

Christian Love Meets Government Regulations: From Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm to Craigwood, 1954-1970¹

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In December 1958, John Butterfield was invited to speak to the delegates who had come to Kitchener to participate in a meeting of the Ontario Conference of Historic Peace Churches. The 550 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ men attending the gathering must have listened carefully to this young man, for in a sense Butterfield was a protégé of the group. Now a grade eleven student at Rockway Mennonite Secondary School in Kitchener, and a baptized member of the Mennonite church, Butterfield had come a long way. He was one of the first boys to have been helped at the Conference's farm for emotionally disturbed boys, which had been established four years earlier near Ailsa Craig, about 100 kilometres west of Kitchener.²

Identifying with the volunteer ethos of Boys' Farm, Butterfield described himself as a "cheap" Mennonite. As he explained, "boys at the farm called the staff 'cheap' Mennonites because most staff were volunteers, and other Mennonites and Brethren in Christ from all over Ontario volunteered long hours of their time. Men came to re-build the farm's barn and women cleaned, sewed, and preserved vast quantities of food. "I personally couldn't resist the love that was shown to me by the staff and the neighbouring Mennonite communities," he concluded.³

The Ontario Conference of Historic Peace Churches had established Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm as a means of contributing to a society that had allowed them conscientious objection privileges during World War II.⁴ The conference had represented the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches

in negotiations with the government and their members had been exempted from bearing arms. They were allowed instead to serve Canadian society by planting forests and building highways. These opportunities to serve beyond their own communities helped these separate people to see the world, in historian Ted Regehr's words, "less as an evil place to be avoided and more as a place of great suffering in need of the love and healing that Jesus had exemplified in his ministry on earth."⁵ Further, just as their service during the war had been appreciated by Canadians, their post-war initiative was also welcomed. Ontario Social Services heralded Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm as a "pioneering" institution, for in 1954 few such services existed in that province. The Farm was unique, for it was geared especially for boys whose problems were too severe for a foster home, but who might, with the proper environment, still be able to be saved from the severe measures of the industrial or training schools. Although these institutions had been established under the Ontario Industrial Schools Act as early as 1884, they still provided the standard care for delinquents.⁶

The story of Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm is just one facet of a broader Mennonite history that was adapting and accommodating itself to Canadian society during the post-World War II era.⁷ It is also an important part of the story of the developing welfare state in mid-twentieth century Canada. P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell have noted that the 1940s signalled a new era in Canada. With the establishment of the new federal Department of National Health and Welfare, the appointment of Dr. George F. Davidson as the first Deputy Minister of Welfare, and the passing of the Family Allowance Act, all in 1944, state welfarism became firmly entrenched in Canadian society, and the child became the centre.⁸ The history of Canadian social welfare has been told largely from this perspective. But as Shirley Tillotson has pointed out, the focus on state expansion has caused historians to overlook changes in private welfare services. With the exception of certain feminist historians little attention has been paid to the impact that the public presence made on private charity. Yet during this era, public money came increasingly to augment the budgets of private charities such as Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm.⁹ Indeed, eerily reminiscent of the Methodist and Presbyterian experience some fifty years earlier, when their educational and social welfare programs shifted from church to state control, this Mennonite initiative came increasingly under the direction of Ontario Social Services during the decade and a half from the farm's inception in 1954 to 1970.

By using records kept by the Conference of Historic Peace churches and its successor, the Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario), and a number of interviews of people who served in the institution during those years, I will outline the transition that Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm made during the 1960s, from a Mennonite mission farm to a government-sponsored institution. Basing my assessment on these sources, I argue that despite an increasing dependence on public support, the farm's Christian ethos remained foundational to its success. Indeed, as David Marshall has pointed out, to contend that "society is becoming increasingly secular does not mean that religious faith and institutions disappear."¹⁰

The establishment of Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm in June 1954 was within the context of such faith. Jack and Anne Wall, a young Mennonite couple who had found their experience working at Boys' Village in Smithville, Ohio, in their words, "a life-changing commitment," and who had brought with them a passionate desire to serve Canada's disadvantaged youth, were instrumental in starting the farm. On his own Jack had no credibility with the Ontario Ministry of Social Services for he had no professional training in social work. For Jack, what some might have seen as a chance encounter, his meeting with Mennonite Central Committee's Canadian voluntary service coordinator Harvey Taves at a youth gathering, was nothing short of providential. For Taves, the meeting must also have been auspicious, for he was looking for new service projects in which the Mennonites could invest their efforts now nearly a decade after the end of World War II. The MCC's overseas relief work had, in large part, run its course, and such a project would give the Mennonites an opportunity to serve, while at a more mundane level, it would keep the MCC's Canadian office open. Wall's vision also captured the imagination of members of the Amish Mennonite Church in Nairn, ON. A 135-acre property, including a three-story house built by Scottish pioneers one hundred years earlier, which had been purchased by that group to serve as a halfway house for a rescue mission in London, was donated to the Mennonite Central Committee in the hopes that This new project would be more successful than the former.¹¹

