

# W.I.'s FOUNDED DRAMA FESTIVALS HERE IN 1945

## Held First Provincial Festival In Spring of '48

The idea of Drama Festivals being held in this province developed from a local project of Women's Institutes—the staging of several plays during their district convention, in 1945. Following this, the idea spread to other areas, with the result that the Provincial Women's Institutes were requested to organize a Drama association on a province-wide basis. This was done in the late Fall of 1947, and the first Provincial Drama Festival was held in the spring of 1948. At this time judging was done on a County-basis, the county-winners then competing in the Final Festival.

Since that time many changes have taken place. One of the most important was that competition was not limited to Women's Institute groups or those sponsored by a women's Institute. Now any group whether farm organization, church group, or community drama club may enter. (Entry fee for Senior groups is the standard fee of \$2.00. There is no fee for Junior entries.)

County barriers were broken down for the 1950 festival, and three classifications were decided upon, namely (A) Junior Festival (B) Urban or city players (C) rural players. Competition was limited to one-act productions, as formerly. With a total of 21 plays, it was decided to bring in an outside adjudicator for the semi-finals to avoid any criticism of "favoritism" by a local person.

In 1952, the Festival was enlarged to permit the introduction of 3 act plays. This was begun as an experiment for one year, but has proved so popular that it has become an established part of the festival. (A class for beginners was also added that year.)

With the inclusion of 3 act plays, the time spent by adjudicators was



MRS. EDDY MORRISON  
President

doubled, necessitating a four-night Festival Final.

From 1952 to 1954, there was an average of 17 plays participating each year.

At the annual meeting in June, 1954, upon the advice of several adjudicators, a motion to have the Festival staged in the fall (rather than the spring) was accepted by the meeting as an experiment for one year. Thus, in November of 1954, another Festival was held. This—perhaps because of inadequate advance publicity—resulted in fewer plays being entered and of these only one was from a rural group. This "experiment" was thus voted to be discontinued this year; and a return to the original time of late May agreed upon by the 1955 annual meeting.

Looking back over the year's performances we find that in 1947 and 1948 the York players took top honors in the senior group, while Kinross convent children scored highest among the Juniors. In 1950 awards were presented to the Little Theatre Guild of Charlottetown, with Hunter's River Women's Institute the runner-up. Clyde River pupils and Kinkora convent children were winners in the junior classes.

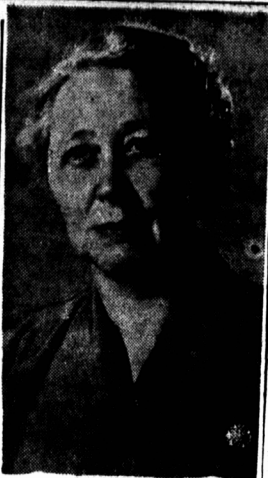
Hunter's River again won in 1951 with York a close second in the rural class, while St. Peter's Cathedral A.Y.P.A. received the trophy for urban class, with Little Theatre Guild's presentation placing second in that group. One of Kinkora convent's plays "Doctor Manners" won in the Junior class grouping.

Indian River Dramatic Club's 3 act play carried off top honors, in the 1952 festival. St. Mary's Dramatic Club of Souris placed second in this rural group. The trophy for the best 1 act play went to Irishtown Women's Institute, while the St. Peter's A.Y.P.A. once again captured honors in the city-group class.

1953 Festival trophies went to the following groups: Brackley Women's Institute; St. Peter's Bay C.Y.O.; Indian River dramatic club, with runner-up the Tignish Drama Group.

The spring of 1954 saw Montague Trinity United Church, Y.P.U. players walk off with major honors in the rural section, for their 3 act play. Runner-up in the rural class was Tignish players. St. Peter's A.Y.P.A. of Charlottetown Charlottetown won in the one-act play city group, while Little Theatre Guild headed the 3 act plays from city group.

Little Theatre Guild's production was chosen the best performance of the fall festival in 1954, with St. Dunstan's University players second. Parkdale Women's Institute play was the only entry in



MRS. HAROLD LAIRD  
First President

### More Plays In Festival Urged

Since the organization of the Prince Edward Island Drama Festival Association, a small but interested group has carried on the work, but the time has come for expansion—more members, more workers and more plays produced. It is with pleasure that I note the renewed drive for membership.

