

# Plaque cites homestead's history

On June 13, 1959, a plaque sponsored by the Blue Lake and Auburn Women's Institute was unveiled by the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board, Ontario Department of Travel and Publicity, at the birthplace of Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, Founder of the Women's Institute.

All levels of the Women's Institutes were in attendance; Branch, District, Area, Provincial, National and International, the latter represented by an Area Vice-President of the Associated Country Women of the World.

In July, 1959, at Charlottetown, P.E.I. the Board Directors of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada decided to purchase the birthplace. A three month's option was taken and the Homestead purchased for \$11,500, with approximately three acres of land.

Following the FWIC purchase of the property a National Homestead Committee was set up. The project was placed on the agenda of the FWIC Board Meeting in Vancouver, June, 1961. It was brought before the National Convention that followed, and as a result \$5,000 was voted from the funds to restore the Homestead and \$500 for landscaping the lawn. Later by a Board letter vote, \$50 was added to the amount for landscaping.

The Horticultural Department of the Ontario Agriculture College, Guelph, planned and did the landscaping around the Homestead. A flag stone walk was placed in front and to the side steps. Sturdy and attractive steps both front and side were constructed. The Township of South Dumfries donated the use of heavy machines and labour, which improved the site as well as the parking area. Picnic tables were the courtesy of the Ontario Department of Highways for three seasons.

Basically the house was well built. The foundation needed little attention and the roof only minor repairs. The basement was cemented and set tubs installed with a new cold water tank. Cupboards from the old kitchen were placed in the basement, also a counter space and electric outlets to prepare for picnic parties. The outside basement entrance was re-built. An oil furnace with forced air vents was installed and gives adequate heat to the whole house. The Ontario Hydro did a complete re-wiring job with a new hot water tank and marked a very substantial bill as paid. They also moved an unsightly pole from the front of the house to the side.

Few changes were made in the interior of the house.



MRS. HOODLESS WITH HER FAMILY, 1887

A door was cut in the lower hall to the former pantry, which has been transformed into a kitchen for the hostess. In September of 1961 North and South Brant Districts entertained at the homestead.

A sub-committee of the larger national committee was formed to be guided by expert advice on furnishings.

James S. Gooding, museum division, Ontario department of travel and publicity and Mrs. Jeanne Minihinnick, Upper Canada Village, Morrisburg Ontario, visited with the homestead committee. The homestead is the replica of the modest rural home of the period when Mrs. Hoodless lived there, 1857-1881.

Two acres of land adjoining the Homestead at the west had been purchased by the South Dumfries Township Council for park use. This was landscaped as a Centennial project in the Township and a plaque erected in 1967.

In April 1963, a terrific wind storm destroyed part of the roof on the north of the Homestead. The Annual FWIC Board Meeting in Ottawa, at the same date, ap-

proved re-shingling the house with cedar, painting the building white and supplying their own picnic tables with picnic equipment in the basement.

June 19, 1963 another historic event took place at the Homestead when Mrs. Gerda van Beekhoff, The Netherlands, President of the Associated Country Women of the World made a visit there. Tea was served by the Homestead Committee in the restored dining room, using a cloth and dishes of that period, 100 years ago.

November, 1963, Red Letter Day. On invitation by the

local Homestead Committee the Mother Institute of Stony Creek (organized February, 1897) first Women's Institute in the world visited the Historic Birthplace of the Founder, Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, at R. R. No. 1, St. George, Ontario. A hand-painted china bowl, filled with yellow marigolds, centred the dining room table where tea was served with dishes and cloth of that period.

In 1964 the FWIO Board Directors and 400 delegates from the Officer's Conference, travelled by bus from Guelph and were enter-

tained in the newly decorated basement to tea. With the exception of one year this has been an annual event, entertaining delegates to the FWIO Officer's Conference.

The kitchen has been set up in the basement beside the old stone fireplace, with its pine furniture, iron stove, tin and iron cook ware and blue willow dishes. There are also tables and chairs (seating 45) as well as cups saucers, spoons and equipment for making tea and coffee provided for Branches bringing their picnic lunch to the Homestead when the weather is not suitable outside. Kindly make arrangements in advance with the Hostess.

The library in the parlour contains 182 volumes. Fifty-two of these came from the Capron Estate in Paris, Ontario and are within the appropriate dates. Two volumes have been donated by Lady Tweedsmuir.

In May, 1965, Mrs. Aroti Dutt, Calcutta, India, Asian Vice-President of the Associated Countrywomen of the World came to address the Provincial Conference of Women in Toronto. "During my travels with ACWW I often speak of Mrs. Hoodless. I have always wanted to vis-

it her home and pay my respects to such a great lady," she said, when she visited the Homestead. Mrs. Dutt was elected ACWW President in September, 1965 at the ACWW Triennial Conference in Dublin, Ireland.

October, 1965, seventy-six members of the Australian Country Women's Association visited the Homestead on their way home from the Conference in Ireland.

By June, 1966, the furnishings in the Homestead which had been gifts of groups and individuals were inspected and approved by Mr. Strymo, Museum Division, Ontario Department of Travel and Publicity.

The second lap in the restoration and furnishings of the Homestead was completed as planned for Canada's Centennial, 1967. The third step — Landscaping planning was begun. A qualified landscape gardener, Rosehall Nurseries, Brantford, completed the plan for the three acres surrounding the Homestead to be in keeping with the two-acre park owned by South Dumfries Township Council and landscaped and plaqued as their Centennial project 1967.

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