

Culinary Historians of Ontario

Toronto Region

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The Culinary Historians of Ontario is an information network for foodways research in Ontario. It is an organization for anyone interested in Ontario's historic foods and beverages, from those of the First Nations to recent immigrants. We research, interpret, preserve and celebrate Ontario's culinary heritage.

Women's Institute Celebrates 100th Anniversary

To mark the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institute (W.I.), a major celebration will take place at the Hamilton Convention Centre from June 17 to 22, 1997. The theme of the National Convention, hosted by the Federated Women's Institute, is *Indebted to the Past, Committed to the Future*.

For many readers, the W.I. may be a recognized name, but one which is not too familiar. In this issue, CHO shall attempt, with the assistance of several W.I. members, to introduce you to this rural organization.

What is a Women's Institute?

The W.I. is an important world-wide rural organization, designed to up-lift the rural home and rural life. It was founded in 1897 in Stoney Creek, Ontario.

Adelaide Hunter Hoodless was an important advocate of "domestic science" for women (i.e., the idea women should be educated in the science of housework and home life - cooking, cleaning, nursing, etc.) to improve family life. She was invited by Erland Lee to speak about these ideas at a Farmer's Institute meeting, which was an organization for women to teach "domestic science", hence the first W.I. was formed.

With the help of the Ontario Department of Agriculture and an enthusiastic response from across the province, W.I.s were formed in many villages and townships. The organization was federated across Canada in 1919 and worldwide in 1929.

The major focus of the W.I. was education. Each W.I. held a monthly meeting which featured an educational segment and many W.I.s sponsored educational courses for rural women such as the Demonstration Lecture courses. The W.I. also played an important charitable role by providing food and financial aid to distressed rural residents; a social role (teas, concerts) and a community role (building community halls, sponsoring local libraries and recreation fields). They also helped to sponsor numerous pieces of legislation, for example, the Milk Pasteurization Act.

In it's Centennial year, 1997, the W.I. is the largest women's organization in the world with over 15,000 members in Ontario alone. Today's Institutes remain devoted to improving the lives of rural women and Canadian society through such initiatives as recycling programs, environmental awareness and rural community development.

Written by: Susan Bennett, Ontario Agricultural Museum

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Voices from the Women's Institutes

To commemorate the W.I. 100th anniversary, a book by Linda Ambrose entitled *For Home and Country, the Centennial History of the Women's Institutes in Ontario*, chronicles the changing role of the Women's Institute since its beginnings in 1897.

CHO asked two W.I. members, **Agnes Reist** and **Helen Piett**, to discuss the function of their own respective groups in 1997. What follows are heartfelt narratives that reflect the importance of these organizations to women in rural areas.

Agnes Reist is a member of the Helena Feasby W.I. in Kitchener. This group has been in existence since 1948 and is still active.

"The Women's Institute has meant many things to me . . . meeting new friends, developing skills as a homemaker (I was a bride of 18 months when I joined) and as a speaker and working within my community in the areas of health, agriculture and education.

"I am very grateful to our founders, Adelaide Hoodless and Erland Lee, for the opportunities I have had to participate as a member of such a world-wide organization. I can only wonder what kind of life I would have had without my W.I. friends.

"Over the past five years, the Helena Feasby W.I. recycles paper and glass and sells it to a local depot. Proceeds from this project buys a water pump for a Third World country. Every meeting we collect *Pennies for Friendship* to assist our associated country women of the world. For the last three years, our members are knitting squares to be sent to Zambia to be sewn into jackets, ponchos or toys.

"I can only wonder what kind of life I would have had without my W.I. friends."
Agnes Reist, Helena Feasby W.I.

"Other experiences include travelling abroad to Ireland and Kansas to hear other W.I. members express their experiences and opinions; working as a member on the Erland Lee Homestead committee; and raising \$50,000 to the MacDonald Institute, at the University of Guelph, as part of the Institutes 50th anniversary celebrations.

"My involvement in the W.I., both locally and provincially, has hopefully helped people in the other world-wide communities and my own."

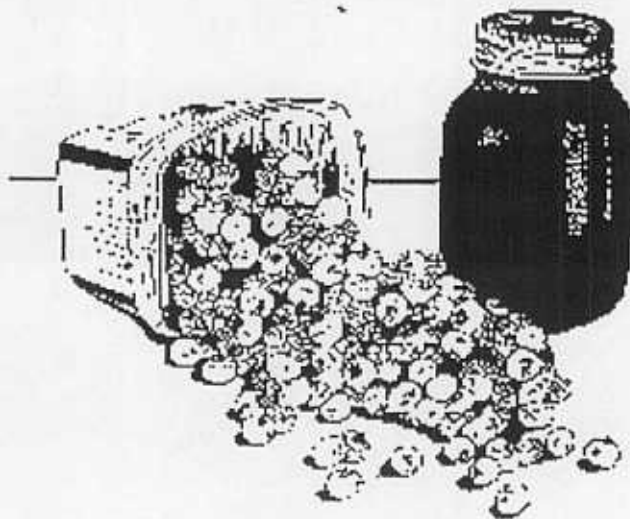
Helen E. Piett is a member of the Brooksdale W.I. This group has been in existence since 1922 and is still active.

