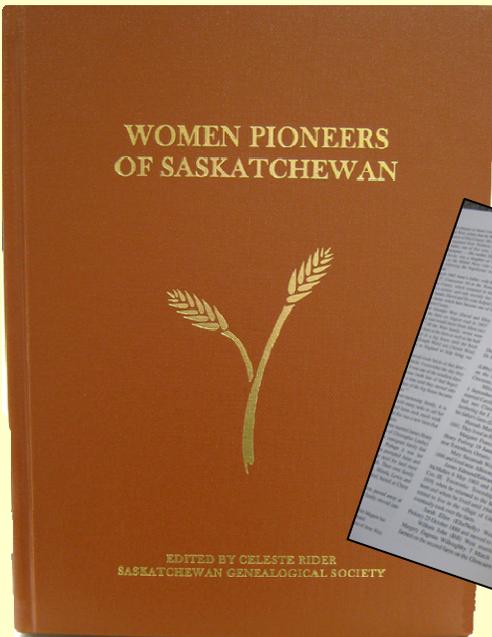


Women Pioneers of Saskatchewan



THE WOMEN WHO CAME BEFORE US

“What seemed to them once a foreign soil has long ago enfolded them and set its prairie grasses to blow above their graves. Their descendants skim the once empty province in high-powered automobiles today, basking in warmth and music though they may travel through a snow-encrusted landscape. They came home to thermostats and automatic washing machines.

The sod shanties, the dugouts, and the unbroken miles exist only in memory. But Canada would be poorer today had it not been for Rosalea, Oksanna and women like them who, having no bridge for return to the Old World, stubbornly faced and withstood disaster in the New.¹

In the spring, many genealogists turn their attention to cemetery recording. This is what Celeste Rider, Provincial Library of the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society, was doing one weekend in March 2008. As she may her way through the Mount Hope Cemetery in Assiniboia, transcribing the information on the headstones and taking digital photos, she came upon the headstone of Alice (née Rose) Lonsdale. Even though it was an ordinary, unassuming granite headstone, she took a photo of it. She couldn't get this particular gravesite off her mind and as time went by, she began to wonder about the person buried there. Particularly haunting and sad to her was the inscription "In Silence We Remember" etched into the marble face of the stone below the dates of the lady's birth and death. Celeste began to ask herself, "Who was Alice LONSDALE?" Who was left to remember her in silence; what about all the other Women Pioneers of Saskatchewan? " When our generation is gone, will there be anyone that will remember them? This is why she wanted to start this project now. In some cases, we've already lost at least a generation or two who would have had much clearer memories of these women. She wanted to preserve the memories and make information available to future generations about the pioneer women who worked right alongside the men and helped to build this province.

¹ Armstrong, Patricia G. "No bridge across the ocean". *Folklore*, Vol. 28 (Autumn 2007). Regina: Saskatchewan History and Folklore. (p7)