

Women's status looks better to a 'person' watching for 100 years

By Pat Bell
Citizen staff writer

Emma Jane Ducie was 12 years old when she informed her brothers that she was no longer going to clean and black their boots. That was in Yorkshire in 1895.

Eighteen years later, she was encouraging fellow pioneer farm wives in Canada to join together for mutual support.

Tuesday night, at Rideau Hall, the 100-year-old teacher was honored for her work in improving the status of women in rural Saskatchewan.

She was one of five Canadian women to receive a Persons Award from Gov.-Gen. Edward Schreyer. Established four years ago, the award commemorates the 1929 amendment to the British North America Act which granted women "persons" status, and won them the legal right to be appointed to the Senate.

Urging today's feminists to be sure they are seeking justice, not privileged treatment, Ducie said, "You don't have the same opposition as we used to. Women are being treated well indeed."

Ducie, who immigrated with her family to Saskatchewan in 1907, after graduating from the Home and Colonial Teachers Training College in London, Eng., was one of the founders of the Homemakers' Clubs, later called the Women's Institute.

In an interview Tuesday, she recalled her disappointment when nobody came to the first scheduled gathering in 1913. There was a farmers' meeting the same day, and with no more than one horse and buggy to a family, the women had no transportation.

"We set another time, and women came from miles and miles around. There must have been 50 or 60," she said. "We started with their first interests, which were their own homes and community, but then it spread out to the district and the region."

Ducie's home soon became the headquarters for the travelling library supplied to the group by the provincial government.

Women attending meetings would pick up books from the big grey box on the front porch.

"Perhaps I was a bit bossy, but I guided them in their reading," she said. "Some people I had to poke and push into reading, but I found you could get to them through their children, because they were so anxious that they have an education."

Ducie, who became a provincial president of the rural women's organization, later served on the advisory council of the University of Saskatchewan College of Agriculture. In 1977, her name was included in the Saskatchewan Hall of Fame in recognition of her work to improve the living conditions of rural women.

The first woman (in 1916) to receive a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Manitoba was also given a Persons Award Tuesday. Isabel Ross Hunt, who celebrates her 89th birthday today, was the first woman to establish a law office in Western Canada. In 1929 she was the first woman to be hired as a solicitor by the City of Winnipeg, and in 1953 the first woman in Manitoba to be named Queen's Counsel.

Other winners are: long-time activist for women's rights and



— Wayne Cuddington, Citizen

Ducie chats with Gov. Gen. Ed Schreyer Tuesday

Toronto Sun columnist Laura Sabia, Toronto; Marie Hamilton, of Halifax, a teacher and preschool co-ordinator working to improve the status of black women in Nova Scotia; and Gabrielle Labbé, of Montreal, a tea-

cher and women's association volunteer.

In the 1960s, Sabia headed the Committee for the Equality of Women, which led to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

This is our valley heritage

by Evelyn Moore Price

Many of the early thoroughfares in Renfrew County meandered, following the line of least resistance, but Ross township's Queen's Line was not one of these. Before 1812 in this area of what later became Renfrew County, there was a straight stretch of road, which was approximately six miles long which never deviated from its straight and narrow path. It had its beginnings at the Cobden-Beachburg Road, formerly a part of Highway 17, and extended down between the Sixth and Seventh Concession of Ross township. Situated as it was between the Ottawa River and East of Muskrat Lake, it was heavily timbered swampland over run by wild animals and criss-crossed the Indian trails. There is still evidence of Indian graves on the rocky places along where these Indian trails were situated. Many older residents recall where these graves were located.

There are claims that Don McCaskill was the first settler about 1850 and

later more pioneers arrived and the need was great for a road here in this part of Ross township. The settlers took the necessary steps and petitioned the government for a charter to help build a road. It is said that Queen Victoria, upon hearing of all these settlers without a road, granted that such a travelling route be established. In gratitude the settlers wishes to name it Victoria Road, but as time went on, the name "Queen's Line" was adopted.

In these early years a combined general store and post office was built by JC Anderson on the farm of James Headrick. It was known as Queen's Line post office until rural routes were established, just before World War I. Queen's Line lost its post office to RR 1, Foresters Falls. The store had a succession of owners in the ensuing years, being remodelled to each owner's taste in renovations.

Hugh Gilmour was the second settler, whose wife was formerly Miss Ellen Metcalfe from Almonte. They purchased land from the crown, settling on S 1/2 Lot 14, Concession 6. They lived there all their lives and as common in these days, they raised a large family. One son named after his father, inherited the property. He married a neighbor's daughter, Jessie Headrick. The second Hugh Gilmour

had a son, Hugh Kirby Gilmour, who was a young man graduated in 1927 from McGill University, Montreal, being ordained as a Presbyterian minister. His first charge was at Lemesurier, Que, preaching there for 12 years before being stationed at St Elmo, where he served a very large congregation.

Later he was at Richmond, where he died at the age of 50 years.

A great grandson assumed ownership of the farm and their son in turn was named Stephen Hugh Gilmour. Thus five generations of Gilmour, each named Hugh, resided on this Queen's Line homestead.

On this same farm was built the first school—SS No 8 Ross. The first trustees were Thomas Appleby, Richard Oattes and Hugh Gilmour. The first school inspector was Rev James Hugh Cameron, minister of Kerr Line Presbyterian Church. He rode on horseback to visit schools and early settlers.

Queen's Line attained more recognition as it became the artery of travel to the Dominion Magnesium Mine near Haley's Station.

Research into Our Valley Heritage in this bicentennial year of 1984 brings to life another facet in the story of early settlement!