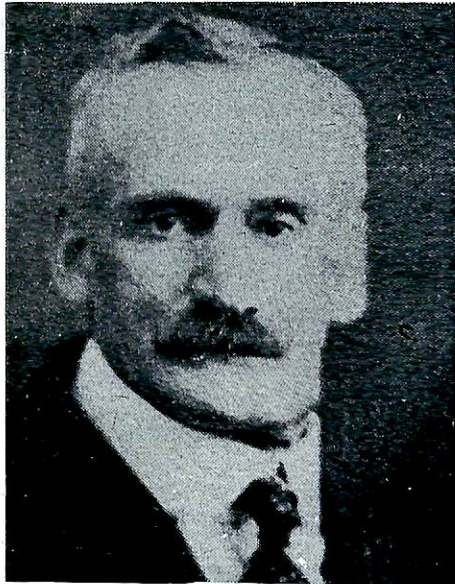


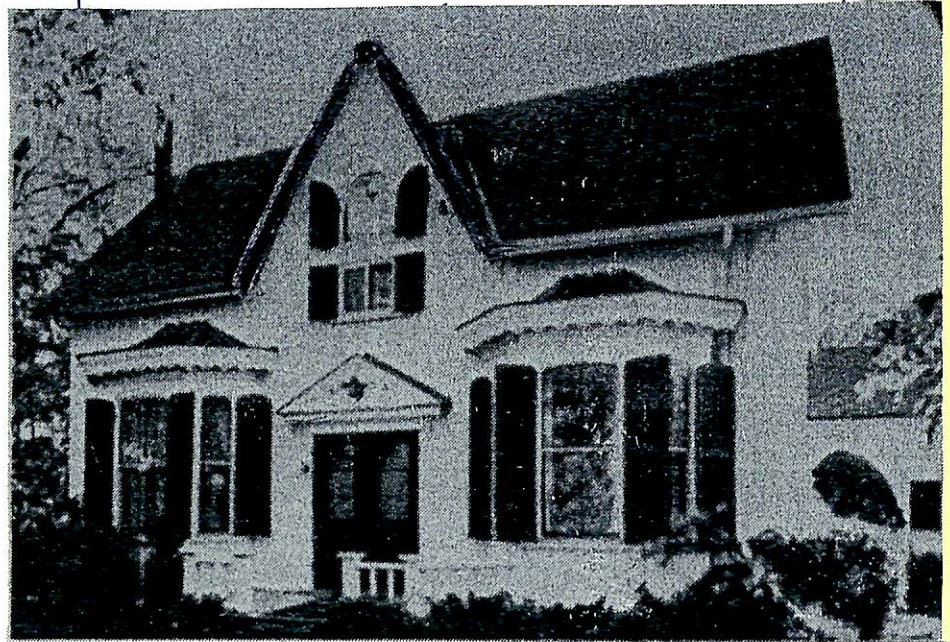


Erland Lee (Museum) Home

Erland Lee, at whose farm home in Stoney Creek [right] the constitution of the Women's Institute was drawn up in February, 1897.



BY JEANNETTE MOORE



The Women's Institute

Last Tuesday, Norwood Women's Institute celebrated its 70th anniversary - 70 years of achievement in a movement which has affected the lives of all of us whether or not we actually participate as members. Norwood is but one group in a movement that had its beginning 83 years ago at Stoney Creek, Ontario, and has spread to every hamlet, village and city across Canada and from here around the world.

* But although anyone who lives in rural Ontario is aware of the dedication and activity of Women's Institute members, I was unaware, as no doubt are many other readers, of the influence of this movement on all our lives until I took the time this week to read about the woman who started the W.I.

Knowledge brings respect - for the effect of one woman's energy and far-sighted intelligence - a 19th Century woman's liberator.

The 13th and last child of Irish immigrants to Peel County, Ontario, Adelaide Hunter was born in 1857, received little formal education but was blessed with a brilliant mind. She read and studied extensively and her ideas, which she promoted with dogged persistence, were years ahead of her time. Eventually, the causes she promoted were recognized by persons in power so that the Minister of Education, Hon W.G. Ross, at her urging, introduced a course of Domestic Science

The need for a school to teach Domestic Science teachers arose as a result of the expansion of Domestic Science through the school system and Mrs. Hoodless prevailed upon Sir William MacDonald to provide funds for the college in Guelph.

* But strangely, the Women's Institute which she founded, owed its existence not only to the woman Adelaide Hoodless, but also to a man, Erland Lee, secretary at the time of the Farmers' Institute of Wentworth County.

The Ontario organization known as the Farmers' Institute was started in 1884 sponsored by the Ontario Government to get farmers together to study subjects pertaining to improving the farm industry. At one point Mrs. Hoodless spoke at an agricultural conference in Guelph at which she accused farmers of being more concerned about the health of their animals than their children, and of feeding their animals more scientifically than their own families.

* Erland Lee heard her and was impressed. He asked Mrs. Hoodless to come and speak at the Saltfleet Township Farmers' Institute - which she did. In her speech she pointed out that if men needed an organization to help them grow better crops and raise better livestock, women should also have an organization to help them with their work. "Such an organization is more necessary, in fact" said Mrs. Hoodless "since women's work,

homecraft and mothercraft, is much more important than that of men as it concerns the home and the care of the loved ones who dwell therein."

* The women at the meeting agreed with the idea and 35 of them promised to attend an organizing meeting called for February 19th 1897, at the old Squire's Hall, Stoney Creek. One hundred and one women and one man, Erland Lee, showed up, and the Women's Institute had its beginning, the avowed purpose being "the dissemination of knowledge relating to domestic economy, including household architecture, with special attention to home sanitation; a better understanding of the economic and hygienic value of foods, clothing and fuel, and a more scientific care and training of children with a view to raising the general standard of the health and morals of our people".

As well as founding the Institute which today has members in every country in the world, Mrs. Hoodless continued the promotion of the teaching of Household Science, she assisted Lady Aberdeen, wife of the Governor-General, in founding the Victorian Order of Nurses, and she influenced Mrs. Massey-Treble to establish the Lillian Massey School of Domestic Science in Toronto later to become the Household Science Department of the University of Toronto.