

King's Colourful History

W.I. flourishes in the early days



On Feb. 12, 1897 at a meeting of the Farmer's Institute in Stoney Creek, Adelaide Hoodless spoke up: "You are in the midst of a campaign to improve the health of your animals. I am here to tell you the health of your wives and children is more important!"

Mrs. Hoodless suggested that rural women needed an Institute of their own. From then on, the Women's Institute movement flourished; women in King Township rose to the challenge. The King East Branch began in June 1907 and by 1911 there were branches in Laskay, Nobleton, Schomberg and Kettleby. Snowball's W.I. started in June, 1926, and the Temperanceville branch convened in 1934. The King East branch disbanded but reappeared as the King City branch in 1939, and the King Ridge branch was established in 1955.

Lady Susan Tweedsmuir, wife of Canada's Governor-General, encouraged institutes to collect local histories, to cherish local heritage. Village Histories became the 50th anniversary project of the Women's Institutes in 1947, and were named in honour of Lord Tweedsmuir who died in office in 1940.

Mary Scott, of the Laskay branch, reminds us that: "Much valuable and interesting local history would be lost without the institute ladies' enthusiasm and their ability to rouse folk to talk, write, recollect, collect and research ..."

Lila Reddick wrote proudly of her Snowball branch, that it "always responded to any need or activity in the community. The W.I. was most often the leading spirit ..."

Mrs. Kay reflected: "I hate to think of what Schomberg might be like if it had no Women's Institute. They strove always for the good of the community." Helen Rumble commented about her King City branch: "This is where I learned a great deal about ... consumer education and family living."

By the 1970s, declining membership led branches to disband. But the legacy of these energetic, determined and generous women – their Tweedsmuir Histories – endures on the King Township Library's website. Today in King only the Nobleton branch continues traditions of the Women's Institutes, and it published the Tweedsmuir Histories in a small book *Nobleton Heritage: 1800-1976*. Updated editions are available at the King Township Museum.

Submitted by the King Township Historical Society