

Phyllis Ellen Weston

Phyllis Weston English Scholarship

Phyllis Ellen Weston was born on June 24th, 1907 in Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire, England to Ellen and Godfrey Weston. Her father was a molder who had apprenticed in the trade for seven years after leaving school at 12 years of age. In 1909 the family left England on the ship, the *Empress of Britain*, seeking work and a better life in Canada.

They arrived in Winnipeg on July 12th and made it their home for 2 years until moving on to Calgary in 1911. Except for brief periods in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, Miss Weston lived in Calgary ever since then. She began her schooling at the Colonel Walker Cottage School, then went on to attend Alexandra, Ramsay, Crescent Heights and East Calgary High which was located in Colonel Walker School. Although neighbours chided her father for not sending his girls to work after Grade 9, Godfrey Weston strongly believed that his daughters would certainly benefit from further education. Miss Weston's eyesight was poor so on her doctor's recommendation, in 1924, after Grade 11, she attended Calgary Normal School to train to become a teacher. He felt this would give her eyes a rest. The following year, at the age of 17 she began her teaching career in a brand new one-room schoolhouse at Meadowside, 8 miles east of Crossfield, Alberta. The next year she returned to high school to complete Grade 12.

In 1929 she received a Burns Scholarship of \$250, which paid her full tuition for her first year at the University of Alberta. She had saved enough to pay for her own room and board in Pembina Hall. As a result of a weak economy she was unable to attend university full time after that so continued her studies at summer sessions between teaching terms and received her B.A. Honours in 1946. She then pursued her M.A. in the same manner and was awarded it in 1951, also from the U of A. She wrote her thesis for that degree on the "History of Education in Calgary." It is on microfiche at the Calgary Public Library.

Phyllis Weston taught for 40 years in the Calgary Public Schools. (An article in the *Calgary Herald*, January 31, 2003, paid tribute to the lasting impact that her teaching had on her many students.) She held administrative positions as "Lady" Vice Principal at Balmoral Junior High School and as English Department Head at Crescent Heights High School. She served on the Alberta Curriculum Committee for High School English and on the committee which prepared Grade 11 and 12 English final exams. The Calgary School Board sent her to Philadelphia to attend a North American Council of English Teachers' Workshop. She presented programs to Calgary English teachers at local conventions. During her teaching years she made many contributions to education in the

province beyond the classroom. She was the author of several chapters in the Grade 9 social studies textbook about “the Americas” which was used during the 1950’s. She was also one of the authors of a series of English grammar texts, “Just English 1, 2 and 3.” During the late 1970’s she served a 3-year term on the University of Calgary Senate.

She was active in the community and served as president for one term of the Calgary University Women’s Club. As a member of the Calgary Women’s Literary Club she presented numerous papers on noted authors and their works. She also was president of that organization for a year. As a member of the Calgary Philatelic Society she presented a number of well researched, interesting programs.

Phyllis Weston first traveled abroad in 1935. Accompanied by her sister and two friends, she traveled by train to Vancouver, then cruised on a ship down the west coast, through the Panama Canal and up to New York, following which she returned to Calgary by train. She arrived home with boundless enthusiasm to visit as much of the world as possible and took numerous trips in the ensuing years. In retirement she continued her world travels. She made four extensive trips around the world and shared her experiences in travel sketches which she contributed to the Trinity Lodge “Chit Chat” and to the online travel magazine “21stcenturyadventures.com.” In her articles she presented a gentle look at spots around the globe. Despite limited eyesight in later years, she continued her lifelong love of learning through books on tape.

Phyllis Weston died in September 2003 at 96 years of age.