

## PHOEBE FLORENCE MILLER

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Woodrow French, Charlotte Strong, Regina O'Keefe

Phebe Florence Miller was born in Topsail on July 8, 1889. She was educated at the Methodist School in Topsail. In 1907, after completing school, Florence Miller went to work as government telegraph operator in Topsail in 1928 she was also appointed postmistress.

Florence Miller began writing at an early age. She was an avid letter writer, participated in writing contests and was a constant composer of verses which she submitted to American greeting card companies. Her work was published by such companies as Hall Brothers of Kansas City (Hallmark Cards), for over 25 years. She also wrote at least one-hour long radio program, which was broadcast over an American radio station, in 1926.

It was as a writer of poetry for which Miller was best known in Newfoundland and she became known as the "postmistress-poet." She published only one book of her poems but was a regular contributor to local newspapers and magazines.

Her book, *In Caribou Land*, was published in 1929 (with a foreword by E. J. Pratt). This slim volume of poetry, abounding with Newfoundland themes and imagery, brought her much acclaim. Her home in Topsail soon became a gathering place for both aspiring and published writers, a veritable literary salon known as Blue Castle reading room, where they discussed their own work and the works of others.

She loved nature and loved to walk, and rural Topsail provided her with much to see and admire. She remained very active throughout her life though surprisingly she had little desire to travel. Florence Miller died on May 18, 1979, less than two months before her ninetieth birthday and is buried at Topsail United Church Cemetery.

In 1980, Charlotte Strong Florence Miller's grand-niece represented her aunt's papers and other family items to the Centre for Newfoundland Studies. The collection consists of manuscript writings and correspondence.

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