

Burnstown in January, 1911. Meeting at the home of Mrs. John Forrest, Mrs. John Blane became the first President, Agnes McLachlan the first Secretary. There were 6 members; fees were 25 cents. By the end of the year there were 21 members. It took that year to feel well-established. Then Burnstown Executive went out and helped organize (in 1913) branches in Glasgow, Castleford and Lochwinnoch. In 1914 Bonnechere Valley, Goshen, Pine Grove and South Horton organized. In 1915, Horton North and White Lake. Fair work began in 1914 - the first display had 36 entries (how can we fuss about 15?).

These were World War One years. Virtually every branch in the province did war work. Picture by 1916 nearly 900 branches with 30000 members knitting socks, making flannel shirts, rolling bandages. The keynote of meetings was patriotism. Members learned to do without, to eat less expensive food, to grow their own gardens, make their own entertainment, sew garments from flour bags and to pray as they worked. There were short course in home canning. Children were not forgotten - hot meals at school, music lessons, skating rinks, concerts, etc. The list is endless. Comfort boxes were packed for soldiers overseas and the tag on each read "With Greetings and Prayers from the Women's Institutes of Ontario for the Empire and World Peace".

Those years 1911-1917 showed the most phenomenal growth and activity in W.I. of any time in the 100 years of history. In closing, part of a poem written for W.I. at that time is as follows:

Women of Canada I pay
My best respects to you today.
We're banded here, as women should
In hopes to get and give out good.

We've got to think and glean and plan
And work as only women can,
For there is lots of work to do
For good of Home and Country, too.

Our homes are first, our duty's clear -
We tend and serve our loved ones dear.
But after that, our Country's next,
With various tasks between, betwixt.

And if the enemy should prevail
Of if the Government should fail,
And every other think to boot,
There still will be "Our Institute".