Things moved quickly. By the fall of that year, Jack Wall and Harvey Taves had surveyed most Children's Aid Societies in Ontario to discover what need there was that the Ontario Mennonites might fill. They had also spent the summer raising funds for the project among the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Ontario and upper state New

York. The overwhelming response was in favour of “a home which could care for boys with emotional and behaviour problems ten to fifteen years of age,” boys who fell between the cracks of the foster home system and the provincial training schools.¹²

In November, Wall was appointed as housefather on a voluntary service basis, while Taves took on the directorship. In reality, Taves’ directing was mostly from his Kitchener office. Wall and his wife Ann were on site and they ran the home as they continued to raise funds and promote the work, while feeding, clothing, nurturing and supervising twenty boys of various classes, races and religions between ten and thirteen years of age, who had been accepted at the farm through southwestern Ontario Children’s Aid Societies. Their task was a challenging one, for there was as of yet little funding for the project. This meant that Anne, who had two infants of her own to care for, also bore the brunt of the household management. Initially, she did all of the cooking and laundry for up to seventeen boys and her own family single-handedly. She found herself using tin cans to heat water for laundry and meal-making, and washing all of the boys’ clothing with a wringer washer.¹³

As if these conditions were not arduous enough, managing the boys was exhausting. Many of them had come through a number of foster homes already. While not yet being categorized as “delinquents,” a term denoting, in historian Susan Houston’s words, “an allegation of deviant behaviour sustained by public authority” (a definition which varied from time to time, but which usually included children who were part of a “*street culture*”), descriptions of the boys accepted at the farm suggest that some were heading that way.¹⁴ According to Taves’ successor Alden Bohn, the boys manifested a variety of behaviour problems including being “disturbed,” “self-conscious,” “mouthy,” “insecure,” and “lacking ambition.”¹⁵ Only physically healthy boys with an IQ above 90 were accepted, but most boys exhibited the sorts of personality or psycho-neurotic disorders that Bohn described. What he did not mention was that anxiety symptoms such as vomiting, obesity and compulsive eating, tics, enuresis and learning difficulties were common. But some boys were clearly suffering from more than problems in deportment. Many were used to violent ways of interacting, and staff frequently found themselves confronted with unruly actions including fist fights between the boys, truancy, pyromania, stealing, and the indiscriminate wielding of knives.¹⁶ For all of these reasons, foster homes were no longer an option for them.

While in retrospect it seems somewhat naive to think that a largely untrained, volunteer staff could do what a normal foster home was unable to, the operating principle reflected both the environmentalism advocated by Froebel in the latter part of the previous century, and the nonresistant philosophy of the Conference of Historic Peace Churches. Indeed, a study done by the farm advisory council in 1955 clearly reflected the ideal that “a healthy and loving environment shaped the personality and lives of children,”¹⁷ and that life in a good, middle-class family could save those working-class children who had gone bad.¹⁸

The operating principle of the Boys’ Farm is that it will provide an environment in which a boy will be loved, understood, coached, educated and generally helped to feel that he can become a useful member of society. The general prescription for helping him overcome his problems will be the process of living in such an environment provided by all the members of the staff and the other boys. This process of living will be merely an extension of the family principle. He will have more brothers than is normal and his parents are foster but he will still be part of a family. He will also be encouraged to make himself useful to the family, to share in its responsibilities and in the same sense, to accept its authority.¹⁹

In short, although the initial motivation had been simply to help needy boys, as the program developed, the ideal came to mean duplicating traditional Mennonite farm life and family and religious values. Carol Baines has observed that such ideals, common among Canadian institutions for needy children, showed little inclination to work at changing the environments from which the children came and to which they would likely return. There were no attempts made to teach the boys at Ailsa Craig how to cope in constructive ways with the inferior housing, poor sanitation, broken health, inadequate wages and frequent unemployment to which they had fallen heir. Rather, the personnel at Ailsa Craig Boys’ Farm, similar to other children’s institutions, seemed to work at training the youngsters who passed through its doors to aspire to middle-class values.²⁰ House parents, a cook, a farmer and other maintenance staff, as well as three teachers who spent mornings working on remedial education in the school established on the premises, soon joined the Walls to run the operation, reflecting what Canadian middle-class society saw as the ideal education. A ‘normal’ family life was supplemented by the three R’s and

farm living aimed to further teach the boys to be hard-working, and ultimately to train them to be the bread-winners for their families.²¹

With this emphasis on rearing working-class boys to model middle-class values, it would appear that the farm was an attempt to masculinize what Tillotson has suggested had become the feminine side of the Canadian welfare enterprise. If the 1940s had seen the transformation of child care to a public dimension legislated by numerous new social policies, this was the masculine domain and the work of the private agencies usually resembled “mothers’ work more than that of fathers.”²² Institutions like Ailsa Craig Boys’ Farm were responsible to socialize children, to nurse those who were infirm, to deal with life crises and to supplement the family economy. Public welfare, meanwhile, played out the masculine role by supplying the major material subsistence through public funding.

