

Mennonites, Healthcare Institutions, and Modernity: The Mennonite Youth Farm in Rosthern, Saskatchewan

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On April 25, 1951, the front page of the *Saskatchewan Valley News*, a newspaper based in the town of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, announced the birthday celebrations for Miss Margaret Wiebe of Swift Current, Mrs. Derksen of Saskatoon, and Mrs. Marie Nickel of Coaldale.¹ All three women were residents at the Invalid Home on the Mennonite Youth Farm, located less than a mile south of Rosthern. Although the birthday festivities provided an occasion for the story, the news article also relayed the Home's annual report, including a break down of the ages of the 52 residents in the institution, a list of financial support provided for their upkeep, which included old age pensions, blind pensions, and social welfare, received from local towns, individuals, and churches. In terms of their physical and mental disorders, the patients similarly ranged from 10 cases of complete incapacitation to 15 bedridden patients and 27 relatively independent patients; 15 of these individuals were considered 'mental cases' and 5 others were listed as being blind. In spite of the recognition that the Invalid Home had a long waiting list for

individuals seeking access to the institutional services, the authors of the report thanked “God for the many blessings [they had] experienced [in the previous year],” and gave further thanks to the “many churches, aids and individuals for their wonderful assistance – both spiritual and practical.”² It was evident that the Invalid Home was an integral part of the broader community, and subsisted on a blend of state and philanthropic funds from the Mennonite communities around Rosthern.

This brief report offers an intriguing glimpse into the history of long-term, institutionalized health care provided by and for Mennonites in western Canada. A careful examination of this health-care complex offers insights into the way in which Mennonites identified and addressed chronic physical and mental health needs within their community, and particularly how they embraced an institutional response to these needs that retained an important bond with the surrounding area. This study reveals tensions between the historic provincial health care initiatives that unfolded in Saskatchewan after the Second World War and the community-based institutions that struggled to keep up with modern medical reforms, while at the same time addressing underlying spiritual and religious needs of local patients. Such an examination exposes some of the underlying causes behind institution building, the growing public recognition of chronic or long-term health concerns, and a community’s strategies for resistance to a Canadian assimilation agenda.

This history also illuminates a number of broader themes concerning Mennonite assimilation into ‘modern’, English-speaking society. The Mennonite Youth Farm had its precedents in a desire to preserve more traditional elements of a Christian life, with a strong connection to the land, the community, and the Church. As well, while some of these features have been retained in the Youth Farm to this day, it is also evident that by the middle of the twentieth century the objectives of the Youth Farm had shifted in response to more pressing challenges. Some of these challenges concerned the shift to an English-speaking community, the introduction of new technology with related changes to the workforce, urbanization, and pressures on families to adopt new gender roles and nuclear family responsibilities. These kinds of changes sometimes culminated in family breakdown, divorce, and a fracturing of the community, changes that introduced new kinds of scenarios into modern Mennonite life on the Canadian prairies. Faced with the growing pains of modernity and increasing pressure to adjust to a more secular, English-speaking society, the Mennonite Youth Farm evolved as a community sanctuary that provided for many individuals’ long-term health needs, but it also functioned as a barometer of the broader cultural changes facing Mennonites in western Canada during the post-war period.

Few historians have explored the Youth Farm, either in its capacity as an extension of Mennonite charity, or in its role as a health-service provider. Ted Regehr, in his book *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970*, is one of the few scholars who has addressed this facility's past. He describes it as one of the "most unusual co-ops".³ Regehr explains that the Conference of Mennonites in Canada purchased the grounds and existing buildings from the federal government in the 1940s. The federal government had used the land for an experimental farm since the 1920s, but land prices had dropped considerably during the Depression and the government had rented it out to recover some of the lost revenues. The Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization had occasionally leased the grounds during the 1920s and '30s to host religious retreats that Regehr describes as being "characterized by evangelistic services, singing, and fellowship."⁴

