

## **Caroline "Carrie" Nikolejsin nee Swinder**

Caroline Swinder's family farmed in a small Polish village. When she was nine years old, her mother died of tuberculosis. When her father remarried, the two sisters of the first marriage were sent to live with their mother's brothers. One sister stayed in Poland, the other, "Carrie", was sent to a brother who had a homestead farm at Cedoux, Canada.

After one month on the ship, alone and knowing no one, unable to understand the language, and many days of sea-sick isolation, she arrived in Halifax. Her papers explained her destination, so she was put on a train to Cedoux.

When she arrived at her uncle's farm, she was put to work helping her aunt. When the Depression began her uncle sent her to Regina to work as a housekeeper/nanny for a family with several small children. It was there that she learned to speak English. She told us English instructions were often misunderstood. For example, when preparing dinner she was told to "soak the duck", but what she heard was "soap the duck". She said it was not a recipe to keep!

While visiting the farm, she met and married Nick Nikolejsin, a neighbor's son. They had very little. Their first home was a wood granary offered by a neighbor. They found an old cook stove someone had discarded. This was used for cooking and was the only source of heat for the home. Fuel for the stove was often dried cow-chips as trees for wood were scarce on the prairie.

Nick worked on farms in the area, so Carrie was left to look after the house, yard, and animals. Two children soon arrived adding more to her daily work. Diapers were made from flour sacks and worn out men's underwear. When Carrie's aunt became seriously ill, she and Nick returned to live with her. She took over the house and farm duties, as well as providing care for her aunt and later her uncle.

When the children were still small, she became ill with tuberculosis and spent six months in hospital away from family. Anxiety about them delayed her return to health. When finally released, she again took over and continued working long hours to care for her family.

The Depression forced many pioneers to be self-reliant. They raised cows for milk and beef, selling milk and cream. Chickens also provided meat and eggs for themselves and for sale. A large garden provided fresh vegetables and the extra was canned for later use.

Pioneers had a hard "hands-on" existence.  
To them we say "THANK YOU"!