

ADELAIDE HOODLESS

(1857-1910);

domestic sciences pioneer

Adelaide Hoodless watched helplessly as her youngest child, just past his first birthday, died after drinking contaminated milk in 1889. Her grief became the force behind a movement that helped bring science to housework across Canada at the turn of the century.

Hoodless devoted the rest of her life to educating women in the "domestic sciences." Back then, women's work was backbreaking and endless — from fussy hand-sewing to cooking from scratch on wood stoves. Hygiene was rudimentary. Where Hoodless lived in Hamilton, milk was delivered in open vats, buzzing with flies.

Hoodless crusaded to give homemaking the same scientific rigor and respect as men's professions. Women, she declared briskly, must be taught the value of "pure air, proper food, systematic management, economy, care of children, domestic and civil sanitation and the prevention of disease."

Her indefatigable lobbying and lecturing helped bring domestic-science courses to high schools across Ontario, and led several colleges and a university faculty to be established.

Hoodless brought a Victorian blend of science and morality to her cause. Her 1898 domestic science textbook, the first in Canada, covers calories, chemical composition of food, recipes, and the importance of cleanliness. Hoodless warned that lack of domestic-science training created inferior homes, leading to juvenile delinquency and "a general lack of appreciation for quality," writes her biographer, Cheryl MacDonald. Hoodless also founded the Women's Institute, which has organized and educated women in rural Canada for decades, and helped establish the national YM-CA, the Victorian Order of Nurses, and National Council of Women.

MRS. ADELAIDE HUNTER HOODLESS

HAMILTON, ONTARIO.

Founder of the First Women's Institute at Stoney Creek, Ontario.
February 19, 1897.