The WI often lobbied provincial legislators on behalf of its rural communities. Toronto, 1930
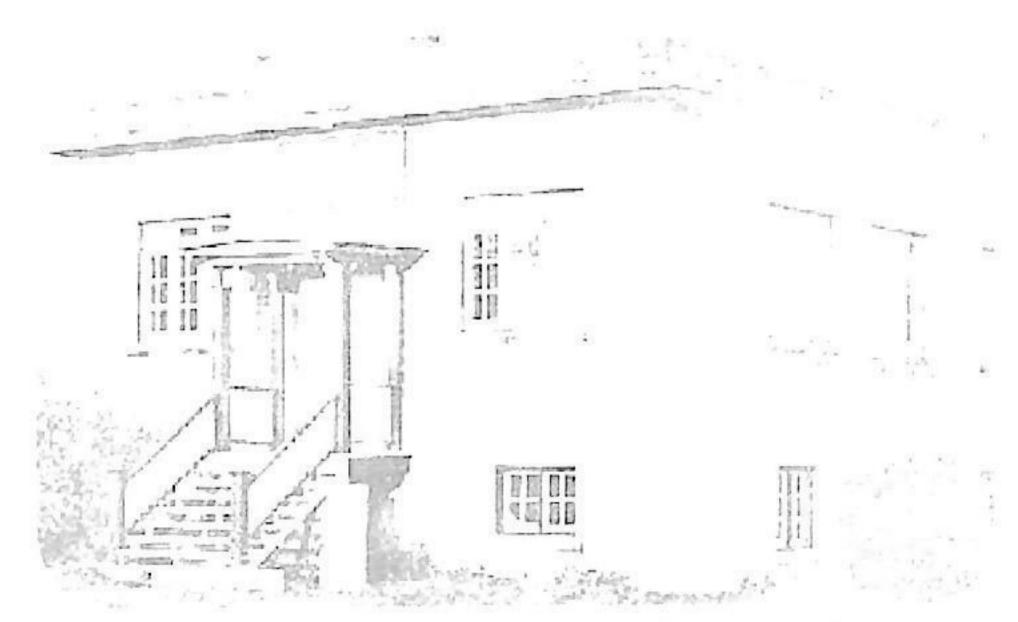
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feminism, still, the membership effectively worked the political system to improve the plight of rural women. Over the course of its history this has meant rallying around Emily Murphy, their first national president, during her involvement with the "Persons Case," to pressing for counselling resources for farm families facing the pressures of economic stress.

By 1919, WI branches had been established in every Canadian province. WI meetings also provided members with a much needed forum in which to socialize with their peers.

In its early development, the WI was closely associated with Canadian agricultural colleges. The establishment of the Macdonald Institute at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, Ontario, and Macdonald College in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, near Montreal, was due to their lobbying efforts. In Ontario, the provincial Department of Agriculture aided WI development by publishing handbooks outlining how to establish a branch, the duties of officers, how to run meetings, and suggested topics of study. Elsewhere across Canada instructors from provincial agricultural colleges were frequently invited to lecture at WI branch meetings. The WI could hardly be characterized as a hotbed of radical

Long before most Canadians had heard the phrase "think globally, act locally" those precepts were guiding the activities of Women's Institutes from coast to coast. Although they clearly had a rural orientation, the WI's community projects rarely had a single focus but rather were directed at solving pressing issues as observed by the local membership. Their projects often benefited the many small urban centres that serviced the needs of the surrounding farming communities.

The social well-being of their rural community was important to WI members. This community hall in Colpoy's Bay, Ontario, was erected by the local WI branch.

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