Under this schema, then, it was Jack Wall’s duty as housefather to work with the boys on the farm in the afternoons. The goal was to teach these young men responsibility by having them tend a variety of animals, as well as showing them how to work the land as they hoed the sugar beets and picked the cucumbers grown on the farm. Wall was also expected to play the role of a middle-class father as he engaged his charges in healthy recreational outlets such as horseback riding, softball, volleyball and horseshoes.²³ Meanwhile, a succession of cooks provided healthy farm meals for boys who had often been nutritionally, as well as emotionally deprived. Alice Martens, who served as cook at the farm in the early years, recalls the boys telling her how good the food was in comparison to what they were used to. But here the typical feminine nurturing image ended, for the housemother Etta Horning’s task was not so much to nurture the boys, as to manage the large household.

This patriarchal model of family was framed by rituals typical of Mennonite family life. Grace before meals was supplemented with devotional time, and after meals hymns were sung. At bedtime, Wall led the boys in evening prayers. On Sundays, all staff helped to outfit the twenty boys in freshly laundered clothes, and took turns escorting them to the local Mennonite church – not just in the morning, but also in the evening. This rite was replayed mid-week when the boys were taken to prayer services.²⁴

In the midst of their high ideals, farm personnel often found their work to be exhausting. Whatever their role, workers were required to act

as supervisors and mentors. Like a family, most staff lived in the big house with the boys, and carried out their work running the institution, while helping the housefather care for his charges. Meanwhile, unlike a typical family, the youth were unruly and as already mentioned, used to violent ways of interacting. Dave Martens, who came to Boys' Farm as a maintenance worker in 1956, recalled forty years later that he had had no time off in his first six weeks at the farm. While time may alter memory, Martens' vivid recollections suggest the tensions felt by staff members: "You always had to watch your back," and at night you were quite likely to be woken up by some antic, such as a rooster having been thrown into a boy's bed." When Martens was finally given a week-end off, he remembers going to bed Friday evening to wake up a day and a half later, on Sunday morning.²⁵

Initially, corporal punishment seems to have been an accepted way of dealing with these sorts of problems.²⁶ Admittedly, the romantic view of providing a loving family setting for twenty boys was not realistic. The boys who had been removed from their own homes or from foster homes because at best they were unwilling to conform to the rules, and at worst, because they were unmanageable and violent, would try the most patient of staff. Yet although the situation seemed to call for the severe measures at one time held by most middle-class Canadians as the only sure way to deal with troubled youth, "kindness and love" had been long promoted by social workers as a more humane response to the anti-social behaviour characteristic of these boys.²⁷ The physical approach to discipline seems to have been an anomaly in Mennonite circles as well, for the softer measures fit more closely with the Mennonite principles of love and nonresistance than did harsh methods aimed at correction. Indeed, the Boys' Farm advisory board insisted that corporal punishment be stopped, for "correction and rehabilitation" must be done "through love," not "through fear of reprisal."²⁸

The problem was, how was enough stability to be gained to create an atmosphere where more genteel corrective measures could be successfully employed? Taves, in his pivotal role as executive director of the Mennonite Central Committee Ontario office and with his infectious enthusiasm, responded by recruiting a couple who would be central to the survival and success of boys' farm as the Conference of Historic Peace Churches had envisioned it, through the 1960s.²⁹ Ed and Agnes Driediger came from Saskatchewan to southwestern Ontario in 1957 to serve the

institution as farmer and cook. In their early thirties, the couple had been working for the previous three years at the Mennonite Youth Farm on Rosthern, SK for physically challenged girls and boys.³⁰ Not long after the Driedigers arrived, the Walls left the boys' farm to start a similar program for girls in nearby Parkhill. The Driedigers would remain at the farm for the next thirteen years and despite the lack of formal training (Ed had a grade eight education), he soon became the director of the farm. It was under his leadership that alternative methods of discipline were tried. It was also during Driediger's time as director that the advisory board negotiated their on-going relationship with the Ontario Welfare Council, that staff were encouraged to train professionally, and that in the face of pressures towards secularization, religious expectations were refined, but kept foundational to farm life.³¹

Driediger, with his "big stature," his "optimistic calmness," and his "just justice," immediately engendered the confidence of the Mennonite Central Committee administration, the farm staff, and the boys themselves.³² Driediger was able to bring unity to the community and the boys found someone whom they could trust.³³ This is not to say that there had not been trusting relationships before Driediger came on the scene, but perhaps Driediger's own recollection of what was in his mind a pivotal event that occurred shortly after his arrival at the farm, will illustrate his influence. Driediger recalled meeting Bob, who was among the regular runaways, in a field some distance from the farm house as the boy made one more escape attempt. According to Driediger, while Bob admitted that he would like to return, he was afraid of getting the strap. Driediger remembers his role as being Bob's advocate. According to him, when other staff insisted on corporal discipline, he gave his resignation to the board. Apparently "kindness and love" won the day for Driediger was asked to stay on as acting director, and violent punishment was banned.³⁴

