

Mildura and District Historical Society

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MRS. A.M. FARMER.

(as supplied for and read at the Civic Farewell
on September 19th. 1988)

P.O. Box 2057,

Mildura, 3500.

September 15th, 1988.

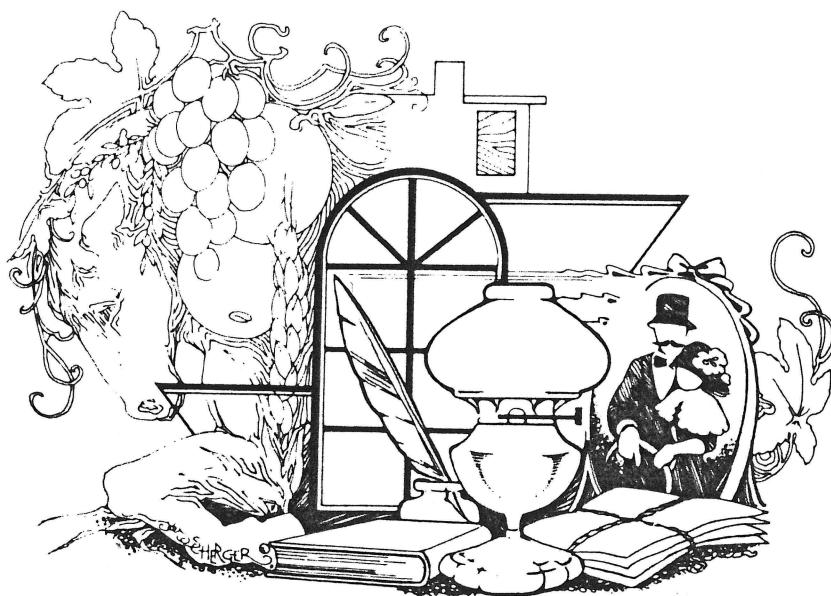
Mrs Alice Farmer nee Lapthorne was born in Mildura - her father, Mr Henry Lapthorne, was the proprietor and editor of Mildura's first newspaper, "The Cultivator", which he purchased from its founder, Mr N.B. McKay in 1897 and continued to publish until 1920.

Alice attended a small private school and later, Mildura Primary School of which she became dux. She moved on to Mildura High School and was one of its earliest pupils. There she contributed to the school magazine and her love of literature blossomed.

Upon leaving school she became an assistant at the Carnegie Library for a short period before taking a teaching position at Merbein Primary School to which she travelled daily on horseback. After three years she resigned to be married and left the district to make her home in Melbourne. At this time she continued to compose verse and write articles for publication.

She returned to Mildura in the 1930s and in 1940, after a period relieving at the Carnegie Library, she was appointed as the first Children's Librarian, a position she held for 22 years. In that capacity she was able to instil a love and respect for books in the hundreds of children who made use of the facilities and she gave assistance to many youngsters who felt the urge to write as well as to read.

In 1946, her historical writings on Mildura and District were collated under the title of "Mildura Calling" and published by the



Melbourne Bread and Cheese Club. This was the first local historical publication written by a writer born and living in Mildura and as such was an historic event. In 1965, the 2nd edition, with some revisions, was published by the Mildura Gallery Society and in 1981, Alice Lapthorne herself published the third edition with information brought up to date and the addition of photographic material. Her book is frequently consulted as an authority on Mildura's history and she herself has always been only too happy to assist students on the subject. She also frequently acceded to requests to speak at schools and social functions on different aspects of our past.

In October, 1955, during the term of Cr. R.R. Etherington as Mayor of Mildura, a public meeting was convened in the Children's Library premises with the view to forming an Historical Society. The following month, Alice Goldring as she then was, was elected Honorary Secretary of the Mildura & District Historical Society, a position she occupied continuously for 25 years with zeal and meticulous attention to detail. Not only did she spend much time researching information in response to requests but she spent countless hours in cataloguing and recording the material acquired by the Society and the Society will be ever in her debt.

J.G. Antcliff

Honorary Secretary.