

# Tweedsmuir Histories Hold Important Link With Past

The foresightedness of the wife of one of Canada's governor-generals is preserving local community histories in Ontario in a unique way, through books recording the story of the community in which each branch of the Women's Institute is located.

Here, in Thunder Bay these books are being compiled by 20 branches, and form an important display feature when branches hold district meetings.

They are known as Tweedsmuir Histories and were suggested by Lady Susan Tweedsmuir, a woman of education and culture who lived in Canada from the years 1935-1940, during the time her husband Lord Tweedsmuir was Governor-General. His term of office was cut short by his death in Montreal, Feb. 11, 1940.

Lady Tweedsmuir was concerned that in the fast-moving events of the late thirties, with houses being pulled down, roads being built and the contribution of pioneering generations disappearing from the countryside, that authentic and historical records characteristic to each community be preserved for future generations.

The first books were started in 1939, as Tweedsmuir Village History Books, and in 1947 the "Village" was dropped by the provincial board of the Institute.

To those Institute women who first became curators for their branch, fell the formidable task of collecting, sorting, learning to compile, mount and illustrate in a sturdy but artistic form that would withstand the years, a record of their community from its very first years. Recorded were the names of persons who had contributed in any way to building its future, of buildings, occupations, industries, schools, churches, organizations and events, to pass along to educators of the future.

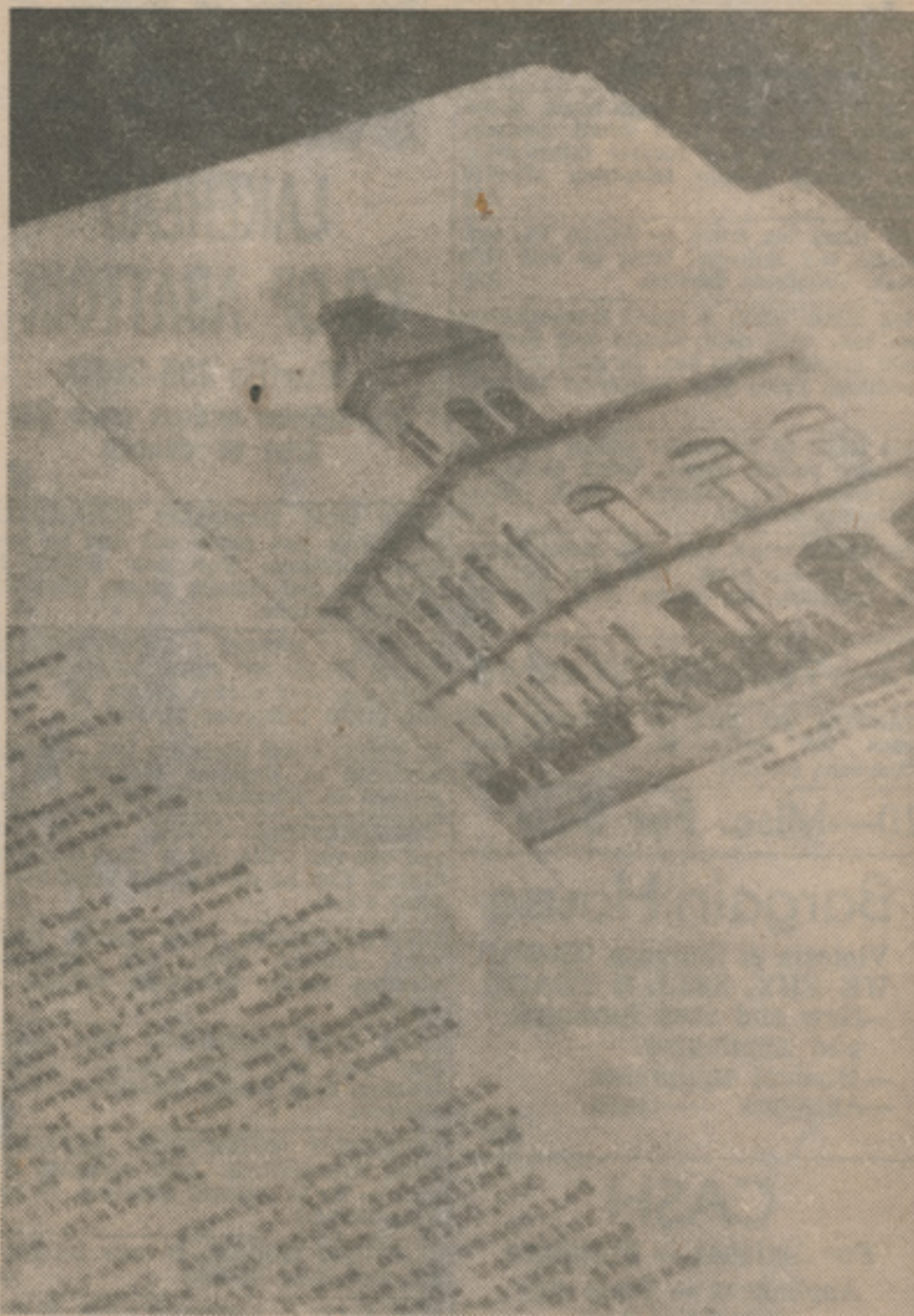
One of these women who is still carrying on the work, is Mrs. Ross G. Purcell of the West Fort William Branch, and while she did not become convener until 1947, Mrs. Purcell worked on the first committee with the then convener the late Mrs. Roy Hegel and was the branch secretary in the first year the branch book was started.