Driediger quickly discerned that major problems were the lack of physical space, the low ratio of staff to boys, and the lack of maturity and training among the volunteers. Matters came to a head in 1961 when Driediger suggested resigning as acting director to become housefather. Taves was alarmed at the prospect of losing his director, and immediately arranged a trip to Mennonite Central Committee headquarters in Akron, Pennsylvania, to discuss the matter with the Executive Secretary of the organization.³⁵ The upshot of the matter was the recognition that it was too difficult to expect one housefather to "keep effective control and form

meaningful relationships” with twenty boys. The board decided to go to the more costly route of cottage care recommended by social services. Two cottages were to be built which would house ten boys and a housefather and housemother in each.³⁶

Further, Taves ensured that despite Driediger’s lack of training, his position as leader was upheld. This was problematic, for Ontario Social Services was pressuring the advisory board to hire more professionals. Taves, on his part, was not to be dissuaded. He stressed that despite Driediger’s lack of formal education, his “steadiness and his insight and ability with the boys made him the natural leader of the staff.” Taves insisted that as Mennonites, they should resist being driven by society’s expectations. There may have been a trend in the Canadian welfare state towards becoming more professional, but Taves held to his position, reminding the board that the church was in the program to make an important contribution to society, not to conform to secular pressures. Thus at Taves’ insistence, the board formally appointed Driediger as director of Boys’ Farm early in 1962.³⁷

Under Driediger’s leadership, and with increasing demand from Children’s Aid Societies as far afield as Parry Sound and Ottawa, the two cottages originally planned became three. By 1964, with funding from the provincial government, ten boys and a set of houseparents were set up in each of the “sturdy” new brick cottages.³⁸ This expansion by no means solved all the Farm’s problems. Driediger continued to be faced with frequent staff turnover, and applicants for open positions rarely qualified for the job. For instance in 1965, Driediger needed to replace one-third of his staff of twenty-four. Abe Willms’ assessed the situation in an article published in the *Canadian Mennonite* that year: “One should enter a job like this only with strong nerves, outstanding balance in personality, and a constant willingness to ‘walk the extra mile for a friend’ holding every boy as friend even when he is being quite unfriendly.”³⁹

To better prepare them for the challenges of their work, houseparents were encouraged to participate in staff conferences. In this setting they could attempt to understand the problems that the boys brought with them from their pasts. Further, although they did not always avail themselves of the opportunity, these meetings gave houseparents the occasion to express their own feelings of frustration and to share with their colleagues.⁴⁰

Roles continued to be defined according to the traditional Mennonite approach to child rearing. In short, the housefather was to be in charge of

the house and the boys, for strong “male control” was seen to be the key to keeping the boys in line. Not only was the housefather the disciplinarian, but he was responsible also for boys during work assignments on the farm and for their religious life; further, he oversaw the boys’ finances and in consultation with the housemother assigned each boy a room and a bed.⁴¹

What is especially striking about the job description is that there was none for the housemother. Similar to views of motherhood in the larger society, her role was assumed. Initially, as was mentioned earlier, Ann Wall took on all of the household duties. As the staff expanded to include cooks and laundresses, the housemother’s role changed to that of middle-class mother of the 1950s and 1960s, except this matriarch had twenty children. She was expected to create a “homey touch” for the boys which meant encouraging all twenty to get ready for school and church, helping them with homework, supervising indoor games, making sure they took their soiled sheets and clothing to a central laundry depot, and supervising the serving of dinner to her large family.⁴² Driediger recognized the great stress that this living arrangement put on houseparents, and by 1965 he had hired six married couples, three for each cottage, and three relief, to allow weekends off and summer holiday time.⁴³

Meanwhile, most boys studied at the farm school, by now all day. Government funding allowed the farm to increase the staff to a principal and four teachers with about six boys in each classroom. No longer a volunteer enterprise, by the mid-1960s, both houseparents and teachers received salaries comparable to what they would have received elsewhere. Indeed, it is striking that by the latter part of the decade, the desire to voluntarily serve society motivated few of the workers. While the desire to help was no doubt part of it, similar to other young people of the sixties, most were interested in the adventure of employment in a new locale. For instance in 1969, when Driediger invited his nephew Jack Willms and his wife Audrey to come from Saskatoon, SK to serve as houseparents, Jack, a sociology and psychology major at University of Saskatchewan, saw the opportunity to experience another part of Canada, and a career opportunity. He spent the next ten years of his life at the farm, three as houseparent, then three as social worker and the last four as executive director of the institution.⁴⁴

Back to the early 1960s, while the houseparent staff was expanding, and the school system was becoming more professional, Social Services

was pressuring the advisory council to hire trained case workers as well. Initially, this presented a problem. The institution was run by a denomination largely composed of rural folk for whom higher education still meant, for most, high school, with perhaps teacher training. In short, although there were some exceptions to the rule, it was difficult to find Mennonite social workers who were willing to serve in that setting.⁴⁵

A solution to the problem was for the institution to fund certain workers with an aptitude for social work to further their education in the field. Thus in 1961, the advisory board appointed Howard Otterbein from New Dundee, ON, for a term of seven years, with the understanding that he would enrol in the University of Western Ontario's social work program.⁴⁶ Otterbein supplemented the houseparent's role by spending individual time with each boy, and by bringing in films and speakers to further train the houseparents.⁴⁷ Two years later, a second staff person was encouraged to pursue a social work degree. During the 1960s, in all, the advisory board sponsored six individuals in this way with a third social worker added to the staff in 1966.⁴⁸

