

# Town Homes for Country Women



Two Views of the Brandon Rest Room.

**E**VER shopped in a town that has a rest room? No! Then there is a rare treat in store for you if the women of your town or community ever awake to the opportunities that are theirs. It isn't more than eight years ago that the very first rest room was established on the prairie. Today there are 200 of them scattered throughout these three provinces. Shopping day for the country women trading in those 200 towns isn't what it was before the rest room came. It would be hard for these women to recall the misery of a day in town in the old days. Women who have never experienced the pleasure and ease of a rest room, though, have a deep understanding and appreciation of the picture which Mrs. George Campbell, of Youngstown, sketches when she tells of the pre-rest-room days in her village.

She says: "Take the average farm woman: a day in town means getting up early in the morning, hustle with innumerable chores, get herself and children ready and drive miles to town, do her shopping, and what then? Her husband may not be ready for hours and what is the woman to do? The children are bound to get tired and fretful, and she has to wait in the stores till she is ashamed or walk up and down the street, the children straggling after her, no place to go, no place to make herself and children tidy and comfortable. One woman solved the problem for herself and dear little babe by hunting up their wagon. It was on a back lot with the horses tied to it, but it was their own and preferable to the street, and sat there for hours. The babe was happy, perfectly indifferent to his surroundings, but the mother's heart was sore and lonely, that in all the town where they spent their money, no place was provided for them. Yet, we marvel why so much money is sent to the mail order houses. It reminds me of the advertisement, 'Before and After.' Now they drive to the rest room, they know it's lovely and cosy and warm, leave their parcels and wraps and go shopping with a light heart, knowing when they are through they have a place of their own, where they will be comfortable and happy."

What a difference today—but I must not tell this story. The women who know all about that "before and after" can tell their own stories far better. Mrs. Dayton, of Virden, who was instrumental in establishing the very first rest room in Manitoba, writes of the value not only to the country women but to the town merchants. Did you realize what a valiant ally you are likely to have in your town merchants? It means business to them. Mrs. Dayton writes, "Why did we start a rest room? Because it was a crying necessity then, and is just as badly needed now."

## No More Tired Country Shoppers---Town Rest Rooms Have Done It---By Mary P. McCallum

### A Business Concern

"Eight years ago, the first rest room in the West was started in Virden, Manitoba, by the Home Economics Society of that town. At that time there was no provision for the comfort of women coming to town to do business. Men and horses were taken care of (men often to their detriment) but women, after their shopping was done, waited around the stores, or walked the streets, often with a child in arms and others at their feet, waiting for husbands who were often very long in returning.

"We had faith in our venture and started without a cent, rented a good room (which we could divide into two), in a central location, on the ground floor, at \$15 a month. No rest room should ever be upstairs. We furnished it with gifts from men and women of toilet conveniences, furniture, telephone, pictures, sofas, magazines, books and daily papers. We then hired an honest discreet matron to begin work at 11 a.m. and stay until 9 p.m., at \$15 a month.

"How did we finance it? The H.E.S. took the responsibility, appointing a strong committee whose duty it was to attend to it, and for the first year the members of the society gave all the eatables. Then donations from our merchants, farmers, grants from our town council and one rural council, with

the sale of refreshments did the rest. Some rural councils turned us down. They did not realize what it was going to mean.

"Today this room is the community centre for the women of the district. Many bring their butter and eggs here, having previously arranged with the town women for sales. In the early days of our patriotic work we gave out thousands of articles, cut ready to make, and hundreds of pounds of yarn for socks from this room, and this got the whole countryside interested in this work and in this room. Our women feel at home here, leave their wraps and their children, get a cup of tea if they wish, meet other women. There is always someone in the rest room. In winter the women heat foot warmers, wrap up the children, etc., and go home in comfort. Doctors say if there was a rest room in every town there would be fewer sick women.

"Today there is no trouble to finance it. Women using it, give subscriptions, grants come from the councils, an occasional dinner does the rest. The upkeep is between \$600 and \$700 a year. Many Home Economics societies provide heated furnished rooms without the matron, but these lack homeliness and sociability. It is good business for any town to make comfortable the women who do their shopping in it. I am sure the rest

room helps Virden business. It is very important that the right sort of matron be secured; she must not be too young, must be able to hear well and say little."

### A Municipal Room

It rests with the men of Portage the honor of having been the first men to realize the value of the rest room and to help the women establish one in a way that benefits a live business proposition. Mrs. Kenneth Gair, of Portage, tells us how it was done. "The Portage rest room was first thought of by the Burnside Home Economics Society (Burnside being about eight miles out of Portage), and when they spoke to the reeve about it, he told them to make a municipal issue of it, and that the council would help them. The council asked the ladies to appoint a representative from each ward to meet with them, and from this meeting, the rest room as it now is emerged.

"These ladies were appointed a board of management by the council, and although the council pays the bills, the ladies manage the rest room, of course submitting a report to the council.

"Our council is elected on the two-year plan, and as each new councillor is elected he selects a lady from his ward to act on the board, the lady that represents the board for that ward retiring with the councillor. Up to this time the same ladies have been continuously on the board, as the new regulation just came into effect last year, and our councillors being returned by acclamation this year, the board did not change.

"The matron serves a 10, 15 or 20 cent lunch, and after the cost for the same is deducted, the remainder of the proceeds is used by the board to pay for the brooms, O'Cedar oil, towels and all the other small things such as ink, writing paper, envelopes, etc. The council provides, furnishes, and keeps the room in repair, pays for light, heat, telephone and coal oil for cooking purposes, also the matron's salary. The initial cost to the people was 45 cents per quarter-section, and the next year it cost 12 cents per quarter-section.

"Our rest room is furnished in oak, upholstered in leather (not imitation, but the real thing). We have every convenience; it is fully modern with a dressing-room, and toilet in the basement. There is a sitting-room, dining-room, kitchen, and the matron has a bed-room for herself. I consider it a very up-to-date rest room, and really the only truly feasible plan by which a rest room can be run."

### Labouring Under Difficulties

Unfortunately there are few municipalities with a council possessed of the same business sagacity as that of Portage. But where there is a will there is a way. The Youngstown women



Members of the Rest Room Committee in the Portage Rest Room.

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