

Chapter 8 - Health Care and Education at Theodore

Adult Education

While the events surrounding the building and operations of a community' school is an essential element in its history, a second important element, and one that it often overlooked, are the numerous events that can be classified as adult education. In Theodore, as in most other prairie communities, adult education often to the form of a one or two day event sponsored by a government agency or the extension department of the University of Saskatchewan. Additionally, almost all of these educational events were of a practical nature, focussing primarily on agriculture or homemaking.

Better Farming Trains

One of the earliest form of adult education were the Better Farming Trains that every summer between 1914 and 1922 toured Saskatchewan, and provided lectures, demonstrations and exhibits on five agricultural topics: livestock, field husbandry, boys' and girls, household science, poultry, and farm Mechanics. The train usually consisted of one lecture car for each of the topics covered together with one or more demonstration or exhibit cars for each topic.¹

In the spring of 1920 the arrival of the Better Farming Train was announced in the Theodore news column as follows:

That very popular institution, the "Better Farming Train." which is sometimes called the "University on Wheels," will visit this section of the province next month.

The equipment this year will be practically the same as last year. There will be two large automobiles or machinery cars to carry the livestock and feed and two large flat cars, one fitted up with pens to carry sheep and hogs, and the other to be used as a live stock demonstration car.

The moving picture car which was a popular feature of the train last year will again be the leading feature of attraction for the boys and girls some splendid new films have been secured, the best of these being moving pictures of pelicans, blue herons, terns and other curious birds which were taken at Lake Johnson last year under the direction of F. Bradshaw, chief game guardian for the province. There will be two coaches fitted up for men's lecture cars, a coach for women's lecture car, a nursery car fitted up with sand piles, slides and cribs and with capable nurses in charge so that tired mothers can leave their children in care while they are attending lectures or visiting the various exhibits on the train. There will be three large coaches used in displaying field husbandry exhibits and another car to display dairy, mechanical, building and poultry exhibits. The train and entire equipment is furnished free by the Canadian Pacific Railway, which is sparing no expense to make the Better Farming Train of the greatest possible service to the farmers of the province.²



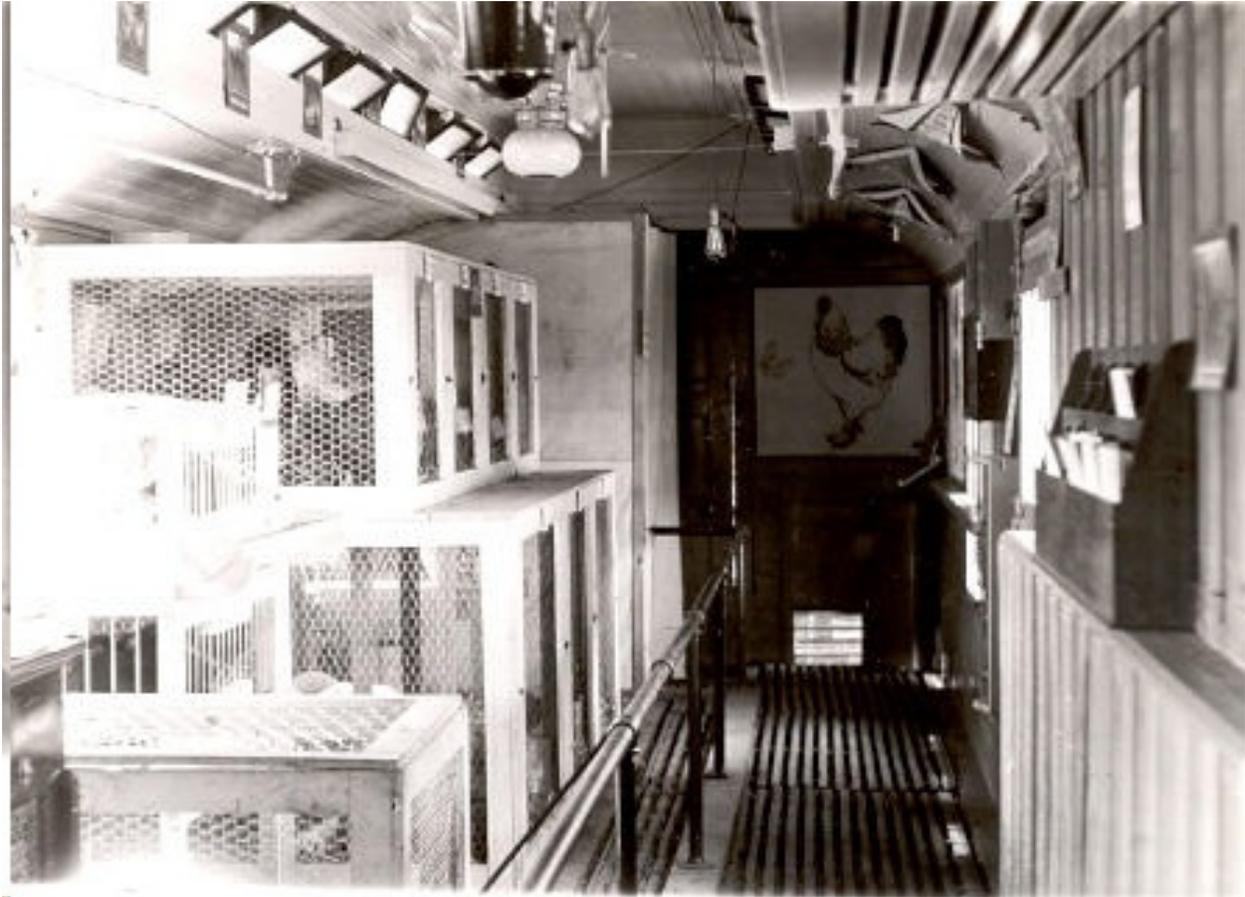
A Livestock Car of the Better Farming Train 1920 Public Domain Media