Young Mennonites were thus prepared to serve professionally, and positive results were seen on the farm. When Otterbein returned from his studies in 1963, he was pleased with the improved atmosphere. With added staff, he observed less "repressive measures" than formerly were needed for control; further, with their added training, houseparents appeared to garner more authority; finally, Driediger himself "sound[ed] more like a social worker everyday."⁴⁹

Further, in the late 1960s, some of the previous patriarchal assumptions were challenged when two young women applied for social work positions at Boys' Farm. Much discussion of Anita Klassen's and Betty Kehler's merits for the position ensued at the board level. Was it a good investment to educate a woman? "The feeling was that girls should have the option of marriage." Finally, however, perhaps against their better judgement but under Driediger's and Otterbein's advice, the personnel committee of the advisory board acquiesced to a social climate that allowed women to move into professional careers.⁵⁰

In 1964 a name change, and a halfway house which opened up in the nearby city of London, symbolized the transition that had been taking place through the first half of the decade. The Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm advisory board acquiesced to the newly trained social workers and renamed the institution Craigwood, while the London group home came to be known

as Craigwood extension. As the new professionals explained, “the term Boys’ Farm denotes an institution operated along nineteenth-century Dickinsonian lines.” They worried that government social services might be “prejudiced against such a name.” Furthermore, they were concerned that the boys might “feel a stigma to being attached to a boys’ farm.” When the old guard reminded them that “the name Ailsa Craig Boys’ Farm ha[d] found a warm response within the Ontario Mennonite constituency,” the concern was minimized. Christian principles would be upheld, but the name change to Craigwood would become a metaphor for what the London extension made concrete. Officially, boys’ farm would enter the modern world, in name and in urban outreach.⁵¹

Other decisions confirmed this direction, some with detrimental results in church relations. For instance, the conservative Waterloo-Markham group stopped supporting the farm when Driediger insisted on purchasing television sets for the boys.⁵² No doubt the conservative element was also disenchanted with the shift in the farm enterprise. The livestock, which had previously been kept despite little profit because they were seen “to bring psychological and spiritual healing to disturbed boys,” were all sold by 1964 to grow corn as a cash crop.⁵³ Further, by the latter 1960s the preserves contributed by Mennonite women were outlawed by the government as unsafe.⁵⁴

Nor were the more progressive churches inclined to support the project in the way that they had done immediately after the war. To reverse this trend, Taves attempted to play on the sensibilities of the membership by making a Mother’s Day appeal. “All of us feel grateful to our Mothers!” he wrote to the pastors of all the Mennonite congregations in southern Ontario. “There are many children who may have mothers, but in whose mind the concepts of ‘love,’ ‘motherhood,’ and ‘family’ do not create pleasant, secure or loving images. We are speaking of the emotionally disturbed children in the homes and institutions across our country.”⁵⁵ Perhaps it was to the women that Taves made his appeal, for a women’s auxiliary, composed of representatives from the various Mennonite groups supporting the farm, continued to sustain the institution by furnishing cottages and decorating new and renovated buildings until 1970. General church contributions, though, continued to decline throughout the decade.⁵⁶ The result of this flagging church support was that Craigwood became increasingly dependent on the government for financial support.⁵⁷

The Craigwood advisory board and its staff also came to rely ever

more heavily on counsel from government agencies.⁵⁸ Yet despite the increasing dependence on government, there was much ambivalence about the direction given by social services. The most contentious point of interaction with social welfare throughout the decade was Craigwood's religious principles. For instance, in 1960 the Department of Child Welfare took issue with boys being routinely taken to the local Mennonite church, insisting that they should be allowed to worship with their own denominations. Ailsa Craig responded by pointing out that for a time, the local ministerial had taken turns conducting Sunday evening services at the farm, but it did not work; the boys had become restless during services and the ministers had found it too difficult "to create a worshipful atmosphere." Years later, Agnes Driediger recalled these attempts with empathy towards the boys: "It was hard on [them . . . they] were not used to going to church at all." The solution was to take them to the Mennonite church with farm staff to supervise, and Ed Driediger to teach them in Sunday school.⁵⁹

Initially workers saw it as their mission to see the boys "saved." But early in the decade concerns with "sin, punishment, reward," and "salvation" gave way to the foundation of "love" for "emotionally disturbed children." In Driediger's words, on the advice of a Mennonite leader whom he admired, he was able to come to the point of giving up "counting sheep" and letting "God count the sheep."⁶⁰ In practical terms, this meant allowing a boy who had run away in 1963 complaining that there was "too much religion, too few girls and too many rules," to stay in his room on Sunday mornings when he returned to the farm, until he chose to go back to church on his own.⁶¹ It also meant staff putting up with much abuse from the boys. That same year Driediger reported a conversation with the mother of one of the boys: "How can you people take the physical and verbal abuse that you do without retaliating?" she asked him. "We certainly can't take it from our son." Putting the farm's nonresistant philosophy into words, Driediger replied that while "it is not . . . easy . . . part of our work is to show the boys that their violence is not always met with the same and that personal pride doesn't mean a thing."⁶²

At the same time, Craigwood administration was more geared towards working with the boys, than with their families. In 1965, an Ontario Welfare Council study of Craigwood urged case workers to keep closer relations with the parents of their charges. Social workers did follow up by seeing that boys made contact with home two or three times a year, but Driediger preferred to continue the attempt to be family to the boys.

