

New Norwich archives trace growth of area

By Denyse Lanouette
of The Free Press

NORWICH (Bureau) — The mother of former U.S. president Herbert Hoover and Canada's first woman doctor, Emily Howard Stowe, have something in common with villagers here — they both came from Norwich.

Just ask Johan Hopkins. She can tell a person all about the town's famous citizens, and about its infamous ones as well.

Mrs. Hopkins, a former teacher who spent 35 years instructing Norwich's youth, is the township's archivist.

For the past year she has been compiling the area's genealogy, drawing census charts, and assembling as many pictures and documents as she could for the archives here, which officially open today.

The archives are in the former township offices in Norwich, next to the town's museum. The archives contain documents, photographs and personal diaries tracing the district's history and developments.

The archives are supported by the Norwich and District Historical Society which has financed the project through its annual steam engine display.

The town was founded in 1811 by Peter Lossing, an American settler from New York state, and his three sons.

Lossing bought 15,000 acres of prime agricultural land from the government at a pre-inflationary rate of 50 cents an acre.

He then returned to New York and persuaded 11 other families to join him in Canada.

Many of the original settlers stayed and their descendants still live in the area. Others, like Hoover's mother, returned to the U.S., but they have not forgotten their Canadian roots.

During the past year, Mrs. Hopkins has received inquiries from New Mexico, Missouri, Mississippi and she even had a visit from one of Peter Lossing's descendants, now living in Alabama.

Mrs. Hopkins has gathered, mapped and mounted hundreds of newspaper clippings, wills, land deeds, maps, diaries and photographs reflecting the town's cultural and commercial development.

"It's just fascinating. The important thing is to preserve our history. This generation is fast forgetting all about it," she said.

But then history is important to Mrs. Hopkins who can trace her ancestors back to the 1700s in Scotland. She said one of her ancestors fought with Horatio Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar.

Mrs. Hopkins said her ultimate goal is to write a history of this community.

Entering the archives is like stepping into a time machine.

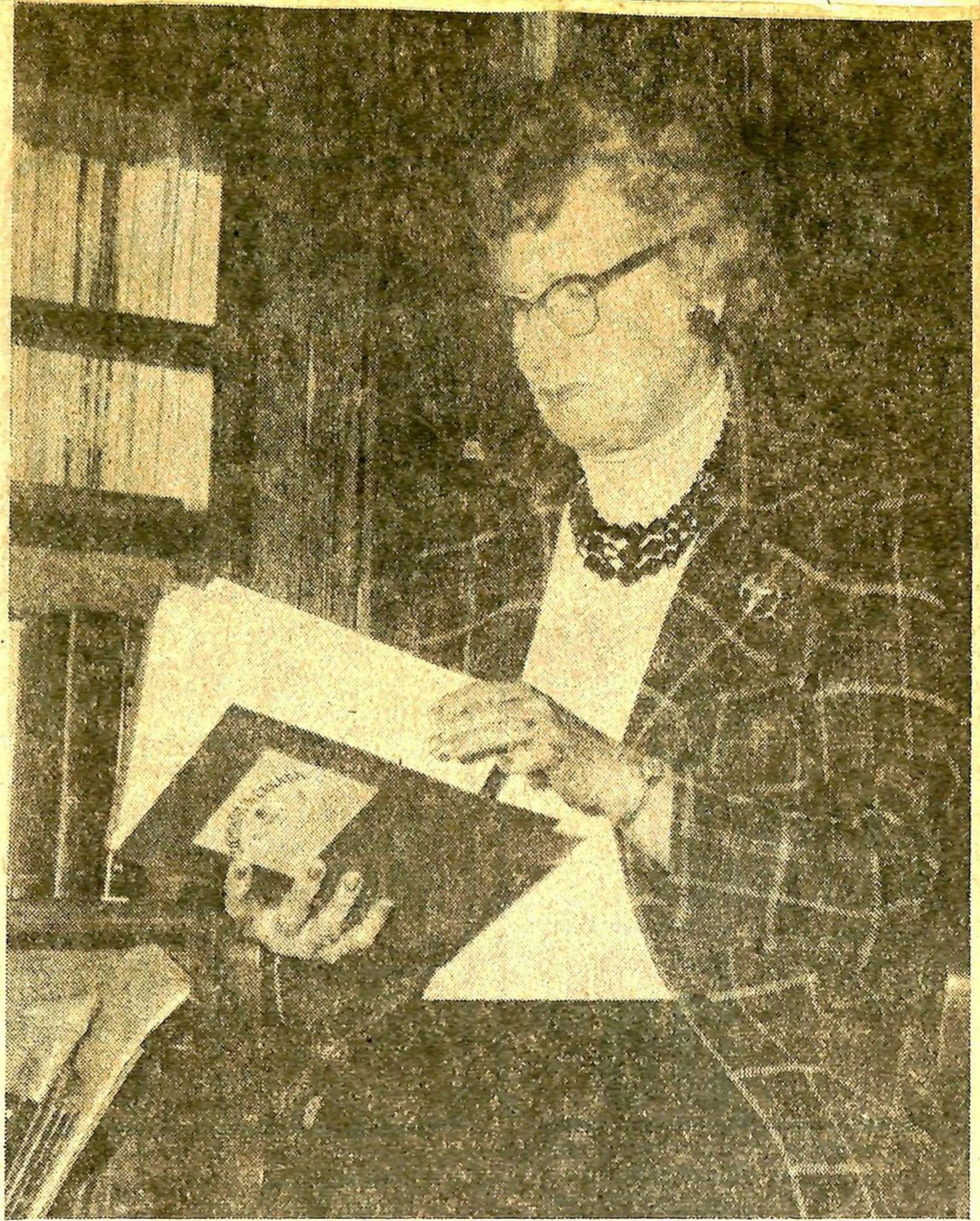
Old photographs, maps and paintings adorn the walls while old wooden cabinets are overflowing with documents, books and 700 glass photography plates dating back to the last century.