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the federal government looked to withdraw further its commitments to these experimental farms and, in the case of the Rosthern facility, William Lyon MacKenzie King's government agreed to release the farm to the Mennonites on the proviso that it be used for public service and charity. In 1942, the Minister of Agriculture Jimmy Gardiner officially sold the Farm to the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization (SMYO) at what Regehr contends was a "fraction of [its] market value. The SMYO in turn agreed to use farming proceeds to build and operate, as finances permitted, homes for orphans, the elderly, the mentally retarded, and troubled youngsters."⁵ Regehr explains that services rendered for the Mennonite Youth Farm were later granted special status as an acceptable alternative to war service for conscientious objectors. This provision appealed particularly to Mennonites who sought mechanisms for avoiding war service. Although this feature was not in place during the Second World War, it created opportunities for American men during the war in Vietnam. Finally, Regehr states that "mutual aid societies [such as the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization] helped preserve traditional values and allowed controlled adjustment to new economic conditions."⁶ Although Regehr examines the history of the Youth Farm in the context of Mennonite cooperatives across Canada, he does not consider how it fits within a matrix of health and welfare services. Nonetheless, he observes that the Mennonite Youth Farm provided an institutional response to external modernizing pressures.

Kelly G.I. Harms has written the most comprehensive study of the Mennonite Youth Farm, chronicling its history from its inception through to the 1990s. For Harms, this healthcare facility represented a unique expression of institution building, a Christian mission, and community dynamism that culminated in a humanitarian organization

that responded to community needs. He credits the Mennonites in particular for organizing this kind of welfare institution, suggesting that “The Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization was a group of young people who, because of their Anabaptist beliefs, responded to a call to missions as well as a call to service.”⁷

In spite of the limited historical scholarship on the Mennonite Youth Farm itself, several scholars and many local historians refer to mental illness throughout their studies of Mennonites. Royden Loewen’s *Hidden Worlds* recounts the stories of Mennonite migrants as they left Russia and established communities throughout North America. Mental illness, insanity, and mental retardation appear in some of these stories, at times as a regular feature of community life and at other times as a product of hardship and tragedy, even trauma associated with migration.⁸ Local family histories similarly express the existence of mental health problems, often in general or non-clinical terms. For example, George (Gerhard) Dyck, in his account of the Dycks from Tiefengrund, describes living with his younger brother Johnny Dyck who allegedly developed a brain disorder as a child. This child might now be described as intellectually disabled. Fellow Tiefengrunders, the Funks, made reference to a different kind of mental anguish in their family memoirs. The Funks recorded a mysterious case from 1920 when Walter Funk, who at the age of 31 lived with his parents, had “an accident while handling a gun.” The family genealogist added a note to his entry, “Walter was in love with a young woman who couldn’t return that love and it apparently depressed him to the point of suicide.”⁹

Others moved beyond the stories of personal strife or family adjustments and, instead, praised the Mennonites for their Christian vision for human welfare. A Kroeker history recalled with pride that one of David H. Epp’s greatest achievements “was that through his pastoral care of the mentally disturbed in the insane asylum at Ekaterinoslav he became aware of the need for the Mennonite mental hospital and physical care to patients in the brotherhood.”¹⁰ Although Kroeker does not elaborate on this entry as he traces the plight of the Russländer, his inclusion of this case is one of pride and further underscores the belief that Mennonites may have had their own version of mental health facilities and interventions befitting their religious needs. These local histories demonstrate how mental health issues were woven into the fabric of the community, as sources of pride when they involved establishing care homes, and as sources of concern or even embarrassment when events strayed toward the misunderstood or stigmatized.

