

Name of Branch: Pendryl-Poplar Women's Institute

Location: Pendryl, near Winfield, which is at the intersection of Hwys 13 and 20 about 70 kms west of Wetaskiwin.

Organized: Charter Date – Nov. 27, 1953; the women withdrew from the WI in 1957 in order to form the Conroy Club, an organization that would be completely dedicated to their own community.

Charter Members: n/a

First Executive: n/a

Disbanded: 1957

Activities: The Conroy Club was named for a much-loved district nurse, Amy Conroy, whose photo we have borrowed here from p. 115 of *Backhorse to Pavement*.



The Pendryl-Poplar WI succeeded a community club called the Nurses' Auxiliary started during the winter of 1929-1930 by then District Nurse, Miss Philips. The aim was to provide layettes for needy mothers. This was the beginning of the Great Depression and new clothes were hard to come by. District women enjoyed the opportunity to help others as well as the chance to travel in winter by bobsleigh to meet other women. During the summer, the roads were too muddy most of the time to allow for safe travel.

In 1953-54, the existing club re-formed as a WI, but only for three years. They had had a long time organizing for the community themselves without anyone else to answer to. In addition, in the WI, several levels had to be funded, along with any moneys kept back for local use. This is, in fact, a reason given by other former WIs for disbanding in the decades before the 1950s – WI was too expensive and the chain of command too long. Women felt that a community club was more affordable and that decisions could be made quickly and locally.



Nurse Conroy, 86 years old.

Nevertheless, when we look at the activities of the Conroy Club, as it was subsequently re-named, they are almost identical to those engaged in by WIs at the time. *Backhorse to Pavement* (p. 115) tells us that, "Some of our activities include: sponsoring a fair in August; a 25 dollar scholarship to a Grade 9 student at Winfield School; donations to fire victims and the

Winfield Library; and a continuous number of projects at Winfield Recreation Centre. We also support the Cancer and Heart Funds, Salvation Army and Red Cross. We supply the treats for the Winfield School and pre-school children at Christmas and we cater to many banquets. At one time our senior members each received a Christmas plant or cut flowers at Christmas time but this is now [1981] done at Easter.

Over the years we have put on several skits and plays, entertaining audiences at Buck Lake, Breton and Winfield.”

Sources: PAA 2007.0012/29 Box 3. Charters from Disbanded Branches 1915-1979. Vol. 2; *Backhorse to Pavement*. Buck Lake, AB: Buck Lake History, 1981, p. 115.