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women's clubs and the livelihood of
community in twentieth century
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McNab, Tracy

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**PICNICS, POTLUCKS AND COOKBOOKS: FARM WOMEN'S CLUBS
AND THE LIVELIHOOD OF COMMUNITY
IN TWENTIETH CENTURY SOUTHERN ALBERTA**

**Tracy McNab
Bachelor of Arts, University of Lethbridge 1981**

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MASTER OF ARTS

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**To my husband for his patience,
my mother for her inspiration and
my dad for putting me on that Massey Ferguson tractor**

. . . and to my children so that they will know.

Abstract

This thesis examines the collective labour and resources utilized by farm women within the context of the farm women's neighbourhood club in rural communities in twentieth century Southern Alberta. The ethnographic research explores the historic, cultural and political foundations of women's labour on farms and in formal and informal farm organizations through interviews conducted with former members of two clubs that were actively involved in fundraising and philanthropic projects in their rural communities for more than forty-five years. The critical perspective argues farm women in rural clubs responded to the patriarchal farm discourse that gendered their labour by using their reproductive skills and resources to build and maintain friendships, social networks and mutuality, and do good works that ensured the livelihood of their rural communities.

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It is with the greatest of appreciation that I recognize the support of my family and friends who marched beside me on this long trail. It has been an adventure.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

We always had a Strawberry Tea in the spring, but if you did anything like that you always had to donate . . . we had fresh strawberry pie, and went in. The ladies would pay and have coffee and pie . . . at the Library. And we usually had it close to Mother's Day, so it was kind of an outing for mothers, the women and that. It was just a little fund-raiser.

Jill¹

If you were asked to define rural women's work, what are the first things that come to mind? Do you envision a 'farm wife' toiling over pots and pans in the kitchen while scrubbing her floors and offspring, and then in a spare moment dashing out to tame her garden in order to fill those pots and thereby her family? Perhaps you see a woman arriving home from her job in the barns, field or local village in order to cook for and be the caretaker of her family and household. Maybe she also sells some of the surplus products of her household labour at the local farmer's market. All of these labour activities are relevant to historical, and current constructions of women's work on Southern Alberta farms. Their labour is multi-faceted and can be widely varying even in localized areas because the vagaries of weather, pests, commodity markets and government policy propel farm families to undertake different livelihood strategies in order to make ends meet.

The theoretical conceptualization of farm women's labour as it relates to the household has been dichotomized in relation to men's labour in arguments based on labour in the 'public' versus 'private' and domestic versus non-domestic spheres of production. Their labour has also been characterized in economic binaries including reproductive versus productive labour; informal versus formal labour; paid versus unpaid labour; and nonmarket versus market production, to name a few. These theories primarily consider the boundaries of labour and production in order to better explain the

gendered division of labour that has historically defined women's work in rural family production. Current theories of women's farm labour also recognize the diverse range of productive activities they performed in support of the livelihood of the farm (Sachs 1983, 1996; Shortall 1999; Whatmore 1991).

There is another crucial aspect of farm women's labour that has received little attention: farm women as labourers in the rural neighbourhood to ensure the livelihood of their community. How do we define such labour?

The involvement of farm women as volunteers in clubs and associations has a long history in Canada. Some groups were formal and highly structured and benefited farm women by providing educational opportunities for them to encourage farm family health and safety. The organized or semi-organized structure allowed women to pursue many political objectives including prohibition, the enfranchisement of women, health and welfare legislation and policies for farm families, and legal rights to farm land and property. Although these associations were also actively involved in the social life of their communities, their work was largely motivated by the objectives and policies of their parent provincial or federal organizations or specific political causes or legal cases.

The work of informal farm women's clubs in rural neighbourhoods to ensure the livelihood of 'community' is far less understood. Scholars have chosen to deal with farm women's volunteer labour as 'community or civic housekeeping', neighbouring, or for those groups considered more politically motivated as examples of maternal or agrarian feminism.² These studies do not specifically focus on the productive strategies that informal farm women's groups undertook to utilize the material and labour resources that are available in their households, farms and community.

Karl Polanyi analysed the economic strategies and the patterns of economic integration that are prevalent in various cultures using a substantivist approach which

emphasizes the historical and comparative analysis in the understanding of economies: “The human economy, then, is embedded and enmeshed in situations, economic and non-economic”(1957b:250). He proposed that exchange relations can be seen as organized patterns of movement of material goods in capitalist and non-capitalist societies. He described these patterns as reciprocity, redistribution, market exchange and householding. The movement of material resources can be back and forth (reciprocity), or moving to and from a centre (distribution), or as in market exchange which is the process of buying and selling of commodities in the marketplace. Polanyi defined householding as “production for one’s own use” or “production for a person’s or groups’ own sake” can be represented as a circular movement of goods between households. He notes that “the practice of catering for the needs of one’s household, becomes a feature of economic life only on a more advanced level of agriculture; however, even then it has nothing in common either with the motive of gain or with the institutions of markets” (1957a:53).

Rhoda Halperin (1990) uses the concept of householding in her consideration of the economic processes occurring in rural Appalachia of Northeastern Kentucky. Integral to her theoretical analysis of these rural ‘economies’ is her argument that householding can take many forms and can involve different kinds and combinations of institutional arrangements, capitalist and non-capitalist within, and among cultural systems. In her study, rural families used kin networks to ensure their livelihood by undertaking productive activities that included wage labour, subsisting through the production from family farms, selling produce and buying and selling used goods from sources including the family, garage sales, other markets which include byproducts of the capitalist system (1990:146). These families were able to resist total dependence on the capitalist system by asserting control over their labour and resources through these

informal economic strategies.

Following the work of Polanyi and Halperin, this thesis considers the livelihood strategies 'employed' in rural areas and responds to the question: How do informal farm women's groups in Southern Alberta use resources from the household, farm, neighbourhood and region to sustain the livelihood of their rural communities? This thesis specifically challenges the gendered boundaries of women's farm labour and production by considering the collective work of farm women in their efforts to create and maintain 'community' in support of the livelihood of neighbourhood farm families. The analysis expands the concept of householding as the material provisioning for the purpose of economic livelihood by considering the multifaceted range of productive activities undertaken by rural club women to create and promote social capital in their rural neighbourhoods. I argue farm women's community work is a response to the constraints of paternalist rural discourse that has historically limited their access to the capitalist economy.

Following an introduction to the groups considered in this thesis entitled **The Clubs**, I then background my relationship to the thesis question in **Approaching the Field**. In the **Historical Overview of Alberta Farm Women's Groups**, farm women's organizations are contextualized in the environmental, cultural and political perspective. Following this is the **Methodology and Fieldwork** employed in this project and includes a consideration of my relationship to the participants as researcher. In the chapter **Theorizing Informal Farm Women's Clubs**, I provide the theoretical foundations for understanding production and reproduction in the farm household farm, and labour as it is extended into community through the collective labour of the club. The **Observations** section considers the **Farm Life** of the participants including farm women's labour and the division of labour on the farm. This chapter also considers **The Clubs and the**

Livelihood of Community as farm women's labour and resources are extended from the household into the community through the neighbourhood club, including membership, meetings, club activities and community impact of their labour. In the **Conclusion**, I summarize farm women's labour within the context of the farm women's club as they worked to ensure the livelihood of community in their rural neighbourhoods.

The Clubs

Readymade Farm Women's Club Song:

If you ever come to Readymade on Club day
And watch us ladies happy at our work
You will find us all quite busy and contented
or from our duty we will never shirk.

You will find us making quilts and other items
To raffle off or sell at our bazaar
Or we'll send a dozen roses to a shut in
Write a letter to a member gone afar.

Or perhaps there may be one who is quite troubled
We'll cheer her up and send her on her way
For we'll share alike the burdens and the sunshine
When we gather all together on Club day.

Now if there is going to be a Club for always
And somehow we are sure there's bound to be
You will find us girls quite ready and all willing
To work towards a fine community.

Composed by Clara Thompson, member of RFWC (date unknown)³

The Readymade Farm Women's Club (RFWC) and the East Neighbourhood Club (ENC) were rural farm women's clubs that began operation in 1939 at the end of the Great Depression in North America. The ENC operated for over fifty years and the RFWC operated for approximately forty-four years. The ENC began with six neighbour women who came together for their first meeting at the home of Martha Orcutt on March 23,

1939. The women originally called themselves the 'Busy Bees' a name drawn out of a hat of suggestions placed there by the attendees. It later became the Watt Community Club, in recognition of a country school centrally located within the rural community, and when this school closed in approximately 1949, they changed the name to the East Neighborhood Club. Clara Curry, one of the founding members recalled: "At the beginning of this group, it was strictly a social club for the ladies to get together and bring their handiwork, if so desired. These were the days of depression, everyone was the same" (WHS 1985:128).

The RFWC formed in the Readymade area with thirteen members in December of 1939 (Readymade Historical Society [RHS] 1977:85). The only other women's club in this specific area, the Readymade Women's Institute (also known as the Ever Ready Women's Institute) had disbanded eleven years prior due to financial concerns and high dues required by the provincial administration of the Women's Institute (RHS 1977:84).

The participants representing the ENC and the RFWC described their clubs as "social," noting the importance of getting together with their neighbours, getting out of the household and visiting with other women. Jill, who was a younger member of the ENC when it folded described their club as "more of a social group, you know. It was an organized club but it was a social outing. We didn't take ourselves too seriously." Flo, an elder member of the ENC felt that the club "really put the community together . . . and it gave you something else to think about except what you had to get done at home. And you know, somebody was always having fun, there . . . You know, it was a fun club." Dora, who became a member of the RFWC around 1942, reiterated this when she simply stated "we had a heck of a lot of fun!"

Approaching the Field

I am a farm girl, the daughter, granddaughter and great granddaughter of farm women who laboured in the kitchens, gardens, barns, fields and communities of Southern Alberta. My interest in farm women's household and community labour evolved from my own experience as a 'labourer' on my parent's dryland grain and cattle farm. Unlike most of my local female peers who maintained a largely 'domestic' existence on their farms by helping their mothers in the household with their duties, I summer fallowed, drove grain trucks during harvest, picked rock (an abhorrent job), stacked bales, mucked the chicken coop and livestock barns, and raised 4-H beef cattle. I relished the opportunity to escape domestic drudgery when my father required an 'extra hand' in the fields or barnyard, but much to my chagrin, the duties incumbent on a female living in a farm household during the 1960s and early 1970s *also* required me to cook, clean, garden and take care of my siblings. At the time, the rationale for these imposed 'divisions of labour' on the farm was unavailable to me and usually explained as "just the way it is." It was much later that I came to understand that my labour responsibilities were compounded by a domestic ideology regarding rural farm women that were predicated on a historical patriarchal discourse that imputed a gendered division of labour on the farm (Sarah Whatmore 1991).

Although this discourse heavily prescribed the labour roles of rural women in our area, not all of this labour was entirely located in and around the farm household, or in the fields in response to temporary labour requirements of the farmer. Significantly, women in my farm neighbourhood also laboured as members of the ENC, a non-political, nonreligious, informal organization of women who were active in the rural community and local village for more than fifty years. Although many of the members (and many of their spouses) considered 'The Club' to be 'just a social group,' I knew

from my own experience helping my mother with her 'club work' that women's individual and collective labour within the context of this club was integral to generating 'community' in our neighbourhood and district. Other than the time and labour they were able to offer to the club, these farm women had very limited material resources to work with other than what might be available in the household or from the farm.

In the same way that women's labour on the farm has suffered from invisibility in relation to the productive labour of the farmer (Adams 1991; Safilios-Rothschild 1985), the work of informal farm women's clubs, in Southern Alberta, remained largely unrecognized except through bare mention in locally produced histories. This thesis focusses on how farm women's labour was constituted within the context of the rural women's neighbourhood club to the benefit of them, their families and their community.

Chapter 2: Historical Overview of Alberta Farm Women's Groups

It must be remembered that, whatever the other characteristics of an association, it is always formed at the point of tangency of several institutions or of subsystems within an institution.

Chappel and Coon, *The Principles of Anthropology* (1942:418)⁴

Voluntary associations, therefore, seem like bubbles rising and disappearing on the surface of boiling water. It is from deeper sources that the people who stir them find their motivation, and it is at more significant levels that we must try to explain a society . . .

Meillasoux, *The Urbanization of An African Community: Voluntary Association in Bamako* (1969:147)⁵

Informal rural farm women's clubs in Alberta have had little recognition in historical literature except through bare mention in locally produced histories. From these brief descriptions one is able to glean that most of these clubs were organized during early 1930s and 1940s, with a few forming as late as the 1960s, although little else is understood of their raison d'être. This historical overview explores the environmental, cultural and political circumstances that predicated the formation of these community-minded, informal organizations of farm women. Southern Alberta is an area characterized by flat glacial til plains known as the Canadian Prairies. The land is prone to drought, strong warm 'Chinook' winds, blizzards, hailstorms and the occasional tornado, but yearly precipitation in this semi-arid environment allows for the extensive dryland cultivation of grain. Meltwater channels from the eastern slopes of the Rockies drain through the area providing a ready supply of water for irrigation dams and canals for intensive agriculture in the central region. The area is rich in coal, oil, and natural gas. The City of Lethbridge⁶ is centrally located, provides services to the agricultural, oil and natural gas industries, and is the home of both a college and a university. Small

towns, villages and hamlets dot the region, identifiable by the ubiquitous grain elevators or railroad sidings.

First Nations peoples belonging to the Piikani (formerly Peigan) and Blood (Niitsitapii) Tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy were moved to reservations in southwestern portions of Southern Alberta as a result of the Treaty 7 land agreement with the Federal Government in 1877 (Dempsey 1987). Other rural populations of the area are largely comprising the descendants of farming families in southern Alberta. Most European settlers arrived here as a result of the Federal Government's policy of encouraging massive immigration into the West in order to develop agricultural lands for future eastern and international markets. With farming opportunities in the west of the United States virtually drying up due to earlier homesteading efforts, Western Canada became "The Last Best West."⁷ Western Canada was the destination for individuals and families from Europe and other parts of North America who desired new farming and land development opportunities.

The completion of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway through Alberta in 1883 initially brought settlers from Britain and Ontario, quickly followed by the Americans (this included immigrants of Scandinavian or German descent, and also members of the Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints religion who were looking for farming opportunities where they would not be persecuted for their polygamist beliefs), Russians, Jews, Hungarians and German speaking people (from Germany, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the United States) and Ukrainians in the late 1890s (Palmer 1990). Restrictive immigration regulations and persecution limited the number of both Chinese and Japanese settlers until after WWII.

The first wave of immigration into the West in the late 1800s and early 1900s was largely a 'masculine' operation promoted by Federal idealized quotas that recognized

strength and character in men to control the land and environment. Immigrant farm women seemed to be enigmas to the government as they were largely left out of government planning and incentives for Western Canadian settlement (McManus 2005:127-134). With women still relegated to the domestic sphere by nineteenth century patriarchal discourse, the 'taming of the land' became a masculine responsibility and the household was largely perceived as the 'domain' of mothers, wives and female workers (Rollingson-Magnusson 2000).

Catherine Cavanaugh (2004:184-187) argues that Victorian gender ideology provided the conceptual framework for colonization and settlement as part of an expansionist discourse that perpetuated myth of the West as a manly space, and women as 'civilizers' or 'gentle tamers' which had the effect of women being passive and disembodied, and in effect, guaranteeing men's dominance. These characterizations of farm women as settlers in the early part of the twentieth century in Alberta are largely an effort at contrasting or collapsing their labour with that of men but this does little to actually explain their efforts to establish and maintain the family homestead and the rural community. Robinson notes: "The need for self-sufficiency on the pioneer homestead required the farm wife to step beyond the role of housekeeper, although this task was indispensable as well" (1979:10-11). Farming at the turn of the century was largely a cooperative effort, requiring women to be pressed into service to perform men's labour as need, or tragedy, required. Although there was flexibility in the allocation of labour, this did not affect the firmly established boundaries of the gendered divisions of labour prescribed by paternalistic farming discourse of the time which situated women in the household and mandated their primary responsibilities to the care of the household, children and vegetable gardens.

