

Will Catherine do church history?

By **ROGER DRAY**
of The Free Press

CULLODEN — The United Church here will close its doors the end of December for the last time in 117 years. Naturally, they've asked Catherine McClintock to write its history.

The choice is obvious because this Oxford County village south of Ingersoll knows the white-haired, 73-year-old woman — with a hint of Scotland in her voice — as its historian.

It was Mrs. McClintock who agreed, with some misgivings, back in 1949, to direct the Tweedsmuir community history project that Women's Institutes were being asked to undertake in those days.

She had already shown an interest in collecting events. Her daily diaries of neighborhood, national and world happenings, begun 30 years ago, can recall the weather the day President Kennedy was shot or remind her husband, Ross, the last time the sow farrowed.

The McClintocks sold their farm and moved to a smaller house in the village seven years ago after raising six sons.

They still laugh about the time a man from Toronto knocked on their door last summer after making enquiries in the village.

"Is this where Kate the historian lives?" he asked when Mr. McClintock opened the door.

The man was trying to track down his ancestors. The McClintocks were able to tell him about his great uncle moving a house next to theirs for his great-grandmother. The next-door lot had been the site of the village blacksmith shop at one time until that ancient frame building was moved across the road to where it now serves as a tin shop.

Mrs. McClintock, who finished her formal education at the grade school in Aven, had some doubts when the Women's Institute pressed the

Tweedsmuir history chairmanship on her in 1949.

"When they asked me to do it, I felt I wasn't qualified," she remembers. "But I tried and tried. I kept scratching things down in a notebook. To put it down and put it together is quite a job."

Once the job was started, there was no stopping the enthusiasm of Kate McClintock.

She walked door-to-door through the village, interviewing long-time inhabitants and gathering their mementos of events in the past. With her drug store Brownie camera, she added pictures of Culloden's older homes and other landmarks.

She travelled to the county offices in Woodstock to research an old Oxford atlas. She compiled honor rolls for two world wars and wrote family histories.

What was supposed to be a committee project became her personal challenge. No one else seemed to have time for it.

The history trail had some pitfalls. More than once, Mrs. McClintock remembers, she "got in trouble" over information gleaned from one family in the village and disputed by another.

For Mrs. McClintock, the story had life.

"This village was once quite a goin' place," she'll tell an interested visitor, describing the churches, hotels, shops and mill that served a once greater Culloden population.

Her own recollections, orally interjected, color the more matter-of-fact presentation in her book.

She points a finger at a khaki clad figure in a yellowed photograph of a group of First World War soldiers menacing the photographer with fixed bayonets.

They are all from Culloden but she remembers one in particular who signed up in a drunken stupor.

"He didn't realize it 'til after he had sobered up. I remember the provies came looking for him at our house while I was across the road cutting wood with my dad."

Culloden's Tweedsmuir history is now 11½ pounds of handwritten pages, photographs and worn documents in a hardbound cover.

Mrs. McClintock knows its weight because she had to mail it to the government offices in Toronto last November for microfilming.

It came back more than

three months later in pieces, its pages torn from the binder and in chronological disarray. The only hint of its misadventures was the arrival in Culloden of the Tweedsmuir history prepared by the Sault Ste. Marie institute.

Culloden's history, its index still missing, has yet to be sorted out although much of its content is self-dating.

There are original government letters in the flowing script of the period that appointed Andrew Smart as Culloden's second postmaster in 1873 and his wife as postmistress at his death in 1893. Their daughter gave them to Mrs. McClintock.

A handwritten page is dated by its mention of the burning of a store in 1853 where the village weekly newspaper, the Culloden Lively Times, was published by Hugh Mann.

Another page, apparently introductory, says the name Culloden, probably brought by a forgotten Scottish settler, is a Gaelic word meaning "back of the swamp."

There are some quarterly "membership tickets" the Culloden Methodist church issued to followers in 1879 and a record of the \$1,200 cost of erecting a frame building in 1856 for the village's first church, Knox Presbyterian. It was bricked over 20 years later for \$1,300.

5
It is the same building Culloden United proposes to close New Year's eve because there is not enough support for more than one church on the circuit out of Brownsville, two miles south.

Services were being held at Culloden United only once in two weeks although Mrs. McClintock was still teaching Sunday school regularly.

"If you live in a community and don't have community spirit, you don't have any spirit," she says. "That's what the good Lord put us here for."

Will she take on the church history?

Mrs. McClintock shows the same reluctance she must have displayed when the Women's Institute gave her the Tweedsmuir history project.

She has had three heart attacks in the past 10 years and she was nearly 25 years younger when she started the Tweedsmuir project.

"I couldn't go out and do it today," she says, speaking of the monumental community history. "I don't feel like it."

But her husband chuckles and reminds her she has no choice with the church history.

"Yeah, she promised," he says. "She stuck her neck out."