Newspapers provide another local source of information about the Youth Farm. The *Mennonite Youth Bulletin* and *The Valley News* contain several articles related to activities on or about the Youth Farm. These periodicals suggest that the Youth Farm complex played an

important role in the community, both as a site for institutional care and as a resource to the community, a place of employment, and a destination for charitable and religious expression connected to the Mennonite traditions. Indeed, with the youth farm's geographical location on the southeast edge of the town of Rosthern, it maintained important ties with the local community through the youth activities that took place on the farm campus. This inter-relationship between the community and the health complex served an important function as a contemporary reaction to Canadianizing pressures, but it also set the health complex apart from many other hospitals or asylums whose precarious locations beyond an urban community kept patients isolated, and contributed to the idea that people living in these institutions had been warehoused, dumped, or somehow represented the detritus of society.¹¹

Saskatchewan's Minister of Public Health reported in 1959 that most of the mental hospitals throughout North America were "too large, became grossly overcrowded, [and] had very few trained staff."¹² Although he did not describe the Mennonite Youth Farm in particular, he praised the people of Saskatchewan for recognizing the dire need to integrate individuals with mental health problems into the community and for resisting the desire to keep them isolated in institutional settings that were severed from their communities. The Youth Farm remained different from other mental health facilities because it had been developed as an integral part of the Mennonite community and retained strong ties to it. While the residents in the care facilities at the Youth Farm experienced hardships and challenges, they remained important resources for the Mennonite community, particularly in the period following the Second World War as members of this community felt acute pressure to embrace a new world order that included an unhyphenated Canadian identity. Rather than being dislocated from their communities as they joined the swollen ranks of the asylum population, the residents remained important members of the Mennonite community.

Mental Health and Religion

The intertwining of mental health and faith is commonplace in the history of institutionalization and is not unique to Mennonites. Several historians have demonstrated that earlier asylums were more often the product of religious charity work than an outgrowth of the medical or psychiatric profession.¹³ The facilities in Rosthern were no exception to this trend.

By explicitly linking mental health with religion, two invaluable sources emerged on this topic, which shed further light on the

conceptualization of mental health needs. Kelly Harms' local history of the Mennonite Youth Farm Complex, *Grace Upon Grace*, charts the Farm from its experimental beginnings through its purchase by the Mennonite Youth Organization to its flourishing as an agriculture centre that provided the dividends necessary to expand its investments in health care. Harms explains that the Youth Farm had initially provided a local place where the youth could engage in spiritual activities, particularly during a period when missions further afield were more difficult to finance and when the need within the community was great. George Dyck's memoirs reinforce this attitude: "The Mennonites I knew generally wanted to be Christian agriculturalists and to have a certain separation between themselves and other people, and between themselves and upper levels of government."¹⁴ During the first decade of the Youth Farm's operations, the emphasis remained on the twinned missions of providing Christian guidance and agricultural instruction, accomplished in part by encouraging financial support for activities in the form of donations from local Mennonite churches and families, while leaving administrative control to local Mennonites in good standing.¹⁵ The *Bulletin of the Mennonite Youth Organization* reported that, although the Invalid Home was open to individuals from any denomination, "since the Mennonites have given the most money for this cause, they will be the first to be accepted, but if there is room, others are accepted too."¹⁶ Each of the facilities maintained a waiting list, a fact that remains true today.¹⁷

Harms also suggests that external factors produced a growing anxiety concerning the Mennonite youth and their relationship with the Church and a more traditional way of life. This situation was presumably intensified with the widening gulf between traditional and modern values, made more evident with the influx of Russländer in the 1920s, many of whom settled in the Rosthern district alongside second-generation Mennonites. By the time the Second World War broke out, Mennonites in Canada faced another series of challenges as the federal government no longer seemed willing to honour pacifism agreements and took a strict stance against German-speaking communities, particularly those clustered together as the Mennonites were in the Rosthern district. The Youth Farm offered an alternative to war service for American draftees and a reaffirmation of Mennonite values over Canadian assimilation. Bill Peters expressed this option succinctly: "It is not enough to say you won't kill, you have to go the next step and say that you are willing to save a life and help someone live."¹⁸ Referring more generally to the context of the 1940s, Harms stated that:

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very quickly to social changes in areas of education, economics, and language, to name a few. This pressure was magnified by their economic vulnerability resulting from the Depression and drought of the 1930s, and new pressures brought on by the Second World War. ...The youth of that time had made the transition from the German spoken at home and in church, to the English spoken at school and with friends.¹⁹

The Youth Farm offered a viable outlet for cultural investment in a manner that appeased anxious political authorities, but also served the community's needs to retain a Mennonite identity that involved maintenance of language, religion, and customs. In one way, the Youth Farm provided a counter-balance to the Canadian government's assimilation strategies, and did so effectively by concentrating its religious activities in health-related arenas.

