

Founding of First WI Recalled By Members

Women's Institute members throughout the length and breadth of Canada paused for a moment on Saturday to remember a day in 1897 — when the world's first WI was formed at Stoney Creek. Founder of this first institute was Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, a native of Brant County.

Mrs. Hoodless was one of 13 children of Mr. and Mrs. David Hunter. Her brothers were university men and she grew up in a home of culture and uncompromising Presbyterian ethics.

Loss of her first child, whose death at 18 months was attributed to lack of knowledge with re-

gard to proper infant feeding, was a dominant factor in Mrs. Hoodless' desire to bring within reach of all the education necessary to prevent such tragedies. She approached the department of education urging that the rudiments of homemaking be taught in the public schools. But she received no encouragement.

Her first forward step came when Erland Lee asked her to address a meeting of the Farmers' Institute at Stoney Creek. There she discussed the value of domestic science and sewing instruction in public schools and, finding women interested, suggested the formation of an organization for women along these lines.

The outcome was the organization meeting of the Stoney Creek Women's Institute on February 19, 1897.

In 1899 Mrs. Hoodless suggested that the WIs ask the Government to provide for the scientific education of women by establishing a women's department at the OAC, Guelph. She approached Sir William Macdonald of Montreal, and he was so interested that he contributed \$200,000 for the building at Guelph now known as Macdonald Institute.

The now familiar motto, "For Home and Country" was adopted in 1902, through the suggestion of Mrs. Laura Rose Stephens, first Government lecturer. Mrs. Hoodless was convener of the committee to discuss the matter and



the next year the emblematic pin was selected. It was designed from a signet ring worn by Mrs. Stephens and bore the motto and the letter OWI (Ontario Women's Institutes).

Since those early days the WI has become a world-wide organization — a fitting tribute to a woman whose main concern was to find a better way of life for her countrywomen.