

woman to be elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. In 1922 she accomplished her main piece of legislative work in the form of the Child Welfare Act.

Although the text is generously interspersed with pictures and excerpts of Edith's speeches in the Legislature, as well as quotes from the Winnipeg newspapers and newsmakers of the day, yet it does not really illuminate the personality of Edith Rogers. The genealogy on page fifty is very helpful in sorting out Edith's relatives but would be more appropriate at the beginning of the book. The author hints at what might be a very interesting personal and family life but never elaborates on it. One wonders what problems Edith Rogers had to contend with in "her private battle to control her dependance on alcohol"? A closer look at Edith Rogers, the woman, might provide for a more interesting biography of Edith Rogers, the politician. As it stands, this book presents a somewhat tedious account of the career of Edith Rogers, M.L.A. It is written for a high school audience and is suitable as supplemental reading in History or Canadian Studies.

Emily Murphy provides the most enjoyable reading of all three books, offering as it does a literate and exciting account of a fascinating woman. If, however, you could choose only one book to introduce high school students to the subject of women's role in Canadian politics, then *Women In Canadian Life: Politics* will do that very well, and on a much wider scope than any biography.

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Canadian Lives

PHILOMENA HAUCK

Catherine Schubert, Vicky Metcalf. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1978. 62 pp. illus. \$3.00 paper (The Canadians Series) ISBN 0-88902-243-7.

Daughter of the Old Pioneer, Terry Leeder. Illus. by Deborah Drew-Brook. Dundurn Press, 1979. 63 pp. \$2.95 paper. (Frontiers and Pioneers Series) ISBN 0-919670-42-3.

A Harvest Yet to Reap, A History of Prairie Women, Linda Rasmussen et al. The Women's Press, 1976. 240 pp. illus. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-88961-029-0.

It Could Have Been Worse, Peggy Holmes, with aid and abetted by Joy Roberts. Collins, 1980. 190 pp. illus. \$13.95. ISBN 0-00-216612-7.

Pioneer Among the Mountains, Terry Leeder. Illus. by Deborah Drew-Brook. Dundurn Press, 1979. 63 pp. \$2.95. ISBN 0-919670-40-7.

Pioneers Every One, E. Blanche Norcross. Burns and MacEachern, 1979. 159 pp. illus. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88768-082-8.

Salt of the Earth, Heather Robertson. James Lorimer and Co., 1974. 224 pp. illus. \$12.95 paper. ISBN 0-88862-075-6.

Until fairly recently, there were few biographies of prominent Canadians or of those less well-known but intrepid pioneers who braved the hardships of the harsh Canadian frontier. In the past decade, however, this situation has changed as a steady stream of memoirs, reminiscences, biographies and fictionalized biographies appears annually in the literary marketplace. These books vary greatly in quality and appeal, ranging from richly illustrated volumes of the coffee table variety to cheap paperbacks for reluctant young readers.

The first two books to be considered here, *A Harvest Yet to Reap* and *Salt of the Earth*, have several features in common. Both books are large and copiously illustrated with photographs and documents from archives and private collections. Although the photographs in both cases lack clarity and modern technical quality, they speak eloquently and evocatively of the joys and sorrows and culture of their time. As well, both books are loosely organized and more suitable for browsing than continuous reading.

Salt of the Earth, the third book by western journalist Heather Robertson, tells the story of "one of the greatest human migrations in history" when settlers from all over the world swarmed to the free land in the Canadian west. From the time of the opening of the C.P.R. (1882) to the outbreak of World War I, these hardy immigrants cleared and tamed the wilderness, established homesteads and communities. The book is a pictorial and written record of their lives as seen through their own eyes. Divided into five sections, "The Trek West," "Homesteading," "Community," "Town" and "War", the book has a loosely chronological organization. The excerpts from diaries and other documents with the accompanying

illustrations illuminate the stoicism, the joy, and despair of the new settlers and endow the whole with a universal significance.

