



The Erland Lee homestead on Ridge Road above Stoney Creek where the charter for the Women's Institute was drawn up in 1897.

Lee Home

Want Historic Site Status

SALTFLEET — The Mountain Brow homestead of the co-founder of the Women's Institute may be preserved by the province as an historic building it was learned this week.

The "Edgemont" estate, built and owned by the Lee family for six generations, has been the centre of concern for some time by organizations wishing to immortalize the homestead of Erland Lee.

At present, a rock-hewn plaque donated several years ago by the South Wentworth Women's Institute is the only historic marker on the Ridge Road property.

THE PLAQUE, in front of the hand-carved wood residence, built in 1873, commemorates the home and the walnut dining table at which Mr. Lee drew up the first charter of the Women's Institute.

A post-card of the homestead which attracts hundreds of international tourists to Stoney Creek every year, is available at several town stores.

However, lack of funds in the past has prevented purchase of the house by various civic and women's groups. It is presently owned by Mrs. Frank Lee, widow of a son of Erland Lee.

But this week both Stoney Creek and Saltfleet councils passed resolutions requesting the provincial government, through its newly-created Ontario Heritage Foundation, to purchase and help maintain the Lee Homestead.

The Heritage Foundation, a group proposing to purchase and assist with upkeep of historic sites in the province was created at the last sitting of the provincial legislature.

(A spokesman for the department of tourism and information yesterday said the foundation has not yet received official proclamation from the lieutenant-governor. However, she said the selection of commissioners to preside over the foundation is pending.)

STONEY CREEK councillor Peter Dawson, instrumental in drafting the resolution, said he hopes the homestead will be one of the first considered by the foundation.

At a special unveiling ceremony Oct. 1, a provincial plaque declaring the house an historic site will be unveiled, but the province as yet has made no offers to buy the house.

Councillor Dawson is a member of the citizen's committee for preservation of the Lee Homestead, a group headed by Mrs. W. J. McEvoy of Binbrook.

However, other groups such as the "Lee Homestead Committee for the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario," headed by Mrs. Russell Wise of Puslinch, have been very active during the past few years.

THE FWIO committee has met regularly during recent months and will report back to its board of governors in November concerning progress.

Mrs. Wise insists her group is the only one involved in attempting purchase of the homestead. She said that negotiations have been undertaken with federal and provincial governments for some time to arrange its purchase.

Mrs. McEvoy is also connected with the women's committee, Federation of Agriculture, a group particularly concerned with establishing an agricultural museum adjoining the Lee household.

Mrs. D. H. Rogers, president of the Stoney Creek Women's Institute, said her concern about the future of the Lee household had been a major factor in her running for election.

"I would be just delighted if the province would see fit to purchase it," she said.

MEMBERS of the Lee family said the household would be sold in the near future because Mrs. Lee found it too spacious for her present needs.

Erland Lee immortalized himself in 1897 when he invited Mrs. Adelaide (Hunter) Hoodless to speak at the annual ladies' night of the South Wentworth Farmer's Institute, of which he was secretary.

He had heard Mrs. Hoodless speak in Guelph about domestic science and its value to mothers. Mrs. Hoodless had lost a child at two years by feeding it impure milk.

Mrs. Hoodless accepted the invitation to speak and from her address, a women's branch of the society was formed. Erland and Janet Lee helped draw up the new constitution.

Minister Will Dedicate Erland Lee Homestead

SALTFLEET — William Stewart, minister of agriculture, will unveil a plaque Oct. 1, dedicating the Erland Lee homestead on Ridge Road as an historic site.

Approximately 300 Women's Institute members from across the province have been invited to attend the unveiling ceremony, commemorating the residence of their co-founder.

The plaque reads: "First Women's Institute, 1897."

"**THE WORLD'S** first Women's Institute was organized at Squire's Hall, Stoney Creek, in 1897. Erland Lee, a founder of the Farmers' Institute, assisted by his wife, arranged the meeting.

"About 100 women from the Saltfleet district attended and were persuaded by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, to form an organization of their own to improve their skills in the arts of homemaking and child care.

"Here, in the Lee home, Mr.

Lee subsequently helped to draft the constitution of the new society. Mrs. E. D. Smith of Winona became the first president of the "Mother Institute".

"The Women's Institute movement has since become a worldwide organization."

PRESENT at the unveiling will be many distinguished guests, including Mrs. Frank Lee, widow of a son of Erland Lee and owner of the Lee homestead. Miss Marjorie Lee, of Hamilton, and Mrs. H. C. Freel, of Stoney Creek, daughters of the co-founder, will also be present.

The Lee homestead is visited annually by hundreds of Women's Institute members from all parts of the globe.

The historic site plaque is being erected by the provincial Department of Public Records and Archives, on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario.