

GRACE PATTERSON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE'S BICENTENNIAL PROJECT, 1984
THE NAMING OF GRACE C. PATTERSON PARK
AND
THE UPDATING OF THE PICNIC SHELTER

The weather was sunny with a chill in the air on September 16, 1984. The grounds had been readied by Thamesford's Parks Board. The newly renovated picnic shelter and the five picnic tables were bright with colour. The cairn stone with its new plaque was graced with four potted yellow chrysanthemums. On the river a blue heron winged its way over the water and seven lazy little turtles sunned themselves on a floating log as the crowd of over eighty quietly gathered with lawn chairs to take part in the dedication of the naming of Grace C. Patterson Park and the updating of the picnic shelter.

Grace Patterson Women's Institute had applied for a Bicentennial grant to the Department of the Secretary of State, Ontario Regional Office, Toronto, just before the deadline of March 31, 1984. Mrs. Harold Kerr, Mrs. Roy Ross and Mrs. David Woods had been nominated to form the Bicentennial Committee with President, Mrs. Verne McArthur and Secretary, Mrs. Stanley Weir included. The feeling of the Women's Institute members was to refurbish the picnic area of Allen Street Park with new picnic tables, a Bicentennial flag and a bronze plaque relating Thamesford's founding, the original idea and the one contained in the application form. However on May 25, 1984, receiving more in grant money than requested, the Bicentennial Committee was able to expand the project. An agreement was reached with the Township of Zorra Council for the Women's Institute to go ahead with work plans.

A new cement floor was installed, a new white steel roof and new facer boards replaced the deteriorating ones, and four new all-weather picnic tables were purchased and along with a 1967 one were painted hycinth blue to deter robbery. The Council painted the shelter and installed eight reinforced posts around the outside of the shelter to prevent cars from entering.

During the planning stage in committee discussion Mrs. Verne MacArthur brought forward the idea to rename Allen Street Park to Grace C. Patterson Park to honour the memory of Grace Patterson who had died the previous March. The decision was to arrange for a bronze plaque to be installed on a cairn stone similar to and in keeping with the Terry Fox memorial at the community centre. The Council of the Township of Zorra approved the request and plan.

A boulder was secured from Cold Springs Farm and with their help was brought from their Putnam facility to the park site. The site was readied by David Woods who dug down by backhoe to a solid foundation, then bringing discarded cement slabs from the river edge, he filled the hole laying a base of gravel on top. When the stone was placed, a cement foundation was cribbed around the base to complete the project. Mr. & Mrs. MacArthur attached the new bronze plaque to the stone. The inscription reads: "Grace C. Patterson Park - dedicated to the memory of Miss Grace C. Patterson, 1891-1984 teacher, missionary and friend and our pioneer forefathers who founded (St. Andrews) Thamesford in 1845." It was our Women's Institute accomplishment.

The dedication ceremony was in charge of Mrs. Verne MacArthur. Honoured seats were kept for Mayor Wallis Hammond, Mrs. Margaret Fleming, President of Oxford North District Women's Institute, and the Bicentennial Committee to whom a yellow rose corsage trimmed with blue ribbon has been presented by the President of Grace Patterson Women's Institute. Present were some of Miss Patterson's immediate family and friends, Mr. & Mrs. Harold Potter, their daughter, Patricia, and their son, Brian of Toronto, Mr. & Mrs. Jack Yeoman of Woodstock and Frances Harte of London. Councillors Mr. Harvey Beaty and Mr. Ted Nancekivell were in the crowd.

A welcome and a prayer opened the program. Mayor Hammond, Mrs. Fleming and Mrs. Potter addressed the gathering briefly. Mrs. Roy Ross reviewed Miss Patterson's teaching, missionary and community endeavours as well as her connection with the our Women's Institute. She gave a brief history of the founding of Thamesford and as the inscription on the plaque was read aloud, Mrs. Harold Kerr unveiled the plaque.

Lawrence Mackay, his brother, Ian and their friend, Jim Sharples of Woodstock provided a medley of music using violins, a mandalin and a guitar for listening pleasure.

The history of the picnic shelter was given by Mrs. Verne MacArthur. At its dedication on the Calithumpian week-end in 1967, Miss Patterson spoke and in part,