

Women's Institutes change with the times

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

The Georgetown Gemini

Although the Women's Institute (W.I.) was formed in 1897 to better educate rural women, the organization, like the Silver-Wood Branch in the Georgetown-Acton area, is still relevant in today's high-tech world of working mothers, single-parent families and labour-saving devices.

"Women's Institutes are for women who are curious and want to absorb knowledge and learn about the world around them," ex-

plained Silver-Wood member Eve Martin recently.

"There really isn't a typical member. We have women in their 20s and women in their 90s and if they have anything in common it's a desire to learn.

"Some of our members have a Grade 8 education and some have university degrees, but no matter what their background their opinions are accepted and they are welcome," Martin said.

The first Women's Institute came into being after Adelaide Hoodless' baby

died from drinking contaminated milk and she felt that there was a need to better educate rural women.

Through the efforts of Erland and Janet Lee and Hoodless, the first group began in Stoney Creek with the objective of promoting the knowledge of household science to improve home sanitation, more scientific care of children and raising the general standard of health.

From that beginning the organization now has a world-wide membership of 9 million women, with 40,000

in Canada and 223 in Halton District.

Over the years the W.I. has influenced governments to make important changes through resolutions including Canada-United States acid rain control, recycling and the environment, agriculture in schools and a current proposal, the Living Will.

Today's aim, in part, is to assist and encourage women to become more knowledgeable and discover, stimulate and develop leadership. Through speakers, tours, workshops,

seminars, conferences and regular monthly meetings the W.I. presents a wide range of topics to all women.

To Martin, who followed her mother's footsteps into the W.I., the best part is the fellowship.

"We meet once a month in each other's homes and have a pre-determined topic to hear about. The last one was a presentation on the international origination Sleeping Children, which provides bedding to children in third World countries," Martin explained.

Another large part of the W.I. work is compiling the story of small communities in Ontario, known as the Tweedsmuir Histories, named after Lady Tweedsmuir, wife of Cana-

da's Governor-general in 1935.

Currently Martin is attempting to save some early W.I. documents that were damaged by a flood.

"What we are trying to save are old minute books of meetings that have occurred in the branches and the district.

"In them are accounts of what occurred in those meetings, how the decisions were made and the standards that we still go by today," Martin said.

Martin added that future goals of the W.I. are to maintain the membership and try to relate to working women.

The W.I. always welcomes new members. For more information call Martin at 853-1382.

