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Women's Institute Organized in 1897

Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless had lost a baby and she felt that, as a young mother she should have had the chance to know more about how to care for babies. She started a campaign to have household science taught to girls in public school. The only way for rural women to get this education was to have an organization of their own to study homemaking, as farmers had their Experimental Union and their Farmers' Institutes. One young farmer, Erland Lee, hearing Mrs. Hoodless speak, asked her to come to his community, Stoney Creek, and speak to the women. The result was that on February 19, 1897, the first Women's Institute was organized in Squire's Hall, in the village of Stoney Creek.

After seventy years the original objectives still hold ture. At first the women got up their own papers and gave their own demonstrations. They shared with each other what they knew, with an occasional speaker from the college, but soon found this was not enough. They asked the government for courses in foods, cooking, dressmaking and home nursing. In 1912 they got their first regular course and that was the beginning of the Extension Services we have today. The courses have changed but the purpose of them is the same as it was in those days. The founders of W. I. had the courage to blaze new trails. Members today try to go forward to greater things.

At the present time, 1970, there are 31,314 members in 1342 branches in Ontario.

Colours;-- The origin of the colours as related by Laura ((Rose) Stephen, first lecturer and organizer of the Kleinburg-Nashville W. I. seventy years ago. She was appointed by the Department of Agriculture at a W. I. convention at Guelph and gathered ideas for the colours. The conventions were held at Guelph, known as the Royal City because Guelph was the family name of Queen Victoria. For this reason purple and gold, the royal colours were chosen. Through the years it was found that the purple colour was difficult to obtain in ribbon or paper, so blue had to be substituted and the purple was gradually replaced by blue. Now blue and gold are accepted as the official colours of the W. I. of Ontario.

Motto;-- In 1902 Laura Rose Stephen sat in her mother's parlour at 25 Glasgow Street, Guelph and penned "For Home and Country". Later is was decided by judges that these four words be taken as the W. I. motto. This motto has now been universally adopted.

W. I. Pin;-- Again in February 1902 Laura Rose Stephen provided the idea.

W. I. Ode;-- The author and origin is not known. It is sung to the tune of Auld Lang Syne.

W. I. Grace;-- The W. I. grace was composed by Mrs. Clara Lintell of City View and Merivale W. I. It is sung to the tune of Old Hundred.

Mary McKenzie
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