Perhaps the most revealing example of this is the summer cross-Canada trips on which he and several staff took their thirty charges. The facility would rent a bus and camp from Ailsa Craig to the Okanagan. A favourite stop was Manitou Lake at Watrous, SK near Driediger's former home. While it is likely a coincidence that this was near a spa resort with a history of people coming there seeking cures, it must have been restorative for the boys to show off to Driediger's nephew young John Willms, who recalls watching in awe as these adventuresome city boys performed their stunts in the local diving hole. It must have also been therapeutic for these boys to be accepted as extended family by Driediger's sister Ann and her brood. Ann Willms would serve the entire gang dinner and wash several dozen pairs of blue jeans and t-shirts, soliciting young John's help in hanging them all by hand on her clothesline.⁶³ Indeed, the boys were included in the circle of Driediger's western family during several summer trips during the sixties, despite such misdemeanours as stealing a car en route home one summer.⁶⁴

With their strong commitment to the boys, the Craigwood administration refused to abide by social services' recommendation that boys be kept in an institution's charge for only two years. Craigwood insisted on keeping boys under sixteen years of age, as long as they deemed necessary; on at least one occasion, a boy remained at the farm for a full five years. Further, the whole purpose of the Craigwood extension was to allow boys who had turned sixteen and were unable to return to their families, a supervised opportunity to re-enter city life.⁶⁵ Finally, social welfare's classification of the farm as being appropriate to cater only to boys who were "mildly disturbed," seemed limiting to Craigwood's advisory board. Their application to be put under the Department of Mental Health, which helped fund facilities caring for children suffering from more severe mental or emotional disorders, illustrates that they refused to be totally shaped by the government agency.⁶⁶

For Ed and Agnes Driediger, the increasingly close surveillance by the social welfare department meant that the era of voluntary service for the dedicated nonprofessional was over. Like the Wall's had some ten years earlier, in 1970 the Driedigers also left the farm to start their own foster home in Ailsa Craig. Meanwhile, Howard Otterbein stepped into Driediger's place, making the transition to a professional institution complete.⁶⁷ Ed Driediger, his wife Agnes, and the dedicated Mennonite personnel that had worked under them over the years, left their mark,

however. Despite the gradual decline of church support, the increased dependence on government funding, and the professionalization that took place through the 1960s, the ethos of the farm remained fundamentally Christian. In 1970, spiritual concerns remained a priority for the Craigwood board and its staff as they continued, in their words, “to rethink their relationship to [government] agencies and their responsibility for running a unique program of service.”⁶⁸

In retrospect, boys like John Butterfield who returned to the farm with his wife Betty to serve as houseparents in 1968 on one end of the spectrum, and Teddy, who returned to visit after being released on parole for killing a man on the other, made Ailsa Craig’s philosophy of Christian love seem worthwhile. As John’s earlier testimony had suggested, the love shown at Ailsa Craig had reached him in a personal way. But who’s to say that Teddy’s return did not also illustrate the success of the farm? Years later, Driediger recalled how on his visit, Teddy wanted to see pictures of himself and the other boys. “There’s me, and there’s me,” he said. “He sat there and laughed, tears rolling down his face as if he had found some roots.” Five jail terms later, upon his release, he phoned the Driedigers from Richmond Hill, BC where he was then managing a condominium building: “He told me,” Driediger recalled, that “he was doing well because of what I learned from you . . . to have faith in God.”⁶⁹

The Craigwood story continues. Throughout the 1970s, the farm came increasingly under government control and by 1983, it formally severed its ties with the Mennonite Central Committee. Further research might explore whether the institution’s religious foundations crumbled with this change. Other questions that beg to be answered are around the gender constructs that shaped the institution and the boys’ and their parents’ expectations and experiences of the farm. Did the farm make as positive a contribution to the working-class culture which it served as it did for the Mennonite church which sponsored it? These, and other questions, remain to be yet addressed in this important piece of Canada’s religious history.

