

Women's Institutes cel

te their centennial

By Eileen Argyris

Turning personal tragedy into public benefit is the central story of the Women's Institute, which celebrates its 100th birthday this year.

Founded by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless in 1897, the institute began as an organization to help women to expand their domestic science skills.

Adelaide Hunter was born in 1857 between Brantford and St. George, not far from Hamilton, Ont. In 1881, at age 24, she married an affluent Hamilton businessman, John Hoodless.

CHILD DIED FROM CONTAMINATED MILK

Sometime later, the youngest member of the Hoodless family, an infant of 18 months, died from drinking contaminated milk.

From this personal grief began Mrs. Hoodless' life-

long mission. In an effort to prevent similar tragedies, she began by campaigning for pure milk.

Adopting the motto, "You purify society when you purify the home," she believed that the education system did not adequately prepare women for the responsibilities of running a home and raising a family.

She became the first president of the Hamilton Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and her crusading led to the formation of a school teaching scientific household management in 1893.

She was severely criticized at the time for suggesting that this school should be funded through the local board of education.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Hoodless was actively involved in the estab-

lishment of a number of other organizations for women, all of them designed to contribute to women's better education.

These included the National Council of Women, the Victoria Order of Nurses and the Women's Institute.

The Women's Institute was first called the "Women's Department of the Farmers' Institute," a popular organization of the day. The first meeting was held in Stoney Creek on Feb. 19, 1897.

Perhaps because Mr. Hoodless pursued his missions with such zeal she suffered a fatal heart attack at the early age of 53, on Feb. 28, 1911, while in the middle of a speech in Toronto.

SCHOOL NAMED FOR HOODLESS

As a tribute to her memory, the following year Hamilton citizens laid the cornerstone for the Adelaide Hoodless School.

The only surviving Women's Institute (WI) branch in Colborne and Cramahe is in Castleton. It is one of 40 branches in this district. With 17 districts in the province, and an average of 15 members per branch, that adds up to over 10,000 members across Ontario.

Branches in Colborne and Ridge Road folded after amalgamating in an effort to stay alive.

Castleton's is still a strong branch, with 16 members, but member Sue LaBerge admits that like other branches around the area, it badly needs an infusion of new younger blood.

Most of its members are longtime members. But there are now no surviving charter members from the Castleton WI's beginning in 1905.

NOT 'CHIN-WAG'

"A lot of people perceive this as a bunch of ladies getting together to sip coffee and chin-wag, but it's not that," said Mrs. LaBerge.

At their monthly meetings, the women enjoy guest speakers on a variety of topics. They share news of the world and



Castleton Women's Institute today — Last Wednesday, these members of the Castleton WI met at the Cramahe Township home of Sue LaBerge. They are: (rear, from left): Beth May, Myrtle Ducie, Mary McKague, Elaine Pagnello, Margaret McMichael, Verna Rusk. In front are Shirley McComb, Joyce Murray, Sue LaBerge and Ruth Harren. Missing from the photo: Irene Osborne, Lorraine Coombs, Muriel White, Doreen Deacon, Betty Chandler. All are taking part in this year's observations to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Women's Institute.

Photo by Eileen Argyris

Castleton WI has benefited the community

Donations from the Castleton Women's Institute have served to better the lives of their community for 92 years. A partial list of these contributions follows:

- Assistance to individuals and organizations in need, e.g. Salvation Army, Brownies, Guides, sports groups, and others;
- Paid caretaker to improve grounds of cemetery
- Paid for the fence at the cemetery
- Purchased piano for town hall (1912);
- Prepared boxes for northern relief;
- Placed first-aid kits in public schools (1931);
- Provided layettes, footwear and bedding;
- Worked with the Red Cross during WWII;
- Purchased an electric stove for Castleton United Church;
- In co-operation with the United Church Women, donated Christmas treats for Sunday-school children and shut-ins;
- With 4-H garden club, placed 14 waste receptacles in Castleton and Morganston;

Pennies for Friendship started for ACWW (Associated Country Women of the World) projects.

Gave \$50. to help purchase new doors for

municipal building in Castleton;

- Purchased office chair for library;
- Paid half the cost of new curtains for the stage in the town hall;
- Since 1983, give the trophy for the most improved student in Grades 4,5, and 6 at Castleton Public School;
- Donated money for the Castleton and Morganston ball diamonds;

Supported Northumberland farm safety and Peterborough CATscan funds;

- Paid half the cost of a bicycle rack for the town hall;
- Purchased a flag for the town hall, and two picnic tables
- Participated in bicentennial celebrations for Ontario and Cramahe Township.



Nearly 75 years ago — On a summer's day in 1922, these members of the Castleton Women's Institute gathered at the home of Mrs. Al (Sarah) Johnson (now the home of WI member Beth May) to make rag rugs. In the photo are: (back) Donna Leeper, Beth Carr, Helen Newman, Cora Goodrich, name unknown, Lena McKague and child, Carrie Welton. Sitting on the verandah are Ada Black, name unknown, Flossie Welton and Rita, Gladys Nelson, Mrs. Will Campbell, Sarah Johnson (hostess) and her two sons, Mrs. Will Gerow, Mrs. Frank Cowie, Mrs. A.J. Jones, Pearl Church, name unknown. On the grass are Mrs. George Campbell, Mrs. J. E. Wolfrain, Mrs. Dave Arkles, Mrs. Dennis Lathrope, Miss Crichton, Sarah Richards, Mrs. Ben Andrews and three unidentified ladies.

Photo from Tweedsmuir History of the Castleton Women's Institute

study current events. Sometimes, they view slides of trips taken by members or neighbours, and always, they bear in mind their purpose and motto: "For home and country," also the name of their quarterly newsletter.

WORLDWIDE ORGANIZATION

The Women's Institute, or WI, is affiliated provincially with the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO), nationally with the Federated Women's Institutes of

Canada (FWIC) and internationally with the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). This is the largest women's organization in the world, active in

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Castleton