

File C.1. Violet McNaughton

Would you like to hear,

Exc. U.M.

How Pioneer Farm Women Sparked the Suffrage Campaign  
in Saskatchewan

And How the Spark was Nearly Smothered.

Early in 1913, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers invited delegates to the forthcoming annual convention, to bring their wives along.

A special program would be provided for them at the University.

Nearly fifty of us went. Pleasant as the entertainment was, we soon found that most of us ~~shared~~ <sup>shared</sup> a common desire...to obtain the franchise.

What could we do? There was no existing rural women's organization actively working for it. We would form one ourselves.

We would ask the men in convention down town to allow us to become a women's section of the association. It had already endorsed women's suffrage. We sent our requests down to them by special messenger. We received no reply. Undaunted we ~~went on with~~ <sup>made</sup> plans to meet at the next convention.

Again we lined up our request. This time we took no chances. Three of us were chosen a delegation to the men's convention. Realizing we had no voice there, we cut through red tape by asking, "Could we bring the men a message from the women?" Probably expecting a simple fraternal greeting, they agreed, "Yes, we could come to the platform right away. Without frills, we presented our former request and asked for a grant of \$500 to complete our organization. Amidst the applause a delegate shouted, "Make it a thousand". The unsuspecting <sup>secretary</sup> gasped. More applause...but we said "no" five hundred would be enough. Another delegate threw \$1 upon the platform to start a shower for us. We said "no" \$500 was sufficient.

The three of us went back to our women's gathering walking on air...

Not only because of the \$500 grant, but also because of the welcome we had received. Some of us had briefed our men friends in the convention to see that constitutional changes were put through to suit our wishes. We were now part and parcel of a powerful farm organizations. We were the Saskatchewan Women Grain Growers.

But there were still thousands of people as well as the government to be convinced that women were indeed persons. The task was difficult in those pre-radio, and for so many of us pre-telephone...pre-car days.

We canvassed the country on foot, on horseback, stone boat, and by horse and buggy. We spoke from the back of wagons at prairie picnics, held as Nellie McClung said, "in the shade of a barbed wire fence".

*We invited the W.C.T.U. and newly organized Equal Franchise League.*

Finally in May 1915, around a hundred representative men and women, submitted a huge suffrage petition to Premier Walter Scott in the Sask. Legislative Chamber. I recall sitting in the seat of the honorable George Langley and I thought with pride, "If it hadn't been for the Women Grain Growers, rural women ~~would~~ would not be represented here to-day." Premier Scott was sympathetic. He promised us serious consideration but said the government would like more signatures. We secured them. Early in March 1916, I received a letter from Premier Scott promising that an equal franchise bill would be brought down at the next session of the House. It was. It had been a good campaign...difficult, exciting, successful.

*in towns and cities to join forces with us.*

## How we got the franchise in Saskatchewan

We three were Mrs S. V. Haight, Violet McNaughton  
and Mrs A. Thompson of  
Netherhill who had to bring her baby  
because she was nursing it.