May I suggest that all groups producing plays this season enter them in the Provincial Drama Festival which will be held in the Spring. In this way, you will share your production with others; your play will be adjudicated, if you so desire—it doesn't necessarily need to enter into competition with other plays. The group will profit by any help which the Association is able to provide and in turn the Association will profit by your entry and your interest.

Will you also provide news of your activities in drama. If your school, your church, your Women's Institute or any group with which you are associated, produces a play, won't you tell us about it so that we may pass the news onto other groups through the Newsletter which is prepared under the auspices of the Prince Edward Island Drama Festival Association.

One of the highlights of between festival activities was the drama short-courses given co-operatively by the Adult Education Council and the Drama Association. The earlier ones were well-attended.

Later however, the problem of finding an instructor to conduct classes at the time most suitable for our students became so difficult that the project was suspended. In its place, three scholarships (awarded annually) are given. These are available to anyone participating in the festival—whether as actor, director or stage crew.

Yours,  
Jessie Fraser,  
Secretary-Treasurer  
P.E.I. Drama Festival Association.

### Importance Of Junior Drama Role Stressed

"As the twig is bent, so the three will grow" might well be the slogan used to exemplify the work of Junior Drama. These juvenile players of today are the actors of tomorrow, and many a star made his or her debut in a play staged on some small school platform. Though we are not aiming for stardom in our players, let us think of the benefits to be derived from participation in Junior Drama.

1. It teaches clear and careful enunciation and phrasing, develops a well modulated speaking voice, and brings poise and assurance in later life.

2. It creates an appreciation of good literature for our best children's plays are adaptations from choice selections in junior literature.

3. It teaches cooperation in group work and makes each one feel his responsibility to the others.

4. It brings out creative talent when we let the children assist in stage preparations and costumes.

5. And since acting is a natural for children, it provides wholesome fun and entertainment while they learn.

Producing a junior play is not difficult. Given plenty of enthusiasm, a good imagination and plenty of common sense, any director can put on a very, very worthwhile and commendable production. The children will love it, and your only problem will be, "What shall I do with the extra ones? They can't all take part". Let them help design their own sets and provide their own properties. They will all be regular "eager beavers", and

will be learning at the same time. Past Festivals have featured excellent Junior plays, and many other outstanding productions were played during play-offs. Let us make this year, our Association's Tenth Anniversary, a real celebration in Junior Drama. Start now to read plays and make your plans so that your district will be represented by a Junior play. Let's all pull together work together and plan together so that we can all "play" together at Festival time.

#### EARLY BEGINNINGS

"Tall trees from little acorns grow." So began my first radio talk on the Drama Festival in the year 1947, and now, after eight years of, at least "toil and sweat," we of the Prince Edward Island Drama Festival Association can truthfully say that our tree, if not yet great in stature, is slowly and surely reaching upward and out.

Dr. L. W. Shaw lent his support to the Drama Festival movement on that first radio program, and (Continued on page 9)



DR. L. W. SHAW  
Honorary President

The word "drama seems to frighten many people and indeed this frightening fact may be the chief reason why so few concern themselves with dramatics. Are we afraid because we think of drama as something far removed from ordinary everyday life? Perhaps so. Would it help, I wonder, to leave aside for a moment our thinking about the more formal plays and concentrate on stories with which we are familiar. One of the principal values of dramatization is that it tends to bring a story alive and to make the characters and situation of that story real to the listener. A person reading a story must do this in imagination. Dramatization is intended as an aid or a stimulus to imagination. Commencing, then, with this simple yet interesting and useful way of making stories come alive, we may easily take the next step into the field of dealing with the simpler plays. From the easy play we can pass readily to the more difficult ones. Remember what happened in Stratford on Ontario where Shakespeare's plays are now being staged with tremendous success.

Let us consider for a moment some of the advantages of dramatics. We have already mentioned one namely that a story becomes alive. In order that others may hear and understand what we say, we must improve our diction, articulation, pronunciation—in short we must improve our speech. What fun can be had in putting on a play in any community or within any group. These are but a few of the advantages. I am sure many others would emerge. Drama should not be a frightening word, rather should we consider dramatics as an interesting and valuable activity in which many persons can have a part. Let us "play up" the role of dramatics in our community life.