## STARTED IN 1940

The first book begun in 1940 by the Westfort Branch is uniquely bound in a varnished wood, framing a hand-loomed cover made by Mrs. Thomas Cooper.

Within its pages is a priceless record of the early years in the west end of the city and its growth relationship to the rest of the city, with of course, the story of the branch from its organization in 1919.

One can see the mode of dress through the years in institute picnics and garden teas over the years; the record of the coming of the first white man to Fort William, Pierre Radisson in 1655; the establishment of the first trading post by Daniel Dulhut in 1678 on the bank of the Kaministiquia River; the arrival of the first steamer in 1817; the first white woman Mrs. McIntyre who crossed Lake Superior with her four children in a birch bark canoe, the first school on Island No. 2 with six pupils.



**THE FIRST TOWN** Hall, destroyed by fire March 10, 1903, on the site of present

City Hall; one of many old pictures in the first book. —Staff Photos

refuses to give up a book to the Branch when she moves away from that area, or, as in some cases, a branch disbands due to the encroachment of urban development, "what do you do?" asks Mrs. Purcell. "This has happened only once to my knowledge in our area, at Hymers, where several years ago the Institute group was disbanded and the curator refused to give the book up to be kept in the community when she moved away." The material in that book, she said, was garnered in that community, and it rightfully belongs in that community. Now, she said, the District Executive has no knowledge of the whereabouts of that particular book.

Being a curator of Tweedsmuir Histories is a solemn trust Mrs. Purcell said, and now present Institute manuals stress the point that the book belongs to the community, and the office of curator is only a term office of six years.

A wealth of memorabilia such as this can be found relating to any area or community in its Tweedsmuir History Book or books being kept by the Institute Branch in that area, that is if the convener or curator has been appreciative of her responsibilities.

