

# FWIO bought Lee Homestead

The option to buy the Erland Lee Homestead, Edgemont, was picked up by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario Thursday June 15. The FWIO raised the necessary \$40,000 and now are the possessors of the 99-year old home of Erland Lee, a co-founder of the Women's Institutes in Stoney Creek.

Plans are to move the FWIO head office to the Homestead from its Toronto location and keep it open year-round.

Edgemont is nestled among stately pines, on the proposed extension of the scenic drive from Niagara along the escarpment overlooking Stoney Creek and Hamilton with the blue of Lake Ontario beyond. It is a

white frame house which was the home of the Lee family for six generations. The Homestead is located on Ridge Road near Tapleytown, and about two miles from King Street East in Stoney Creek via the New Mountain Road which winds up Hamilton's mountain.

James Lee, of British soldier lineage, built a log cabin on the site when he and his family arrived with the United Empire Loyalists from Maryland, U.S.A. in 1792. Several of the furnishings and flowering plants he brought with him can still be found in the home and on the lawns. There is antique glass, classic racing prints, and other treasures and outside, yellow roses, tiger lilies, Myrtle, Sweet Mary and a lovely Snowball bush. He

cut virgin pine on the property and built some of the furniture, one piece being a seven-foot china cabinet made with wooden pegs instead of nails.

The Crown Deed was presented to John and Mary Lee on their wedding day in 1801. John built the back part of the frame house in the same year.

Abram, son of John Lee, planned the present home at the top of Lee Mountain on Edgemont Farm in 1860 and the front part was built in 1873. Abram tore down the original back part. The white house is of Gothic architecture with the boards placed upright and the joints covered with battens. It has green shutters and hand-carved verge boards. The

neatly-clipped cedar hedges, the large trees and trimmed lawns enhance the beauty of this vintage home. Abram's treasured diaries reveal interesting information of the progress of the locality.

A lad named Moore, as a 14-year-old carpenter apprentice, hand-carved from the home grown lumber the verge boards running along the gables and front porch. His original pattern resembles a paper chain of maple leaves. It took him all one summer to do the intricate and artistic carving which is admired by viewers of the house.

Erland Lee, grandson of John Lee, and Janet Chisholm Lee, with their five children were the fourth generation to occupy the Homestead. When the Farmers' Institute of South Wentworth was formed in 1884 he was one of the charter members. Through the years he served as secretary-treasurer and president.

The Farmers' Institutes were formed for the purpose of disseminating information in regard to agriculture and for the development of local talent. Mr. Lee was a prominent, public-spirited, broad-minded farmer of Saltfleet Township and followed mixed farming on the 100-acre property.

It was through the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Erland Lee and Adelaide Hunter Hoodless that the first Women's Institute was formed. It was on the walnut dining table in this home that the original Constitution of the organization was penned by Mrs. Lee. The table remains a treasured piece of furniture in the home.

Frank, younger son of Erland, and Mrs. Lee with their two daughters carried on the traditions of the Homestead. In due time much of the property was sold for residences and now it consists of 2.9 acres and also contains a five-room tenant house and a storage barn.

On May 28, 1961, a memorial plaque on a rugged granite boulder in front of the Lee Homestead was unveiled:

In Memory of  
ERLAND LEE and  
his wife JANET  
who pioneered the first  
Women's Institute  
(now world-wide)  
at Stoney Creek, Feb. 19, 1897

and to commemorate their home with table on which the Constitution was drawn up.

Erected by the District of South Wentworth Women's Institute.

Through the efforts of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario an historic plaque was unveiled and dedicated at the Homestead by the Historic Sites Board of Ontario on October 1, 1967.

For many years it had been the hope of the Ontario Women's Institutes that the Lee Homestead could be bought to become an archive for past minutes books of the branches, districts and areas and other treasured documents and artifacts of the organization.

An option was taken by the provincial board of

FWIO in October 1969, on the property on Lot 17 Concession 4, Township of Saltfleet, south side of Ridge Road. Besides the house with attached garage, tenant house and barn on the scenic property, the dining room table with leather upholstered dining chairs, a large sideboard, desk built in the dining room bay window, and the floor-to ceiling pine cupboard were all included in the option.

The older part of the house still has the original hardware — ornate iron latches and hinges.

Thus for the 75th anniversary of the Women's Institutes the purchase of the Lee Homestead preserved one of the most beautiful vintage homes in Ontario for a useful and permanent purpose.



THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FIRST WOMEN'S INSTITUTE WAS SIGNED ON THIS TABLE IN THE ERLAND LEE HOME.