Youth and Community

The original focus on agricultural activities soon turned a profit, which was quickly reinvested in homes for individuals requiring healthcare support.

The initial facility also strategically created a link between the youth (mostly teenagers) and elder members of the community by developing an Invalid Home, which performed many functions of a modern-day nursing home for elderly members of the community who required some additional care. For example, one of the first residents, Tina Dyck of Waldheim, was reportedly "happy and healthy, only can't use her legs." Another original resident, Elizabeth Doerksen, was "low at times but has always recovered."²⁰ One of the youths, Cornie Driedger, remembered learning German from reading to one of the residents, Mr. Kruger. Although Mr. Kruger was from Russia, he "would get after Cornie for murdering the German language."²¹ Cornie Driedger later described a similar scenario with regard to prayer in the Invalid Home. He learned from observing the elders.²²

Soon after the opening of the Invalid Home, however, a number of other institutions were established, indicating a growing need for spiritual, mental, and physical assistance. The Invalid Home opened in 1944 and was followed by a Children's Orphanage in 1946, a Crippled Children's Home in 1951, an Invalid Home in Herbert also in 1951, as well as a Home for the Mentally Handicapped in 1954 that two years later divided into a men's home and a women's home. Today, the Youth Farm continues to provide agricultural and religious activities for Mennonite Youth while also serving the elderly population with

two adjacent facilities, one for 24-hour care and the other for semi-independent living. Throughout the expansion of the Youth Farm complex, the religious mission remained central.

The ever-expanding set of services and activities associated with the Youth Farm depended to a substantial degree on the individuals involved with its promotion. Between 1943 and 1957, the Youth Farm underwent dramatic expansion, requiring fund-raising campaigns and a public relations strategy. Reverend Jacob C. Schmidt and Henry Friesen were key players in this regard. Schmidt had been elected to lead the Youth Work in Canada at the Canadian General Conference, which soon thereafter became the first Mennonite Youth Organization in North America.²³ For over thirty years, Friesen and Schmidt, as boosters for the Youth Farm, aggressively supported the activities of the Youth Farm and became central figures in the fund-raising campaigns, traveling all over the province generating funds for the Youth Farm from Mennonites in the region.²⁴ In addition to financial contributions, they also solicited donations in kind, including labour, farm produce, and even the gift of music and singing as people were encouraged to visit the farm and join one of the many singing groups.²⁵ Their activities and dedication to the Youth Farm had an enduring impact on its success and its growing profile among local Mennonites.

Part of the success resulted in an expanding set of services and institutions, which however, were met with mixed feelings. Reverend Irvin Schmidt, for example, claimed that the “increased demand for such a home caused the Youth Organization to pray for guidance. ‘Does the Lord want another Children’s home to be started on the farm?’ Some of them came from broken homes and responded very poorly to discipline and the religious atmosphere.”²⁶ Reverend Schmidt’s comments from the 1970s correspond with Walter Klaassen’s candid reflections from the 1990s about the changing nature of Mennonite families and marital discord in the Rosthern district in the post-war period. Klaassen’s history of the Eigenheim Church community is much more critical, however. He extends his analysis of the fears of marriage with non-Mennonites as proof of the disintegration of the community and suggests that the pressures from within the community were so great during this period that illicit sex (premarital) contributed to a number of cases of unwanted children. This situation created psychological problems with both the unwed parents and the ensuing children needing assistance. He explains that this situation was especially explosive in such a

tightknit community in which sex was not discussed with members of other communities in which less restricted rules about sexual behaviour were operative. Eigenheim young

people were mostly not prepared to function freely in that other world at first....The women involved, like the Mennonite men who chose to become soldiers, paid a high price in emotional and spiritual strain which is always exacted when the pace of social change accelerates. The shadows cast by sexual transgressions took a long time to disappear. These men and women were not so much agents of change as its victims. Perhaps also the concern in the church was not so much with illicit sexual behaviour but with the fact that such behaviour threatened the social stability of the community with its emphasis on the high value of marriage and the family. These cases all came at a time when that social stability was already threatened.²⁷