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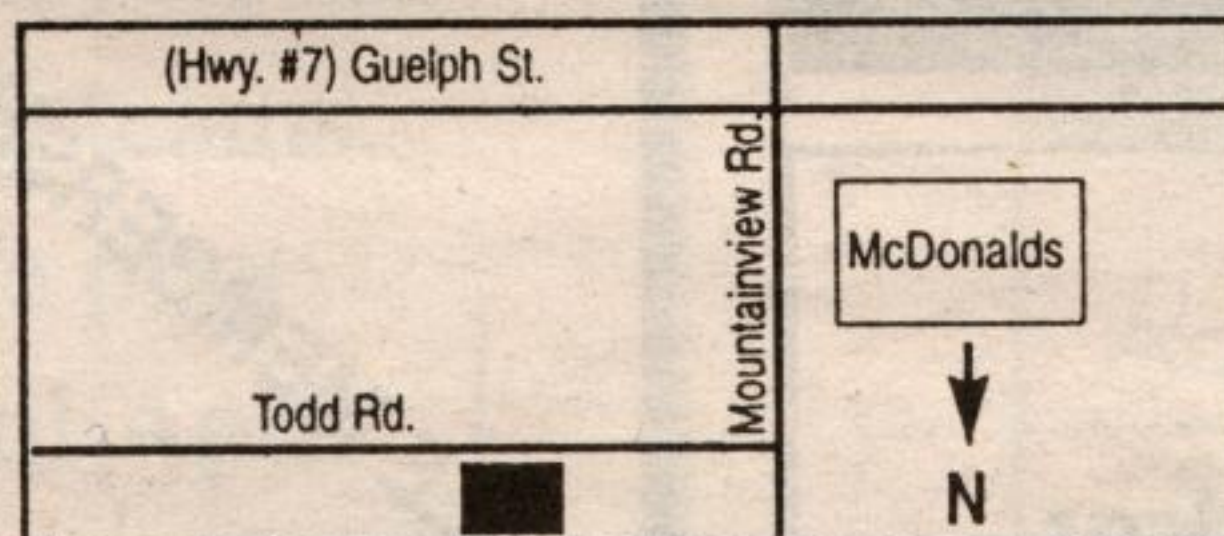
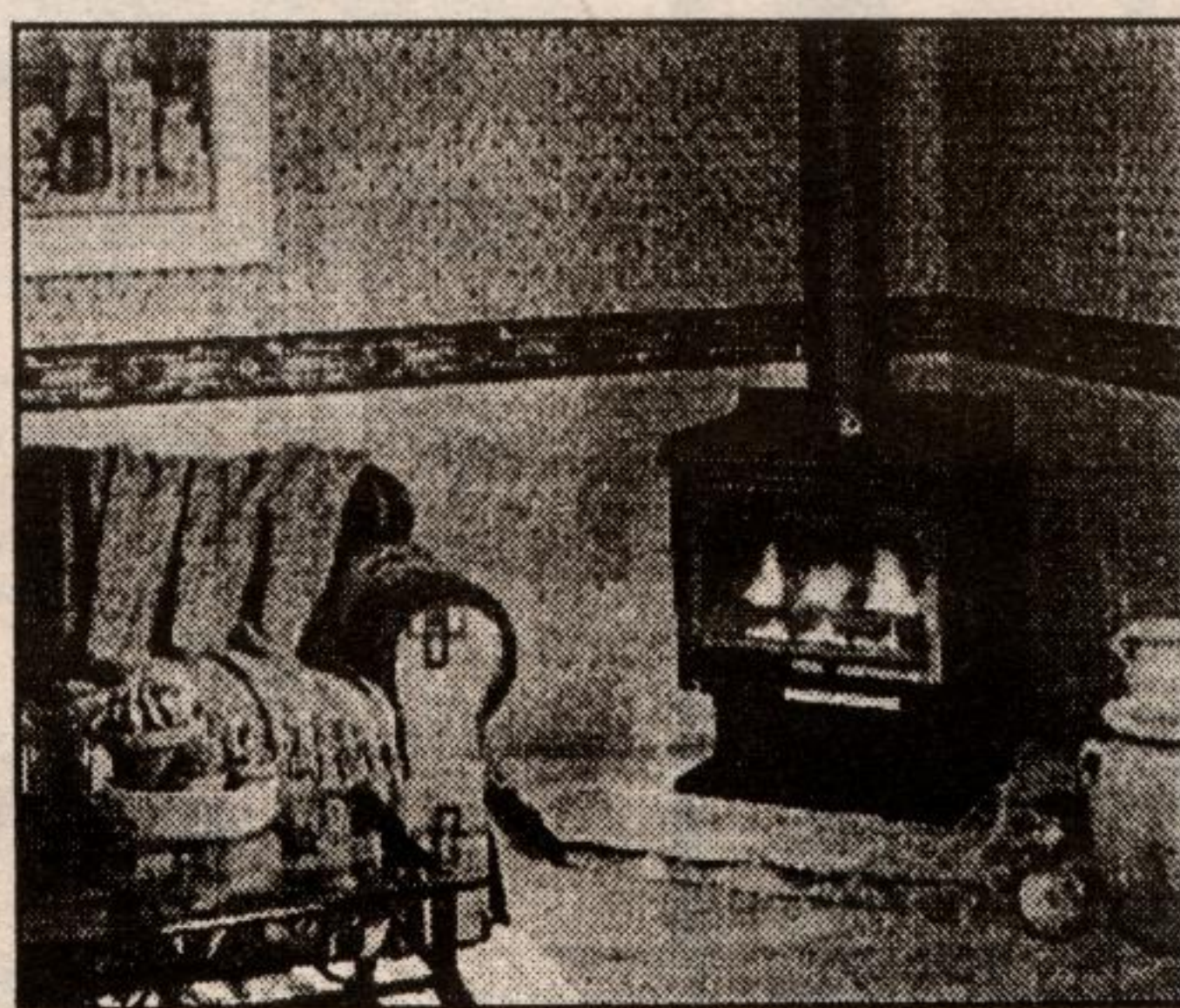
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HANDFUL OF HISTORY: Eve Martin holds open some of the historical records for the Silver-Wood chapter of the Women's Institute. (Karen Wetmore photo)

'Our Town' Christmas cheques back again

The *Our Town Christmas Cheques* are back again.

This program has been so successful that the Halton Community Credit Union, in co-operation with the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, will be launching the program to local businesses in November. The program encourages residents to shop in town.

Halton Credit Union is prepared to write loans of between \$500 and \$1,500 to qualified consumers at a zero per cent interest rate for six months. This money may be

spent only at participating retailers in the Halton Hills area.

The names of participating merchants will appear on 10,000 *Our Town Christmas cheques*, 20,000 flyers (including a map with business locations marked), and advertising in local newspapers.

To join this program or for more information, call the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce at 877-7119. The cost of this program is \$100 for Chamber members and \$150 for non-Chamber members.