

Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame honors city woman Helen McKercher

By Gary Nyp
staff reporter

TORONTO—Helen Mae McKercher, of 73 Hillcrest Dr., a former director of the home economics branch of the Ontario ministry of agriculture and food, was named Thursday to the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Miss McKercher, a long time resident of Stratford, joins just three other women to receive the honor in the hall of fame's 18-year history.

Two other people, the late Robert McCain of Floren-

ceville, N.B. and the late Dr. Robert Savage were also named, bringing the number of persons honored over the last 18 years to 102.

Miss McKercher, who retired as director of the home economics branch at the ministry of agriculture and food in 1976, was nominated by the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, for whom she served as honorary president and adviser for many years.

Miss McKercher has been responsible for many nutritional programs set up by

the women's institutes across Ontario. She is described by Mrs. Clarence Diamond, president of the federation, as "the one with most of the ideas when it came to implementing programs."

Miss McKercher also served on the national board of the federation.

When she retired from the ministry in 1976, a campaign was started by the federation of women's institutes to set up a scholarship fund in her name. Since then over \$10,000 has been raised and the scholarship will

be awarded this year for the first time. It will be given to someone who has graduated after four years of home economics and plans to do post graduate or extension work in that particular field.

Miss McKercher was born on a Huron County farm near Seaforth. She graduated from the MacDonald Institute in 1930 and interned in dietetics at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and the Ottawa Civic Hospital.

In 1931, she joined the See "c" — page 2



Helen McKercher

Carling Wests Mark Anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. Carling West celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at their home on March 21, 1978.

Received a cablegram from Buckingham Palace.

Best Wishes from Mr. Joe Clark, leader of the Opposition, Mr. William Davis, Premier of Ontario, Dr. Bruce Halliday, M.D. M.P. for Oxford; Dr. Harry Parrott, D.D.S., M.P.P. for Oxford and Pauline McGibbon, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Trudeau sent a plaque.

Mrs. Harry Parrott presented an engraved plaque on

behalf of the government of Ontario.

The bride and groom presented each other with a diamond ring to remember the 60 years.

Mr. and Mrs. West were married in London, Ont. in 1918.

They farmed near Chesley, Ont., before coming to Medina 23 years ago. Relatives and friends came from Port Stanley, London, Toronto, Durham, Hanover, Chesley, Elmwood, Galt, Cambridge, Fort Erie, St. Marys and surrounding area.

Women's Institute branch of the Ontario Department of Agriculture and became home economist for the counties of Wellington, Middlesex, Dufferin and Perth.

In 1943, Miss McKercher enlisted in the Women's Naval Service as one of four dietitians and found herself responsible for feeding 20,000 men at a naval base at Cornwallis, N.S.

A year after she was discharged as a lieutenant, she enrolled at Cornell University in New York State where she completed her bachelor of science in foods and nutrition and her masters degree in extension education.

In 1951, she became chief of consumer services for the Canada Department of Fisheries and then in 1956, returned to the Ontario Department of Agriculture.

She expanded the department from a staff of 20 home economists to 60, an indication of increasing demand in rural areas for education in the ever-changing art and science of home economics.

In 1976, there were 50,000 rural women and girls participating in programs directed by Miss McKercher.

Miss McKercher once said that her greatest accomplishment was her ability to administer change. Her programs operate through various women's institutes, agricultural societies and associations.

"The making of dresses and the showing of calves is just a means to an end," she once said. "The philosophy of the program is to develop people, give them a more satisfying life, create leaders in the community."

"Miss McKercher is a leader," says Mrs. Diamond.

Through her work, Miss McKercher has been made an honorary member of many women's societies. She was honorary president of The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, and an honorary life member of the Canadian Society of Rural Extension. She is also a life member of the Associated Country Women of the World, which has a membership of more than nine million.