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How Things Have Changed The Monteith Farm

By RICHARD CAMERON

It began as an experimental farm.

In the 1920s and 1930s, it saw service as a continuation school.

During the Second World War, the site served as a prisoner-of-war compound.

Now, the Monteith complex is an industrial farm, district jail and Ontario Training Centre.

The training centre was officially opened, Thursday afternoon, by the provincial minister of reform institutions, Allan Grossman, assisted by J. W. Spooner, minister of municipal affairs and MPP for Cochrane South. They unveiled a plaque commemorating the event.

The Monteith centre is the fourth to be opened in Ontario. A fifth is under development to serve the Ottawa district.

Purpose of the training cen-

tres is to provide incarceration for young male offenders, 16 years of age, whose maximum sentences do not exceed two years less a day definite and two years less a day indefinite.

Also included are male offenders 18 to 21 years of age who are first offenders and whose maximum sentences do not exceed two years less a day definite and two years less a day indefinite.

The industrial farm, oldest part of the complex, was first opened in 1938, as an annex of the Burwash Industrial Farm. From 1940 to 1947 it served as a prisoner-of-war camp, and became a separate institution again after that date.

The farm caters to male prisoners 18 years of age and over who are repeaters with definite and indefinite sentences.

District jail facilities were or-

ganized for male prisoners remanded in custody one to two weeks for pre-sentence reports, fingerprint reports or sentencing. Male sentenced prisoners are held here until transferred to an industrial farm, training centre or reformatory.

Formerly, Haileybury District Jail was the nearest point with such facilities. Monteith, though, is not used as a lockup or remand centre for serious crimes, such as murder or manslaughter.

Monteith, according to the program prepared for the opening, is listed as medium security, although for the training centre and industrial farm, an air of casual restriction about the place suggested minimum security. There are no fences and the uniformed staff does not carry weapons.

As of Sept. 15, total staff was

79. Number of inmates, as of the same date, were, industrial farm, 72; training centre, 44, and district jail, 8. Capacity is, industrial farm, 120; training centre, 60, and district jail, 20.

The training centre, not to be confused with a training school, is designed to provide academic and trades training. The 100 persons who attended the opening ceremonies were taken on a tour of the facilities, except the industrial farm, and saw young men studying in classrooms and at work in carpenter and masonry shops. There was also a class dealing with small motor mechanics. Training school, district jail and industrial farm are segregated from each other.

In his address, Mr. Grossman pointed out that training centres are particularly concerned with the younger, trainable offender.

Punishment, he said, is loss of freedom, not loss of opportunity.

"The basic philosophy of the department of reform institutions is a philosophy of rehabilitation," said Mr. Grossman. "We are convinced that in many instances we can help a young man along the path of rehabilitation and we are encouraged by our success in other institutions like this.

"What we hope to do is to encourage him to take up a purposeful life, so that he may be a positive benefit to the community," added the minister.

He stressed that spiritual and psychological guidance is given as well, and staff is provided to help the young men re-enter society and to give counselling services.

Mr. Grossman explained that while conditions at the training centre may indicate a lack of

deterrence, "without any question, there is a most definite deterrence. When a man serves a sentence, we take away from him his freedom — this is his punishment."

The training centre provides study and recreational facilities, including a library. Visiting privileges for each inmate or student, as OTC men are called, are one visit per week with two visitors allowed per visiting period. District jail visiting privileges are more restricted, but special visits may be had with permission from the superintendent.

Superintendent at Monteith is G. B. Silcock, appointed in 1963.

Chairman for the ceremonies was L. R. Hackl, deputy minister, who is a career member of the department of reform institutions. He is a teacher by trade.

Mr. Hackl noted that inmate population at Monteith has been

declining over the years and today is considerably below the 200 or more recorded a decade ago.

The trend is true across the province, he said, as the Ontario jail population has been declining. There are about 3,000 male prisoners in Ontario, and 100 women.

Mr. Hackl said his wife assured him women were more decent than men, and as such, weren't called upon to serve time as frequently as men.

Among guests at the opening were three Northern mayors, Leo Del Villano of Timmins; M. A. Palangio of Cochrane and Leo Bouley of Hearst. Dr. Harry Hutchison, administrator, adult male institutions, also attended, as did Magistrate E. W. Kendrick of Kirkland Lake.

Civic officials and police officers, as well as several members of the general public, also

attended.

Following a tour of the district jail and training centre, housed in one of two new brick buildings, plus a visit to the workshops, guests were treated to a buffet luncheon in a staff residence. Wives of staff members acted as hostesses.

The meal overwhelmed several visitors, who had not expected such a varied display of buffet items prepared by department staff.

The opening ceremonies and tour lasted an hour and a half, but it was another two hours before the eating ended.

Rev. Z. Levesque of the Redemptorist Fathers at Tunis gave the opening prayer and Rev. J. N. Lothian, Anglican chaplain at Monteith, pronounced the dedication. Father Levesque acted for Roman Catholic chaplain Rev. E. Jubinville who was unable to attend.

Courtesy of Mrs. Estlin