This year we are looking forward to a much more successful year in Drama, but remember our success—depends on your support.

Mrs. Eddy Morrison  
President  
Director of Education.

L. W. Shaw, Deputy Minister and  
Director of Education.

Very shortly the Drama Festival Association plan to open a "Work-Shop" at or near Cornwall under the competent direction of Mrs. Frank Blatch, this should be of great assistance to all interested in Drama and we hope as many as possible in Queens County will avail themselves of this opportunity.

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### Dominion Director Urges Support of Local Ass'n

Prince Edward Island welcomed Mr. Richard MacDonald Director of the Dominion Drama Festival, when he met those interested in drama at Charlottetown, Summerside and Montague. In a clear and entertaining manner he discussed drama across Canada, the Regional and Dominion Festivals, the advent of touring theatre companies and live theatre, such as the festival at Stratford-on-Avon, Ont.

Following is a summary of an interview with him conducted by the P.E.I. Drama Festival Association.

"I feel that the Prince Edward Island Drama Festival Association should be the representative body to speak for drama on the Island, and that it should be fully supported by all drama groups. As a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, the Dominion Festival is only as strong as its regions, and its regions only as strong as its groups. Prince Edward Island has been a region of its own, it would be a great pity and serious set back to drama on the Island if it should have to revert to becoming a part of another Maritime Region.

Like anything else, growth must start at the bottom, so from the small grass roots of the beginning theatre groups should grow into the tall sturdy plant that flowers into plays well done and well suited for Dominion Drama Festival Regional Play-offs. In the Massey Commission report on the arts in Canada, it was suggested that a Canadian Council be formed to give particular assistance to the development of the arts. There is every

indication that this will come up for discussion at the next session of the Federal parliament, so it is vitally important that every province have some solid representative organization covering the broad field of the arts. This would indicate to the Canadian Council when it is formed, that we are worthy of help because we are ready and willing to help ourselves. The Calvert trophies are recognition by basic industry of the place that theatre has in the development of the culture of the people, and we need to recognize this as well.

I see a great need for a trained supervisor and advisor to work in conjunction with drama groups. We must sell ourselves to our communities so that they recognize the value of drama so that they are willing and ready to give us their whole hearted support. Any play production must be properly organized on sound business arrangements, for this as important as the production side. No group doing a play should present their show unless it has been completely rehearsed to the best of their ability. We must constantly strive for improvement in our efforts, and accept the challenge of raising the standard of drama to the level attained by the best in this field. I feel that competition maintains interest and enthusiasm.

All praise to those who are already working as drama groups, and a hearty welcome to the newcomers! Good luck, good plays, good Festivals!

Looking for a play? Just contact the P. E. I. Libraries, Prince of Wales College. Their new catalogue is now ready. In it you will find all types of plays both one act and three act plays. These are all available at the Library, but for reading purposes only. The addresses of the publishers for different plays will be found in the catalogue.

The Drama Festival Information booklets will soon be available. In this booklet will be found all necessary information pertaining to the Festival, along with entry blanks for any group wishing to enter their play.

A workshop will be held in Cornwall in November the date to be set later. Any group interested in this workshop kindly write Mrs. Frank Blatch, Charlottetown, RR6

MISS JESSIE FRASER  
Secretary-Treasurer

### Scholarship Winners Last Festival



MAUREEN BEAGAN



ARTHUR MacLEAN



ELIZABETH WILLETT

# The Prince Edward Island DRAMA FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

## "The Play Is The Thing"

### WE NEED YOU! JOIN NOW! YOU NEED US!

#### Aims and Objectives ---

1. To improve play productions on Prince Edward Island. (These plays not necessary for festival purposes).
2. To promote Junior Drama.

#### Individual Membership entitles that member to ---

1. Free admittance to all semi-finals and finals.
2. Copies of the News-Letter with news of local groups.
3. One vote at the Annual Meeting.

#### Group Membership entitles that Group to ---

1. Two representatives at semi-finals and finals.
2. Free catalogue of plays.
3. Information on different phases of play production.
4. Make-up service, if desired, for finals.
5. Two votes at the Annual Meeting.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP ..... \$1.00  
GROUP MEMBERSHIP ..... \$2.00

THE ASSOCIATION WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FIRMS FOR THEIR GENEROUS CO-OPERATION IN SPONSORING THIS AD.:

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