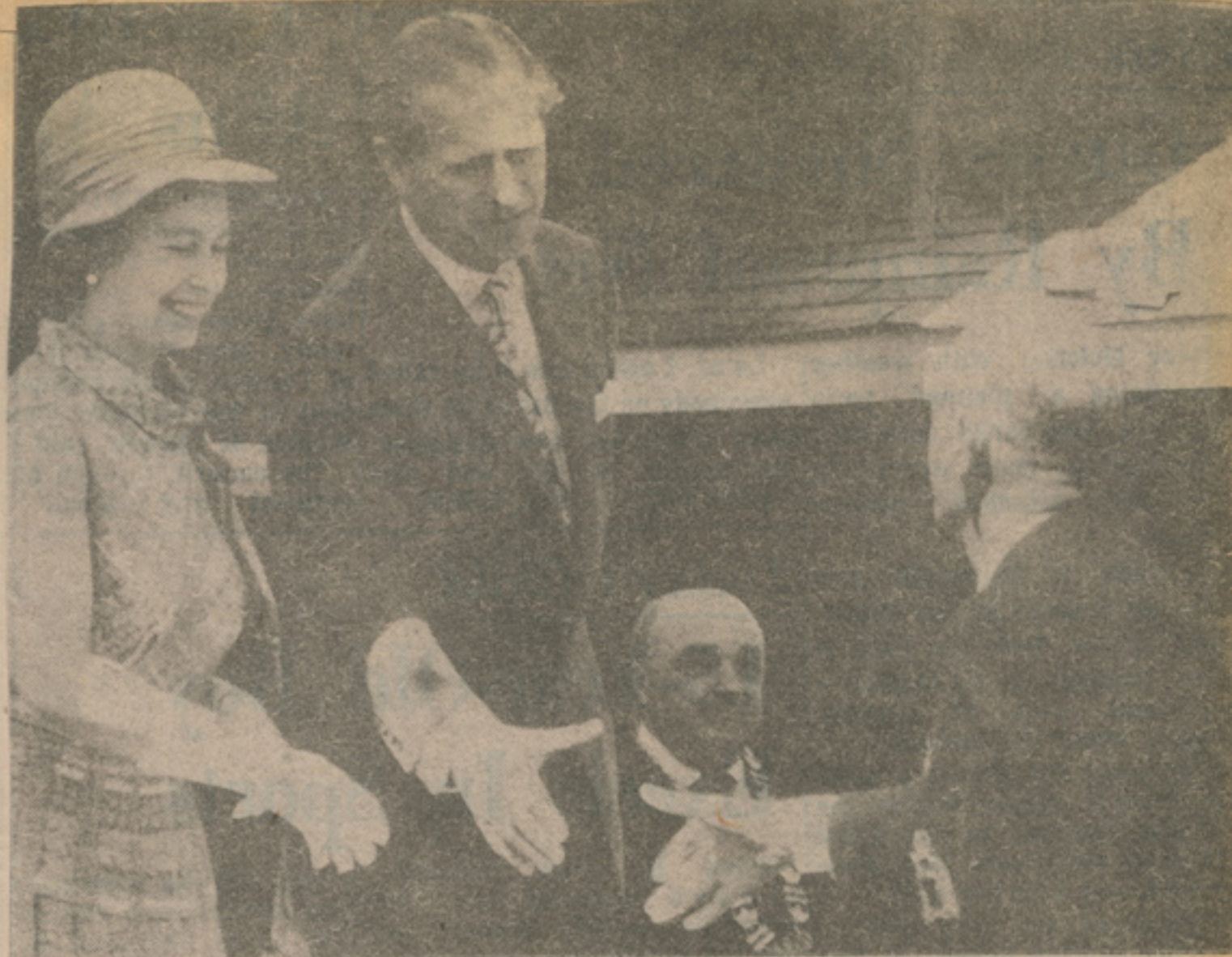
The remembrances of the first citizens are also recorded such as the selling of water by barrel from drays, taken from the lake in Port Arthur and from the river in Fort William, in the early years of the 1900s; the day the Ogilvie Elevator slipped into the river in May 1906; and the one street car running between the two cities in those early years, on a single track with one-hour service.

As an Institute provincial board member for several years, Mrs. Purcell has worked with the committee responsible for monitoring this important project over the years. When faced with a curator who