The earliest organizational activities available to farm women in southern Alberta

were largely connected to religious and educational institution building within their rural communities.⁸ They were a diverse composition of immigrant and emigrant populations, although there was some nucleation and block settlement of families, ethnic and religious groups. Women figured prominently in bringing farm families together by provisioning for construction bees, conducting religious teachings, and organizing community and congregational fund-raising programs to supply these institutions including picnics, dances, draws, raffles and quilting bees (Silverman 1998:191-218).

Although rural southern Alberta farm women were instrumental in creating community in the late 1800s, they had few property rights, no legal rights to their children, and only single or widowed women could own land or property, but not a homestead. A growing interest for women in organizing for the purpose of reform in the 1890s in the Eastern Canada was delayed in the West until the twentieth century due to the sparseness of population and the strenuous work of frontier homesteading and community building (Prentice et al. 1996:196). But it was early in the homesteading period of the 1900s that women acted to affect their position and livelihood relative to men by organizing to lobby for the legislation of rights for women. Catherine Cavanagh argues that western Canadian women reformers drew upon settlement discourse to further their political aims in getting rights for women. "They sought to reconcile the contradictions inherent in social and symbolic constructions of the West as a manly country that ignored women's contributions to settlement even as they called to populate the West and make it productive" (2004:197). Their primary aims were for legal rights to the farm homestead and recognition of the value of their labour.

Some of the earliest formal organizations of women played important roles in prohibition, suffrage, social reforms and farming movements. For example, the Alberta-Saskatchewan Western Canadian Temperance Union (WCTU) led by Louise Crummy

McGivney was established in 1905. Membership consisted mostly of Protestant, middle class urban and small town women (Sheehan 1980:117). The action of this group was largely responsible for the Prohibition Act of 1916. Women in Alberta were legally declared 'persons' by the Privy Council largely as a result of the work of women's rights activists known as the "Famous Five" in 1929.⁹

Women were also working to obtain property rights to their husband's homestead, beginning in 1909 with the campaign to gain equal rights to men to obtain 'free' homesteads provided by the Federal and Provincial governments (Cavanagh 1993:199). Unfortunately, legislation for access to homesteads for women was not passed until 1930, after homesteading was largely complete in Alberta (Cavanagh 1993:200). Campaigns for dower rights continued through the work of the Famous Five and other formal women's organizations in Alberta.¹⁰ On May 1, 1917, the Dower Act became legislation in Alberta, providing women the right to the homestead upon death of her husband and protection from this being sold without the wife's written consent.

The weakening of the germinal feminist movement in Alberta after the securing of the vote has been hotly debated by historians. Views on this issue have included those that suggest the activism was a middle-class based radicalism that was designed to preserve privilege (Bacchi 1983:19), and that the process occurred too easily and rapidly for equality between the sexes to have been attained (Cleverdon 1950). Many rural women responded to their need for a more 'home-grown' representation and homemaking education by joining formal organizations including the Alberta Women's Institute (AWI) and the United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA). The AWI was established in Alberta in 1909, and by 1917 there were two hundred and twelve chapters throughout the Province. The original Women's Institute was founded in Ontario in 1897 in response to a growing interest in having an organization for farm women with a

mandate of domestic science education (Kechnie 2003:24-35).

Rural and urban women were allowed membership in the AWI. Although the organizations defined themselves as nonpartisan and non-sectarian, it promoted the interests of farm women through lobbying the government on suffrage, temperance, health, and family legislation. The organization received operating funds from the Alberta provincial government Department of Agriculture from 1912 in support of the AWI's mandate for the education of farm women and the betterment of farm life but the organization became self-sustaining in 1928. The organization continues to maintain affiliations with the Federated Women's Institute of Canada which is connected to the Associated Countrywomen of the World, an organization focussed on bringing together rural women from around the world (Kechnie 2003:141).

The first local of the United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA) was organized by Irene Parlby in 1914 as an auxiliary to the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA). The UFA was established in 1909 by farmers who were frustrated by economic hardships and unsupportive provincial legislation. Women were allowed to join the UFA in recognition of their contribution to farming but the UFWA received full status in the UFA in 1916. The UFWA differed in membership parameters from the AWI as women were required to be farm women who were either the wives or daughters of farmers, or the sole operators of farms, who were actively engaged in farming (Langford 1997:25). Some of the duties of the locals were to lobby the Alberta government for property laws,¹¹ civil rights and health care legislation. Changes in the name of the UFWA came as a result of the amalgamation of the UFA with other agricultural organizations: in 1949 they became the Farm Women's Union of Alberta, and in 1970 they changed their name to the Women of Unifarm. This group was still operating in 2000.

The AWI and UFWA struggled with each other as competing organizations as

they attempted to gain momentum as representatives of farm women in Alberta (Cole and Laramour 1997:25; Rennie 2000:101). Both groups offered women educational and social opportunities, provided an organizational structure and mandate for the lobbying of provincial and local governments for health and welfare services and property legislation¹² and worked in their local areas to create community through volunteering and fund-raising activities. The UFWA represented itself as a more politically motivated organization while the AWI considered its aims as liberal and not bound by the partisan activities (Cole and Laramour 1997:25; Rennie 2000:101). Rural women would often belong to both organizations (Langford 1997), and on the local level, the UFWA and the AWI would cooperate to sponsor guest speakers, short courses, social outings, and joint fund-raising activities (Cole and Laramour 1997:7).

Other organizations for women in Southern Alberta served as auxiliaries or women's support groups to local churches and religious groups. Members of these groups comprised rural and non-rural women in farming communities that were affiliated with the Roman Catholic, United, Evangelical, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, Mennonite, or Jesus Christ of Saints (colloquially recognized as 'Mormon') faiths. Southern Alberta has been considered an unofficial "Bible Belt" due in part to the settlement of large numbers of Mormons, Mennonites and the communal farmers of the Hutterian Brethren. Although some Mormon families originally came to settle in Southern Alberta in response to religious persecution in the United States, Mormon workers were later encouraged to come to the Lethbridge area to use their expertise in the construction of irrigation canals. The Mennonite (Anabaptist) families from Russia, beginning in 1923, were attracted by the land availability and labour shortages on Southern Alberta irrigation farms. The Hutterian Brethren is a religious communal farming society composed of nuclear and extended families. This group is an "offshoot

sect” of Anabaptists that fled persecution in the United States in 1919 due to their refusal to bear arms (Palmer 1972).

Women’s organizations that were affiliated with fraternal organizations as auxiliaries include the Order of the Royal Purple (Benevolent Protective Order of Elks), the Pythian Sisters (Order of the Knights of Pythias), the Royal Canadian Legion, the Order of the Eastern Star (Freemasons) The Rebekas (Independent Order of Odd Fellows) and Kinettes (Kinsmen). Women’s special interest groups within the area include the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON), the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE), and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA).

The aforementioned groups were active in rural and urban areas as a function of a pre-existing formal organizational structure with special interests, mandates and affiliations. Although the organizations were successful in gaining political representation for farm women and ensuring health and welfare standards and services for farming communities, many farm women chose to be involved with more local rural women’s groups. One explanation may be that the work of these formal groups in the primarily male structured political sphere did not represent the immediate social needs of rural women labouring on their family farms and the unique economic and social conditions of isolated rural neighbourhoods and rural communities.

Veronica Strong-Boag argues that elitist male political circles barred women from significant contribution and forced women to find solutions to their dilemmas in discourse independent of the public world of male politics (1992:402). This, she notes, is what Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (1985:101) defines as “woman’s talk,” which she argues is dismissed as personal or private, and not as political or substantive in the public display of male political or social debates (Strong-Boag 1992:402). This is supported by Edwin Ardener’s position that language in society is hegemonic and, as it is controlled by men,

this has the effect of “muting” women since they are forced to articulate in this language (1975:1-17).

It is perhaps the inability of the more formalized women's groups to meet the localized needs of the farm woman that spurred them to search out the easy comfort of like-minded women in their neighbourhoods. In the 1930s, farm women came together to form friendships and gather support from other women for a number of reasons. Farms were isolated, and transportation was limited to the horse and buggy. Langford and Keating (1987:47) note that historically, isolation may have been more of a problem for farm women than farm men because farm women are responsible for household work and child care which will limit their social contacts, but farming provides men with regular interaction with an adult social world. The worldwide Depression of the 1930s placed considerable stress on Southern Alberta farming communities as families found it was difficult to obtain loans. There were increased bankruptcies and farm foreclosures due to low grain prices, and the severe lack of off-farm jobs limited farmers' ability to supplement their incomes which were already reduced because of periods of drought. Farm women would have had additional stress in trying to 'make-do' with what little farm resources were available to them. And although intercommunication with others was enabled by telephones in many Southern Alberta rural areas in the 1920s,¹³ the financial difficulties of the 1930s caused many farm families to give up this service (Coaldale Historical Society 1983:91-93).

As Clara Curry, the first president of the ENC noted, her group started simply to give neighbours a chance to get together during the Depression (*Lethbridge Herald*, October 16, 1981). This was echoed by a member of the East Milk River Community Club¹⁴: “it seems to me if we got together once a month and visited we wouldn't be so lonesome . . . it was probably better to organize so you could go visiting” (*Lethbridge*

Herald, October 16, 1981). 'Women's talk' began in the kitchens and living rooms of farm women on the Prairies but the dimensions of their collectivity as informally organized rural women's group is less understood.

Mary Neth notes in her discussion of rural community and farm organizations in the Midwestern United States that while there has been a focus on the institutions as the social basis of community, it was informal sociality organized by women in kitchens and homes that gave institutions in farm communities their meaning and created the fabric of daily living (1988:339). For many rural women in Southern Alberta, socializing with the women in their neighbourhood during and after the Depression became a more organized and scheduled pursuit. Mention is made in the local histories of farm women regularly getting together in their farm homes to knit and sew for local servicemen and for various aid organizations during the World Wars. Activities included sewing layettes for new mothers or quilts for the newly wed, cooking for community functions or for bake sales, holding wedding showers for local brides, producing food for shut-ins, and donating funds and materials to local schools, hospitals, seniors, and the less fortunate of their community. A few of these rural women's clubs even took on greater organizational responsibilities by becoming incorporated as nonprofit organizations, which allowed them to strategically orient their fund-raising and labour efforts toward the purchase of land and the construction or purchase of buildings for use as community centres in their neighbourhoods and local towns.¹⁵

The longevity of these rural women's clubs varied although some groups were active for well more than fifty years, and there is evidence that a few may still operate today. Why many of these clubs ceased operation is not known, but what is certain from the evidence provided by in the participants of this study is that the farming crisis of the 1980s put considerable strain on the livelihood of farm families and their communities.

Farmers expanded operations in the 1970s as a result of strong export markets, high commodity (grain) prices, and generous credit opportunities. In the eighties, this trend reversed and many farms were sold off to satisfy these debts (Preville 2003:7).

Membership in the women's clubs declined during this time as families left the farms, and interest in club activities waned as women became employed in off-farm employment to help with farm finances. The clubs considered here were also suffering from attrition as older members often moved into urban centres when they retired from farm life. The participants noted that young married women in the area were not interested in joining their club which suggests that women's social and philanthropic opportunities were available through other mechanisms. These clubs ceased operation in 1984 and 1991, primarily because there were not enough active members to carry out their social and fundraising activities.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Fieldwork

Fieldwork was structured to locate and obtain responses from the members of between one and three informal farm women's groups in Southern Alberta broadly defined as south of Calgary, east of the Canadian Rockies, west of the Saskatchewan border, and extending south to the 49th Parallel where the border of the Province of Alberta joins the Montana border and the Northwest Great Plains.

During preliminary discussions with a few members of my mother's club, mention was made of the existence of other similarly organized and functioning farm women's 'clubs' in the area. Word of mouth also played an important role in identifying other prospective study groups. Almost everyone I spoke to about my project who had a historical involvement with farming in Southern Alberta knew of the existence of a local farm woman's club or organization. The focus of my fieldwork was to locate, research, and interview those groups, clubs, and associations of farm women that 'got together to socialize,' 'put on my shower,' 'put a float in the parade,' 'ran the food concession at my farm auction sale,' 'raised money for the school,' 'canvassed' for charities, 'donated' materials, funds or entertainment to the seniors, or 'brought' their materials and food from their households to the meetings which would be redistributed to the sick or persons with special needs in their local towns and city. As the farm women's club that I was most familiar with had no apparent direct or formal affiliation with a political, governmental, religious, economic institution or organization, I was determined to find out the economic, social and cultural implications of their activities and their individual members in relation to their farm livelihood, 'domestic and non-domestic' labour, families, rural neighbourhoods and community.

Literature specific to the work of informal farm women's organizations appears to

be nearly nonexistent in Canada and the United States. References to farm women 'getting together' to stave off loneliness and isolation (Langford and Keating 1987) through the formation of informal groups for quilting, sewing, reading or singing prevail in rural studies, but the beneficial role that the unaffiliated, farm women's organization played as labourers in the *agri-culture* of their neighbourhood or community has not been considered in great depth.

A historical range for the study encompasses the end of WWI to the present as a review of local histories produced by rural and non-rural community groups in the study area indicated that many of the earlier informal farm women's groups came into operation in the mid to late 1930s and early 1940s, and a number of groups continued to function beyond fifty years.

Two of the former members of the ENC were contacted in order to assess their interest in becoming involved in the study. The dynamics of approaching an extant group versus studying a historical group is a consideration not often noted in research. When establishing contact with an active organization, deferential treatment of authority must be accorded in order to gain access to the general members of the organization. As the ENC ceased operation in 1990, I was less bound by the protocols of administrative hierarchy within the group. Interestingly, the communication networks of this farm women's group remained relatively intact as all but two of the prospective participants already knew of my intention to study their group prior to my contact. Participants were chosen to represent the historical range of the club's operations. Eight of the members agreed to be involved in the study.

The second study group, the RFWC was contacted through an acquaintance and former 'farm girl' whose mother was a long term member of this club. This club had operated in its community located about 50 miles north of the ENC community. Six

individuals agreed to be included in the study from this group. The ENC operated within a primarily dryland farming area approximately sixty miles south and east of the city of Lethbridge, whereas the RFWC operated within a district of primarily irrigation farming located approximately fifteen miles east of Lethbridge. The differing farming environments and resources of the two study groups were considered possible influences on the structure, initiatives, and activities of their organizations

Individual members of the groups were interviewed for approximately two and one half hours using a semi-structured format and open-ended questions (See Appendix A for the individual and group interview questions). These interviews were conducted in 2006. A group interview was conducted in 2007 with seven of the eight members of the ENC in the rural home of one of the members which had been the location of numerous club meetings more than four decades. The format of the interview was designed to informally reproduce the protocol of their meetings in the hopes that this would engender greater range and depth in their responses. All but two of the individual interviews were conducted in the participant's farm or city home, and the majority were done at the kitchen table which became a metaphor for the study as many of the material resources for these farm women's groups were produced in the farm kitchen. The interviews were taped and then transcribed.¹⁶ Pseudonyms have been used for all participant responses presented in this thesis.¹⁷

Historical materials provided by the ENC included minutes of meetings for the years 1949 through 1991, with the exception of the years between 1964 and 1973 which were destroyed in a farm fire, two club photo albums and scrapbooks (n.d. East Neighbourhood Club), and assorted photographs and newspaper clippings from individual members. Access to the minutes of the RFWC was not obtained as members could not ascertain their current location, and a search of local and provincial archives,

libraries and museums proved unsuccessful. A few personal photographs from this group were submitted by individual members. The minutes from the ENC were annotated and photographs were analysed for content and relevance to the study.