Endnotes

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2. *Canadian Mennonite*, 05 December 1958, 1.
3. *Canadian Mennonite*, 05 December 1958, 8; Minutes of the Military Problems Committee, 31 March 1955, Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario) Papers (hereafter MCCO Papers), Mennonite Historical Archives of Ontario (hereafter MHAO).
4. Minutes of the Ailsa Craig Boys' Farm (hereafter ACBF) Advisory Council, 12 November 1954; and Report of a study meeting to consider ACBF held at the School of Social Work, 26 October 1954, MCCO papers, MHAO.
5. Ted Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 125.
6. John Rose, Letter to ACBF Board of Directors, 21 September 1961, MCCO papers, MHAO; and P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in English Canada, 1880-1950* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 403.
7. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada*, 382.
8. Rooke and Schnell, *Discarding the Asylum*, 408-410.
9. Shirley Tillotson, "Class and Community in Canadian Welfare Work, 1933-1960," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, No. 1 (Spring 1997): 84, n.1. Tillotson identifies Christina Simmons, R.L. Schell and Patricia Rooke, Carolyn Strange, Diana Pedersen, Andr ee L evesque, and Franca Iacovetta as some who have counterbalanced this trend, 84, n.2.
10. David Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the crisis of belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 18; see also 249.
11. *Canadian Mennonite*, 14 December 1956, 7; Jack and Ann Wall, interview by Linda Huebert Hecht in Kitchener, ON, 7 October 1997. Report by Harvey Taves to Advisory Council of ACBF, 27 June 1958, and letter from Ed Driediger to Esther Martin, 21 December 1967, MCCO papers, MHAO.

12. *Canadian Mennonite*, 14 December 1956, 7; and Minutes of ACBF Advisory Council, 12 November 1954, MCCO papers, MHAO.
13. Jack and Ann Wall interview.
14. Susan Houston, "The 'Waifs and Strays' of a Late Victorian City: Juvenile Delinquents in Toronto," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 131.
15. Director's report to ACBF Advisory Council, 07 June 1957, MCCO papers, MHAO.
16. Dave and Alice Martens, interview by Linda Huebert Hecht in Waterloo, ON, 17 March 1997; Ed and Agnes Driediger, interview by Linda Huebert Hecht in Aylmer, ON, 22 March 1997; and ACBF "Admissions Policy," 1960, MCCO papers, MHAO.
17. Carol Baines, "The Children of Earls court, 1915-1948: All in the Same Boat, 'Except we were in a better boat'," *Canadian Social Work Review* 2, No. 2 (Summer 1994): 185.
18. Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 92-93.
19. Minutes recorded by Study Committee of ACBF Advisory Council, 12 March 1955, MCCO papers, MHAO.
20. Baines, "Children of Earls court," 190; see also Dennis Guest on the conditions which social welfare, as it developed in twentieth century Canada, aimed to alleviate (*The Emergence of Social Security in Canada* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980], 49).
21. Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society*, 93.
22. Tillotson, "Class and Community in Canadian Welfare Work," 69; see also Rooke and Schnell on the development of the post World War II welfare state which transformed dependent child life (in *Discarding the Asylum*, 408-410).
23. *Canadian Mennonite*, 14 December 1956; Betty van der Smissen, "Report on Recreation Program for ACBF," 1956, and report of Alden Bohn, director of ACBF to ACBF Advisory Board, 21 June 1958, MCCO papers, MHAO.
24. *Canadian Mennonite*, 14 December 1956, 7-8; Dave and Alice Martens interview; report of Director, 31 March 1955, MCCO papers, MHAO; and John (Jack) Willms, interview by Lucille Marr in Edmonton, AB, 9 May 1997.

25. Dave and Alice Martens interview.
26. Dave and Alice Martens interview; and Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
27. Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society*, 241.
28. Report of Director to ACBF Advisory Board; and "Philosophy and Operation of ACBF," December 1959, MCCO papers, MHAO.
29. Letter from John Rose to Iva Taves, 20 July 1965, Iva Taves private papers.
30. Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
31. Director's report to the Board of Managers of the ACBF, December 1959; and Minutes of ACBF Board of Directors, 1 September 1960, MCCO papers, MHAO.
32. ACBF Board of Directors Executive committee, 23 January 1961; and Director's report to ACBF executive committee, 23 January 1961, MCCO papers, MHAO; Dave and Alice Martens interview; and Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
33. Minutes of ACBF Board, January 1964; Minutes of Craigwood Board, 7 September 1965, MCCO papers, MHAO; and Dave and Alice Martens interview.
34. Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
35. Linda Huebert Hecht pointed out the gravity of the situation: see Memorandum, confidential to Board of Directors from Harvey Taves, 21 September 1961, MCCO papers, MHAO.
36. Minutes of ACBF Executive Committee, 27 April 1961 and 28 December 1961, MCCO paper, MHAO; and Rooke and Schnell, *Discarding the Asylum*, 403.
37. Harvey Taves to ACBF board, 15 January 1962; Harvey Taves to Wm. Snyder, 31 January 1962, MCCO, MHAO; and Rooke and Schnell, *Discarding the Asylum*, 407.
38. Harvey Taves, "Record of interview with the Honorable Louis P. Cecile, Minister of Public Welfare of Ontario," 9 May 1962; Ed Driediger, Director, report to ACBF Board, January 1964; Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario) Annual Report (1966), 18, MCCO papers, MHAO; and *Canadian Mennonite*, 7 December 1965, 1.

