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During the year they use the hall (free of charge) for community events such as dedications, funeral teas, showers, anniversaries, birthday parties, etc. They take treats to the sick and shut-ins of the community and sponsor a scholarship at Watt Public School for the most improved student. In the recent past they have knit squares for Bosnian refugees, and collect pennies at every meeting for hungry children in Africa.

At the national level, the Women's Institute has added its support to and helped create the formation of MacDonald Institute of the University of Guelph, they have been

able to have music included as part of the school curriculum, encouraged mandatory stopping for school buses with flashing lights, encouraged and lobbied for laws requiring the pasteurization of milk, lobbied for the highway markings we now take for granted, helped establish Brock University, funded shelters for battered women, and enforcement of handicapped parking as well as supporting 4-H clubs, libraries, local fairs, hospitals and nursing homes, food banks, etc. As well, each institute is compiling a Tweedsmuir History of their branch which gives an in depth look at the every day lives of the pioneers of Ontario.

Across Canada, the Women's Institute has been in existence for 100 years, (Feb. 19, 1997) having been founded in Stoney Creek by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, and a farmer, Erland Lee. In Muskoka, the organization goes back to 1905, when Miss Agnes Smith from Hamilton came to Muskoka to organize a branch. In 1906, her work was followed by Lillian Gray (later Mrs. Lillian D. Gray Price).

Over the years there have been over 30 local branches of the Women's Institute in Muskoka and a number are still active. The ladies I met on Sunday are a dynamic and active group. We congratulate them on their various achievements and on seeing to it that an important part of the history of the Bent River area is maintained in some tangible way.



**BENT RIVER WOMEN'S INSTITUTE PRESIDENT Rosine Findley, Secretary Isabel Quinton, and Nancy Thompson display the plaque the organization has placed at the site of the old S.S. 7 Watt Public School. (Photo by Isaac Taylor)**