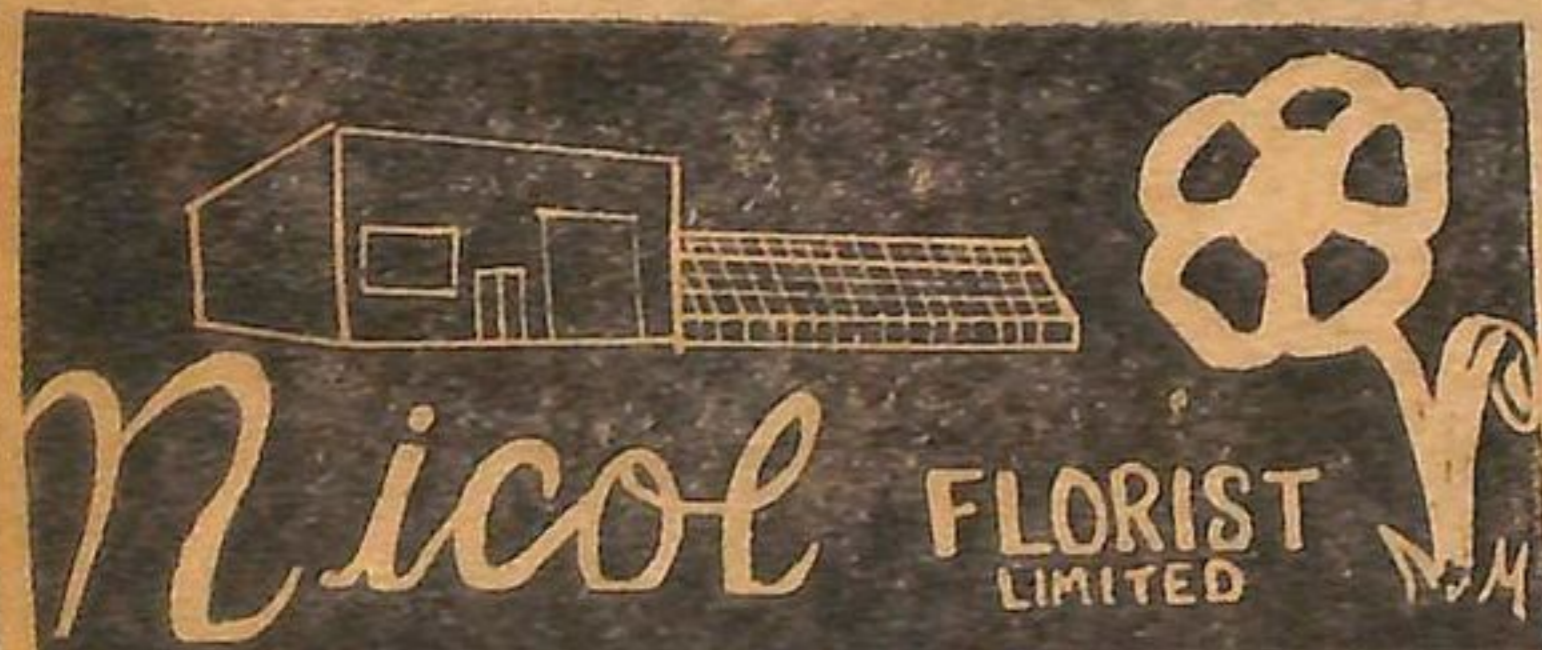
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#### Lynville Women's Institute

Twelve women attended the organization meeting for Lynville Women's Institute in June, 1911 . . . Membership steadily increased with a 1939 peak of 54 . . . One of their earliest purchases was a \$25 vacuum cleaner to be passed around for members use . . . In 1930 the branch started opening a bank account for each new baby in the area . . .

The branch petitioned the Ontario government to pass legislation for a health plan to serve all citizens . . . Barn dances raised funds for war purposes during the Second World War.

#### Delhi Women's Institute

In the early years of Delhi Women's Institute, organized in January, 1908, school children were given garden seeds and in the fall a show was held with prizes awarded for gardening efforts . . . In 1926 a room in Norfolk General Hospital was furnished with funds raised from a day-long celebration . . . An additional 210 members were gained as a result of a contest in 1927 and money was raised to sponsor free eye examinations for public school children . . . In 1950 the branch started the distribution of TB seals in the community and still do so.

#### Renton WI

The Renton WI was organized in March of 1936, with 17 charter members . . . The branch organized a Blue Cross Hospitalization group in 1946 with 15 members . . . Several members were present at the Canada Day of the ACWW in 1953.

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