However, said Mrs. Hopkins, there is a lot more room for more records and documents.

She said although the archives have opened, she still is looking for any additional information she can find.

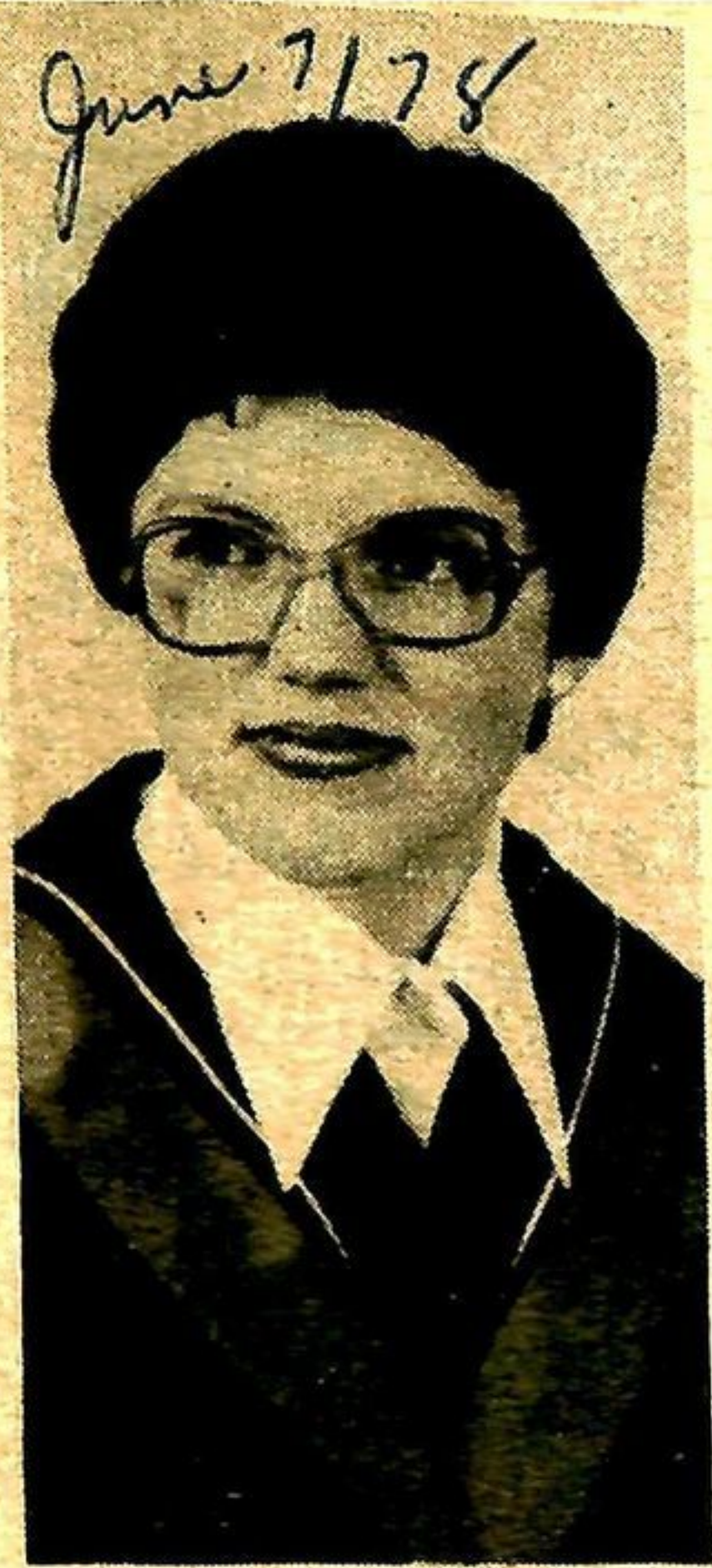
She said that last year she held a "photography party" and invited the town's senior citizens to help provide details of photographs. "They were just hysterical. We got half of them (persons in the photographs) identified."