Lecture car of the Better Farming Train. Interior of lecture car for Crop Production. 1920
Public Domain Media

With the development of extension's short courses at the university, the Better Farming Trains were discontinued in 1923, but a scaled down program consisting of one or two railway cars continued to exist for number of years.³ On 1 April, 1925, for example, several railway cars with information on forage visited Theodore, and in the spring of 1929 the Seed Grain Cleaning Cars sent out by the Department of Agriculture and the Canadian Pacific Railway visited Theodore with information on the best way to eradicate weeds.^{4 5} The Seed Cleaning Cars attracted large crowds of farmers and others who found the various talks and lectures on weeds

and weed control to be both interesting and instructive.⁶ The popularity of these educational events was such that in 1931 so many farmers from the Theodore district visited the train cars that many were unable to gain entry to the lectures on poultry and dairying.⁷



Poultry car of the Better Farming Train. Interior of lecture car for Crop Production. 1920
Public Domain Media

University Extension Programs

In the spring of 1916 the short course in domestic science was presented in Theodore was deemed to be a great success. The ladies who had attended said that they learned a great deal from the demonstrations of Mrs. Archibald and the lectures of the Misses DeLury and Harrison.⁸

In February, 1923 a demonstration of Home Nursing was offered in the Union Church, and all women and older girls in Theodore were urged to take advantage of the opportunity.⁹

Short courses such as those described above proved to be quite popular across the province and during the 1920's the University of Saskatchewan developed a number of other short courses, meetings and programs which could be presented in the various community halls across the province. In March 1923, for example, lectures on forage crops and the place of live stock in a properly balanced farming operating was presented to farmers in the auditorium of the Union Church while in the basement another presentation on nutrition and cookery was presented to the ladies. Both presentation were free of charge as was the evening program of educational moving pictures or lantern views and a public lecture.¹⁰ In 1925 presentation on swine improvement and livestock problems were offered by the extension department of the University of Saskatchewan, each of which attracted a good number of farmers.^{11 12}

Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program

Early in 1937 the Dominion Government inaugurated the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program for young people of both sexes who were between the ages of 18 and 30. It was estimated that by the end of the year approximately 35,000 young Canadians the program had taken some form of vocational training under the program.¹³

At the end of December, 1937 it was announced in the Theodore news column that a course for unemployed girls would be held in Theodore, beginning on January 10.¹⁴ Within a week of the announcement thirty young women had applied for the five-day course.¹⁵ The course was described as follows:

The Theodore Community Hall is a busy place this week, while the five-day course under the Government Youth Training Program is in full swing, with forty-eight enthusiastic girls and "Dad" Ashdown in attendance. Two instructors, Miss Isobel Clare, in charge of Food Nutrition and Handiwork, and Miss P. Currie directing sewing and agricultural classes, demonstrate in, and lecture on, cookery and house keeping methods, sewing, knitting, crocheting and smocking, and beekeeping and other agricultural topics also interest the girls, while "Dad" Ashdown interests himself with looking at the girls. The girls are organized into "families" and assist the cooks in cooking, serving, meals, clearing the tables washing dishes and keeping the quarters tidy. The evening classes are mostly cultural, recreational and social, several ladies assisting in the programs. The girls and their friends will be guests of the local Community Club at a whist drive and dance to take place in the hall on Wednesday evening. On Friday the committee will close the five-day course with a banquet. The committee in charge wishes to thank all who so generously contributed to make the course such a splendid success.