A Harvest Yet to Reap covers roughly the same period of time (1885-1925), and though it also contains much general information about western pioneer life, its focus is feminist. Suggestive rather than exhaustive, the book assembles in picture and text an insightful history of prairie women from all walks of life – farm women, factory workers, prostitutes. It abounds in fascinating vignettes such as the Saskatchewan woman's poignant letter to a politician in which she recounts her husband's determination to leave her penniless after 24½ years of marriage. Another letter to a magazine, from a 31 year-old mother of seven, requests reliable birth control information since, as the writer puts it, she is "not at all well and the farm is heavily in debt."

Arranged to provide a general overview of the history of the white women on the prairies, *A Harvest Yet to Reap* also depicts the growth of the women's rights movement with a brief epilogue to bring the account up to date. The authors themselves regret that the lack of source materials has meant that non-white and non-English-speaking communities are not represented.

The book's parent project was the National Film Board film *Great Grandmother* directed by Lorna Rasmussen and Anna Wheeler. Joined later by Linda Rasmussen and Candace Savage the group collected the many diaries, interviews, other documents and photographs and assembled them in book form. Brief biographies of some of the women mentioned in the book are included followed by an index and bibliography.

In contrast to the previous two books, *It Could Have Been Worse, The Autobiography of a Pioneer* is limited in time and scope to the experiences of a young World War I war bride who homesteaded for a few years with her English guardsman husband in the bush country of Northern Alberta. At the age of 77, the widowed Mrs. Holmes brought her trunkful of scribblings to freelance journalist Joy Roberts and together they pieced together those early pioneering years. Instead of suggesting a gloomy view of life, the title refers to the husband's invariable reaction to the misfortunes which plagued the young couple.

In the early 1920's, life in Northern Alberta was little different from the way it had been a hundred years earlier. In a loosely episodic style, the author assembles many anecdotes which present vivid impressions of the ups and downs of frontier life. There is the story of the

neighbor, alone, ill and pregnant, unable to afford a real doctor. Jumping on her horse the young Peggy Holmes rides off to rouse a "bootleg" doctor who unaccountably forgets his instruments. On another occasion, a widower with five children enlists Peggy's help in writing for a mail order bride.

Told in a conversational style, the book makes no attempt to go beyond the day to day happenings of the author's own experience. It is a quite unpretentious but lively anecdotal account as seen by a cheerful young woman who appears to have taken hardship and privations in her stride. If it lacks the deeply moving simplicity and grandeur of such books as *A Woman of Labrador* or *Days of Augusta*, it is nevertheless readable, fast-moving and occasionally absorbing.

One of the more exciting of the books in the young "Canadian Series" aimed specifically at junior high school students, *Catherine Schubert* also tells the story of a Canadian pioneer woman, this time of the first Canadian white woman to make the hazardous overland expedition across the Rocky Mountains from Fort Garry to Kamloops in 1862.

Beginning with a short chapter on conditions in Ireland which led to the emigration of young Catherine and her family to the United States, the book also describes the nightmarish boat trip across the Atlantic. The major part of the book then relives the stages in the dangerous trek of the Schubert family from Fort Garry across the Rockies, down the Thompson River to Kamloops, on to the Cariboo gold fields, where Mr. Schubert's dreams of gold are eventually abandoned in favor of the life of a farmer in the Okanagan Valley.

Well-illustrated with contemporary portraits, drawings and a map, the book, like the others in the series, adheres closely to the historical records. The small type is balanced by two-inch margins containing occasional discussion questions, summaries and portraits. A short bibliography for further reading concludes a book which should appeal to its young audience.

The next two titles, *Daughter of the Pioneers* and *Pioneer Among the Mountains*, belong to another series, the "Frontiers and Pioneers" series of high-interest low-vocabulary paperbacks for upper elementary and junior high school students. Unlike books in "The Canadian" series which are straightforward and factual, these little booklets are fictionalized biographies told from the point of view of a young person about the same age as the intended reader.

