

**Name of Branch:** Busby Women's Institute

**Location:** Busby is on Hwy 651, 32 km northwest of Edmonton

**Organized:** July 16, 1916

**Charter Members:** Mrs. Emily Elliott, Mrs. Violet Gerig; no other information is now available since the home of Mrs. A. Williams who was secretary throughout the 1920s, burned down, along with all the WI records. The first records that the WI could rely on for any histories it was writing began in 1937.

**First Executive:** n/a

**Disbanded:** 2003

**Activities:** In 1937, there was an on-going discussion about whether or not whether or not the Agricultural Grounds would be transferred to the Busby WI. The WI asked that the Grounds be transferred to another club. But, in 1942, the WI took over the Agricultural Grounds after all.

During the War, in addition to the usual war work Busby WI formed a Dramatic Society and put on several plays, generally comedies. Tickets cost 35 cents for adults and 15 cents for children. The WI also held quilting parties and raffled the tickets for specific social purposes. Tickets sold for 10 cents each, or three for 25 cents.

The Centennial project for Busby WI was to furnish the kitchen in the Community Hall. The WI catered to banquets and weddings and had cupboards built for dishes that they bought. Later, came two electric stoves, a fridge, as well as other articles [ from personal correspondence from Mrs. Ruth Seaman to Elizabeth Lefsrud, 1974].

The progress of the Busby Hall was slow, but sure and illustrates the amount of hard work that was involved in WI catering. Busby began to do catering in 1959 for a wedding. This was in the old hall, which did not have a kitchen. All food had to be brought from the homes of members. At public events, hot meals were sold for \$1.75 and a cold meal for \$1.00. A new hall was later built, but it had no running water. Cream cans were used to bring water to the kitchen. The WI bought a set of dishes for 150, but then the hall burned down and all the ladies were left with was a few cups. The community then built another hall with a kitchen, followed by a big addition in 1980. Now, the WI had a truly modern kitchen with three stoves, two fridges, a deep freeze and a setting of 300 dishes.



Busby W.I., 1939. L-R: Mrs. C. Lett, Hilda Turcott, Dorothy Thompson, Mrs. J. Williams, Alberta Lentz, Mrs. T. Young, Winnie May, Iva Reeve, Mrs. Harry Smith, Mrs. W. McConaghy, Mrs. W. Thompson.

## Notable Members:

### ***Life Membership Book:***

- Violet Gerig was originally from Edmonton; her parents moved to the Busby district, where she eventually married, in 1943. In her four and more decades membership in WI, Violet has held all offices in the branch, including president.

**Sources:** [1924](#), [1928](#), [1930](#), [1937](#), [1939](#) Convention Reports; PAA 91.3041/10 AWI Branch Listing and Contact 1944-1961; PAA 2007.0380/55 Box 2. AWI Branches Vol.1; *Life Membership Book*; PR 2009.0324 26 Box 1 (AWI Report 1999-2004); Busby History Book Committee. *Busby's Busy Years: 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. Busby, AB: Busby History Book Committee, 1989; Westlock History Book Club. *80 Years of Progress*. Westlock, AB: Westlock History Book Club, 1984. Photo is taken from p. 57 of *Busby's Busy Years*.