Positioning Myself

My mother, aunt, a great-aunt and virtually all of my adult female neighbours belonged to the ENC. As youngsters, my siblings and I were hauled to the monthly meetings by my mother, and as a preteen I was giving the honour of helping to serve tea to the club women following the meeting. Long after I left the farm to pursue education and employment, I was given a wedding shower by 'The Club.' Furthermore, of the fourteen women in the two study groups interviewed by for this study, twelve of the respondents knew of my parents, paternal grandparents, or an aunt or uncle.

These women allowed access to their lives in part due to my 'insider' status (Yung 2002:87-111). All of the participants were informed of my history as a 'farm girl' from Warner, my maternal connections to a farm woman's club, and some of the women were able to reference my access to them through a mutual acquaintance whose mother was a 'Club' member in the other study group. This 'closeness' to the subject matter does not come without pause. Anthropological technique and academic integrity requires that objectivity and reflexivity prevail. Being too close to home inhibits the research curiosity, and the insider researcher may be inherently biased (Aguilar 1981:16).

Thomas Dunk in his work in working class culture in Thunder Bay, Ontario notes that some believe that insider research is more effective than the research of foreign cultures because familiarity with the home culture allows easier recognition of subtle but important differences. It also simplifies data collections. "That the culture is lived by the

researcher, rather than merely observed, is thought to enable a greater understanding in terms that are meaningful to the members of the culture under study” (Dunk 2003:13).

Just as foreign cultures cannot be painted with one brush, neither can farm women’s groups be confined to a single description that is defined by the ‘West.’ Meneley and Young note: “What is certain is that the practice of doing ethnography at home invites reflexivity, as it becomes obvious that what separates us from those we study is not some essential and impermeable identity, but, rather our intellectual preoccupations” (2005:7). I am a researcher who has been trained in the techniques of looking beyond the obvious. As the ‘obvious’ was already in my toolkit, the goal of the analysis became the subtle, and not so subtle, nuances and particulars inherent in the structures and practices of local farm culture. Furthermore, the closeness to the subject matter and the participants compelled me to be even more vigilant about possible biases and preconceptions. “The solutions to problems of perception and objectivity, in so far as they exist are to be found in honesty, reflection, and criticism” (Dunk 2003:13).

Nonetheless, I felt challenged and sometimes conflicted by my position as a researcher of women, many of whom were the female mentors of my youth. At times, I found my own sense of authority as ‘a knowledgeable researcher’ was tested by my insecurities as a ‘former’ farm girl amongst the real matriarchs of farming. Also, the interviews brought out an interesting posturing in the farm women: they were willing to listen and generally eager to impart their life histories, but they were careful with some of their responses, particularly those relating to farm finances. I relate this to the closeness of farm families and the mutuality which they depend upon for the livelihood of their community: they were resistant to providing information which could be construed as gossip, innuendo, or just too revealing for ‘other ears.’

Renata Rosaldo suggests that many of us suffer from a “multiplex subjectivity”

(1989:168-195) and Kirin Narayan argues:

Objectivity must be replaced by an involvement that is unabashedly subjective as it interacts with and invites other subjectivities to take place in anthropological productions. Knowledge, in this scheme, is not transcendental, but situated, negotiated, and part of an ongoing process. This process spans personal, professional, and cultural domains (1993:682).

These perspectives best express my engagement of 'the familiar' and the 'objective' in the work of this study.

Chapter 4: Theorizing Farm Women's Club Labour and Householding

Perhaps the best introduction to theorizing the labour of farm women within the informal club as it pertains to householding is by considering the minutes of one of their meetings. This simple, straightforward detailing of the activities of fourteen farm women as they reviewed, debated and decided upon plans of action provides an interesting snapshot of how they used their reproductive labour and resources through the collective action of the club to create and maintain community:

Meeting Minutes of the ENC : February, 1957¹⁸

The February meeting was held at the home of Marie Lagler on February 20th. Madame President called the meeting to order and 14 members repeated the club creed together. Roll Call was answered by each member offering a suggestion for roll calls for the following months. Correspondence included a thank you card from Lois and Wayne Currie, a receipt from Warner Library in recognition of Memorial book purchased for Mrs Lillie, also, a card from district home economist announcing the date of the short course in Lethbridge. Minutes of the last meeting were read and adopted. Old business arising out of the last meeting included the question of a community hall. After a brief discussion, it was decided to hold a joint meeting with the men following the card party on the same evening. Clara made a motion that I act as chairman and approach the subject to the men. Ruth offered her assistance and Mabel made a 2nd to the motion. It carried. It was agreed upon to hold an Easter bake sale. Ann moved the date be set as April 20th. Gay 2nd the motion and it was carried. Verla made a motion that officers contact Jack McNichol and ask permission to hold our bake sale in his office, also that each member be responsible for a donation worth at least \$2.00, Pauline made a 2nd to the motion and it carried. Mabel suggested our club make more use of club calendar and at this time made a motion that secretary obtain the blanks and have our club activities announced over the radio. Verla made a 2nd to this motion and it carried. Mrs. Martin said she would donate a quilt top to raffle. Gay made a motion and 2nd by Mabel that the club accept Mrs. Martin's kind offer and buy the material to finish up the quilt. Helen and Ann offered their homes for quilting. Verla suggested we decide on an early quilting date. Further plans were to be made at a following card party. Clara offered to make flower planter and sell tickets at our bake sale. The draw for winner to be made at the close of the sale. Ivy and Gay offered to make 50 books of tickets for the quilt raffle. Madame President passed out the club books and Verla offered to take the September and November meetings respectively. The following roll calls were decided: March - pencil donation; April - bulb, seed or plant exchange; May - Favourite radio or T.V. programme; June - Homemade article for bazaar. Sept. - Safety suggestions for around the home. October - Handy hint. November - Plans for Xmas supper. Elizabeth won the tea raffle

donated by hostess and Gay asked for the singing of “God Save the Queen” following adjournment. Ann moved we adjourn and 2nd by Edith. Lunch was served. Dues received: \$1.25; Tea money: \$.70; Paid for Turkeys: \$14.70; Stamps and Pad: \$1.09; Balance Feb. 20th : \$35.79

[signed by] Ruth Otto [President]; Marie Lagler [Secretary]

During this meeting, the members considered projects such as the building a local rural community hall, holding a bake sale to raise funds using the products of their labour from their farm kitchens and by selling tickets for the raffle of a planter produced and donated by a member. They were concerned about the profile of their fund-raising activities in the community so they decided to advertise their activities on the radio and made plans to collectively produce a quilt to raffle. They decided on donations which included both knowledge and products of their reproductive labour as their response to the roll call at future meeting. They recognized members for their past service including the purchase and donation of a book to place in the village library in honour of a recently deceased club member (a library they continued to fund for many decades). And the club was recognized for a service provided to a farm family of the community. They paid their bill for turkeys that the club provided for the neighbourhood adult Christmas party, a yearly event that they organized and provisioned through individual and club food donations (they also produced a yearly community children’s Christmas party). And after the meeting, the members enjoyed a luncheon produced by a member hostess which many respondents considered the best part of going to ‘Club’ as women visited, caught up on the news, and exchanged recipes, anecdotes and knowledge gleaned from their life experience as farm women.

In order to understand how these and many other activities of informal farm women’s clubs in Southern Alberta represent livelihood strategies for the provisioning of ‘community’ through householding as conceptualized by Polanyi (1957) and Halperin

(1990;1994;1998), we must first consider the ideology of farm women's labour within the capitalist agricultural economy. Accounts of their labour have been wide and varied, and in many cases romanticized or burdened by the whims of patriarchal discourse which sustains the male farmer's preeminence in the functioning agri-*culture*. In this respect, women in rural economic environments could be more appropriately described as 'women of agriculture,' which suggests an interpretation of rural women as placed within the existing patriarchal structure of western rural culture. Sally Shortall (1999) relates farm women's lack of power to historical limitations in their access to property as farm land has been passed on inter-generationally within families, usually to male heirs, and women more often marry into this type of farming situation, rather than the reverse. Carolyn Sachs (1996:6) notes that in patriarchal social systems on the global level, women do the majority of agricultural work but it is more likely that elder men own the land, control women's labour, and make agricultural decisions in patriarchal social systems.

Capitalist agricultural discourse has largely bounded farm women's work and their power within the economic parameters of the family as reproducers of the labour for the workforce. Louise Lamphere (1986:119) suggests that a capitalist perspective proposes three kinds of reproductive labour: (1) the necessary labour in the form of wages, which supports those who are not direct producers and which can purchase various commodities necessary for subsistence: housing, clothing, food, and so forth; (2) the labour that transforms purchased commodities (such as food and cloth) into consumable items (meals, clothing) or that refurbishes those items (for example, through washing and cleaning), and (3) the labour expended in raising children (see also Vogel 1983; Barrett 1980; Edholm, Harris and Young 1977). As noted by Lamphere, this would place production in the workplace which in the case of male farmers, is located on

the farm, in the fields and where activities relate directly to the money making operations of the farm. Reproductive labour would then be largely bounded by the farm household. For the purposes of this thesis, reproductive labour is socially defined labour occurring in or in direct relation to the household, although all labour is productive, regardless of its location or purpose.

Lamphere defines 'household' work as the organization and scheduling of work in the support of workplace production. This can include the reallocation of reproductive labour in the household based on participation in the external, waged workforce (1986:119). This has the effect of placing the production within the male work force's interactions with the economy and leaving women alone responsible for reproduction within the household. (McKinley Wright 1995:217).

This 'separate sphere' discourse represents an urban model for production which sees production in the factories and workplaces outside of the domestic sphere. Domestic labour is either unrepresented or undervalued in terms of its productive capabilities and restricted within the confines of the household. Jane Adams notes that on farms, the house is not necessarily separated from productive market-oriented activities, although she suggests that women's farm work may be conceptualized differently among different ethnic groups or in different types of farm production (1991:3). For example, Deborah Fink argues that Iowa farm women conceived themselves as "helpers" rather than "workers." She found that within the farming community "a woman lost social favour by engaging in any economic or political activity outside the context of the family, but almost any degree of crossover into male roles was permissible if done within the family's system of control" (1986:19). And, as Nancy Osterud notes, nineteenth century farm women in New York considered themselves "helpmeets" to their husbands (1990:99).

In fact, women on farms do remain primarily responsible for the reproductive labour on farms, but they are often responsible for many other productive jobs, whether as a temporary farm labourer or 'gofer' for the farmer. Farm women often are required to run to town for machinery parts, move farm machinery, bring meals to the fields for the farming crew, chase after recalcitrant livestock, or become involved in petty commodity production or in off-farm waged labour aimed at supporting the economic livelihood of the farm. In the study groups for this research, the majority of women considered themselves "partners" to their husbands in the farming operations, feeling that their work, regardless of its physical location or orientation or responsibilities, was of equal importance to the livelihood of the farm as was that of the agricultural work of the farmer.

Ward and Pyle (1995) suggest that farm women's labour should be considered on a continuum from formal market labour to unpaid household work, as women work in the formal sector, the informal sector, and without pay in the household. The formal sector accounts for the paid, structured capitalist environment and "is structurally heterogenous and comprises such activities as direct subsistence, small scale production and trade, and subcontracting to semi-clandestine enterprises and home workers" (Portes and Sassen-Koob 1987:31). The informal sector can include home-based work in this analysis but not work such as unpaid household domestic labour. Maureen McKinley Wright (1995:232) looked at oral histories of older farm women in Iowa and Missouri to consider the labour options and labour strategies of women in relation to the family economy. She proposes that farm women's labour should be conceptualized on a continuum between the public and private sphere in order to provide a better representation of women's paid and unpaid economic contributions to the farm.

Although there is tremendous variability in the constitution of 'households' across societies, they remain the basic units of the economy that in state-level societies exhibit the cultural universal of maintaining the house, feeding its members, and caring for its dependents (Halperin 1990:42). Jane Guyer and Pauline Peters (Moore 1994:86; see also Wilk and Netting 1984:5-19, and Wilk 1991) suggest that we should consider less the location of the household but "What are the significant units of production, consumption and investment in this region / group / people; and what are the major flows and transfers of resources between individuals and units?" (1987:208).

Henrietta Moore (1994) has considered the flow of resources in relation to the household and argues that reproduction is not confined to the household, and social production is not, as Marxist and feminist analysis have predicted, provided through the reproduction of the household. Considering the concept of redistribution, Moore argues: ". . . it is the mechanisms of redistribution in society, rather than the process of production and reproduction, which are crucial to understanding the relationship between households and larger scale economic and social processes and institutions" (1994:101). This claim she prefaces with the assumption that social identities structure the nature and direction of the flow of resources in redistribution and are in turn structured by the very process of redistribution. In a household, the flow of these resources is implicated in the division of labour, and where these reproductive task fall disproportionately to women, the system of reproduction is gendered, just as the system of production is gendered (1994:101).

If we consider the labour of women on farms is gendered due to its location largely in and around the household, and that this labour varies in its relationship to formal and informal markets, how do we define volunteer labour in rural neighbourhood or community clubs and associations? Does this labour represent the redistribution of

resources based on reproducing gendered divisions of labour as Moore argues? The members of farm women's clubs garner material resources from their homes, farms and rural, semi-rural and local urban communities and use their collective 'unpaid' labour to ensure the livelihood of their communities by creating social capital. How do we effectively conceptualize the mechanisms of redistribution of these reproductive resources that appreciates the volunteer labour of farm women in the collective and represents the flow of their resources to ensure the livelihood of community?

Jane Midgley (2006:218) argues in her study of women whose families work in the rural coalfield community of Ilston in northeastern England that the household and community are interconnected through "feminized" economic practices. She emphasizes a re-conceptualization of society as interconnecting domains and complex relationships between the 'public' and the 'private' (McNay 1999). Midgley (Staeheli 2003:818) notes that this has been defined as "a 'space of betweenness' linking [the] public and private, shaped by changing norms and practices associated with both public and private spheres" (2006:219). She adds that Moore, Milroy and Wismer (1994) consider community actions as a third sphere of economic activity, separate from the domestic / private and traded waged / public domains, and still others have argued that the combination of work within the domestic household, the voluntary sector and the labour force represent a "whole" economy approach to considering women's activities (Mackenzie and Rose 1983; Waring 1988; Henderson 1991; Moore, Milroy and Wismer 1994; Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003). As discussed by Henrietta Moore (1994), this can be conceptualized as a redistribution of reproductive resources between and through the public and private economic domains.

Karl Polanyi (1957;1977) theorized extensively about the flow of resources that occurs in capitalist and non-capitalist economies and argued that the economy is

“submerged” in relationships and that it is embedded in social institutions that can be organized as part of kinship relations, religious institutions or other nonmarket activities (Wilk 1996:7). Polanyi argued that the substantive economy could be understood as constituted on two levels (1) the interaction between man[sic] and his surroundings and (2) the institutionalization of that process. These actions are inseparable, he argued (1977:31).

Polanyi (1977:31-34) proposed that the interaction of ‘man’ and his surroundings involves understanding the materials or goods used for survival. These involve the movements of goods that are locational and recognized as “change of place”, or appropriational, recognized as “change of hands.” The locational movement of materials involves the spatial movement of goods, generally defined as transportation and production like hunts, expeditions, raids, drawing water, etc., or currently as shipping, railroads and air transportation. The key to understanding locational movements is that labour is combined in specific ways with other goods. Appropriational movements deal with transactions and the disposition of things and persons partly or totally from one appropriational sphere to another. This can include management, administration, the circulation of goods, distribution of income, tribute and taxation.

