

Access Press

Volume 19, Number 9

Minnesota's Disability



Community Newspaper

September 10, 2008

Access Press -- Bringing News and Information to People with Disabilities since 1990

E-text Version

In This Issue

**Theater Review
Updates**

At A Glance

Upcoming Events

Performances

Organizations

Back Issues

About Us

Contact Us

Subscribe

**Advertise in
Access Press**

History Note

Institutions 'grew' gentlemen farmers

by Luther Granquist

In 1901, the Minnesota Legislature established the Board of Control to manage the state institutions and prisons and required the board to meet regularly with the superintendents and wardens to consider "in detail" methods to secure "economical management." At quarterly conferences, they often discussed how best to manage the farms at their institutions. These "farming industries," as Superintendent A.C. Rogers from the Faribault State School and Hospital referred to them in a paper he presented in 1914, provided needed support for the institutions and real work for some of the residents.

The reports of these conferences show that the psychiatrists and doctors who ran the institutions became gentlemen farmers with strong opinions about which cow was the better "milch cow" and whether oxen or horses should be used for hauling. In 1909, after presentations by university professors on how to get maximum milk yield from dairy herds, Dr. Harry Tomlinson, the superintendent of St. Peter State Hospital, responded that "cows must be studied individually, if we are going to deal with them intelligently." He observed that some characteristics of cows indicate a "defect in the nervous system" that "may be aggravated by lack of intelligence on the part of the herdsman." He discussed "the influence of the environment upon the health of the cow" and warned of the harm from having one hundred cows in a barn "without a supply of good air and sunshine."

The institutions' residents who worked on these farms did receive good air and sunshine, although usually without pay. Unfortunately, then, and for decades that followed, herd care in understaffed and overcrowded buildings was all that many institution residents received.

The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, www.mnddc.org or www.mncdd.org and www.partnersinpolicymaking.com



Access Press

(651) 644 - 2133

Tim Benjamin
Publisher &
Editor-in-Chief