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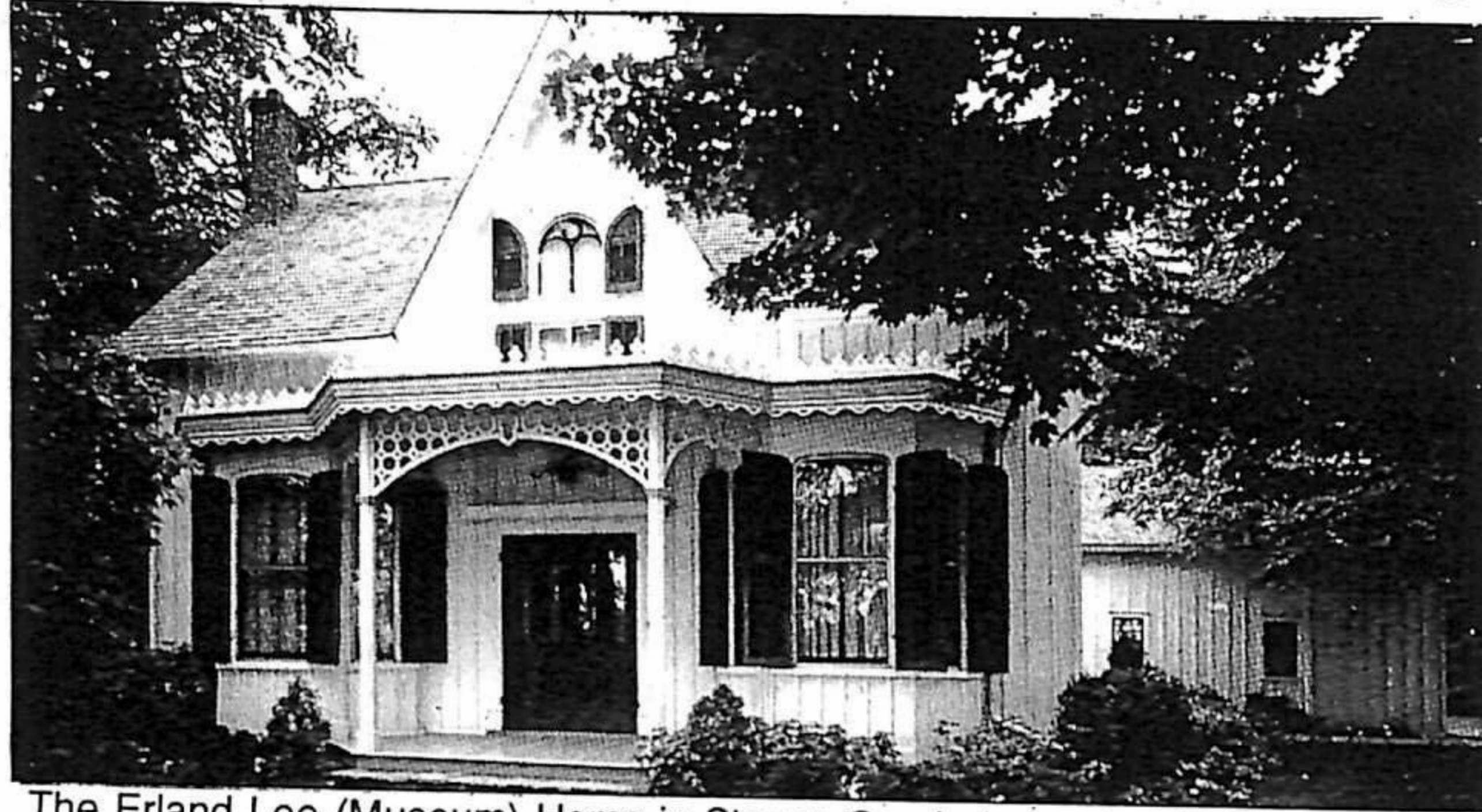
Women's Institutes ready for centennial festivities

Today, Feb. 19, marks the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institute.

From providing construction workers with soup in the 1920s, packing care packages and medical supplies during both World Wars, to advising the provincial government on issues from day care to crosswalks and town stop signs - the Women's Institute has been an integral part of rural communities for the past century.

Barbara Temple of Grimsby has been involved in the WI for 25 years. It was a most significant part of her life and played a role in society, from the grass roots of rural communities to Queen's Park.

"We made an impact," said Temple. The Institute set out originally to educate



The Erland Lee (Museum) Home in Stoney Creek, homestead of the WI's co-founder.

local rural women. This education involved numerous topics including farm safety, nutrition, and home management.

"I joined as a young woman and it was a life saver for living in the country," said Temple, 60, after she and her husband moved to a Wellandport farm.

"It is a social and educational organization," she

explained.

After moving back to Grimsby, Temple decided to join Beamsville as the Grimsby Beach branch disbanded in the late 1970s.

"You got so involved in it you missed it," she said. "You really felt a part of something, as far as the changes you made."

The Institute was instrumental in getting a public

library in Wellandport. The WI branches of Wellandport, Caistor and Rosedene in Smithville got the library running as a storefront operation in the mid-1970s, before it moved into the community centre.

"We felt the library was important and it's still going, so it must have filled a need," said Temple.

The Institute was born

out of tragedy.

Little John Harold Hoodless, was 14 months old when he died 1889, of what doctors then called 'summer complaint', a common childhood intestinal ailment caused by drinking impure milk.

His mother, Adelaide Hoodless, was shocked and angry at her own ignorance of basic domestic hygiene in those days before so much that people today take for granted — such as pasteurized milk.

Feb. 19, 1897, Mrs. Hoodless spoke to 100 women in a town hall meeting in Stoney Creek about forming Women's Institute groups for rural women. The idea was greeted with enthusiasm, and the Women's Institutes of Ontario were born.

"From the grassroots to our provincial board we would present resolutions to the government," said Temple. "They would ask for input on things like day care. It was a significant role."

"We really were considered sane and sensible," she recalled fondly.

This role has diminished as membership has declined over the years, due to an aging membership.

"Also it is difficult," said Temple, "when both members of the family are working, they don't have the time." Also the rural population is decreasing.

Celebrations planned for 100th anniversary

Celebrations are aplenty as local branches of the Women's Institute mark the 100th anniversary of the organization.

Tonight (Wednesday) at 6:30 p.m. the Rosedene Branch and guests will host a special program and buffet at the Silverdale Community Hall to celebrate not only the 100th anniversary but the part the

local branch has played in developing well-informed, responsible appreciation of rural living.

In Beamsville, the Women's Institute will hold a reenactment of the first meeting held in 1897. The meeting is today (Wednesday) at 1:30 p.m. at the First Baptist Church on Mountain Street in Beamsville, across from the

library.

In June, about 4,000 delegates are expected to attend the Women's Institute Centennial Celebrations. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Roberta Bondar, who was Canada's first woman in space aboard the space shuttle *Discovery* in 1992. The convention will be held June 21 at the Hamilton Convention Centre.