Polanyi found through historical and cross-cultural studies that societies exhibit four forms of economic integration relating to these flow of resources. Reciprocity uses mutual obligation and sharing as a base for helping and sharing which is often evident through cultural or social relationships. Redistribution requires centralized collection and control of materials that are redistributed back to individuals or social groups. Exchange can be considered calculated trade in a number of forms usually represented as exchange of goods or exchange of goods for money. He theorized that the economy is based on entirely logical principles in different societies, and the social groups within

these institutions undertake production, exchange and consumption as determined by the rules of these institutions (Wilk 1996:8).

Polanyi's fourth element of economic integration which he called "householding" is described as *oconomia* or the production for one's own use. He defined this production as a feature of the economy of more advanced state structures but having no commonality with the 'motive of gain' or the institution of markets, and occurring with a closed group for the satisfaction of the members of that group (1957a:53). He argued that the institutional nucleus of the group is not of import, as it can occur in a family, a village settlement, or with endemic political power, such as a seigneurial manor, and the internal organization is also not of concern (1944:53). He credits the source of his theory to Aristotle, who argued that production for use rather than production for gain was the essence of householding with the key to the self-sufficient household being that money and markets remain as accessory in order for production to occur (1944:54).

Polanyi did not extensively explore householding as a form of economic integration.¹⁹ Rhoda Halperin's study of the rural families in Kentucky draws heavily on Polanyi's conceptualization of householding as the form of economic integration between households linked by kinship structured through the flow of labour and resources. It is a livelihood strategy that can be observed in many environments and social situations, although, as Halperin notes of Polanyi's unpublished writing (Polanyi n.d.), it is the key form of economic integration for rural parts of states systems (Halperin 1994:148). Halperin argues that householding is the "provisioning of a group by means of circular flows of resources, goods and services. Goods and services move in ways that articulate different patterns of economic organization, that is, different institutions" (1994:145). Thus individuals can labour for the direct subsistence of their families in addition to buying, selling and reselling family goods and useable items produced in the

capitalist market. Family goods move in, through and out of a familial network composed of individuals (several or pairs) as well as pairs or groups of households (1994:145-149).

Householding at the community level was also considered by Halperin (1998) in her research on 'East Enders' of Cincinnati. In this study she considers livelihood strategies that "maintain the family and the community, preserving family and community resources and ensuring the ongoing life of working class" (1998:125). Her study emphasizes "householding" as a mixed, predominantly non-capitalist pattern that focuses on the provisioning of the group through the circular flow of resources and goods that maintain kin and neighbourhood groups in the formal and informal sectors of the economy (1998:126).

Informal farm women's groups in Southern Alberta exhibit householding in their 'provisioning' of their rural communities by redistributing their reproductive labour and goods within realms of exchange that are acceptable within patriarchal farming discourse. Provisioning in this context involves the farm women's club using various economic strategies in formal and informal sectors of the rural economy to enable the livelihood of their rural communities. This includes simple commodity production by the individual member in her home or through the collective work of the club and can include selling these wares in the informal marketplace. Club members also collectively hire-out their labour to raise funds. Goods donated to the club from residents and businesses are redistributed to the community through craft, garage or bake sales. Profit made from these sales are also redistributed to the community by funding neighbourhood or community events and through direct donation. These strategies are unique to the consideration of householding as the provisioning of the rural communities is not in direct support of the economic livelihood of households but represents the production of

social capital through women's collective volunteer labour. Their labour reinforces mutually beneficial relationships amongst members of the community that can enable community livelihood.

Social capital was conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group” (1986:248). Bourdieu presents a labour-based approach to the production of capital in the form of economic capital constituting money and property, cultural capital that includes cultural goods, services and education, symbolic capital which is a legitimation of capital production and social capital (Swartz 1997:74). He believed that “economic capital is at the root of all other types of capitals” which are “transformed, disguised forms of economic capital” (Bourdieu 1986:252). For Bourdieu, the conversion of social capital resources into economic capital is often not obvious except through the study of the benefits that are made available and reproduced through familial and social networks (Warr 2006:499).

For farm women, material resources from the farm household, farm and community flow back to the community through the collective unpaid labour of the club in the informal and formal economy. The feminized practices of these farm women's groups in these economies are largely in response to historical patriarchal farming discourse that circumscribes farm women's labour within the formal economy by limiting their work to the household in support of and within the context of the farmstead. Farm women are able to circumvent these externally imposed boundaries in two ways. First of all, they labour in activities that are considered socially acceptable for rural women in their communities which include cooking and feeding, handiwork and craft production, volunteering, organizing and provisioning inter-family gatherings and cultural events, and

caring for the needy or sick. All of this is social reproduction. Secondly, they create and reproduce social capital in their community through “an unceasing effort of sociability,” which is the primary requirement for the creation of social capital (Bourdieu 1986:250).

Arlene Kaplan Daniels considers the place of sociability in the work of women volunteers and specifically, sociability work as “invisible labour”(1985:363-374). She refers to sociability work as the creating an ambience, organizing a setting, providing refreshment, and guaranteeing the appearance of participants by those who provide hospitality. She notes that this motivational activity can be dismissed merely as trivial, as a social interchange related to women’s gender roles and natural propensities, requiring no ‘real’ skills (1985:364).

Daniels argues that the stereotypes about women’s aptitudes and innate skill obscure or mystify the process by which women carry on their “work” and this mystification is most evident in the manufacture of hospitality to promote sociability (1985:365), “While men are concerned with an autonomous life of work, what women do *isn’t* work but only an intuitive response to the tone and style of interaction” (1985:365). Furthermore, this work can be trivialized as “tea parties for the self-conscious elite” (1985:371) or as an “an organization of cookie pushers” (Cohen 1979:402). Women themselves can sometimes downplay their contributions to the community by instead emphasizing the benefits they receive through simply having social interaction and involvement.

The provisioning activities of these farm women’s clubs can be largely explained by the need to work within and around existing economic and social boundaries based on gender. In Larissa Lomnitz’s discussion of exchange mechanisms that occur in the Third World, she argues that the more a social system is bureaucratically formalized, regulated, planned and yet unable to satisfy social requirements, the more that it tends

to create informal mechanisms that escape the control of the system:

Informal modes of exchange grow in the interstices of the formal system, thrive on its inefficiencies, and tend to perpetuate them by compensating for the shortcomings and by generating factions and interest groups within the system. Informal activities are embedded transactions that obey a symbolic-cultural logic that differs from (and often clashes with) economic rationality or the formal ideology of the state (Lomnitz 1988:43).

The rules of sociability that governs informal exchange vary from culture to culture, but are evident in modern and traditional cultures. Lomnitz suggests that the informal exchange of goods and services within a formal social system develops in response to scarcity, and it tends to involve commodities that are not freely available in formal systems (1988:43).

Farm women's clubs are able to ensure the livelihood of their communities because their reproductive labour is largely invisible to the patriarchal agricultural economy. Their work is not bound by the market system of the capitalist economy, but by the requirements for the production of social capital which Putnam defines as "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital" (1993:35-36). By using the informal economy, club women move labour and resources from the household to the club where both are redistributed to the community. The benefits accrued to the community are returned to the club members and their families by creating mutually beneficial friendships and networks among farm families which encourage mutual aid and reciprocal support. This circular flow of resources represents householding on the community level.

Chapter 5: On The Farm

Interviewing farm women when you are one of 'their own', and at the same time, a researcher of their lives presents some interesting complications. First of all, I am a member of their community, regardless of how long I have been away simply because I was born of Southern Alberta farmers. This identification with rurality goes a long way toward securing your relationship with these people simply because you have a sensibility about agrarian way of life that cannot be acquired from books. These farm people (and I) harbour a quiet pride in this knowledge and the shared experiences and understandings that give them a sense of community with others who have lived 'the farm life.' But with this insight comes is also fraught with trepidation. The 'cold separation' required of the interviewer may be imperiled by the 'reproductive' realities of the interview situation. While I sat at the farm kitchen table interviewing 'Rita', she canned her tomatoes, and 'Sarah' hurriedly prepared a pot of cabbage rolls for the immediately impending family dinner. My own 'reproductive' training as a farm girl obliges me to hop up and help chop the onions rather than sit back and ask the 'hard questions.'

Driving me forward through this complexity of interests was my determination to gain a greater comprehension into the nature of the labour of rural women in the household, on the farm and in the community, and the labour that I performed as a youth. To an outsider, this likely appears to be a less than threatening proposition but I recognized that the patterns of livelihood of the women's lives were influenced by a farming discourse propelled by the patriarchal orientation of farm production which prescribed many boundaries and expectations to their livelihood. Just as these boundaries were a frustration to me as a female labourer on the farm, I was intrigued and at the same time a bit reluctant to hear the effects these ever-present, and seemingly inalterable 'rules' had on a lifetime of labour on the farm and in the community

for rural women.

I also felt privileged and a little awed by the opportunity to be sitting down at the kitchen table of women who had lived through the 'war' of farming, for farming on the Canadian Prairies is a battle against the whims of the weather, pests, weeds, foreign markets and government policy. The concept of the 'rural idyll' or what Aitken (1985) termed for rural Australians as 'country mindedness' which is the belief by rural dwellers that they are special and apart from urban dwellers because their world is natural, safe and free from excesses of the modern world is, as Margaret Alston (2000:35) argues, barely sustained by the reality of rural living. In Southern Alberta, farm women worked hard, long hours to ensure the livelihood of the farm family, and it is doubtful that much thought or labour went to the creation or sustaining of a metaphorical 'oasis of country life.'

Yet, rural women were able to maintain their families through these vagaries and constraints and also garner their limited material resources to work collectively beyond their farmsteads for the betterment of their communities. They were not endeavouring to create a utopian country life. Their labour was about creating community with what they were able to offer as women married to farmers. As it turns out, the clubs and their members had a tremendous amount to contribute and the sustained livelihood of the community was the result of their efforts.

Farm Life for Women

The fourteen women interviewed for this study ranged in age from ninety to fifty-five years and have spent the major portion of their married lives on the farm. A few have retired off-farm, and five are widowed although three of these women still reside on the farms that are now primarily operated by one or more of their children and their families.

Although the women representing the two clubs considered for this study are from farms approximately forty miles apart, farm production differs in each area. The eight farm women of the ENC farmed, or currently farm, with their spouses on extensive dryland grain farms. Winter and spring wheat, barley and canola are the primary crops although a few farms have recently dabbled in the cultivation of legumes. Most of the farms at one time or another had small cow-calf beef operations, and a few in the area continue to carry large herds of cattle. The farms ranged in acreage from between one and nine sections during the history of the farms, including purchased and leased land. The farms are located between twelve and twenty-five miles from the village of Warner which is also the county seat located approximately forty miles south of the city of Lethbridge.

The six farm women of the RFWC currently or previously farmed with their spouses and family on irrigation or combination irrigation and dryland farms. The farms in the area range in size from approximately one-half section of irrigated land to four sections of combined dryland and irrigated farming. The primary crop produced on the irrigated land are sugar beets, although legumes, corn, and grain are also commonly cultivated. Grain is primarily produced on the dryland acreage. Some of the farms had small cow-calf beef operations, and one farm operated a large registered beef operation in combination with dryland and irrigated farming. These farms are located between eight and fifteen miles from the nearest town (Coaldale) and between fifteen and twenty miles east of Lethbridge. Most of the farms in both study groups also had some small animal production, including pigs and chickens, and occasionally a few sheep and horses.

The women of the study came to their farms after marriage with various levels of education. Participants from the ENC included three women who married prior to graduating from high school, and three of the women were married directly following

high school graduation. One of the women, now in her eighties completed a secretarial course prior to marriage although she was not employed in this career after marriage, and another participant who came from outside the district had completed graduate studies and worked briefly prior to and after marriage.

Education for the six participants of the RFWC prior to marriage also varied. One woman had a grade eight education and one married upon graduation from high school. Two women completed a secretarial program in Calgary and were employed prior to marriage. One woman completed an x-ray technology course and was employed in a hospital prior to marriage. Another participant went to agricultural college taking home economics and was also employed briefly prior to marriage.

Formal education following marriage was limited in both groups which was likely related to the heavy demands of childcare and the household. Generally, if women received further education, it was after their children were old enough to take over some of the household and childcare duties. One ENC participant completed a secretarial program and later pursued an undergraduate degree at the University of Lethbridge while living on the farm. Another trained in banking but didn't pursue this as a job. A few of the members of the RFWC who were employed took on the job training courses. Many of the participants took special interest courses offered as educational extension to their communities or an occasional adult education course offered at the Lethbridge Community College.²⁰

Farm Women's Labour

The paid labour that the participants in both groups undertook prior to marriage related to the rurality of their upbringing, the level of education that they reached prior to marriage and the age that they married. Seven of the participants of the ENC grew up

within fifty miles of the farm they inhabited after marriage, an area that is largely composed of extensive dryland farms with a few villages and towns serving as minor service centres and the location of the local elementary and high school. Similarly, all of the participants from the RFWC grew up within approximately fifty miles of the farms they moved to with their husbands after marriage, including both dryland and irrigation farms. Most of the participants were from farming backgrounds prior to marriage.

The pre-marriage labour for the participants in both groups followed historically gendered roles for rural and small-town women which oriented women and female children's work within the household. Cooking, cleaning, laundry, babysitting siblings and neighbourhood children, and helping out with the gardening were the primary duties for many of the young women who grew up on farms and for the few participants who were brought up in small rural towns. In a few cases, the young women were able to pursue paid labour in other households due to personal or family financial need. Alice, an elderly woman from a family of eleven, remembered having to move into town and then hire out to do cleaning and babysitting from age ten on due to the untimely death of her father. Nora, another elderly participant, recalled working at a neighbour's house, cleaning and cooking for harvesters and sheep shearing crews, proudly earning fifteen dollars for fifteen days of work when the going rate for this labour was between twenty-five cents and fifty cents per day.

Some of the farm women undertook non-traditional labour on the farm in their adolescence. Nora proudly noted: "I wrangled the horses and cows in the early days and I farmed with my Dad, so I learnt the trade [farming]." Rita worked alongside her mother growing and harvesting a half acre of green beans that they then sold to a local vegetable processing plant. She used her earnings to pay for her clothing and supplies for school. All of the participants except one grew up on farms or spent some of their

youth on a farm or ranch in Southern Alberta and had extended family involved in farming. None of the women recalled that their mothers, or any family female role models of their extended families performed non-traditional roles during their youth.

The labour that women undertook on and off the farms after marriage was a negotiation between the physical demands of extensive dryland or intensive irrigation farming, nurturing the children and family, the financial and personal rewards of paid labour and preconceived notions about the nature of work of farm women in relation to farm men. Bennett and Kohl (1982:129 *passim*) define the “agrifamily unit” as composed of “nuclear family household” that is managed by the wife and an “agricultural enterprise” managed by the husband, which Garkovich and Bokemeier (1988:212) suggest makes the household as distinct from the enterprise, although they coexist spatially. They note that Matthaie (1982:212) further expands the description of women’s primary “work” as the reproducing of the farm labour force and also includes agricultural activities that produce income and agricultural production for home consumption and market sale.

The daily labour of the participants was largely bounded by the ‘household.’ Rayna Rapp has considered the defining characteristics of the household and argues that these entities in which we live are not families, but households. “Households are empirically measurable units in which people pool resources and perform certain tasks. They are residential units within which personnel and resources get distributed and connected. Households may vary in their membership composition, and in relation to their resource allocation . . .” (1978:180). She notes that household does not necessarily equate with the American family, which includes narrower and broader webs of kin ties corresponding to the “nuclear family” and all relations by blood and marriage (1978:180). In the study area, farm households are primarily composed of the male

farmer, his wife, and one or more children. It is common for adult sons or extended family to also farm in the area. Seasonal or casual labourers may be temporary residents on the farm. Adult daughters more commonly leave their homes for off-farm employment, education or marriage.

