



This is a drawing of the Erland Lee home at Stoney Creek. The Ontario Women's Institute has spent \$40,000 for the home to be kept as a show-place for people to see where the WI was born. (CP)

Women's Institute acquires old home

Three-quarters of a century ago, about 100 rural women attending a special meeting of the Farmer's Institute at Squire's Hall in Stoney Creek, Ontario, founded the Women's Institute movement at the urging of Adelaide Hoodless of Guelph. The Saltfleet Township District women wanted "an organization of their own to improve their skills in the arts of homemaking and child care."

Since that time, Women's Institutes have grown to become the largest women's organization in the world, claiming some 8 million members in 68 countries.

Now, the house in which the Women's Institute constitution was hand-penned by Janet Lee in 1897, and the table on which she wrote, have been acquired by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO). Known as the Erland Lee House, after

Mrs. Lee's husband who gave the movement early support, the green-shuttered, white farmhouse stands on 2.9 acres atop the Niagara Escarpment, commanding an impressive view of Lake Ontario.

"This is where it all started," commented Mrs. H.L. Noblitt, of Ottawa, current FWIO president, at a recent ceremony marking the acquisition of the house and its 1850 period furnishings by the FWIO's Erland Lee Committee.

"The women who established the early Institute chapters couldn't foresee the important and valuable impact the movement would have for rural women the world over," noted the Hon. Wm. A. Stewart, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture and Food, speaking to the audience of about 500 FWIO members from across Ontario who attended the opening ceremonies.

After reminiscences of past Institute history, and congratulations from Mrs. Graham Spry, of Saskatchewan, deputy-president of the Associated Country Women of the World, the ribbon was cut and the large crowd was given a tour of the house.

Among the unusual items on display in the Lee House are a 150-year-old hand-knitted bedspread, a pioneer kitchen furnished with many period utensils donated by FWIO members, and two upstairs bedrooms containing furniture once owned by Erland and Janet Lee.

Outside, a structure called "The Drive House" contains an interesting display of old farm implements, horse and buggy equipment, and posters from the early Institute days.

Women's Institutes on six continents are affiliated with the Associated Country Women of the World which

was founded in 1930 and is closely linked with the United Nations' "Freedom from Hunger" campaign.

The Lee House is an official Ontario Historic Site and is open to the public.