"My first memory of Women's Institute was of my mother attending W.I. meetings. She was a charter member of the Brooksdale W.I., which was organized in 1922.

"The W.I. was organized out of a need to expand domestic skills through short courses and to improve conditions in homes, communities, at home and around the world.

"Meetings often had a speaker, a local musical talent, current events update, and readings. A member always wrote up a motto to read at the meeting on a given theme. These were always well done and I had only wished they had been saved and filed for future ladies to read. I know I still have several I have written.

"Moving only two miles from my home when I married in 1949, I remained in the same community and joined the Brooksdale W.I. I felt it was an afternoon or evening out — usually the third Thursday of each month. Institute meetings were attended by local women, usually friends and



neighbours from the Embro community. Even after my children arrived, I looked forward to such meetings, often taking my children with me until they were old enough to stay with their father.

"I can remember short courses on bread making, quilting, crafts, meal planning, as well as canning. I have enjoyed bus trips such as the one to a Blue Jays game in Toronto. We have visited local museums, herb gardens, farmer's markets, and Festival plays in Stratford.

"The Brooksdale W.I. participated in the Ploughing Match that was held in Oxford County several years ago. We catered three meals a day, enjoying our turn at peeling potatoes, cooking vegetables, setting and serving tables, and washing dishes. It was great fun for a week, but a lot of work. We have catered the Embro Haggis Supper for many years. It means planning, buying and serving meals.

"I am involved in the Institute's Flower Committee that remembers community

members that are sick, shut-ins or have special birthdays and anniversaries that need to be remembered. I find it's the visit that really counts.

"At our Annual Banquet, we entertain our spouses for the evening. (Men are invited to some regular meetings.) Many life memberships have been given if you have been a member for 25 consecutive years. I received by life membership in 1986. There were a few years when my children were growing up that I didn't attend as regularly as I have in the last 40 years.

"Women's Institutes will continue to grow as long as there are women willing to serve their community."

Helen Piatt, Brooksdale W.I.

"A highlight of the W.I. is keeping the Tweedsmuir history of our local community. The Tweedsmuir Committee plans an Institute meeting in January and February. Last year, each member brought their wedding gown, pictures and a wedding gift for display. It was a great meeting with lots of pictures

taken.

"This year, we will have a quilt display. Ladies will be quilting a small crib quilt, display old clothes, dolls, antiques, make oatmeal cookies and homemade ice cream. We have invited the Grade 7 and 8 classes from Zorra Highland Park School to come and see the collections as well as the Tweedsmuir histories.

"Lately our meetings have stressed safety, nutrition, recycling and the introduction of 911 to the farming community.

"I have enjoyed W.I. and meeting older and younger community women. Many Institutes are closing due to lack of interest from the younger women who are working full time or are busy with their family activities.

"Women's Institute is a worthwhile organization and has done some great things in the past. These groups will continue as long as women are willing to serve their community."

Culinary Queries

Molly Green of Woodside National Historic Site in Kitchener has come across a reference to Buda (not to be confused with Buddha) in the King family account at the Berlin General Store between 1892 and 1983. The dates and references are as follows:

Tuesday, December 20/ 92	1 bag Buda
February 28/93	50 lbs Buda (fetched from S&S)
March 29/93	50 Buda 1.10
May 22/93	Buda 50 1.10

If readers have any information concerning this mysterious product, they can contact Molly at (519) 571-5684.

COOKERY COLLECTION

Rosina Morris of the Brooksdale W.I. submitted her mother's recipe ledger to the newsletter. **Davina McKay** was a member of the Braemar W.I. from 1907 to 1922. The recipes presented are from Mrs. McKay's handwritten manuscript of that period. Unlike most historic cookbooks, this one still breathes. In other words, these food-stained, weathered pages truly chronicle the life of this rural woman in the early twentieth century. The selected recipes have not been altered from the original text.