The primary labour responsibility of participants within the context of the household and the family farm was the cooking, cleaning and child care aptly described and oft repeated with pride, frustration and exhaustion by the farm women of my youth and some of the participants as 'chief cook and bottle washer.' Defined by the Ninth Edition of Webster's New Millennium Dictionary as "someone who is in charge but also has to attend to the details and menial tasks; supervisor," this clearly reflects the reproductive labour responsibilities that were the purview of the farm women. The 'chief cook' responsibilities revealed by the women included not only cooking for the family and permanent or seasonal hired men but also the provisioning of the household through shopping, growing gardens, canning and processing food (including milk and eggs prior to changes in health regulations). 'Bottle washing' was a metaphor for cleaning not only the baby bottles, canning jars, milk cans, and dishes but also clothes, house, children, the garden and yard, hired men's clothes and the bunkhouse. The farm wife was also responsible for the daily moral 'upkeep' of the family as the caretaker of the children and their formal and moral education.²¹

Most of this labour was accepted by the women as the duties incumbent on the wife of a farmer. Sarah's perspective on her responsibilities on the farm was generally echoed by all of the participants: "Get the children to school, get the children to everything that they want . . . be sure that three square meals are on the table, and general housework and general upkeep of everybody else. Just try and keep everything smooth running so that they [their farming husbands] can do their work, too." This was

echoed by Kim who defined her work as “really just support at home, and you know, make sure everything, everybody’s happy, and running smoothly” which affirms that the farm woman was required to ‘keep a lid on’ or maintain control of their reproductive responsibilities in order for the productive work of the farmer to be accomplished in a precarious and uncertain climate and financial environment.

The primary involvement of the participants in farm labour outside of the house, on the farm, was in the garden and yard. The garden was clearly perceived as an extension of the household, and therefore the reproductive responsibility of the woman. Women would often engage their children to provide additional labour in the gardens. The participants also commonly hauled prepared meals to the fields for the farm workers, which often the women defined as part of their ‘field work’ or outside labour. Some participants from both clubs engaged in petty farm production by delivering and selling their eggs and cream to local food processors, though this activity became less common due to the stricter health and production regulation of the suppliers by the provincial government.²²

Many of the women expressed their dissatisfaction with some of the reproductive responsibilities of a farm wife. One major stressor noted by most of the participants was the need to extend their labour to the care of seasonal or permanent ‘hired men.’ Male workers would often be employed for the dryland operations during part or all of the growing season and would reside on the farms, while irrigation farms usually required temporary truck drivers during the October through November sugar beet harvest. Some farm families had permanent hired men to help with farm chores and livestock throughout the year. A few participants noted the unsavoury nature of some of the help: “They were usually just ne’er do wells off the street that were in the city, and we’d bring them out, and it was a touchy business. I didn’t like it” (Barb). “Harvest time was quite a

deal 'cause you had to. Well, especially beet harvest 'cause you had at least three other men working, three to four, then you had to do big meals and coffee breaks, and it was a lot of cooking" (Emma). Farm women appeared to have little control over the decisions to hire these workers as the demands of farming made them a necessity when family labourers were not available. The imposition of additional male(s) into the farm activities may have challenged the farm woman's control over her reproductive responsibilities by increasing her labour requirements, compromising the status quo or power dynamics of the farm couple, and affecting her moral control and safety of the children because the hired men were not part of the nuclear or extended family.

Another stressor that my mother mentioned in conversation was the tenuous position that women felt they had on farms. She advised that there was a constant underlain stress about the ever-present danger of losing a spouse to a farm accident or illness, thereby losing a way of life. Women were afraid for themselves and their younger children's welfare if this occurred because it was well-known that the property laws did not protect farm women's contribution to the success of the farm. Farm women in this area commonly perceived that the paternal family of the husband could come in and take over the farm and, thereby affect the family's livelihood, and they felt powerless in relation to this threat. The passing of the Matrimonial Property Act in 1979 may have resolved some of these concerns, but when the participants were asked if they had legal or financial interest in the farm, their responses were variable. Some of the women recognized their property rights and others felt that they did not have property interests in the farm property.

The Division of Labour

The distinction between reproductive and productive labour responsibilities was clearly defined in terms of the gender of the person performing household labour. According to the participants, none of the farm men participated in the day-to-day household duties or caring for the children. A few women noted that their husbands would help out with household maintenance. Although a couple of the men knew how to make bread or sausage, or had some minor household skills obtained in bachelorhood, actual household involvement was more of 'making do' when they had to feed the children or clean house when their spouse was unavailable or ill. Ida noted that the long hours required of irrigation farming meant that he [her husband] didn't have time for household work. Most of the participants pointed out that household work was historically not part of the man's work on a farm: As Dora attested: "No, he just wasn't that kind. A lot of men weren't in those days." Emma had a similar experience with her husband: "Oh, he didn't do much domestic. He's not the new generation." She emphasized that his work was the "farm work."

Kim advised that her husband would cook and clean if necessary but "it's not the way he was raised 'cause his mum never; she catered to the man's work, and I mean Dad [her father-in-law] couldn't hardly boil water after mum died." Some women noted that their husbands would help with the gardening and mowing the yard if they were finished with fieldwork, but this was more commonly the woman's responsibility. As these jobs were 'outdoor' activities and within the generalized productive space of the farmer, men may have found these activities more appealing and the men usually plowed the gardens in preparation for the planting. Men didn't help in the flower garden which suggests that this was also considered women's work.

Other labour that women undertook outside of the household was in response to

the requirements of the farmer for temporary labour in the field or with livestock. Women often helped their husbands move farm power equipment, irrigation pipes or monitor or feed livestock. The presence of daughters in the home who could perform household labour allowed the woman to move beyond the household. Barb noted: "Because the situation with farming was very difficult in respect of getting extra help, then I would fill in at harvest time as a truck driver, and then the oldest daughter would take over the cooking and getting the meals for [the crew], and looking after the younger children." Women didn't express any strong negative feelings about this work. Rather, these jobs were more often referenced as their 'outside' responsibilities, along with the garden and yard.

One anomaly amongst the participants was a woman in her early nineties who was very involved in the daily 'farming' activities, working alongside her husband in the fields and farmyard. Eve clearly revelled in the opportunity to move beyond the household: "I did everything. I milked cows. I had chickens and I worked in the field with the tractor. I loaded [beets], I topped sugar beets, I piled sugar beets. I hoed in the field. I picked the beans, and the cucumbers, and the pumpkins, or whatever needed to be done. You know, I loved, I *loved* being out more than in." When I asked Eve how she was able to handle all of these jobs, her response was "I didn't think about it." She did receive household labour support from her daughters which likely enabled her to have available time to be involved in the 'outside' farm work and manage her household responsibilities.

More commonly, the ability for the farm women to be involved in productive labour 'in the fields' was ultimately under the control of their husband. The men were the farm managers and generally responsible for the allocation of labour to field or farm yard tasks. Nora, who learned to run the combine, drive truck and tractor prior to marriage

noted that her husband was averse to her working in the fields after marriage: “He didn’t particularly think that I should go out and help with the farm work, which I would have loved to [ha]ve done, you know, ‘cause I grew up with that, but he was from a different school. You know, and a lot of people, a lot of men then are like that . . . a woman’s place is in the house.” Flo offered to help out in the field but her husband told her “No, we need a cook more than we need a hand.”

When the farmer requested help in the fields or with some of his farm work, the women responded to these additional demands for their labour because they were the only accessible worker. They negotiated this labour in order fulfill their household responsibilities and for ‘self preservation’ due to their lack of comfort or skill with the farm equipment. Farm women were minimally trained for many of these mechanized activities because they were primarily the responsibility of the farmer and male farm labourers. For instance, some women would drive truck during harvest, but refused to deal with backing up the trucks to unload using the auger systems, or choose to drive a tractor, but refuse to operate a combine or swather. And to maintain their reproductive responsibilities to their children, it was common for farm women to haul their young children with them in the cabs of the grain trucks they were driving during harvest because there was no available childcare in the rural community.

A few women chose to not do ‘field work’ because of the labour demands of the household. As Carla noted “I just didn’t have a desire to go the field. Some women like that but I just felt like how can you? I always thought that how can you keep up your house, and feed your kids and look after [your husband], and clean and be out in the field? It was very difficult. You know, then you had to come back, the ones that did that, and cook meals at night.” For this woman and some of the others, the demand for their assistance with the fieldwork was lessened or alleviated by the partnering of adult male

family members, hired agricultural workers, or teenage sons and occasionally, daughters who took up jobs in the field with their husband. Sons often helped their fathers with field work and yard chores. The labour that farm daughters undertook in relation to the household or fields was generally a reproduction of their mother's labour roles on the farm. If a participant drove truck, summer fallowed or performed chores with the livestock, one or more of her daughters were more likely to perform similar labour in addition to household labour. Similarly, if the participant performed primarily household labour, their daughter(s) generally laboured only in the household.

Off-Farm Labour

Long term off-farm waged labour was not common for the participants from the study groups.²³ Although four of the participants of the RFWC were employed off the farm in full-time labour prior to marriage, this labour ceased for most after marriage. The two ENC participants employed in off-farm labour prior to marriage also quit work upon or shortly after marriage. The reasons the participants gave for quitting or changing their employment included: the employer did not allow the woman to work after she got pregnant; the husband felt there was more than enough work for the woman on the farm; and distance to the jobs made full-time work unacceptable. It was clear that the time and work commitments on the farms including the birth of children curtailed most women's ability to continue working off the farm in other types of labour.

It was after some of the children were old enough to take over some of the household duties including sibling childcare and cooking, or where extended family was available to take care of the children that individual participants actively pursued off-farm employment. Two participants from the ENC and three participants from the RFWC performed full or part-time off-farm wage labour periodically during their residence on the

farm. A few other participants from both groups undertook casual, short-term home-based jobs including sewing, cosmetic sales and election services.

In almost all cases, the financial need of the family was the prime motivator for off-farm employment, although women also held a strong desire to have their own money and personal independence. The ways in which women dispensed their personal earnings supports both objectives, although mothers typically funnelled most of their wages toward their reproductive responsibilities. Only one participant added her earnings directly to the family coffers, while all of the other casual, part-time or full-time off-farm workers retained their pay for their 'own' use although these earnings were primarily applied to 'domestic' merchandise including the purchase of clothing for the children and themselves, furniture, appliances and sundries for the household. Two participants of the RFWC purchased vehicles to provide transportation to their employment and to transport their children to their activities.

All of these women perceived that their off-farm employment was something that was not accepted by the women in their farming community, including the women of their club. This suggestion of moral control did not appear to influence the off-farm labourers of the RFWC as they all continued to work, and a few even moved from part-time to full time labour. Barb who was a member of the ENC felt that club members' negativity about work did influence her choice to quit her job. Fink (1986:19) noted that in the grain and livestock producing areas of Iowa, women would lose social favour if they pursued economic or political activity outside of the context of the family, but women who carried out male roles were not socially sanctioned if the activity occurred within the family's system of control. Norms of behaviour for the participant farm women historically support the position of the farm woman as legitimately productive within the household and within the context of the family farm but not outside of the farm. For the

women of the RFWC, the close proximity of an urban centre with a larger job market, coupled with family financial need likely outweighed the effects of a loss of social favour with others in their neighbourhood, as all of these women remained active members of their clubs during their employment. Conversely, the off-farm paid labour of these farm women may have been more acceptable to fellow club members if this work did not influence their commitment to the work of the club.

Farm Business Decision Making

The involvement of the participants in farm business decisions was varied, although most considered that they had some input into those decision which were integral to the financial success of the farm including the purchase of large equipment, land and livestock. Regardless, the final authority for these decisions was usually the husband. Farm women were generally not involved in crop planning, labour allocation and coordination, agricultural scheduling and farm and machinery maintenance. In some cases, the women were totally excluded from the farm business decisions. As Nora complained: "That again my husband, he took care of that, to my resentment because I wouldn't know until a piece of new machinery came into the yard that it was bought, and that was, you know, to me, that was a no-no because that isn't the way I grew up. My dad and mother shared everything." In my own youth I recall hearing my mother denouncing another equipment purchase by my father, noting that 'the house could be falling down around us, but we've got a *new* tractor (or combine, or grain truck, or cultivator)!' For most of the women, although, the day-to-day farm business and labour decisions undertaken by their husbands were not an issue unless it heavily impacted the ability of the women to carry out their reproductive roles.

The participants varied in terms of their access to, and knowledge of the farm

finances. Some of the participants proudly kept the farm accounts and prepared the yearly taxes, a daunting task considering the complexity of the financial reporting required by government as a result of farm subsidization. A few participants were clearly 'left in the dark' about the farm finances as this was considered the responsibility of the farmer, or, as Kim noted: "I didn't really have a clue what was going on financially, and he, I think, he tried to shelter me, too [so] I wouldn't worry." Alice clearly perceived her husband's complete control of the farm money differently: "You know, he never had a cent to give me for so long, and you know, I worked for myself and had my money prior to marriage and when I got married, I never saw a cent of money. I think he's from that era where men keep all the money and women don't get any . . . that's the only thing I could think of. The other men never done that." Interestingly, she did get to spend as much money as she wanted on groceries. This was likely a small comfort, and when Alice started a home based business, she retained all of her earnings, and charged her husband for her products.

On the other hand, Rita had long-term employment off the farm, retained her personal earnings, and maintained confidence in her husband's responsibility for the farm business: "I had full trust that he would make the right decision and I guess in some ways that might appear to be a little bit old fashion in some senses but he knows the farming operation in and out and I guess I never felt that I needed to question those kind of decisions . . ." Dora another participant who was employed in off-farm labour later in life, strongly asserted her need for the gendered division of labour: "No, I let him do the business because I didn't really want to know anything about the cattle, the grain, what he should do. No, I've got enough. Let them handle the farm, you handle the other."

The strong division between productive "farm" labour and the reproductive 'household' labour roles within the family was not in evidence in the descriptors the farm

women provided for themselves in terms of their relationship with their husbands. The most common response was 'partner' which suggests that for a number of women, farm marriages involved a partnership between the man and woman. As Jane asserted "I don't identify myself as a housewife . . . I think I was more than a housewife. I think I did a lot. I helped him a lot on the farm. I sort of identified myself as an equal partner." Sarah forcefully declared similar sentiments: "I tell you my time was worth as much as his, and I worked as hard, and I always said: God help the man I marry if he didn't have ambitions . . . I am his wife and I am fifty percent of this operation, too, for us to make this a success." This suggests that for some women, being simply identified in relation to the household on the farm was not adequate to explain their importance to the operation of the farm. A few women identified themselves clearly as 'housewife' or 'wife.' Alice further qualified this by describing her status as 'his slave' due to her lack of involvement with farm business and farm money, and Barb felt that she was both "subservient" and "wife" which suggests a lack of power in relation to her husband's role in the 'business' of the farm.

About Living On A Farm

Regardless of the hardships that these women endured managing their household and other labour responsibilities, they all enjoyed living on the farm. Most of the comments provided by the participants showed an appreciation for the ambiance of a farm, including the peace and quiet, privacy and freedom that a farm life provided for them (in contrast to what they perceived would have been available to them as an urban dweller). A few women commented that their current feelings toward living on a farm were a result of growing up on a farm. As Rita opined: "I don't know if the word 'like' even entered into it at the beginning because it was just a way of life and we knew that, and it was just

sort of a continuation of what I knew from childhood. But now, when I look back on it, I realize how fortunate we were to be able to raise our children [here]. I guess just generally the lifestyle in the sense of, you know, it was something I knew, that I was familiar with. I mean you had your garden, you had your own food, your own produce. I mean if you didn't have any money, you always had something to eat." A few women noted that the farm was a good place for children to grow up.

