in TV programs.