

Tweedsmuir Tea Dec. 5, 1982



Dorothy Gibson, Mrs. E. Sommerville (Eastern Area Curator), Ewart Simms, Betty Allen (Pres. of Mountain W.I.), Miss Isobel Forward (Curator of Dundas District W.I.)



Visitors previewing the Tweedsmuir Histories



Willie and Mattie Riddell, whose 50th wedding anniversary just missed the Tweedsmuir History

Women's Institutes thriving in Ontario

There's a new wave of movement among the women of Ontario these days.

The opportunity to belong to an organization with interesting programs, activities and speakers; the opportunity to learn and grow, through courses and workshops; the opportunity to attend conferences, to travel and meet new friends; the chance to do as little or as much, for both oneself and one's community — these appeal to the ever-changing lifestyles of today's women wherever they live.

Where are all of these opportunities available? What is this new movement?

Actually, it has been around for more than 90 years. It is the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario — "WI".

The Women's Institute was founded in Ontario in 1897 by Adelaide Hoodless and Erland Lee. It spread quickly throughout Ontario and then Canada.

The first national president was Emily Murphy, a noted women's rights activist who later became a judge.

WI spread throughout the world when Canadian WI member Madge Watt was instrumental in forming the organization, Associated Country Women of the World.

The aims and purposes of the WI are both difficult and simple to describe — difficult because the group's field of interest is broad, encompassing projects of many kinds; simple because their motto, "For Home and Country", says it all.

A revival is taking place within the Women's Institute. And why? Because it has stood the test of time, FWIO PRO Geraldine Campbell says. Without dramatics, the WI gets the job done.

"After all, Brock University is here today because of the actions of one WI branch," she says. "And FWIO was named the Outstanding Organization in Ontario this year, for its environmental efforts."

Until a recent change in the mandate of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, only the Rural Organizational Specialist was empowered to initiate a new WI branch. This is no longer the case.

Hilde Morden has been appointed the Provincial New Branch Co-ordinator for the FWIO, and New Branch Organizers have been appointed for each of the 14 Areas in the province. Following special training, these New Branch Organizers will be able to initiate new branches — not where they think there is a need, but where women want to have one started.

The need for new branches is evident, Campbell says. In just the past month, three new WI branches have been formed, and several other areas have been showing interest.

FWIO's goal is to establish 14 new branches by August, 1992; and they expect to achieve it easily.

"FWIO has consistently exceeded its goals in the past," Campbell says, "and, hopefully, this will be another time. The person who will really benefit from all this is the woman who joins WI, and that is really the purpose."

Another of FWIO's plans is their new WI Contributing Membership — intended for those who want the benefits of membership although there is not an established branch nearby.

"By the way, do not be misled by its name," Campbell says, "FWIO has never restricted its activities to women!"