The few dislikes that women had about living on the farm included the financial uncertainty of farming, the isolation,²⁴ and distance from the city (for shopping, entertainment or work). 'Running a farm operation' is usually connoted with the managerial and mechanical 'productive' responsibilities of the male farmer, but 'reproductive' labour is also representative of running the farming when one considers that farm women had to 'run the household', 'run to the field' with meals, parts or to help move equipment, run their cream, eggs or vegetables to the food processors, and 'run to town' for groceries, farm supplies, children's activities or for their 'other' job. Flo noted 'the dirt', or the cleaning and Alice summarized it best for all of the participants in her comments: "All the work there had to be done. Just keep working, working. I actually *ran* upstairs, downstairs. I ran for almost eighteen years!"

Summary and Analysis

There is strong evidence of the gendered separation of productive and reproductive labour on the farms of the participants. Women were largely defined by and through their work in the household and in support of their children. Men were largely responsible for the productive activities on the farm, and although most women were involved to various extents in some of the large scale business decisions, this influence did not effect a change in the division of labour. Farm women were the managers of the

household, and men were the managers of the farm business.

Although a few of the participants found a level of financial independence through off-farm employment, or some variation in their work by partaking more in the farm operations, this labour was accomplished in addition to their responsibilities in the household and usually in conjunction with labour provided by their children. Whether women chose to go to the field or not, this labour was ultimately controlled by the farmer as the manager of the farm operations. Men did little or no labour within the household, and women were primarily responsible for the children. This pattern of separation of productive from reproductive labour is a long held norm of behaviour in these farming communities, supported by the participants' childhood influences that emphasized maintenance of the household and children by the women. As evident from the interviews, the participants complied with the gendered labour requirements of this discourse.

The participants who undertook off-farm labour experienced social disfavour by the women of the community, although in most cases this did not affect their decision to remain employed. Labour that women performed outside of the household but within the context of the farm was generally thought by the participants to be appropriate for women of their communities. It appears that as long as the women satisfied their reproductive responsibilities, productive labour, whether on or off the farm was generally acceptable to other women in the community. Off-farm labourers supported their reproductive roles through the expenditure of their earnings on their children and resources for the household.

Farming discourse which prescribes the division of labour between the household and farm operations also informs the location of farm women's power on the farm. Women were responsible for decisions relating to reproductive labour including

the household and the children, while men were responsible for farm productive decisions, including cropping, equipment purchases and labour allocation. Women expressed frustration in the high demands for their labour, their lack of control over, or involvement in farm business decisions and labour allocation within the context of the household and farm, the financial stress of farming, and isolation relating to the distance from urban centres.

In order to combat these stressors and the gendered boundaries to their labour and activities that were reinforced by the patriarchal farming tradition and discourse, these rural women sought out other neighbourhood farm women for companionship and support. The women could identify with each other because they shared similar life circumstances: they were young, married to farmers, separated from their birth family support structure, isolated by distance from other women, and all were integral 'partners' of a farming productive enterprise where economic and survival were experienced as a family concern despite the patriarchal divisions of labour (Ghorayshi 1989:573). In many rural areas of Southern Alberta, connecting with other farm women was enabled by becoming members of farm women's clubs. As noted earlier, rural women's associations have held various mandates since the early 1900s in Alberta, but it is the informal farm women's clubs that provided localized rural women with opportunities for social contact, friendship and mutuality, while allowing women to capitalize on their reproductive skills in order to benefit of their communities and, thereby their families and themselves.

Chapter 6: The Farm Women's Neighbourhood Club

Membership

Don Cohen and Laurence Prusak consider that membership in a group opens doors to intrinsic rewards which have been identified as important to the personal satisfaction and organizational reason: "Membership implies connection: the trust, understanding, and mutuality that support collaborative, cohesive action. It implies commitment to the group and the work, cooperation, and the willingness to do more for a job that is not 'just a job'" (2001:61).

There were few specific rules prescribing membership in these clubs. A geographical or emotional orientation to the local rural area, or rural neighbourhood where the club operated was the primary parameter for involvement in the club, but the boundary for membership was defined differently for both clubs. Neighbourhood frequently connotes an urban area, but as Mary Neth suggests: "A 'neighbourhood' begins with a core of people whose interactions are most frequent and builds outwards to include those who share consistent, face to face interactions" (1995:42).

The RFWC comprised farm women who inhabited farms in the area of Readymade, named in recognition of the 'Ready Made Farms' constructed by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1913 (RHS 1977:2) to entice settler farmers into the region. This rural location is represented by a school and outbuildings moved to the area as part of consolidation of the school district in 1918 (RHS 1977:54-55), and a few adjacent farms. The Readymade School was the centre of educational, social and community activities for this rural area, and although the school ceased operation due to lack of students in 1983, it remained a social centre for the rural community.

For most of the history of the ENC, there was not a particular structure or

building that provided physical orientation for membership or 'belonging,' although the meeting minutes allude to meetings being held in the Watts School which was located approximately sixteen miles east of the village of Warner. This school operated from 1939 to 1949, closing as a result of school consolidation in Warner. The original 'Busy Bees' who established the ENC lived on farms in the area. Although minutes from the first few decades of the ENC do not specifically outline a boundary, in February of 1961, the ENC took specific action to define geographical boundaries, including taking the socially precarious decision to allow membership for women inhabiting farms on one side of certain road allowances and excluding those that resided on the other side. Barb suggested that attendance at the ENC meetings was reaching numbers that could be not easily accommodated by the meeting hostesses in the living room or rumpus room of the family farm home. The club ultimately decided not to extend the geographical boundaries for membership. Carla noted that this upset some women on the outside of the existing ENC boundaries as they wanted to become involved in the club because they had heard of the fun they had at 'Club' and at their parties.²⁵

When the participants were asked if members were required to be a woman to join, they each responded with laughs of incredulity, with more than one participant pointing out with a wry grin that this was why the group was called a 'farm *women's* club.' Men were not members of either of the clubs, and there was no evidence that there they wanted to join or that the club women wanted them to join. The clubs would occasionally garner the help of one of the member's husbands to pull their float in the local parade or transport materials for their projects. At a few points in its history, the ENC made the decision to appeal to their husbands for their input on a couple of their major club decisions that would require the resources of the entire neighbourhood in order to accomplish their proposals. This included the building of a neighbourhood

community centre which appeared to receive less than enthusiastic support from their male counterparts. Subsequently, this was not pursued as a project. Men were generally only involved with the club at a social level during specially organized club events.

Membership for both clubs was nondenominational, non-political and nonpartisan, and women or their families were not required to be landowners, although most of the farms were owned by the husband and wife. There also appeared to be no cultural prescriptive or established bylaws defining membership, other than the paying of minimal yearly dues, which for the ENC ranged from twenty-five cents in 1949 to four dollars in 1980. Within the Readymade area is a large population of Mennonite farmers, and women from this religious community did not join the RFWC. Rita, a member of the RFWC suggested that this was a choice that was made by the Mennonite women and may have related to alcohol. She also suggested that Readymade was “very hard drinking, hard partying kind of community,” a notorious reputation embellished by bootlegging during the Prohibition years of 1916 through 1924 (RHS 1977:99). Although meetings of the RFWC did not involve alcohol, it was available at some of the RFWC sponsored adult social events, and this may have deterred these women from joining the club.²⁶

Japanese WWII evacuees who came Alberta as a result of forced internment settled on farms in the Readymade area. At least one woman of Japanese descent was a member of the RFWC. There is no indication that First Nation peoples or African Canadians were resident farmers in the areas represented by the RFWC or the ENC, although they may have made up some of the transient, migrant or seasonal labour for the farms. Colonies of the Hutterian Brethren were present in both study areas but these women did not join the clubs. In the ENC area, Hutterian women did not regularly

socialize with women outside of their colony.

In these communities, most of the participants joined the club shortly after they had moved to the area following their marriage. Carla, a member of the ENC considered her arrival in the area: “Well, I guess when we first moved into the community and way out here and didn’t know anybody, it was just a wonderful way of getting to meet all the neighbours and get to know the ladies. If we wouldn’t have had the club, I am sure we wouldn’t known one half of the people, but we did. That club just brought everybody together and the women, and everybody worked together and knew each other, and it was wonderful that way.” One member of the ENC who grew up in the neighbourhood joined her mother at the club meetings prior to her marriage, although she did not become a formal member until she wed and settled on a local farm. Marriage to a farmer in the area who was the son of resident farmers was a common to the majority of the participants.

Women were introduced to the club by a neighbour or family member, often a mother-in-law, who was a member of the club. Many of the women moved with their husband to farms previously or currently owned by his parents or relatives, and knowledge of the club was provided by these relationships. A local tradition of women visiting newcomers in welcome to the farm community provided the conduit for members to encourage women to join to these clubs. As Mary Neth points out, neighbouring integrated an individual into a series of interconnected relationships, most ties based on kinship which could expand outward to form large networks between families: “The informal exchanges and social interactions of rural neighbours were the heart of the farm community and the source of women’s influence on community life” (1999:340-341). She considers that neighbouring integrated the work, trade and social lives of farm people as they would exchange work, trade produce and do favours or provide gifts to

neighbours which enable the redistribution of resources within a farm community.

Although there was familial or neighbourly stimulus or influence to join the clubs, most of the women did not feel that they were pressured or without control in the decision to become members. Rather, young, newly married women felt that the club provided an opportunity to meet the neighbours, 'visit' or 'socialize,' and have an afternoon out of the house once a month. As Jill, an ENC member noted: "It was an outing once a month, 'cause in those days you just didn't run into town every day like you do now."

The most common reason given for first attending a club meeting was that they wished to meet their neighbours and find out about the community. This suggests that the young women wanted to socialize and establish friendships with their neighbours. In most cases, the young wives were separated from the support structure provided by their families. Also, the insecurity of being a new bride responsible for a household on the farm was likely a factor in the choice to seek out social support from the neighbour women who attended these clubs. The reproductive labour required of these farm wives also isolated them within the farm household as majority of decision making for the productive work on the farm was the responsibility of the male farmer. Women may also have sought involvement in the club to become more knowledgeable within their reproductive roles as farm women due to their youth and inexperience as the wives of farmers. Joining the club in order to help in the community was noted by a few participants as another reason they joined, although this was secondary to the sociality objectives for involvement in the club.

Maternal discourse in these rural areas may have also played a role in influencing women to join as work with these clubs may have been considered a qualification for 'acceptance' as a farm wife within the community. Two participants

noted that they felt some social pressure to join. Rita, a member of the RFWC joined the club because “it was kind of like ‘the thing’ to do” because if you didn’t join, “then you probably wouldn’t be included in a lot of those activities and because I was very young and very naive, I did what was expected.” Barb of the ENC noted: “Oh, at first I thought it was a community gathering that I could go to with children, see other people and visit” but she added that there was some coercion to be involved in the club: “We were all forced into going because we were told it was a good thing to do, and we did. Most of us, I think, really enjoyed it.”

The youth of the members when they joined the club, combined with a lack of knowledge of the workings of a rural women’s club or similarly organized formal collective activity, caused some of the women to feel intimidated about their prospects as members of the club. For all of the participants from each club, there was a well established ‘old guard’ of members comprised of farm women who had been in the community for a number of years. As Rita noted about her beginnings as a club member: “Truly, it was a pretty intimidating experience . . . I was the young one.”

There were very few women other than the cultural and religious groups previously discussed, who lived within the area of Readymade or the geographical boundaries of the ENC that did not become members of their respective clubs. My paternal grandmother, an immigrant from Hungary, did not join the ENC. My mother suggests this was due to the fact that she was uncomfortable with her lack of fluency in English (although she had a sister-in-law, and two daughters-in-law who were also long-term members). For the ENC, women remained club members even after the death of their husbands, and many maintained their club dues after moving out of the area, coming back to the occasional meeting or to join in special celebrations such as the annual Christmas party.

There is no indication that women were denied membership in these clubs, or were removed from membership after they joined. The commitment to the club was strong for ENC members as there were individuals who chose to pay their dues, and continue to donate goods or labour for club activities, but rarely went to meetings because of personal choice, labour requirements on the farm, or age made travel to meetings less feasible. Given the enjoyment that everyone expressed about their involvement with the club and the labour they performed toward its goals, it is likely that moral control was less a factor amongst the participants in their enduring commitment to the club than their personal goals of socializing and community philanthropy.

Some of the participants were also members of more formal farm women's organizations that operated within their districts. These include the Readymade Farm Women's Union of Alberta, the Women of Unifarm (formerly the FWUA), Women's Institute (Warner), or the female adjunct chapters of local men's fraternal organizations operating in local towns including the Order of the Royal Purple, colloquially known as the 'Royal Purple' and the Kinettes. In the Readymade area, a few participants temporarily joined the FWUA or Women of Unifarm and then opted for the more relaxed protocol of the RFWC, although one of the participants left the RFWC to take on greater administrative duties with the FWUA. No mention of intergroup problems was noted by the ENC. In 1958, the ENC was asked if it wanted to become a chapter of the AWI but the membership refused this change in the mandate, although no rationale is provided in the meeting minutes regarding this decision. There appeared to be some tensions between the UFWA and the RFWC. As Emma recalled: "I know there was a lot of conflict between the farm women's groups. You see, they thought that they were better than our group." This conflict in status may have stemmed from the provincial and political motivations of the UFWA in competition with the local community welfare

mandate of the RFWC. The two groups may have also been competing for fund-raising opportunities that would be limited by a lack of financial and material resources in the farming area. Regardless of the sentiments of the members of the two organizations, the groups did occasionally work together on community initiatives. Also, members in both groups were often neighbours or friends, and conflicts were likely minimized in order to maintain the social relationships and mutuality within the community.

The Meetings

The ENC and RFWC clubs held meetings once a month during the week in the farm homes of their members. Meetings may be cancelled in the case of inclement weather, due to the heavier labour demands of harvest or for summer family holidaying. At the beginning of the year, club women would offer their homes for the meetings, or this would be scheduled during the year. The woman who had the meeting was called the 'Hostess' and was responsible for providing not only her home but also the food and beverages for the meetings. Cohen and Prusak (2001:86-87) suggest that in order for social capital to be produced there needs to be a transference of knowledge which can only occur if there is a degree of mutuality and trust. And, the social spaces where this can occur work best when they harmonize with people's natural social habits. The farm house is a symbolic space for these women. It is the physical, social and moral centre of the family, and it is the site of her reproductive work and potential as the manager of the household. The home is also the place where inter-family social relationships are fostered and maintained through visiting and entertaining.

The pressure farm women experienced when it was their 'turn' to have a meeting was quite intense as the social entertaining conventions of both clubs demanded a high standard of etiquette, particularly in the early years. Women would wear dresses, heels,

and be 'made up' for the meetings although this standard relaxed in the later years. This feminizing practice likely enabled the farm woman to step beyond the functional boundaries of their household existence and address their femininity in a social context. 'Dressing up' would also make them more acceptable within the moral parameters of the club and as female representatives of the farming community. This also may be indicative of the pressures of farming discourse upon women to relay the status or prosperity of their farms to others in their social milieu.

A meeting at 'your' home demanded a spotless house, the best cutlery, tea service and dishes, and seating for up to twenty people which, in a typical southern Alberta farm house are a spatial and material challenge, and considering the daily household responsibilities of these farm women, a labour challenge. Hostesses for the ENC meetings were assisted by a co-hostess, but the women of the RFWC produced the event on their own. Barb recalled that she rarely had a meeting at her home as it was too small for the group, so she co-hosted, instead. An ENC hostess and co-hostess were also responsible for providing a 'tea prize,' which would be drawn by the attendees who would donate a few cents to the club in order to be included in the contest.

