

LINDSAY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE . 1926-1973 V1-1



Lindsay Women's Institute bus trip, June 18, 1947.

The women were waiting at Ferndale to catch a bus to Guelph to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Women's Institute.

(l to r) Bernadette Tigert, Lenore McLay, Lillian Clarke, Annie McLay, Annie Smith, Donelda Shearer, Kate D.L. McLay, Dorothy Hayes, Eliza Hayes.

The best-documented and most enduring Women's Institute in the township was organized in Lower Lindsay on a snowy day in February 1926. The idea of creating a local branch of the W.I. had been mentioned first at a gathering a few weeks previously to clean up Hayes's Hall. The women agreed there was a need for an organization to look after various community projects. Everybody went home and the idea seemed to have died. But Martha Shearer, Archie's wife, decided to look into the W.I. She made inquiries at Lion's Head, the closest branch. A day, February 9, 1926, and a place, the home of Mrs. Maggie Smith, was set for an organizational meeting.

The day was very stormy but 15 Lion's Head W.I. members came to the meeting by horse and sleigh. They were met by several women from S.S. No. 1 and S.S. No. 5 districts. The branch was organized and given the name Lindsay Women's Institute. The charter members of the Lindsay W.I. were: President Frances Rouse, vice-president Maggie Smith, second vice-president Rachel McLay, treasurer Millie Ackerman, district director Kate McLay, Mary Ackerman, Maria Blacklock, Eliza Hayes, Lottie West, Frances Bennet, Christie Nixon, Margaret Rouse and Annie Smith. Younger women joined the W.I. as they came of age or moved to the area.

An organization needs money. A quilting bee was quickly organized. In later years, meetings were organized around similar knitting and quilting bees, usually in the fall. The pattern of this first quilt was called "The Ladies Puzzle." Tickets were sold to raise money, in this case \$21.60. The quilt was won by Mrs. Russell Burley of Stokes Bay. A box social held on March 19, 1926 realized \$38.45. For this event, the chairman was John Smith, the auctioneer was Archie Shearer and the doorkeeper was Charles Hayes. Another fundraising activity over the years was the operation of a refreshment booth at township school picnics. With money in the treasury, the W.I. was ready to start its community work.

The Stokes Bay cemetery, established before the turn of the century at the initiative of the Lindsay Township council, was the final resting place of many Lindsay pioneers. By the mid-1920s, it had fallen into neglect. At the May 1926 meeting it was moved by Rachel McLay, seconded by Eliza Hayes, that a bee would be organized for June 7, 1926, to clean up the cemetery. Money was voted to buy cement to repair tombstones. The cemetery "bee" became an annual event where township men cut the grass and repaired fences and tombstones. The women provided lunch. The Dyers Bay-Brinkman's Corners W.I. undertook to help maintain the cemetery at McVicar where many northern Lindsay pioneers were buried.

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HISTORY