39. *Canadian Mennonite*, 7 December 1965, 1; List of administration and personnel at ACBF, June 1962; and Minutes of Craigwood Board, 14 December 1965 and April 1966, MCCO papers, MHAO.
40. Minutes of ACBF Board of Directors, 29 December 1960; and Director's report to ACBF Board, January 1964, MCCO papers, MHAO.
41. Executive Committee of ACBF Board, 23 January 1961; Ed Driediger, Director's report to the ACBF Board, 8 January 1963 and Jan. 1964; and Minutes of MCCO Welfare Section, October 1970, MCCO papers, MHAO.
42. Don and Inez Uchytel, interview by Lucille Marr in Stoney Plain, AB, 19 January 1997; and Harvey and Ruth Krahn, interview by Lucille Marr in Edmonton, AB, 2 February 1997.
43. Ed Driediger, Director's report to the ACBF Board, March 1965, MCCO papers, MHAO.
44. Harvey Taves to J. Robarts, Minister of Education, 18 September 1961; Minutes, Craigwood Board of Directors, April 1966, 3 May 1966, October 1969, MCCO papers, MHAO; *Canadian Mennonite*, 7 December 1965, 1; Don and Inez Uchytel interview; and John Willms interview.
45. William Klassen, speaker at ACBF Study Conference, Nairn Mennonite Church, 9 November 1961, MCCO papers, MHAO.
46. Minutes, ACBF Board of Directors, 1 September 1960, 30 March 1962, MCCO papers, MHAO.
47. Case workers report to the ACBF Board of Directors, 30 March 1961, MCCO papers, MHAO.
48. Minutes, Executive Committee of ACBF Board of Directors, 30 March 1961; Director's report to ACBF board, 10 September 1963; and Minutes, Craigwood Board of Directors, October 1965, 3 May 1966, 1 November 1967, March 1968, 12 December 1969, January 1970, MCCO papers, MHAO.
49. Caseworker's report to ACBF Board of Directors, 19 November 1963, MCCO papers, MHAO.
50. Minutes, Craigwood Board of Directors, 10 April 1968, January 1970; Director's report to Board of Directors, March 1969; and Caseworker's report to Board of Directors, 12 December 1969, September 1970, MCCO papers, MHAO.
51. Minutes, ACBF Board of Directors of Directors, July 1964, MCCO papers, MHAO.

52. Ed and Agnes Driediger interview; Minutes, ACBF Board of Directors, March 1962, MCCO papers, MHAO.
53. Harvey Taves to Peter Bunnett, 29 March 1962; Minutes, ACBF Board of Directors, February 1964; and Director's report to Craigwood Board of Directors, 14 December 1965, MCCO papers, MHAO.
54. Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
55. J.B. Martin to pastors of Conference of Historic Peace Churches constituency, 5 March 1962; Harvey Taves to Ontario Mennonite ministers, 4 March 1962; Harvey Taves to ACBF Board of Directors, 27 March 1962; and Minutes, Craigwood Board of Directors, October 1965, MCCO papers, MHAO.
56. Mennonite Central Committee, Annual Report (1966), 18; and Director's report to Craigwood Board of Directors, 19 March 1969, MCCO papers, MHAO.
57. Minutes, Craigwood Board of Directors, 14 June 1966.
58. Linda Huebert Hecht pointed this out: see Minutes, Craigwood Board of Directors, 13 September 1966.
59. Minutes, ACBF Board of Directors, 29 December 1960; Harvey Taves to W.A. Bury, Director of Child Welfare, 13 December 1960, MCCO papers, MHAO; and Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
60. Caseworker's report to ACBF executive committee; Minutes, ACBF Board of Directors, 23 January 1961; ACBF study conference, 9 November 1961; "Craigwood," publicity booklet, 1968, MCCO papers, MHAO; and Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
61. Caseworker's report to ACBF Board of Directors, 2 April 1963, MCCO papers, MHAO.
62. Director's report to ACBF Board of Directors, 8 January 1963, MCCO papers, MHAO.
63. Report on ACBF summer trip, 1961; Director's report to Board of Directors, 10 September 1964; Minutes, Craigwood Board of Directors, 14 March 1967, MCCO papers, MHAO; John Willms, interview; and Sid Marty, "Saltwater Solace," *Canadian Geographic* (September-October 1997): 70-71.
64. Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
65. Caseworker's report to the Craigwood Board of Directors, January 1964; "Craigwood" publicity booklet, 1968, MCCO papers, MHAO; and Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.

66. Craigwood study, 1966; "Report from Child Welfare Branch by C.T. Rousell; Director's report to Craigwood Board, 15 February 1967; Wilson Hunsberger to Betty Graham, Director of Child Welfare, 5 April 1967; "The Children's Mental Health Centres Act," *Statutes of Ontario*, 1968-69; and Minutes, Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario, Welfare Section), 2 March 1970), MCCO papers, MHAO.
67. Minutes of Craigwood Board of Directors, October 1969; Craigwood Personnel List, 16 February 1970, MCCO papers, MHAO; and Ed and Agnes Driediger interview.
68. Minutes of Craigwood Board of Directors, 24 June 1970, MCCO papers, MHAO.
69. Ed and Agnes Driediger interview; and Director's report to Craigwood Board of Directors, 3 January 1969; 11 September 1968, MCCO papers, MHAO.