The clubs usually met in the afternoon which accommodated the need for the women to be home to prepare evening meals for their families. The reproductive responsibilities of farm women also required that they were the primary care givers for the children, and preschool age children usually came to the meetings with their mother, particularly during the growing season, as the men were involved in fieldwork. Often, there were more children than adults which made for a festive but riotous atmosphere. I remember being excited at the prospect of meeting up with the neighbourhood kids because we could 'run wild' in the farm yard or in the hostess's rumpus room while our mothers were busy with their meeting elsewhere in the house. We were generally held

hostage to good behaviour by the threat of denial of the tasty snacks that were provided by the hostess. Many women noted that these meetings allowed their children to meet the neighbourhood children, a more difficult process in these farming areas due to the distance between the farms of prospective playmates. By bringing the children to the meetings, the women were able to use their club experience to carry out their reproductive responsibilities to their children by providing opportunities for socialization and interaction with the neighbourhood children.

Meetings were called to order following the arrival of the members. Membership in the clubs varied over the years, although attendance data is only available for the ENC. Membership rolls for the ENC carried as many as twenty-eight due-paying members, although active members usually numbered less than twenty. An 'active' member was usually also involved in attending meetings and donating regularly their time, labour, and materials. A few members of the ENC did not go to meetings, and this may have related to the interpersonal dynamics of the group, although they were active labourers for the club. Both clubs would usually have between six and twelve women in attendance although active membership waned in the later years of operation.

Women of the ENC and the RFWC would arrive at the meetings, find their chairs (usually in the living room), and wait for everyone's arrival. Meetings were usually called to order followed by the singing, which may also have included singing 'O Canada', or 'God Save the King' (or Queen), and a club members' song, or the statement of a club creed:

OUR CREED

May we always try to be cheerful and work in harmony. Be kind to one another, and feel that we are free to do a good deed unto others, whatever the need may be. To see only the good in each other, and lay all fault-

finding aside. Teach us to be strong in heart and mind, so God give us faith to abide.

Composed by Clara Curry, ENC Founding Member
(date unknown)

The expression of allegiance to the Commonwealth, a common routine in most gatherings of people in Canada, suggests that this was a method of legitimization and a code of conduct for the club and its productive work as citizens of Canada. The Creed of the ENC affirms an entirely different responsibility which is largely grounded in the reproductive roles of these women within the family and community. Being “cheerful,” “kind to one another,” “doing good deeds,” “seeing good in each other” and “lay[ing] all fault-finding aside” strongly reiterates the advice that mothers provide for their children as a part of their reproductive responsibilities to prepare them to be moral and productive citizens in society. As with the club song for the RFWC, the reproduction of gender and community is evident in these simple statements of mandate for these organizations.

Both clubs generally followed the Roberts Rules of Order²⁷ for the organization of the meetings which included an administrative structure with a president, secretary, and treasurer. Individuals to fill these positions were obtained by a yearly vote or appointed by acclamation, with women putting forward names for consideration. The ENC appeared to establish norms and conventions for their activities as an organization²⁸ by adopting bylaws in the 1940s that prescribed meeting time, club administrative and meeting, protocol, cost of dues and tea prizes, and the amount and type of food to be served at the meetings. This structuring of activities may have occurred as club membership increased, and the club took on more activities and responsibilities in the community. By 1949 this club was managing donations, organizing showers, and giving

gifts for weddings in the area.

The meetings for the ENC started with a roll call. This formality often involved the member bringing an idea for fund raising, donations and volunteer activities, or showing up in a thematic costume or hat. Within the context of the roll call there is also evidence of householding as reproductive resources moved from the household to the community. Members would be requested to provide a handmade quilt or afghan square, apron, used children's and adult clothing, canned goods, scrapbooks, magazines, toys, loose change, cookies, cakes, jams, jellies, and chocolates produced in or provided by the household which would then be redistributed to senior facilities, disabled children, and other nonprofit organizations supporting less fortunate individuals and families in their or other communities in Southern Alberta. The magnitude of these simple gift-giving gestures can be understood by evidence in the club minutes that this activity occurred for the duration of the organization.

The ENC meetings would proceed with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting followed by the treasurer's report that was instituted at sometime prior to 1973 but after 1964. There may have become a need to more formally track the club earnings expenditures and donations when their community work excelled, and there was a need to safeguard their financial transactions beyond their tin cash box. This accounting report was followed by old business, new business and committee reports. Old business usually involved discussing outstanding bills to be paid, committee or individual reports on work to be completed on projects or plans needing additional consideration or refinement. New business would entail the consideration of new fund-raising opportunities or projects, or community volunteer activities or events that the club had been requested to undertake. A vote by show of hand or balloting usually decided the commitments of the club to these ventures. Ideas for club fund-raising projects or social

events came from the community, through individual members or the club administration.

Interpersonal relations would sometimes be tested during the discussions relative to proposed projects or a direction the club was to take, occasionally leading to raucous periods of intense debate. Members of the ENC recalled one particular meeting when a motion was made to change the physical boundaries for membership. The determination of a few members in their goal to convince others of the need to expand the boundaries was clearly remembered by the participants for being loud and emotional. Although participants from both clubs were very hesitant to cast aspersions on any members regarding interpersonal conflict at the meetings, they did intimate that there were a few members who were commonly intransigent, or others who formed cliques that would subtly 'push their weight around', but they noted that any 'ill will' was generally not carried beyond the term of the meetings.

As Dora, an elder member of the RFWC noted: "Well, I hate to say this but there was always someone who is going to disagree on just about everything and . . . once in a while you have to kind of sit down and just resolve it and say, well that's it. I mean either do it, or we don't do it . . . and then you put it to a vote and then that's it." These women appeared to value their female and family relationships within the neighbourhood more than the threat of the loss of friendships and mutuality brought on by extended conflict.

The meetings were adjourned after the completion of the formal business. Both the ENC and the RFWC would then have the 'tea' or luncheon prepared by the hostess(es). The women would be served tasty morsels including squares, cake, desserts, fancy sandwiches or salads, and coffee, tea and punch. This social time was where the foundations for social capital were laid. Community and its constituents

including trust, mutuality, and networking were engendered and reinforced during this time through visiting, sharing of news and knowledge, gossip, and story telling. Club members greatly enjoyed this portion of the meetings because it gave them the chance to talk and laugh with their neighbours for an hour or two (this usually lasted far longer than the business portion of the club meeting). Both clubs would occasionally host guest speakers. For the ENC this included the local public health nurse who would discuss family and health issues, or women from the community who demonstrated gardening techniques, sewing projects or crafts.

Cohen and Prusak (2001:107) note that conversation binds communities and builds social capital, it includes gossip, stories, and the mutual discovery of meanings, the negotiation of norms and aims, expressions of sympathy and disapproval, bewilderment and understanding, and it implies mutuality and a kind of engagement or relationship. This sharing can then produce trust which reinforces the sense of mutuality of the group and strengthens social bonds.

By creating and reinforcing friendships through the social time of the meeting, the farm women were able to establish informal social networks that were mutually beneficial and also supportive to the activities of the club the neighbourhood and the community. Women would gain and transfer knowledge, which is fundamental for reproducing gender roles and the norms of behaviour. Members would learn from older members or their peers about their success with new recipes, crafts to attempt, time saving techniques in the household, child rearing advice, or who was getting married, having babies, which neighbour had passed away, or the latest gossip. As Dora of the RFWC asserted: "You need the experiences of the older people. They can tell you how things can be done, and the younger ones have new ideas that can be helpful, sometimes they are, sometimes they aren't. But the older people, you learned by their

experience and how things were done. Sometimes [the] older way is the better way, sometimes its quicker, not as complicated.”

Cohen and Prusak (2001:62) refer to this as the ‘ground truth’ of the organization, which refers to the “complex reality of authentic experience as opposed to generalities, theoretical modes and official pronouncements” (2001:62). They define this as is the process by which newcomers simultaneously learn a group’s experience and become members of the group (see Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger 1991). “By participating in the organization, the newcomer discovers its actual norms and values . . . and aims [which] is an essential part of becoming connected and productive members of an organization” (Cohen and Prusak 2001:63). Club members also learn how to become members of their community through this transferal of local knowledge.

Club Activities in the Community

Club women used the skills they obtained in the kitchen, as they managed the children, gardens, and controlled the material domain and moral life of the household to create social capital through the labour and goods they allocated to the rural neighbourhood club. And it was the food that they produced that became the most common resource for their philanthropic work. As Patricia Allen and Carolyn Sachs (2007:3-4) note, women’s responsibility for feeding others has been variously considered by feminist scholarship, as food has been presented as providing power in the family or conversely argued that food re-inscribes their subordinate gender roles because this reproductive labour is not recognized. Women of the RFWC and the ENC used the most readily available resources available to them from the farm including vegetables, meat and grain to produce food in the household kitchen. The redistribution of this resource through the collective action of the club gave farm women relevance as farm women, community

members and community builders.

In order for the clubs to donate to various needs identified in their community, they had to raise funds and this was accomplished through the use of the reproductive skills of the farm women. Farm women could not stray far from their own reproductive responsibilities on the farms due to their responsibility for the household and its contents, including the children. As a result of these demands, the ENC and RFWC found ways to accommodate fund raising using their household and reproductive skill sets. Fund raising for the clubs included: catering dinners or luncheons for other organizations (ENC) or putting on community dinners (RFWC and ENC); catering farm auction sales; providing baking and cooking for bake sales or raffles; and producing quilts or afghans for raffles. The ENC organized Mothers Day Teas at a meeting hall in Warner where the members provided home-baked food, donated their labour and raised money through ticket sales for the event. Both clubs donated used household items and clothing for rummage or garage sales and flea markets. Club members cooked, baked, canned, sewed, knitted, crocheted, quilted and culled the closets, cupboards and toy boxes of their homes so that their labour could fund 'good deeds' in their community. (See Appendix B for a list of the donating and earning activities of the ENC). The livelihood of the community would be reinforced and reproduced by this labour because the benefits would be returned through the work of the club members. This circular flow of goods and services between the non-capitalist and capitalist realms of production is what Halperin (1994) conceptualized as 'householding.'

Much of the labour of the ENC and the RFWC also involved the creation and reproduction of community by arranging activities that encouraged social contact and the maintenance of social ties and mutuality amongst the families. The ENC organized and donated funds toward yearly family picnics that included not only the families of

members but other local families. They held yearly Christmas parties for children of the community, with the Club donating funds toward the food, presents, and games. They gained the services of one of their husband's for 'Santa Claus.' A highlight of the year for all members of the community was the Christmas party for adults, which the club would organize. The club would fund the meat, and drinks, with the members providing salads, potatoes, and desserts. In later years, the ENC would occasionally hire another local nonprofit club to serve for these parties. Occasionally older teens were allowed at the parties, or some years it would be determined a 'club member only' event. This practice continues today, as former members come together from various locales in southern Alberta for a potluck Christmas party. The RFWC also organized and provisioned Christmas parties and picnics for adults and children in the community, and card parties for adults during the winter.

The club women donated their labour to other projects which were purely social in nature and purpose, although occasionally the clubs did benefit financially from a reward for their endeavours. For example, both clubs would construct floats for the yearly local town parade, which many of the participants considered the most enjoyable of their projects. The floats took hours of work, including the construction and fitting on of hundreds of hand 'fluffed' tissue, crepe paper or cellophane flowers in a member's quonset or garage. The ENC also held a community chili cook-off at the local 'Farmer's Day' in Warner, and managed a food concession at the accompanying rodeo. It is likely that the side benefit of this labour was that the exposure increased the visibility of the club and helped them to develop and reinforce a reputation for community interest and philanthropy. The floats often garnered them a ribbon and a cash prize for the excellence of their work. In the later years of the ENC, members would organize bingos and sing for residents of a local senior's lodge. ENC members would also volunteer to

help at Blood Donor's clinics in Warner.

One of the main activities of the ENC as reproducers of gender and community was the management of rite of passage celebrations for neighbourhood and community. This included wedding showers, wedding anniversaries, wedding luncheons, and funeral luncheons. Wedding showers were 'put on' by the ENC for the daughters or future wives of the sons of club members, although this often was also offered to the extended family of the members. Once the membership was in agreement to undertake the labour for this event, a shower committee would be struck. The committee would be responsible for liaising with family on the menu, decorations, and shower gift requests. The individual club members would then volunteer to cook, deliver, and serve the food at the event, set up and decorate the hall where it was held, and organize the entertainment and the master of ceremonies for the event.

In recognition of the importance of the celebrant to the community, the club would also donate a 'hostess' gift to the shower, which was funded by a small cash donation from club members. In the earlier days, this gift was often bedding, and in later years it included pots and pans, hand and bath towels, glassware, kitchen utensils and recipe boxes, all of which represent the reproductive material resources of the successful farm woman. I have fond memories of the wedding shower that the club held for me in 1987 at the Warner Memorial Library, which was the location of most of the club showers in later years. I still have a few of the cooking pots that the club gave me as their hostess gift and hand embroidered towels that I received from women of the community. The ENC also posted a cash donation list in the village hardware store so that other residents of the community could put money toward gifts for showers, and the club would be responsible for purchasing gifts from these funds. The club usually donated all of the services for the shower including food, facility rental, and coordination

of the program for the shower. The ENC gained community notoriety for the success of the events.

The ENC was often asked to cater wedding dances and funeral luncheons. Wedding 'midnight' luncheons usually involved individual club members preparing and donating fancy sandwiches, buns, squares, cakes and their labour during the event, including serving and cleanup. The club would usually fund the provision of the coffee, tea, punch, meat, pickles and condiments. Funeral luncheons would be requested by bereaved families from the neighbourhood. Club members would provide, and often serve sandwiches, squares and pickles, and the club would fund the drinks. In the case where nonmembers were organizing the luncheons, the club may be requested to donate food to the event, and members would be contacted to prepare and deliver their home-baked goods. The club would usually receive a reimbursement for the costs for food funded by the club for catering a wedding luncheon, but donated their labour and food to funeral luncheons, and wedding showers. The club's involvement in anniversary celebrations for members of the club was organized as were the wedding showers, with the club donating a purchased gift (usually an engraved silver platter) and individual club members donating food and labour for the event. Baby showers were not a common celebration in the community and were not an ENC function.

Financial donations made by the ENC over its fifty-year history are extensive and represent the club's commitment to aiding the community and its inhabitants. Senior citizens, hospitals, disabled children, the local library, school, and the local firemen were the primary beneficiaries of the fund-raising efforts the club. The club instituted some donations within their bylaws, including yearly donations to the Warner Memorial Library to help fund a librarian, the book collection and building; to the Warner Cemetery for maintenance; and to the Warner School for a grade twelve academic scholarship.

The main fund-raising project of the RFWC was to 'put on' a yearly dance at the Readymade School or at a rented banquet facility in Lethbridge. The club hired a band and the members donated food they had prepared for the luncheon and all of the labour including the set up, serving and clean up following the dance. Members would sell tickets for this event in the community. "Ya, it was a fund-raiser. The last one was a lot of work and I think we made thirty-five dollars . . . so then it was the last one" (Rita). Two hundred and fifty people attended this particular event. Other fund raising activities of the club included raffles. Club women canvassed local and Lethbridge businesses to donate funds or merchandise which would then be raffled. The club also held bingos, Mother's Day Teas, produced food for bake sales in Coaldale, and sold Watkins vanilla which earned the club a coffee urn.²⁹ As previously noted, serving food at farm auctions was another source of funds for the club.

Funds from the labour of the RFWC were donated to the Readymade School for trophies and other activities, the Rehabilitation Society in Coaldale, canvassing for Easter Seals, Coaldale Sportsplex, Coaldale Sunrise Ranch, the Cancer Society, the Dorothy Gooder School for developmentally challenged children in Lethbridge. Other philanthropic activities of the RFWC included donating afghans, quilts, baby layettes, doll layettes, Christmas treat bags for children, knitted and sewed articles for the Red Cross, and care packages for the Armed Forces.