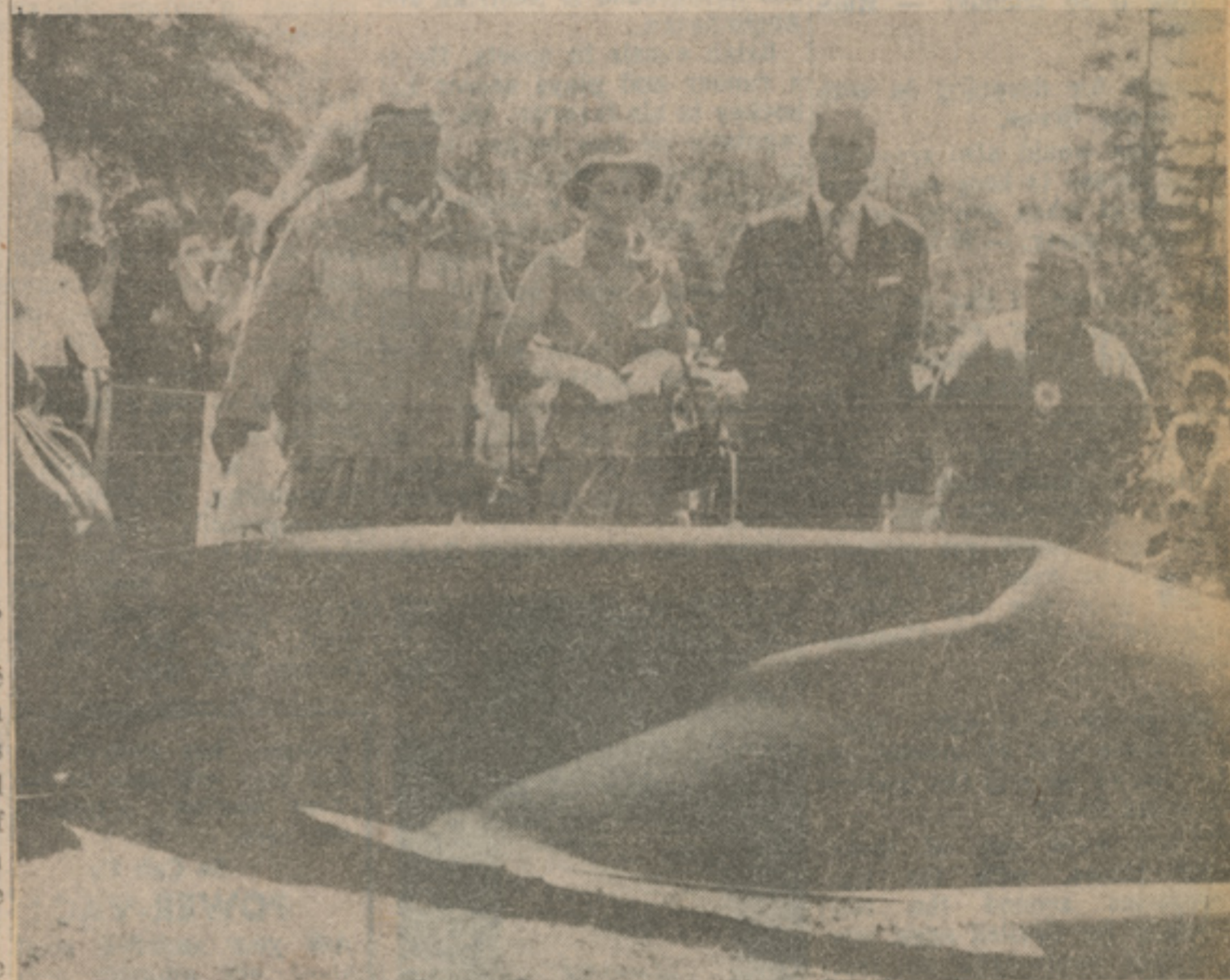
the Tweedsmuir committees, and welcomes them.

Tweedsmuir books, said the long-time curator, provide a field of research for students of colleges, high schools, and universities, and a mine of information for any interested in the local community if they are newcomers or visitors.

It is also intended to stimulate interest in local history by young and old, and while Institute members are expected to each contribute to the compiling of books as they develop with a community, the help of anyone interested is always welcome, with pictures, articles or anecdotes that will be treasured as part of the story of any community.



**FIVE RCMP VETERANS WERE PRESENTED TO QUEEN**



**ROYAL BARRIER ON MOUNTAIN: WIND CURLED RED CARPET**



**AND A FINAL FAREWELL SCENE AT LAKEHEAD AIRPORT**

## SOME BOOKS LOST

Unfortunately, Mrs. Purcell states, some books have been lost, some through unavoidable hazards like fires in homes. A few have been lost this way in the province, but also when those who have been entrusted with the compiling of the books have not always recognized that these

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