

Name of Branch: Barons Women's Institute

Location: 51 km north of Lethbridge on Hwy 23

Organized: June 30, 1915 by [Miss Mary MacIsaac](#), who travelled to Barons on the Provincial Government Special Farming Train, which provided agricultural training to the new settlers and assisted men and women in rural areas to establish organizations that would support their communities. [Note: PAA 2007.0380/55 Box 2 AWI Branches Vol 1 has organization date of June 1914]

Charter Members: Mrs. H. Thorsell, Mrs. Garrett, Mrs. O. Blaine, Mrs. W.J. Sherwood, Mrs. Catherine Crow

First Executive: Mrs. H. Thorsell, first President, Mrs. Garrett and Mrs. O. Blaine, Vice-Presidents, Mrs. W.J. Sherwood, Secretary-Treasurer.

Disbanded: 1970

Activities: After forming in 1915, the Barons WI met in the Barons Methodist Church once a month. Nearly all the women in the community belonged to the Women's Institutes, rising to a maximum membership of 82 in the 1920s. "One of the first undertakings of the members was the acquisition of a building for a rest room, so that women from the country would have a place to rest, make a meal and attend to their children, after a long trip to town by wagon or buggy. These rest rooms were a feature of nearly every village or town, where there was an Institute branch and were much appreciated by the farm women. They had all the furniture for comfort, and stoves for heat and cooking, as well as the dishes. The building was paid for in 1920, as it had for a long time been no longer needed for its original purpose. In the meantime it had been the site of the meetings of many organizations, Clubs and groups; the headquarters for the Barons Band; a place for card parties and other entertainments; and had been a home for an elderly member" (*Wheat Heart*, 119).

Early Minute books for the WI are often amusing to read. In 1919, a joint picnic was planned with the UFA. Mrs. Donovan offered her husband as a guest speaker; members were apparently delighted at this suggestion because they thought it would be good to hear from a man for change (photo, *Wheat Heart*, 119).



The practical side of running a Women's Institute branch can be seen in this humorous motion: "that our meetings be revenue bearing, taxing each member for her share in eating up the refreshments." (quoted passage and photo, *Wheat Heart*, 120).



Celebrating birthday anniversary of Women's Institute. Some of those present: Nettie Kittleson, Alice Shearer, Alida Kulpas, Mrs. Lebow, Mrs. Hood, Mr. H. E. Irwin, Mrs. Bruce Clark, Mrs. Gow, Mrs. House, Mrs. Hattie Chester, Mrs. J. Blacklock, Mrs. J. Turner, Ruth Popham, Anna Lyon, Mrs. MacQuarrie, Mrs. Popham, Mrs. McIntyre, Jane Popham, Mrs. Hunter, children — Mary Chester, Dorothy Kulpas.

Notable Members:

Life Membership:

Mrs. J. A. MacQuarrie was born on February 3, 1900, of English and Irish extraction. She graduated from the Provincial Normal School in Fredericton, New Brunswick, carrying her love of learning forward over the years in her desire to read good books. She married Arthur A. MacQuarrie on July 20, 1921, then came to settle in Alberta.

Mrs. MacQuarrie belonged to the WI for 37 years, holding office at the branch, constituency and district levels. She was branch president for two and a half years, branch secretary for five, convener of Little Bow Constituency for six years, and director of District 4 for two years.

Her Life Membership was presented to her by the Barons WI for long and faithful service while a member of that branch. It was presented to her in April 1959.

Anna Lyon

Anna Cowell Lyon was born in What Cheer, Iowa, August 19, 1899. She came to Lomond, Alberta, as a young girl where she later married Alvan Lyon, March 31, 1919. After her marriage she lived in Barons. Mrs. Lyon joined the Barons Women's Institute in 1923, served as secretary in 1924 and as president in 1941, 1948, 1950, 1955, and 1956. She served faithfully as Convener of Handicrafts in her branch and in Little Bow Constituency. At the time she received her Life Membership she was serving as vice-president of the Barons branch and was also on the Board of the Auxiliary of the Senior Citizens Home in Lethbridge.

Mrs. Lyon was an active and public-spirited citizen, working hard to provide the finances for building the community hall. Barons WI was the first local organization to contribute to this effort.

Anna took an active part in the many clinics held in Barons, including the TB, chest x-ray, baby, and dental clinics and in the campaign to raise funds to send a local boy East for an operation. During the Second World War she was active in the Patriotic League, organizing clothing drives and food parcels and was in charge of the local tobacco fund for the boys overseas.

Anna Lyon was given her Life Membership in October 1957 at the regular meeting of her branch. Special guests were present for the occasion.

Catherine Crow

Catherine Crow is the daughter and granddaughter of pioneers. Her maternal grandmother is the only woman who came west with the Overlanders in 1862; they were a group of 140 people seeking the gold fields of the Cariboo. They left Fort Garry in June and arrived in Kamloops on October 13 of that year. The next morning after their arrival in Kamloops, a baby daughter was born to this hardy pioneer woman and that baby girl became the mother of our very valued member, Mrs. Catherine Crow. This anecdote was part of the application for a Life Membership for Mrs. Crow, an honor granted by the Provincial Executive in March 1963.

Mrs. Crow is the daughter of Thomas and Rosanna Schubert Leduc and was born at Landsdown, now Armstrong, British Columbia, in 1891. She attended school in Armstrong, where she later married Ralph Raymond Crow in 1909. Mrs. Crow was a Charter Member of Barons Women's Institute and always took a keen interest in the many projects sponsored by that branch. Perhaps her most outstanding contribution was in the field of handicraft; she contributed work that brought many points towards winning the handicraft shield in Little Bow Constituency for Barons WI in 1960, 1961, and 1962.

Sources: [Barons History Book Club. *Wheat Heart of the West: A History of Barons and District*. Barons, AB: Barons History Book Club, 1972 (text and photos. 119-121); Women's Institutes. [Barons Branch fonds](#). Glenbow Archives; *Life Membership* 111-112, 161-62, 215-16; PAA 2007.0380/55 Box 2. AWI Branches .Vol 1]