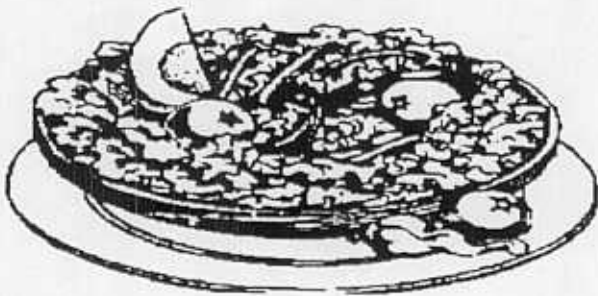
Chille (Chilli) Sauce

10 lbs. ripe tomatoes
1 pt. vinegar
2 oz. salt
1 lb. white sugar
1 oz. allspice
½ oz. black pepper
cayenne to taste
1 oz. garlic or a few chopped onions will do

"Boil all together or until the whole is a smooth mass. Seal when cold."

Rhubarb Marmalade

"Wash and dice 5 lbs. of rhubarb and put 3 lbs. granulated sugar on it. Let stand over night. In the morning, add 4 oranges and 3 lemons. Cut lemons up fine and pour over them 1 pint of water. Let stand over night. Drain off in the morning. Add lemons to the rest and cook until thick and clear. The lemons treated like this will not be bitter. This is exceptionally good."



Salad Dressing

1 egg
1 cup sugar
1 heaping tablespoon corn starch
1 heaping tablespoon mustard
1 teaspoon salt
cayenne
½ cup milk

"Mix & put on stove. When warm, add 1 ½ cups vinegar stir done (good)."

The next selection of recipes comes from the **North Waterloo Women's Institute Cook Book** of 1949. To offset the cost of publishing this manuscript, advertisements from local merchants were printed on the opposite pages from the recipes. Recipes submitted were gathered from Institute members and this book was used as a fund-raiser for the group.

Eggs a la King

6 hard cooked eggs
4 tablespoons fat
4 tablespoons flour
½ teaspoon salt
2 cups milk
Dash of pepper, paprika and dry mustard
2 tablespoons chopped green pickle
Dash of chopped pimento

Melt 4 tablespoons fat and blend in flour. Add the salt, pepper, paprika and dry mustard, blend, and let bubble for three minutes. Slowly add the milk, cook and stir until smooth and thick. Add the sliced eggs, chopped pickle and pimento. Serve hot over toast.

Vera Latsch

Glorified Rice

2 cups boiled rice
1 cup pineapple, cut into cubes
1 cup whipping cream
25 marshmallow, cut in quarters
1 cup eating apples
½ cup sugar

Cook rice until soft, but not mushy. Mix all ingredients except the whipped cream and let stand for 1 hour. Fold the whipped cream into the mixture just before serving.

Mrs. G. Thibideau

Adelaide Hunter Hoodless: Domestic Science Pioneer

Adelaide Hunter Hoodless (1857-1910) — co-founder of the Women's Institute and the Victorian Order of Nurses — believed her life's prime accomplishment was the establishment of Domestic Science education for girls in the Canadian public school system.

"Domestic science is the application of scientific principles to the management of the home," she said. By the 1880s, a number of social movements, trends and ideas had coalesced into "Domestic Science", such as:

- good, well prepared foods mean healthy, well nourished bodies and minds,
- hygiene and nutrition are interrelated sciences that should be practiced by responsible housewives,
- women's magazines and household management books demonstrate the "correct" manner of looking after the home,
- iron cook stoves, new culinary gadgets, accurate measuring of ingredients and most of all, cookery itself, requires skilled scientific instruction from professional people. (*Learning from one's mother wasn't good enough anymore.*)

As an energetic mother active in church and community and in tune with her time, Hoodless was interested in the expanding fields of hygiene (sterilization, pasteurization) and nutrition (dietetics, chemistry). This interest became a personal cause for activism when her baby son died from contaminated milk in August 1889. *Everything* thereafter she became involved in promoted women's education as homemakers. She particularly felt that the school system's greatest failure was its orientation to boys' futures, not girls', who were destined to be homemakers. "Educate a boy and you educate a man, but educate a girl and you educate a family", she said. Hoodless and many contemporaries thought that education in domestic

science was a better form of female suffrage than achieving the vote because it acknowledged the formidable skills required to be a successful homemaker* (cooking, sewing, doctoring, accounting, nutrition, cleaning, time management, even dairying and beekeeping, etc.). Such skills were on a par with those of success farmers.

Throughout 1893, Hoodless simultaneously promoted the nationwide expansion of the YMCA and the inclusion of cooking classes into the syllabus of her local YMCA in Hamilton. On January 20, 1894, the first cooking classes taught by the YWCA started. Some were taught by Hoodless herself, for apparently she was an excellent cook.

After a spirited debate between parents and local and provincial officials, Domestic Science officially entered the curriculum of Hamilton schools later in 1894. In January, 1897, Ontario passed legislation to expand it into the whole public school system, following which Hoodless wrote a textbook with the unimaginative title, *Public School Domestic Science*, called "the little red book" in 1898.