Social instability also extended beyond immediate relations within the family to include financial difficulties, changes in the labour market, new technologies and rising levels of wealth. Harms explains that several of the children who required support from the Children's Home were not in fact suffering from a distinguishable mental disorder, but rather needed a refuge from "difficult family situations".²⁸ This trend altered the way that the Home functioned. Although it had been originally designed to respond to the mental and physical health needs of local children, the increase in the number of children with emotional needs or who simply arrived as orphans meant that the Home had to adjust its outlook.

Harms also suggests that external factors produced a growing anxiety concerning the Mennonite youth and their relationship with the Church, the German language, and a more traditional way of life. This situation was presumably intensified with the recognition of a widening gulf between traditional and modern values.

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Modernity and Finances

The Mennonite Youth Farm itself was subject to modernizing trends. The farm succeeded in raising its revenues, in large measure due to

modern agricultural technology. The *Youth Bulletin* proudly reported that it had won several provincial awards for its dairy, boasting that “the Farm owns a modern pasteurization plant, and the dairy has become one of the finest in the province of Saskatchewan.”³⁰ Modern technology was also a major feature within the health care facilities. Sisters Anne and Mary Thiessen remarked that they experienced a difficult transition when they moved to the Youth Farm, especially as their parents were going through marital difficulties at the time. They moved from a very poor farm home “to the cleanliness of an institution,” a move Anne described “as coming into real civilization.”³¹

By 1949, the Youth Farm reported an average annual profit of \$3,000, revenue that was then reinvested into agriculture.³² The funds for the healthcare institutions derived from individual donations, in combination with the proceeds from local fundraisers and church offerings. As the *Valley News* reported, “the Invalid Home is self-supporting, the Children’s Home needs to be continually supported by freewill offerings since there is not a sufficient income.”³³ As the newspaper suggested, the institutions relied directly on support from the community, which provided another direct link between donors (community members), the Church and the residents.

Following the introduction of provincial legislation in 1947, which provided some funding for hospitalized services, the Mennonite Youth Farm began appealing to various levels of government for more sustainable funding. In 1952, for example, the Invalid Home director, J.C. Schmidt, applied for a sales tax exemption alongside an application for a provincial grant to reduce expenditures related to the maintenance of the home for the aged.³⁴ Although the government responded with gratitude and offered a grant totaling \$600, the Minister stipulated that this money should not be used to develop new institutions, especially homes for crippled children or harmless mental patients. Minister Sturdy explained that, under the provincial health reforms, the government of Saskatchewan would be initiating building projects that would satisfy needs in these categories and therefore the Mennonite Youth Farm should not proceed with plans in this direction.

The issue soon came to the attention of members of the provincial public service who believed that the institutions should be co-ordinated under the provincial government, and would presumably assume a more standardized image. Civil servant J.S. White reported to Minister Sturdy on this matter, stating “I do not think anyone would question the sincerity of the Mennonite organization itself but it seems to me that whatever they might do or consider doing in this particular field should dovetail with the plans of the Health Department.”³⁵ While government officials were eager to include the Mennonite facilities in their vision for healthcare reform, part of that vision included

standardizing service options and developing several sections under the Department of Social Services to oversee all mental and general health institutions.³⁶

Rather than balk at the coming changes, Mennonites from across Saskatchewan sought ways to take advantage of the new political financing for health-care facilities. For example, in 1959, delegates of Mennonite Central Committee (Saskatchewan) comprising several Mennonite conferences, including the Mennonite Brethren Conference, the Conference of Mennonites in Saskatchewan, and the Brethren in Christ, met to discuss the lack of care for people suffering from mental illness and others who were mentally retarded. In subsequent meetings, delegates voted to propose a new facility for 40 residents, which could be built in either Waldheim or Watrous, Saskatchewan. A final meeting decided in favour of Waldheim, 20 miles west of Rosthern.