Interestingly *Pioneer Among the Mountains* concerns the same family that appears in *Catherine Schubert* and covers more or less the same adventures. In the present book, however, the story is told from the point of view of young Gus, Catherine Schubert's older son.

Gold fever is the driving force behind the treacherous journey to the B.C. interior. It carries the Schuberts and their companions over foot-wide mountain ledges and glacial-fed rivers that take their toll of animals and humans. With the family's arrival in Kamloops, the reader is left with the impression that Mr. Schubert will give up his quest for gold in his relief to have his family alive. In reality, however, as is evidenced in *Catherine Schubert* and other accounts, the Schuberts did follow the gold to Quesnel where Mr. Schubert mined for several years.

The other book in the series *Daughter of the Old Pioneer* is adapted from Nellie McClung's autobiography, *A Clearing in the West*. In its 63 brief pages it covers the journey of the McClung family from Grey County, Ontario, to Manitoba and briefly describes the early years on the new homestead. Although the book adheres closely to Nellie McClung's own account, it lacks the vitality and immediacy of the original, reading more like a travelogue than a real-life story about flesh and blood characters. The writing is uninspired and at times ungrammatical; e.g., "Riel had been hung" (p. 59) and "It's better to get these things out, talk never hurt" (p. 51). It is hard to imagine young people willingly reading either of the "Frontiers and Pioneers" books except as a reprieve from an even duller history text.

The final book in the group *Pioneers Every One* tells the stories of sixteen women and girls who, in the estimate of the author, played outstanding parts in the history of this country.

Selected from the earliest period of Canadian history to the present time, the women are representative of the early frontier, the arts, politics and community service. Included are such well known names as Catherine Trail, Pauline Johnson and Lucy Maud Montgomery and lesser lights like Adelaide Hoodless and Mary Pack. Necessarily sketchy, the biographies are historically accurate and written in an economic straightforward style suited to young adolescent audiences for whom the book is presumably addressed. In most cases portraits are included and a brief further reading list is appended.

Unfortunately this book, *Pioneers Every One*, and the two books in the "Frontiers and Pioneers" series are so poorly bound that they will not withstand even moderate use.

Apart from *Salt of the Earth* and *A Harvest Yet to Reap* the books in the group are undistinguished at best. If one looks at *Catherine Schubert* as a compact and reasonably attractive vehicle for the transmission of interesting aspects of Canadian history to young people, it serves its purpose well. The two books in the "Frontiers and Pioneers" series are less attractive and pedestrian examples of the same genre. *It Could Have Been Worse*, though readable and interesting enough, lacks the power and emotional impact of great autobiography. *Pioneers Every One* which could be a useful reference book in junior and senior high schools, is marred by a generally unattractive appearance, long pages of uninterrupted print and poor binding.

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Entre Deux Ages

MARY GRAHAM

Félicien le fantôme, Bernard Clavel et Josette Pratte. Illus. de Jean Garonnaire. Fides. Jean-Pierre Delarge, 1980. 29 pp. ISBN 2.7621-1067.X.

Félicien le fantôme est à la fois un livre pour enfants et pour grandes personnes qui raconte avec beaucoup de naturel la métamorphose de Félicien, garçon de ferme, en Félicien fantôme. L'histoire fait revivre en nous des sentiments de nostalgie pour nos vieilles traditions en reliant le passé au présent. L'état d'esprit de nos aïeux est mis en opposition avec le nôtre, en tant que citoyens contemporains. La narration est en style indirect, mais elle est loin d'être impersonnelle puisque le narrateur prend parti pour Félicien. Les actions des autres personnages sont interprétées à travers ses yeux.

L'histoire se passe dans la campagne de Québec sur la plaine qui sépare Montréal de la frontière ontarienne dans une vieille demeure paysanne. Elle commence en 1846, dans un petit village près de la