As a result of the five-day course mentioned above, we are of the opinion that this district and village will be swamped with young men in search of wives who will be able to make pie that can be eaten without the aid of backsaw.¹⁶

The Government school for unemployed girls that was in session here for five days last week, wound up its course on Friday evening with a grand banquet to its forty-eight attendant young ladies. Miss Currie, who was in charge, stated that the Theodore class was one of the best that she had the pleasure of teaching at any school in Saskatchewan, both as regards to numbers and intelligence shown. Monday evening's session was devoted to home nursing and Mrs. Scott Richardson, of Theodore conducted the classes through this part of the day's proceedings. On Tuesday evening Miss B. I. Archer of the local school staff gave a talk on "Developing a Pleasing Personality," and seemed well qualified as instructor in this line. As a result of this youth training course, five profitable days were spent by the young ladies of this town and district, whose knowledge gained will pay good dividends later.¹⁷

As a follow-up to the course, an achievement day was held in Theodore Hall the following June. Supervisors from the university were present to inspect the work accomplished by those who had taken the five-day course in January and to help the girls in any new work they may wish to undertake. Participants who had attended the five-day winter course were asked to get a list of articles for display from Mrs. A. P. Swallow.¹⁸

The success of the five-day course in 1938 prompted the local chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) to sponsor a second course of six week duration which

was held in January 1939.¹⁹ Under the leadership of Mrs. Carey and Miss Hogg of the Household Economics Branch, of the University of Saskatchewan 33 young women attended the course in the village hall.²⁰ The aroma that emanated from the hall after each cooking lesson prompted the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* to predict that the services of the participants would be in demand by the local bachelors.²¹

By the time the course ended in mid February 42 young women had received instruction in cooking, sewing, and other household work. To wind up the session the participants invited their mothers or, in the absence of their mothers, some other lady of the village, to an afternoon tea.²²

The six-week course was described in *The Yorkton Enterprise* as follows:

Dominion -Provincial Youth Training at Theodore Concludes

Girls Develop Personalities as Result of Youth Training Classes and Given Education in Scientific House-Keeping.

To those who are not aware of the purpose of the Youth Training Schools that have been operating in various centres throughout the present winter, and in some localities a year ago, we would refer to the work that has been accomplished in the Theodore school which closed on Tuesday evening, February 14, after completing a six weeks' course.

The schools are maintained by funds jointly provided by Dominion and provincial governments and the purpose is to train the youth in such a way that they will be better fitted in every way to fill their place in coming days. In some localities, boys' schools are operating, where manual training is taught, and information in a practical way instilled into their minds. Other localities have schools operating for the training of young ladies whose ages range between sixteen and thirty years.

This was the case in the Theodore school, and we might say here that great credit, is due the members. of the local branch of the IODE, who were chiefly instrumental in securing this training school for Theodore and whose members took a heavy task upon themselves in the way of making provision for school and residential accommodation for teachers and pupils. They were successful in securing the use of the large Theodore town hall for classroom purposes at a minimum rental that covers cost of heating and lighting and also secured two suitable dwelling houses in which the teachers and pupils lived and carried on practical housekeeping, the girls being under the supervision of one of the instructors and the numbers being divided between the two dwellings.

The girls were formed into different groups, whose duty it was to take week about doing the Cooking and general housekeeping in the homes, while one of the instructors attended either home, always assisting the girls with advice and showing them the best method best method of doing their daily duties. In the classrooms all manner of useful work was taken up. Sewing, knitting, crochet work, cooking, baking, dressmaking, etc., filled each day, with useful education for each pupil, while one of the instructors, who is an expert gardener handed out much useful information in regard to outside work of this nature.

Each girl was subject to sensible discipline and those who were backward socially were encourage to better things. Personality developed all along the line and each girl was given a certain amount of responsibility that will prove of great value in coming days. Some of the work that has been accomplished might be mentioned here. Each girl was required to make for herself a cotton house dress, a pair of leather gloves, hooked. chair seats from old wool or silk material, designs being original and each pupil working out her own design; five-piece sets of table mats have been made by each on a hand loom and many other articles have been made as a result of the careful teaching of the untiring instructors in charge...