The Director of Psychiatric Services, Sam Lawson, applauded the proposal and recommended that the government support the initiative, given the gross overcrowding in the existing provincial facilities. He even went so far as to recommend that the Mennonite initiative might take advantage of new federal legislation that would help to finance the capital costs of building the institution.³⁷

The proposal, at first, did not contradict the provincial vision for a co-ordinated set of health care facilities, but upon a closer look, members of the civil service grew concerned by some of the requests. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) estimated a total cost of \$100,000 for the building, but then included a variety of strategies for reducing the construction costs. First, they recommended waiving the architectural fee, if they could identify a local architect who might donate his services for the cause. In fact, they had one in mind. Secondly, rather than pay directly for labour costs, the MCC representatives suggested that they would draw on volunteer expertise from the community, thereby using sweat equity as a form of donation to the long-term spiritual, mental, and general health of the community.³⁸

While the vision for a community institution remained consistent with developments that had occurred on the Youth Farm for several decades, these developments ran counter to a provincial strategy for wide-reaching health reforms, particularly those which would conform to a standard of modern care where the emphasis was placed on medical technology over the institution's relationship with the community. The provincial government would later lament the way in which institutional care often severed people from their communities, but the competing visions for health care placed the Mennonite Conference and the Saskatchewan provincial government at odds by the end of the 1950s. In order for the Youth Farm to receive financial support from the government, it needed to conform to the provincial

strategies; in the end, its efforts to expand the Youth Farm complex were constrained by the new legislative arrangements.

Conclusion

The history of the Mennonite Youth Farm complex illuminates a number of broader themes concerning mental health and spiritual health care, as well as the competing visions for institution building in the post-Second World War period. These competing visions were further complicated by the expansion of the welfare state and the development of Medicare. The Youth Farm had its precedents in a desire to preserve more traditional elements of a Christian life, with a strong connection to the land, the community, the Low-German language, and the Mennonite Church.

The Mennonite health facilities did not necessarily resemble those in more traditional asylum settings, or modern hospital complexes in the twentieth century, but shared their precedents instead with the religious institutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In particular, the early 'retreats' or 'moral treatment' centres set up by Quakers in England more closely resembled the twentieth century version of the western Canadian Mennonites' response to community disintegration. These traditional institutions demonstrated a real desire to care for the members within their folds who required additional physical, mental, cultural, and institutional support.³⁹ Faced with the growing pains of modernity and increasing pressure to assimilate to a more secularized, non-German, Canadian society, the Mennonite Youth Farm evolved as a community sanctuary for those both inside and outside the walls of its institutions. However, it also functioned as a cultural barometer of the broader changes facing Mennonites in western Canada during the post-war period. As the Youth Farm activities represented a tightened grip on the local Mennonite identity, an approach tied to traditional values more reminiscent of the nineteenth century and more familiar to the original Mennonite families, the cultural chasm with the second generation widened. Influenced by the allure of urban adventures, exotic relationships with non-Mennonites, and Canadian patriotism, the Youth Farm's health facility's cultural goals surrendered to a more modern image of institutionalized hospital care in the last quarter of the century.

