



The sixtieth anniversary of Women's Institutes coming on February 19, 1957, will stir new interest in the beginning of the movement. Here we have a picture of the founder, Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless and the house where she was born near St. George, Ontario, in 1857.

A voice that cried in the wilderness

THREE-quarters of a century ago, a baby boy died in Hamilton at the age of 18 months. In those days, however, one child died in five and every family had its small graves in the churchyard.

What made this case different was that the baby's mother refused to accept the situation with resignation. She set to work to find out why her own child died, why so many other children died, and studied ways to lessen this sorrow and suffering.

What she accomplished has stamped her name—Adelaide Hunter Hoodless — on the honor roll of women's organizations in Canada and the world over. By the end of her brief 52 years of life she had founded or help found: the Young Women's Christian Association of Canada; the Victorian Order of Nurses; the National Council of Women; the Macdonald Institute at Guelph, and Women's Institutes across the world.

When Mrs. Hoodless learned that her baby's death was caused by contaminated milk, she was shocked that she herself could have been so negligent. She was even more shocked to learn that many

babies were dying from the same cause, not only in Hamilton but all over the continent.

And her awakening had only begun. She soon became aware that, although a great deal of scientific research was being devoted to finding the best possible feed for pigs and cattle and even hens, little or no thought was given to finding the best food for human children. She noticed, too, that, where local farmers would entrust their horses to the care of only highly qualified men, they would often pick, as mothers for their children, women with no training at all in child care and household management.

"Canadian girls today learn a great many things, except those things which will be

of greatest value to them as women—the rearing of children and the proper management of a home," she said. Thanks to her efforts, this cannot be said with the same degree of truth today.

Mrs. Hoodless was born Adelaide Hunter, youngest of the 12 children of David and Jane Hunter, whose small farmhouse still stands off Highway 5 between Brantford and St. George, Ont. Her parents were hard-working Irish Presbyterians who had

come to Canada in 1830. By the time she was born, Feb. 27, 1857, her father was dead, and during her earliest years the family had a serious economic struggle.

Adelaide's only formal education was at the nearby school in St. George, but she had enough refinement, social charm and natural good looks to marry a very well-to-do Hamilton businessman, John Hoodless, when she was 24. The rest of her life might have been spent in a quiet, unassuming round of social

pleasures and civic duties, if she had had a better milkman. It was the death of her first baby that gave her life its purpose.

What this purpose was, Mrs. Hoodless herself summed up in a remark she made shortly before her death: "Apart from my family duties, the education of better mothers to make better homes has been my life work." Nor was she any less clear as to what she thought was needed in the education of women of her time: "... a special attention to sanitation ... a better understanding of the economic and hygienic value of foods and fuels ... and a more scientific care of children with a view to

raising the general standard of the life of our people."

Mrs. Hoodless made her first big step toward her chosen goal when she became president of the Hamilton YWCA, which took her to Chicago in 1893 as a delegate to the World Conference of Representative Women. The 17 years of her life which followed were years of achievement. They were also years of nerve-straining work, and tireless efforts to break down firmly entrenched prejudices.

In 1894 she sponsored a resolution before the newly formed National Society of Women, asking that Canadian schools introduce manual training — which, for girls, meant domestic science.

"When I started to prepare a paper to accompany my resolution I found it impossible to get any up-to-date information in Canada," she related. "The subject had not even attracted the attention of our educators, as I soon learned, and as Mr. G. W.

Ross, Ontario's Minister of Education, admitted."

She discovered, however, that a great amount of work was being done in domestic science education in Britain, Germany and the United States. Still she was not able to convince Mr. Ross or anyone else. Nevertheless in 1895, she went ahead and started a household science class in the Hamilton YWCA as a practical demonstration of what she was proposing. As she later put it: "I started my class almost alone, and in a small way, but in strong faith."