

# a half-century of service

by Elsie Worthington  
Picture, if you will, anxious parents on this island watching over a critically ill child, in the days before government welfare. They have been told that the child must be sent to the city for specialized treatment. They must let her go, but where will they find the money for this costly care? Their heavy hearts are lightened by a generous gift from the Guild of Sunshine.

This story, with varying details, has been repeated many times in the annals of the Guild of Sunshine, Salt Spring Island's league of mercy which closed its books in December after 55 years of charitable work. There have been cases where the grateful recipient, always anonymous, repaid the help given, perhaps years later.

Perusal of old minute books reveal many gifts made to the community for compassionate purposes.

It was the Guild of Sunshine that gave substantial financial support to help the late Dr. Beech found Lady Minto Gulf Islands Hospital in 1914. For many years assistance to the old "Lady Minto" was the Guild's prime objective. More than \$2,500 has been given to the hospital since the Guild's inception in 1911.

Old records state that in the 1930's the Guild helped to purchase a cookstove and sewing machine for the old hospital on Ganges Hill (now used as a school dormitory). Donation of \$25 was made annually through depression years. When the new hospital

in Ganges was opened in 1958 the Guild of Sunshine furnished the Children's ward at cost of \$700. True to form, the final disposition of Guild funds saw \$200 government bond given to the hospital. This has been put into an endowment fund for the children's ward.

Mrs. Arthur Walter was the first president to guide the steps of the infant society. She was followed a few months later by Mrs. B. V. Layard, with whom the idea of a "sunshine club" originated. She was the mother of popular former Salt Spring Island resort owner, Group-Captain A. R. Layard. Mrs. G. W. Dean, mother of well-known Ganges resident, Miss Helen Dean, was vice-president. Secretary was Mrs. J. A. Bastin, wife of the Anglican vicar. It was over a cup of tea in front of Mrs. Dean's fireplace that three or four women decided to

Records show that help to the Red Cross and the blind was a continuing project, both in money and time. Many canvassers for the annual Red Cross and CNIB campaigns were drawn from the Guild of Sunshine. Hospital visiting was done regularly. The women made a special effort to "walk the second mile" at Dr. Francis' Home for the Aged in Ganges, where sunshine was brought into the life of many a patient otherwise friendless.

A long list of worthy causes received help over the years, in keeping with the policy "to support efforts that make for the happiness and welfare of others". The list includes such projects as Salvation Army homes for senior citizens help to flood disaster victims of the Winnipeg flood in 1946; Fraser Valley flood in 1948 and the Alberni tidal wave disaster a short time ago. Recent gifts include donations

agricultural fairs, where in the early days admission to the fair and a hearty meal cost 50¢. In 1918 a piano was pur-



President in 1915 and an energetic worker until her death in 1935, the late Mrs. Jane Mouat is shown in this picture. She was the mother of W. M. Mouat and Mrs. R. Toynbee. This picture was furnished by Mrs. Toynbee.

their assets to honour all of the islands early settlers by providing a bench for Centennial Park, and an ornament-

## THE STORY OF SALT SPRING ISLAND'S GUILD OF SUNSHINE

form the Guild of Sunshine. One of the early members, Mrs. Norman Wilson, president in 1915, is still with us.

The ladies were banded together, in the words of their constitution, "to help each other, our neighbours, our institutions, . . . to brighten other lives and to bring sunshine to all". In the meetings, again following their rules, business was conducted "independant of religious beliefs, politics or nationality". Another rule assured secrecy where help was extended to individuals.

to our own Pioneer Village and children's books to the local library. Unknown, even to members, is the total number of individuals helped by the Guild in its 55 years of service.

For ten years following World War I the group maintained a sick benefit fund for its members. Interest in the community was not always spelled out in money. In 1947 a letter was sent to the health officer asking for a sewage system at Ganges.

Several money-raising methods were tried in the 55 years. Catering was done for

chased at \$325 for Mahon Agricultural Hall and rented to other groups to cover payment for the instrument. Final payment was made one year later. Flower shows, bazaars, teas - you name it - the ladies have probably tried it! One enduring event was the daffodil tea; started in Mrs. Gilbert Mouat's home in 1921 and continued annually until last year.

Mindful of the work done by those who pioneered their society, the last group of women to meet as "Guild of Sunshine" set aside part of

tal cherry tree to be planted in memory of an early member and life long resident of Salt Spring, Mrs. Marie A. Wallace.

The last of the officers to whom fell the sad task of closing this outstanding organization were president, Mrs. Walter Norton; vice-president, Mrs. A. B. Barber and Mrs. Walter Jameski; secretary Mrs. Bonnie Larsen; treasurer, Mrs. S. K. Claibourne, and executive members Mrs. Cyril Wagg, Mrs. E. Adams, Mrs. L. Holloway.

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