Notes

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- ¹ “Invalid Home on the Mennonite Youth Farm,” *Saskatchewan Valley News*, April 25, 1951, 1.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ted Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 141.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid., 142. Irvin V. Schmidt stated that the farm sold for \$20,000 with a \$5,000 down payment. See Irvin V. Schmidt, “The Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Farm,” unpublished paper in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the course in Anabaptist Mennonite History, Elkhart, Indiana, (1976), 4.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Kelly G.I. Harms, *Grace Upon Grace: A History of the Mennonite Home of Rosthern*, (Mennonite Nursing Homes Inc., 1994), vi.
- ⁸ Royden Loewen, *Hidden Worlds: Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2001), 39, 51, 53, 57, 60.
- ⁹ *Abraham and Johanna Funk Family Album 1985*, compiled by Sylvia Regier (Altona, MB: Friesen Printers, 1985), 156.
- ¹⁰ N. J. Kroeker, *First Mennonite Villages in Russia, 1789-1943, Khortitsa-Rosental* (Cloverdale, BC: D.W. Friesen & Sons, Ltd.), 59.
- ¹¹ See for example, Andrew Scull, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-century England* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1979).
- ¹² Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-34 JW Erb papers, Letter from Erb to Mr. Robert Perkins, December 14, 1959, 1.
- ¹³ See for example, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); and James Moran, *Committed to the State Asylum: Insanity and Society in Nineteenth-Century Quebec and Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000).
- ¹⁴ George G. Dyck, *Living Saskatchewan: A Personal History* (self-publication, 1995), 55.
- ¹⁵ Kelly G.I. Harms, *Grace Upon Grace...*, 29.
- ¹⁶ *Mennonite Youth Organization Bulletin*, c. 1964, 3.
- ¹⁷ The initial focus on youth grew out of fears that the second-generation of Mennonites and newly arrived Russländer sometimes required a realignment with traditional values. (Most of the families in the Rosthern district at this time were Prussian Mennonites who had arrived in Canada in the 1880s and 1890s through Poland. A few families, including my own, were Russian Mennonites from Chortitza, but these were not the famed Russländer who arrived in the 1920s, mostly in abject poverty, fleeing from the Russian Civil War.)
- ¹⁸ As quoted in Harms, 50. Harms also describes how Conscientious Objectors could work at the Mental Hospital at North Battleford during the war, gaining important skills that they could bring home to Rosthern after the war. Harms, 56.
- ¹⁹ Harms, v.

- ²⁰ *Mennonite Youth Organization Bulletin*, c. 1964, 3.
- ²¹ As recalled in Harms, 60.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Harms, 24.
- ²⁴ Harms, 25.
- ²⁵ Harms, 27. I am also grateful to one anonymous reviewer who drew my attention to the importance of singing as an important component of the Youth Farm activities.
- ²⁶ Schmidt, 9.
- ²⁷ Walter Klaassen, *The Days of Our Years: A History of the Eigenheim Mennonite Church Community, 1892-1992* (Rosthern: Eigenheim Mennonite Church, 1992), 130.
- ²⁸ Harms, 85.
- ²⁹ Harms, v.
- ³⁰ *Mennonite Youth Organization Bulletin*, c. 1964, 3. See also Harms, pages 31-41, for a more in-depth description of the dairy and its importance to the community beyond the Youth Farm.
- ³¹ As quoted in Harms, 65.
- ³² "Mennonite Youth Society Semi-Annual Meeting," *Valley News*, April 13, 1949, 1.
- ³³ Ibid., 1 and continuation on last page (page number cut off).
- ³⁴ Saskatchewan Archives Board, M16, AM Nicholson papers, Letter from John H. Sturdy to J.C. Schmidt, April 10, 1952.
- ³⁵ Saskatchewan Archives Board, M16, AM Nicholson papers, Memo from JS White to J.H. Sturdy, April 10, 1952.
- ³⁶ The Youth Farm belonged to the Conference of Mennonites in Saskatchewan, the largest of several Mennonite conferences in the province. It was also the only conference that had institutions serving the elderly, the physically disabled, and those with mental illnesses. However, throughout the province, various Mennonite conferences showed a willingness to co-operate in a new generation of health care.
- ³⁷ Saskatchewan Archives Board, M16, AM Nicholson papers, Memo from M.W. Sturby, Supervisor of Low-Rental Housing to D.E. Chalmers, Director of Housing and Nursing Homes, October 1, 1959, 1.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 1-2.
- ³⁹ For further discussion of this older trend, see: Barry Edginton, "Nineteenth-century Asylum Design: The Impact of the York Retreat," *Psychiatric Spaces: Architecture, Madness and the Built Environment, 1600-2000* (eds) Jonathan Andrews, James Moran, and Leslie Topp (Routledge, 2006).