Lectures have been given on such subjects as beekeeping, gardening and poultry-raising, while instruction in physical training was given, for which Mr. Bonney of Theodore deserves thanks. Travelling instructors have given practical education on general recreation topics such as recreation in rural communities, drama, folk dancing, etc. Mrs. A. L. Spencer of Springside addressed the girls on one occasion on forming a drama club, while Dr. Turner gave them a talk on another occasion on subjects relating a health preservation, sanitation, etc., and M. Conrad, of the local school staff, lead them on another evening in community singing.

As a result of the course of training that has been given them, it is expected that these girls will return to their various homes and put into daily practice the valuable things that have been learned Its well as share them with others less fortunate than themselves. In this way only can the full benefit be derived from the money spent. The lessons in co-operation given, the development of personality in each pupil and the general good obtained in every day's teaching should prove invaluable to each pupil directly and to the communities in which they live. For the two competent ladies who acted as instructors in this we have nothing but words of praise. The fully understand their work and spared no pains to impart their knowledge to their pupils. To those who in any way added to the value of the school or to those who worked so hard and faithfully to make the school possible, the citizens will offer their hearty thanks. And in this connection we would mention the members of the IODE, Dr, Turner Mrs. Spencer, Mr. Conrad, Mr. Bonney and ll other who assisted in any capacity.²³

As in 1938 an "Achievement Day" was held some months after the course concluded. In

September, 1939 the participants in the course were asked to bring the results of tomato-raising

project to L. L. Larson's store where they would be exhibited and judged. Ladies who had not participated in the course were encouraged to compete for the best half-dozen home-made buns.²⁴

Theodore was not the only village in the Yorkton area to participate in such educational activities. The villages of Invermay and the Rural Municipality of Orkney also had a similar course and a District Achievement Day was held in Theodore town hall in October, 1938. Tomato projects and serving were on display and there was a bread baking competition open to all with a fifty-pound sack of Five Roses Flour, as prize for the successful exhibitor.²⁵

Other Programs

In addition to those programs offered through various government programs there were several educational programs sponsored by local residents. One of the groups to sponsor educational programs for local farmers was the local branch of the United Farmers of Canada. In 1931, for example lectures were delivered on chemical fertilizers, and the means of using them to the best advantage.²⁶

Because the United Farmers had adopted a socialist point of view some of the educational programs focused on the social conditions faced by farmers. In September, 1932, for example, the Rev. E. C. Bewell, the minister of the Local United Church spoke on, "The Individual and the Social Order"²⁷ The following November Mr. John Svenbjornson of Elfros was scheduled to speak on "The Economic Problems and the Farmer," and the Rev. J. L. Pottruff of Springside, who had addressed an audience in the Dr. Brass auditorium in Yorkton on the topic of "Economic System" was also scheduled to speak on an unannounced subject.²⁸

A second group of sponsors of educational events was the local implement dealers. Beginning in the mid 1930's and continuing into the years following the Second World War, Theodore's dealers for the Cockshutt Plow Company, The international Harvester Company, The Massey-Harris Company, and the John Deere Plow Company offered lecture and picture shows depicting up-to-date farming methods. In addition to whatever advertizing value these event may have had, the lecture and pictures were often described as both interesting and instructive, and attracted many local farmers who it seems looked forward to these event.

Notes:

1. "The Better Farming Train", *University Achieves & Special Collection*. University of Saskatchewan, retrieved <https://library.usask.ca/archives/campus-history> 8 December 2012.
2. "Better Farming Train Will Visit Yorkton," *The Yorkton Energise*. 27 May, 1920.
3. "The Better Farming Train", *University Achieves & Special Collection*. University of Saskatchewan, retrieved <https://library.usask.ca/archives/campus-history> 8 December 2012.
4. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 24 March, 1925.
5. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 1 March, 1929.
6. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 March, 1929.
7. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 20 January, 1931.
8. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 23 March, 1916.
9. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 6 February, 1923.
10. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 27 February, 1923.
11. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 February, 1935.
12. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 May, 1925.
13. Edwards, Frederick. "Youth in Training," *Maclean's Magazine*. I January, 1938.
14. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 30 December, 1937.
15. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 6 January, 1938.
16. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 13 January, 1938.
17. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 20 January, 1938.
18. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 16 June, 1938.
19. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 5 January, 1939.
20. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 January, 1939.

21. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 January, 1939.
22. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 16 February, 1939.
23. "Dominion -Provincial Youth Training at Theodore Concludes," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 23 February, 1939.
24. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 1 September, 1938.
25. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 13 October, 1938.
26. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 13 February, 1931.
27. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 23 September, 1932.
28. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 October, 1932.