If Domestic Science was to be taught in schools, then teachers needed to be trained. In July 1897, the first examinations for prospective teachers were conducted in Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton. Then on February 1, 1900, The Ontario Normal [Teachers'] School of Domestic Science and Art opened in Hamilton, with Hoodless as its first president. The student teachers' syllabus included chemistry, household economy, marketing, invalid cookery, and "plain, high and chafing dish cookery".

Once established in the lower grades, she went on to promote it at the college level. By 1903, Domestic Science classes were being taught at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph. The next year, the

MacDonald Institute formally opened in Guelph, and the school moved from Hamilton. Advanced courses in "the practical study in Nature Study, Manual Training and Household Sciences" were offered. Homemakers could sign on for a three month or one year course of study, or teachers for two years. "Applicants for this course must be mature women in sound health with executive ability...".

The University of Toronto graduated the first women with degrees in Domestic Science in 1902 and Dietetics in 1906, but the Department of Household Science building (south east corner of Bloor and University, now home to The Gap and the Ontario Ombudsman) went up in 1908. MacDonald College at McGill University in Montreal soon followed.

Domestic Science became an important part of the education of Canadian girls and remained so until the 1980s. How many reading this took the dreaded "Home Economics Class"? Domestic Science would have inevitably arrived in Ontario and Canada following the lead of Britain, Germany and the States, but because the persistent and resolute Adelaide Hunter Hoodless believed in its necessity, it arrived sooner than later.

* Homemaker is not a modern feminist term used instead of the gender specific "housewife" but a word already used by late Victorian activists.

Written by Fiona Lucas,
Co-Founder of CHO

Selected References:

- MacDonald, Cheryl. *Adelaide Hoodless: Domestic Crusader*. Toronto: Dundurn Press. 1986.
- Quayle Innis, Mary. *The Clear Spirit: 20 Canadian Women and Their Times*. U of Toronto Press. 1966
- *Encyclopedia Canadiana*. Grolier. 1975 ed.
- Ferguson, Carol & Fraser, Margaret. *A Century of Canadian Home Cooking 1900 Through the 1990s*. Scarborough, Ont: Prentice-Hall. 1992.

Culinary Calendar

Please send CHO information about your upcoming food history or related events. We are pleased to include them in the newsletter.

March

Mediterranean

Chez Soleil

120 Brunswick St., Stratford

Learn more about one of the world's healthiest cuisines. From Greece to North Africa, discover why this region is the birthplace of Western Civilization. Four week session, March 4 to 25. Cost: \$140.00. Class participation is limited to 6 students. Pre-registration required. (519) 271-7404.

March Break Adventures

The Gibson House

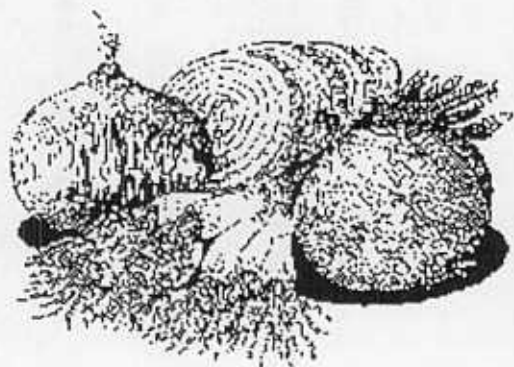
5172 Yonge St. at Park Home Ave., North York

This spring your children can step back in time and recreate life in a rural household. Children ages 5 to 12 will have an opportunity to bake over an open hearth, play games and more. March 11 & 12 (ages 5 to 7) 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon or 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. March 13 & 14 (ages 8 to 12) times same as above. Cost for 2 day program is \$17.00. Pre-registration is required. (416) 395-7432.

Vegetarian

Chez Soleil

A tour through the vegetable kingdom, each week arriving at a different global destination. Four week session, March 7 to 28. Cost \$140.00. Class participation is limited to 6. Pre-registration required. (519) 271-7404.



April

An Introduction to Hearth Cooking

The Gibson House

Enjoy a day from the past in the historic kitchen by experiencing and experimenting with 19th century cookery methods and ingredients. April 5 or April 8, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Cost \$20.00. Pre-registration is required. (416) 395-7432.

From Cathay to Canada: Chinese Cuisine in Transition

*The Ontario Historical Society and the
School of Hotel and Food Administration,
University of Guelph*

This symposium will explore Chinese food and its important contributions to Canadian cuisine over the last century. April 12. For more information call (416) 226-9011 or fax (416) 226-2740.

Culinary Credits

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