Mrs. Hopkins said the archives are open to everyone at no charge. She said she opens at regular hours but would like visitors to make appointments.



Woodstock Bureau

Archivist Johan Hopkins leafs through an old personal diary at the Norwich archives which opens today.



Margaret Cameron, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Cameron, Burgessville, recently graduated from the University of Waterloo with an Honours BA in History.

Township attractions listed

Burgessville, Norwich and Otterville are listed in the 1978 South-western Ontario Travel Guide. The Guide lists attractions in every populated centre with a population of over one hundred persons in the eight counties of Southwestern Ontario.

Information is provided on population, highway access, attractions, facilities and events. Phone numbers are provided in most cases for those wishing more details about specific attractions.

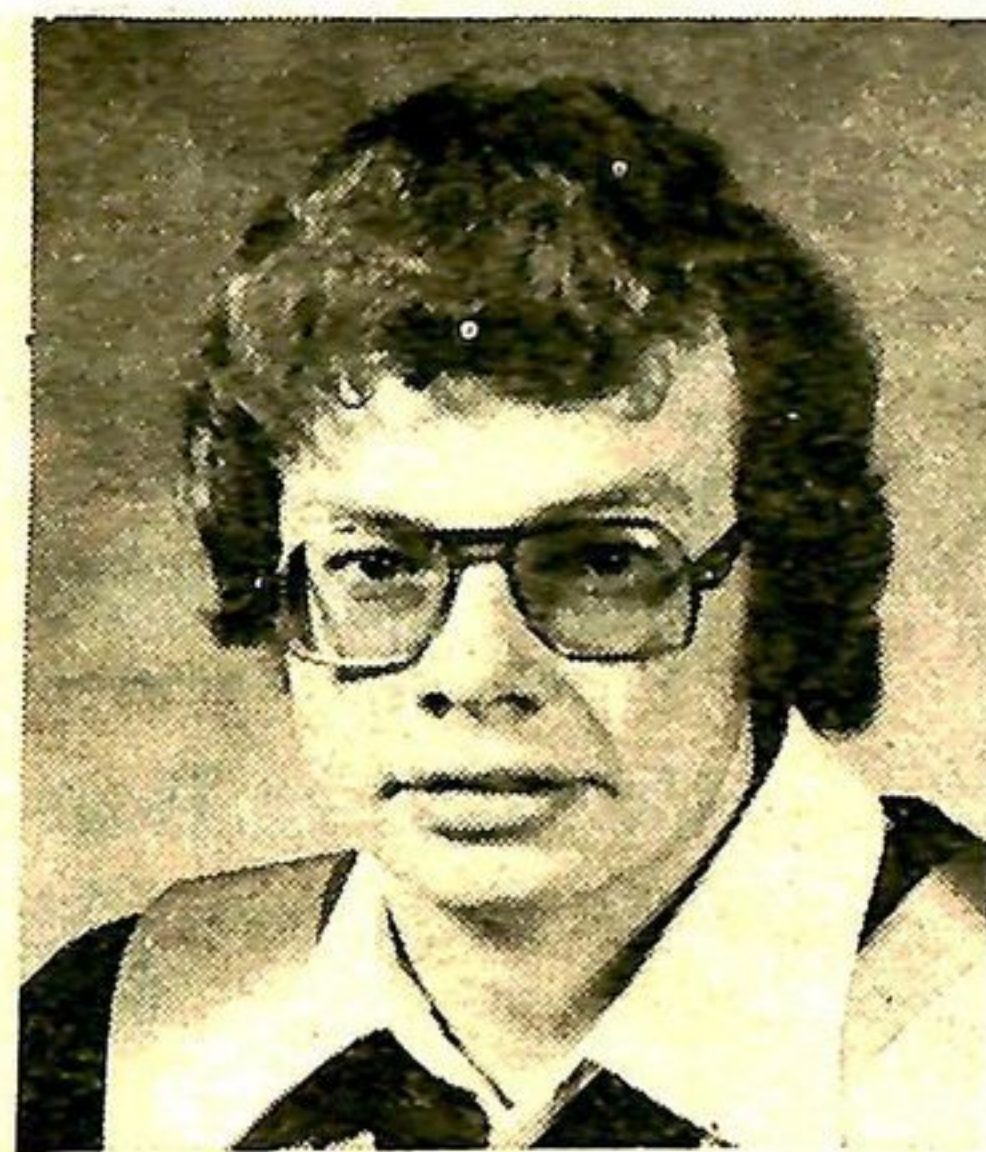
The 99 page, picture filled

booklet will be distributed in Michigan, Ohio and Toronto and will be available at Information Centres throughout the province.

Burgessville's population is set at 350 and is described as "A bustling centre for antiques and craft collectors."

Norwich's population is set at 1,800. The Guide says, "Site of Canada's first cheese factory, the Annual Historical Show and Steam Festival, June 2-4 (863-2213) features restored steam engines and tractors, antique cars and an exciting Midway. The Norwich and District Museum (863-2632) displays a fine collection of its Quaker pioneer heritage on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, May through October."

Otterville's population is listed as 800. The Guide says, "Visit the intriguing South Norwich Historical Museum any day from 2-5 p.m., May through October, or the unique five-sided Audi House which has been restored. The relaxing Municipal Park is beside an interesting fish spawning area."



Chris Van Ravensway, son of Mr. and Mrs. Evert and Co Van Ravensway of RR 1, Burgessville is a recent graduate of the Agricultural Business Management program of Centralia College. Chris plans to work at home.

Burgessville News June/78

BURGESSVILLE (C) - The ladies of the Burgessville Women's Institute held their meeting on Thursday with a trip to tour the Erland Lee home and craft shop at Stoney Creek. A

tour of the craft shop showed house, which was furnished with original furniture, was also made.

This home was where Erland Lee and Adelaide Hoodless signed papers

many handmade beautiful quilts, tatting, knitted and crochet work. A tour of the forming the first Women's Institute in 1897. Institutes have been in existence for eighty-one years.

A picnic lunch was enjoyed on the lawn at noon. A short meeting was held. Twelve members answered the roll call. A letter of thanks for the crib quilts which the Institute had given to the Childrens War Memorial in London.

We also went on to Grimsby and toured the Stone Shop Museum.



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