

Name of Branch: Acadia Women's Institute

Location: Huxley, 160 km northeast of Calgary

Organized: began as a social club in the spring of 1918. On Aug. 20, it organized as a Women's Institute.

Charter Members: Mrs. Geo. MacArthur, Mrs. Annie Campbell, Mrs. Chester Malcolm, Mrs. Stanley Stasel, Mrs. Russell, Fraser, Mrs. Peter Mitchell, Mrs. Sydney Hepburn, Mrs. Jack Cummings, Mrs. Dell West, Mrs. Alex Stewart, Mrs. Howard Templeton, Mrs. Hector McRae, Mrs. Gordon McRae

First Executive: for the social club, were Mrs. Geo. MacArthur, pres; Mrs. Annie Campbell, secretary. However, for the WI, the first officers were Miss Olive Forbes, pres; Mrs. P. Mitchell, vice-pres; Mrs. Carl Campbell, sec-treas; directors: Mrs. H. Templeton, Mrs. R. Fraser, and Mrs. George MacArthur; auditors: Mrs. J. Pearse and Mrs. C. Maddox



Disbanded: celebrated its 65th anniversary in 1983; still current in 2007

Activities: The initial membership fee was \$1.00, of which 25 cents went to the WI and the remainder to the Red Cross. This was an unusual way to raise funds for the Red Cross during the War. WI fees at this time were set at 25 cents across the province.



W.I. Meeting about 1928. Standing, L-R: Mrs. A. Silver, Mrs. John Strachan, Mrs. George MacArthur, Frances MacArthur, Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Elsie Winther, Greta Fraser, Mrs. Hector McRae, Mrs. J. Innis, Mrs. Annie Malcolm, Mrs. Stanley. Seated: Mrs. Gordon McRae, Anna Murray, Mrs. Marion Earl, Mrs. J. Cumming, Effie Cumming, Mrs. J. McNiece, Mrs. A. Blair.

Acadia WI was active in working to preserve local history. It published *Back Over the Trail: A History of the Huxley Area* as a Centennial project, one of the first published in Alberta and it published a cookbook.

Acadia WI catered to all sorts of events over the years, including harvest suppers at the school. These meals were produced on a two burner, coal oil stove. Lighting was provided by coal oil or gas lamps; there were no sinks or running water; and all this in a room that was 10 foot by 10 foot square. The ladies served the first curling banquet, bringing everything – from cutlery to china from home so that the meal was a formal affair. This was just one aspect of the vital social role played by the Women's Institutes, which organized and ran pie socials, dances,

strawberry teas, and concerts. The strawberry teas were held in June and were very much looked forward to in the days when farm cream was available.

Acadia Women's Institute supported several charities, including the Woods' Christian Home, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Cancer Society. It supplied money, clothing and household items to people who had been burned out or dried out. Support was supplied at home and for those people abroad affected by war.

The community work of the WI included personal touches that were long remembered by those who benefitted from the WI's efforts: newcomers were welcomed to the community and invited to join the WI; worthy students received scholarships, showers were held for girls about to be married, flowers and fruit were taken to the sick, engraved spoons were presented to newborn babies, any members leaving the community were given a farewell party. These activities were very much a part of the social glue that held rural communities together.

The following list is taken from Acadia Women's Institute's publication: *Back Over the Trail: A History of the Huxley Area*. Huxley, AB: Acadia Women's Institute, c 1967 (p. 39). It is indicative of the contributions made to community life by the Women's Institute. It is by no means exhaustive – the WI would have been doing a great deal more than the list suggests; but it gives an idea of the scope of WI activities and the central role it played in the lives of rural Albertans.

The W.I. of Yesteryear

- 1918: Gordon McRae and Mrs. Campbell played for a dance.
- 1919: Mr. Smith entertained with lantern slides; Dickens' Christmas Carol.
- 1920: Mr. Wm. Earl was voted the most popular bachelor, and was presented with a cake.
- 1921: A lawn social was held on Mrs. Wolverton's lawn.
- 1922: The annual meeting was held at Mrs. Gordon McRae's home with 12 members present.
- 1923: A farewell party was held for Mrs. Stewart.
- 1924: A petition was sent to the Huxley Hall Committee, protesting the sale of beer in said hall.
- 1925: Mrs. Barnes was elected delegate to Constituency Conference held in Huxley.
- 1926: Mrs. Zierke and Mrs. Fraser were appointed captains of two quilting teams, each team made a quilt.
- 1927: Husbands were entertained Friday, March 4, in the school.
- 1928: \$10.00 was sent to Wood's Christian Home.
- 1929: Mrs. Stewart gave a talk on "How to Care For Hens To Make Them Lay".
- 1930: Gave .01¢ for each foot from crows, magpies, hawks, and .01¢ for each egg.
- 1931: A quilt was sent to Wood's Christian Home.
- 1932: Made a baby layette for a needy mother.
- 1933: A farewell party was held for Mrs. Innis.
- 1934: Donald Cameron gave a talk at Acadia School. 10¢ was charged for admission, and an extra charge for the dance that followed.
- 1935: Members held a pot luck dinner at the home of Mrs. Malcolm.
- 1936: Institute took part in amateur night concert, pie social and dance.

Notable Members:

Life Membership:

- [Barbara Carr](#) was born in 1898 in Scotland and emigrated to Canada in 1912 on the first boat to make the crossing after the Titanic went down. She took a business course in Calgary, later working as stenographer and bookkeeper at Alix Creamery. She was first stenographer to be hired there and later drew up the outline for the CADP; she was also the first woman in Alberta to receive a cream tester's certificate. Barbara joined the WI wherever she happened to be living. After marrying and settling in the Huxley area, she joined Acadia WI in 1914, then Huxley, Kinniburgh, and finally Pine Cone, after retirement. Barbara was always interested in politics and civic affairs, but is also remembered for her fine needlepoint and quilting.

Finances: At the end of 1918, receipts were listed as \$12.55 and expenses \$1.10, leaving \$11.45 in the treasury to start the new year. It should be noted that WIs typically did not have large bank balances. They raised money, sometimes quite large sums for the times, in order to accomplish specific goals and so money seldom sat in their accounts.

Sources: PAA 2007.0380/55 Box 2. AWI Branches Vol.1; Huxley and District History Book Committee; [1924](#), [1928](#), [1931](#) Convention Reports; PAA 91.3041/10 AWI Branch Listing and Contact 1944-1961; PAA 2007.0380/55. Box 2 AWI Branches Vol. 1 [no date]; *Life Membership Book*; *Town and Country* (Spring 2007): 10; *Our Huxley Heritage*. Huxley, AB: Huxley and District History Book Committee, 1983; Acadia Women's Institute. *Back Over the Trail: A History of the Huxley Area*. Huxley, AB: Acadia Women's Institute, c 1967.