

From the February 2013 Beacon Bentpath Women's Institute celebrates 100th Anniversary this year

The Bentpath Women's Institute was organized on Thursday, Feb. 11, 1913 and since that time, its members have brought about positive changes in the health and welfare of local children, and in the community in general.

At the time of its creation, the men of the community held regular meetings through the Farmer's Institute. The women's equivalent of this group came about when the Department of Agriculture asked the men if they would like to have a lady speaker address one of their meetings. Mrs. Norman was sent out from the department and was responsible for organizing the Bentpath W.I.

According to current member Alice Langstaff, since the group's creation, it has hosted many courses, conferences, and special speakers on subjects ranging from nursing, canning, and sewing to cooking and education in all branches of home economics. The group also kept the community scene lively with parties, plays, socials, suppers and picnics.

During World War I, the women used their crafting skills in support of the war effort, canning, knitting, sewing and making bandages to be shipped overseas, as well as raising large sums of money to fund soldier comforts as well as Belgian relief and other war-related concerns. They worked with the local Red Cross as well. Through the years, the Bentpath W. I. was instrumental in promoting health inspections in the schools, and also launched a lending library. It also sponsored the Girls Homemaking Clubs, or 4-H Clubs as they are now called. Many girls have received county and provincial honours through this effort.

One of the group's important contributions to the heritage of the area is the Tweedsmuir History Book, which has taken on an almost legendary reputation within the community. It is a carefully kept record of local events, many illustrated with historical photos and data.

The members of the Bentpath W. I., past and present, have always lived up to the Institute Motto, *For Home and Country*.

The group will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Monday, Feb. 11 . See page 7 for more information.

Council approves creation of Heritage St. Clair Committee

It's official. At the Jan. 7 meeting of Clair Township council, approval was given to a new heritage committee to be know as Heritage St. Clair. A group of dedicated volunteers will now begin to identify projects that will preserve and sustain the municipality's heritage sites and lore for future generations. Councillor Jeff Agar will represent council on the committee, acting as a liaison to provide an efficient line of communication between the two parties.

Committee spokesperson Ian Mason says the committee recently discussed several potential projects, but recognizes that little gets done when too many projects are attempted at one time. "We have to be careful not to get too scattered among too many projects," he said. "Our challenge will be to pick just one or two projects, then proceed to completion with the ones we choose." A new group of officers was slated to be elected during the month of January, after which the group can proceed with their work. A volunteer application form has been drafted for those who would like to join the group.

Mayor Steve Arnold welcomes the committee's initiatives. "From my point of view, it is a great step in recognizing places, people and events that are part of our community's heritage and part of what we are," he said.