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## FOUNDER AND ORGANIZER OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES IN CANADA

Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless the founder and organizer of the first Women's Institutes in Canada was born Adelaide Hunter, youngest of the twelve children of David and Jane Hunter, whose small farmhouse still stands off Highway 5 between Brantford and St. George, Ontario. Her parents were hard working Irish Presbyterians who had come to Canada in 1830. By the time she was born, February 27, 1857, her father was dead, and during her earliest years the family had a serious economic struggle.

Adelaide's only formal education was at the nearby School at St. George, but she had enough refinement, social charm and natural good looks to marry a very well-to-do Hamilton businessman, John Hoodless, when she was twenty-four. The rest of her life might have been spent in a quiet, unassuming round of social pleasures and civic duties, if she had had a better milkman. When Mrs. Hoodless learned that her baby's death was caused by contaminated milk, she was shocked to learn that many babies were dying from the same cause, not only in Hamilton, but all over the continent.

It was the death of her baby that gave Adelaide Hoodless her purpose in life. What this purpose was, Mrs. Hoodless herself summed up in a remark she made shortly before her death: "Apart from my family duties, the education of better mothers to make better homes has been my life work". Nor was she any less clear as to what she thought was needed in the education of women of her time: "a special attention to sanitation, a better understanding of the economic and hygienic value of foods and fuels, and a more scientific care of children with a view to raising the general standard of the life of our people.

Mrs. Hoodless made her first big step toward her chosen goal when she became President of the Hamilton Y.W.C.A. which took her to Chicago in 1893 as a delegate to the World Conference of Representative Women.

During these years too she worked tirelessly to help organize the Victorian Order of Nurses. Even in this her single-minded campaign to further the education of women is discernible, for the Order would bring to women in their homes some of the basic facts of hygiene and nutrition.

This ambitious woman bent on improving woman's lot, went up and down the Province talking to school boards, with the backing of the Minister of Education, and eventually started the Normal School of domestic science and art in Hamilton. When it outgrew its quarters in Hamilton, Mrs. Hoodless interested Sir William Macdonald who placed a large sum of money at her disposal. She endeavoured to have the college remain at Hamilton but it was established at the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph in 1904, and became known as Macdonald Hall.

In the meantime, still another of Mrs. Hoodless' organizations had come into being. In the winter of 1896 a young farmer from Stoney Creek, Erland Lee, had heard Mrs. Hoodless argue that if men could find benefit from banding together to work and study, women could do likewise. Impressed, he asked her to speak at a meeting in Stoney Creek. Mrs. Hoodless agreed and the upshot was that on Feb. 19, 1897, one hundred and one women responded to her call to form an association dedicated to building a better nation by building better homes. Thus was formed the first Women's Institute. The movement has now spread throughout all Canada and across the seas. When the representatives of the Associated Women of the World met in Edinburgh in August 1959, one of the first items of business was to pay tribute to Mrs. Adelaide Hunter Hoodless whose inspiration sparked the movement which now embraces six million women in twenty-seven countries. This was but one of the tributes recently given to a remarkable woman whom most people have been inclined to underestimate for too long.

Early in the winter of 1959 the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario purchased, for \$11,500, the old Hunter farm near Brantford where Mrs. Hoodless was born. The Federated Women's Institute of Canada plan to furnish the home as nearly as possible in the style of one hundred years ago. Last June the Ontario Historic Sites and Monuments Board unveiled a plaque marking the Hoodless birthplace as a historic site. Many Women's Institute members from Canada and other parts of the world have travelled to the cairn erected by the Brant County Women's Institutes to commemorate the birthplace. Once the museum is established it will undoubtedly attract many more visitors to see the humble farm home where, one hundred years ago, so many great things had their small beginnings.

As a fitting memorial for the 50th Anniversary, of the founding of the Women's Institute, the Hoodless scholarship fund was established, to benefit rural girls in special courses at Macdonald Hall, Guelph.

On May 13, 1959 the Canadian Post Office issued a special postage stamp commemorating the world wide organization which Mrs. Hoodless founded. However, her name did not appear on