Similar activities appear to have been carried out by other informal rural women's clubs located throughout Southern Alberta. Locally produced histories suggest that some groups formed when rural women came together to visit and produce handiwork in farm homes. Groups that became philanthropically motivated within their communities varied in range of services that they provided. The activities of these clubs included the provision of food, materials and labour for wedding or baby showers, funeral luncheons,

community picnics, dinners, and neighbourhood parties, including children and adult Christmas parties. Often the club members would individually or collectively produce food or handiwork including quilts, afghans, needlework or crafts which were then moved into the community to be converted into funds through raffles, bingos or bazaars, or they provided a donation. The clubs would often offer their catering services to other organizations or events including formal dinners, meetings, weddings, dances, or farm auction sales. Earnings from these endeavours were distributed to numerous community interests and activities, including local schools, libraries, and facilities and services for senior citizens and the disabled (See Appendix C for a description of Southern Alberta farm women's clubs and their activities).

A few of these women's clubs were able to raise funds and garner materials and labour to construct and maintain rural or village community centres. The Spring Point Community Club who was active in a rural area near Fort Macleod purchased land and buildings for a rural community centre, and helped to provide funds for renovations. The Rosemary Ladies Social Club which was composed of rural and semi-rural women purchased land in the hamlet of Rosemary with money earned from bazaars, suppers, raffles and dues, and built a club house which was used for many community events. In the Lucky Strike area, the Goddard Community Club, the Lucky Strike Community Club and the Thistle Ridge Neighbourhood Association purchased closed rural schools for club houses and community centres during their years of operation. The New West Ladies Club of Vauxhall purchased land and constructed a hall with donations prior to becoming a chapter of the Women's Institute in 1921. Some clubs supported existing rural community halls through donations and fund raising. The Country Beavers, located south of the town of Fort Macleod, the Skiff Ladies Variety Association and the Enchant Community Club supplied furnishings and equipment for the banquet kitchens.

Cookbooks were also a popular fund-raising project amongst farm women's clubs in Southern Alberta. The MAE Belle Club and the Spring Point Community Club in the Fort Macleod area, the Granum-Willow Creek Happy Gang Club, the Lucky Strike Community Club, and the Skiff Ladies' Variety Association produced cookbooks as fund-raisers using recipes provided by the members. If the recipe was in a book, you could be assured that it was one that the farm woman took pride in preparing and serving it to her family and friends.

The Role of the Clubs in Community Life

Many of the social relationships and connections made through the clubs encouraged non-club socializing and mutuality. Women in both clubs fondly remembered going with their spouse to evening card parties at members' homes during the long winter months. One participant who lost four family members in a series of tragedies on the farm recalled that the club members always brought food during their bereavement, and their husbands came to help with the farm work. Most of the participants noted that they felt that the club benefited their husbands by providing opportunities to socialize with their neighbours. Friendships would encourage mutuality amongst the male farmers which would be beneficial in times of need. This may include the temporary provision of extra labour, equipment or livestock feed.

In 1940, the ENC instituted a bylaw to purchase and send greeting cards to club members on their birthday, to hospitalized members or their family, and to the families of the bereaved in the neighbourhood. These gestures of recognition may have encouraged a sense of emotional mutuality and solidarity within the community.

When the participants were asked what they learned and how they benefited from their experiences with the club, the responses reflected their need for a social

outlet, challenges dealing with others in collective action, and the support that involvement in a woman's club gave toward being valued members of their farm community. Their comments included:

"I learned to be more social" (Eva). "Really, I learned how to get along with people. I learned how to organize. I learned that there was a lot of give and take, and it was better to give than it was to take a lot of times. [We] learned how to enjoy ourselves, just go off and have fun" (Dora). "[I] learned to deal with people; how to do new crafts; be more outgoing" (Emma). "It was good to volunteer [and] know that you could always count on your community" (Jill). "[I] learned how clubs were organized, operate, how to get along with people; it helped me to become a member. Not only did I not know them but they got to know me; socialization, support . . . I learned that communities are made up of all types, kinds of people and it takes all of them to work together, and sometimes you don't agree but they're important" (Kim). "There are a number of different kinds of women, and some you can get along with, and other you cannot" (Ida). "I am very thankful that the club was there and I was able to belong and it allowed me to sort of integrate into the community and get to know people. I would never have got to know them without the club . . ." (Kim). "[I learned] how a community works . . ." (Barb).

The participants of both clubs were asked how they felt their club benefited their community. Their responses affirmed that the social capital produced by the club was the 'glue' that maintained the bonds of friendship and trust, and encouraged mutuality for the community:

"[The club] made the community more friendly, more sociable" (Eva). "I think if it hadn't been for the club, the community wouldn't have stayed together. It was

something for the women to all come to[gether] and associate with each other, and that what really women need is to get together every once in a while and learn what your neighbour is doing” (Dora). “I can’t imagine a farm rural community that didn’t have this kind of thing [and] how they got to know one another. I don’t think they could have except maybe the close neighbour . . .” (Carla). “I figure it benefited the community because it kept them together” (Flo). “Oh, it made it a community, drew it all together because whenever anything very bad happened . . . everyone drew together and everyone knew everyone that way” (Barb).

These relationships and social bonds maintained the livelihood of community in these rural areas for many decades against tragedy, the implications of weather on farm production, and economic downturns. Although these clubs are no longer in operation, many of these bonds of friendship continue. Collective community activities are now constrained by out-migration due to the farm crisis and retirement, and the perceived resistance of younger farm women to become involved in this form of collective activity.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Summary of the Thesis

Farm women became members of the RFWC and the ENC for a number of reasons.

Farm women were isolated by a patriarchal farming discourse which informed the division of labour on the farms. This had the effect of situating their reproductive power within or in relation to the household and limiting their influence in the active, productive business of farming. Farm women's clubs gave rural women the opportunity to socialize with other like-minded women, make friendships, and gain social support. The women were also able to obtain knowledge from their fellow club members about farm life for women and their rural communities. All of these factors provided them with the tools to be able to better survive the limitations to their activities produced by farming discourse.

These clubs 'worked' for the women because they were able to use their household expertise toward the benefit of their rural neighbourhood and greater community and, in so doing, help to ensure the livelihood their own families and livelihood of the community. Much of the survival of farm families depended upon the ability of the farm women to take advantage of the reproductive resources that were available, namely those of the household, gardens and the women's own labour. Farm women could easily extend this knowledge and resources to the community by offering them as unpaid and paid services that were considered socially acceptable within the farming discourse, which is to say, those that typify reproductive labour on the farm: cooking, gardening, sewing, craft making, meal making, and the organizing of family social activities. By moving food, other household resources and labour through the rural women's club and into the community, the farm women would gain personal and community respect, but more importantly they would gain friendships and mutual

relationships that would benefit themselves and their families. The rural community received benefits from their many and varied social events and philanthropic ventures, as did many social welfare institutions in Southern Alberta, and beyond.

This movement of resources outside of the capitalist 'market' realm to enable the livelihood of the community and its members through the work of rural women's clubs is an extension of the theorisations of 'householding' as conceptualized by Polanyi (1957a) and later expanded upon by Halperin in her study of rural Kentuckians (1990) and Cincinnati 'East Enders' (1998). Within this context, the argument for the circularity of the movement of these particular resources (Halperin 1994) in the two farming communities depends largely on the assertion that household resources (reproductive labour and materials) were returned to the households as transformed 'goods' namely social capital, or the social networks, friendships and mutuality that were to the benefit of the livelihood of men, women and children in farming communities. The consideration of reproductive labour and its resources as a primary source for community livelihood extends the discussion of householding beyond previous considerations of the multiple livelihood strategies of rural extended families to the conceptualization of householding as gendered livelihood strategies within rural Southern Alberta agricultural communities.

Rural club women responded to the constraints of patriarchal farming discourse and produced highly significant and sustaining individual, family and community benefits. Children, senior citizens, mentally and physically disabled persons, orphans, sport teams, musical bands, schools, hospitals, and libraries, and many other facilities, agencies, groups and individuals were advantaged by the work of farm women's clubs in Southern Alberta. This study is a starting point for understanding and recognizing the work of farm women's clubs and it is hoped that the findings will stimulate more curiosity and interest in the prevalence of similarly organized or mandated informal collective

labour by prairie and other farm women in Canada and the United States. Yet again, we must return to the household if we want to be fed.

Endnotes

1. Participant from the East Neighbourhood Club.
2. Maternal feminism was originally applied to the suffrage and temperance movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This ideology centred around the importance of women's work within the home or the 'domestic.' Women were encouraged to take their domestic skills beyond the boundaries of the household and use them in the community for the benefit of other women and children (Berg 1978). Louise Carbert (1995:27) notes that this domestic-oriented discourse continues to be relevant to many farm women as it appeals to their everyday experience and identity as a mother, good wife and neighbour. Monda Halpern (2001:8) defines social feminism as a variant of maternal feminism. She notes that social feminism emphasizes the experiences of women as they differ from men, and focusses on the priorities and values of women as they are affected by a sexually segregated society. Louise Carbert (1995:1-31) uses the term 'agrarian feminism' in order to better recognize the contribution of farm women to farm production, particularly household agricultural production. Carbert (1995:2-3) argues that agrarian feminism is related to social feminism because it specifically considers the farm wives within the family context. Conversely, Halpern argues that agrarian feminism is "driven" by household agricultural production and although she recognizes that this is valuable as it emphasizes the value of household labour to the farm operation, she also asserts: "because the patriarchal farm as livelihood and as household are so inextricably connected, the marriage, and the farm family, may be understood as a locus of feminine struggle" (2001:14).
3. 'Rita' confirmed that these were the words and composer of the RFWC Song, and that it was sung to the music of the song entitled Galway Bay (electronic letter to author, March 4, 2009).
4. See Anderson (1971:217).
5. See Anderson (1971:219).
6. The City of Lethbridge Census of 2008 defines the population as 83,960.
7. Pamphlets in many languages were produced under the authority of Clifford Sifton, Federal Minister of the Interior to advertise the advantages for immigrants from America, Britain and Europe for settlement in Western Canada from 1890s to the start of World War I (David Hall 2007).
8. Keith Melder (1977:30-43) suggests that organized benevolence for women likely began in the early 1800s by raising 'pennies and "mites" for missionary objectives. Later women's organizations became involved in voluntary organizations specifically oriented to the "sisterhood of benevolence", where women began working with and for other women for social causes. For example, the anti-slavery movement began as early as 1832 with the work of African Americans (Melder 1977:59). Barbara Berg (1978) argued that industrialization in the 1800's may have closed off women in the 'domestic', they found ways come together and extend their domestic abilities and strength into the community by taking on social welfare causes and 'municipal' housecleaning. Nancy Cott (1994:xi, xii) notes that by the 1830's, women's associations had more self-interest

and self-definition including 'moral reform' which was concerned with stemming the prostitution activities of men and reclaiming the 'fallen' woman, and also 'maternal' societies that considered the collective roles and obligations of Christian mothers in child rearing. She continues that the reform activities involved work by women's associations in the areas of health reform, education, temperance, and abolition and by the nineteenth century, women were forming around occupational interests. Following the Civil War, church networks produced missionary societies and temperance associations, and secular activities included prison reform, women's education, rural women's housing and safety in urban areas.

9. The Alberta women that are recognized as the 'Famous Five' are Louise Crummy McKinney, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, and Irene Parlbly. Privy Council decided on October 18, 1929 to find women were 'persons' within the section 24 of the British North American Act, and could now be eligible to be appointed to the Canadian Senate (Cavanaugh 1993:200).

10. Although launched by the WCTU and National Council of Women, other associations were involved in the suffrage movement including The Women's Canadian Club, the Canadian Women's Press Club, The Women's University Club in Edmonton and other women's patriotic clubs like the Next of Kin Association and the War Widows Association, amongst other provincial suffrage associations (Cavanaugh 1993:200)

11. The UFWA added their support to the dower campaign in 1916 (Cavanaugh 1993:213).

12. The Irene Murdoch Case involved the plight of a divorcing southern Alberta farm woman to obtain rights to a share of the farm property and assets. The case was eventually considered by the Supreme Court of Canada and resulted in the Matrimonial Property Act which was passed on January 1, 1979. This Act provides farm women and men with the rights to an equal share of all assets that were acquired during the term of their marriage (Langford 1997:48).

13. Rural electrification became available to the Warner area after 1930 (Warner Historical Society 1985:66) and in the 1950s for the Coaldale-Readymade area (Coaldale Historical Society 1983:96).

14. This club may also have been known as the Sleepy Hollow Community Club. See Appendix C for more information on the activities of this club.

15. In order for nonprofit organizations to own land and buildings in Alberta, they must be incorporated under the Societies Act (Alberta, Legislative Assembly 2000a). This Act requires financial reporting and ethical management of corporate holdings by the club and its administration, .

16. As a result of tape failure, the meeting notes were referenced for one participant.

17. The minutes of one ENC meeting have been extracted and presented as written from the club minute books that the ENC participants have agreed to become part of a donation to include the club's photo albums to the Galt Museum, Lethbridge following the completion of the project.

18. The minutes are presented as written in the ENC meeting minute books (n.d. East Neighbourhood Club).
19. Schaniel and Neale (2000:92) suggest that Polanyi eventually dropped this as a form of economic integration because he was persuaded that householding is actually redistribution, 'writ small'.
20. The name of this institution changed to 'Lethbridge College' in 2008.
21. One participant did not have children and the other participants had two or more children.
22. The Marketing of Agricultural Products Act legislates the production and sale of agricultural products in Alberta (Alberta Legislative Assembly, Queens Printer 2000b).
23. Statistical data that reports the historical incidence of paid non-farm labour by rural women is not easily extracted in from information provided Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture. As Diane Martz et al. (2006:4) note in a report produced for the Status Women in Canada which considers the employment of rural women in the Saskatchewan Forestry and Agri-food Industries, the employment of women in the resource sector, the location of this labour and how this is reported as it relates to gender is not routinely made available by Statistics Canada, other governments agencies and the industrial employers. Off-farm work for "farm operators" between the years of 1941 and 1991 provided by the Market and Analysis and Statistics Branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (Pekalski 1995:32) which sources the Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, does not distinguish between male and female farm operators reporting off-farm labour. According Statistics Canada, "farm operators" are defined as "those persons responsible for the day-to-day management decisions made in the operation of a census farm or agricultural operation. Up to three farm operators could be reported per farm. Prior to the 1991 Census of Agriculture, the farm operator referred to only one person responsible for the day-to-day decisions made in running an agricultural operation (Statistics Canada 1991)."
24. Nanci Langford and Norah Keating (1987:47-58) studied farm women's social isolation in Alberta in 1985 and found in their interviews that most farm women did not experience feelings of social isolation, and that predictors of isolation were satisfaction with marriage and satisfaction with farming as a way of life. Regarding satisfaction with farming as a way of life, the two major predictors were personal satisfaction with farm work and the farm woman's satisfaction with the support she receives from her husband for her work in the farm business.
25. The ENC reconsidered the club's geographic boundaries in 1986 as they needed more active members but they chose to maintain the original (historic) boundaries.
26. Alcohol was not served at the ENC meetings but was offered at some at ENC sponsored adult events.
27. Originally published as the Roberts Rules of Order: Pocket Manual of Rules of Order for Deliberative Assemblies in 1896 by General Henry M. Roberts.

28. Blau and Scott (2003:4-5) recognize that in contrast to the social organization that emerge as networks of social relations (social structure) and shared orientation (culture), formal organizations are deliberately established for a specific purpose.

29. The ENC also sold Watkins products and received a large coffee urn for their labour.

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Appendix A

Individual and Group Interview Questions

I. Individual Interview

A. Life on the Farm:

- What kind of farming are or were you involved in: grain (dryland and/or irrigation); livestock; mixed (grain-livestock, irrigation-livestock, grain-market garden); other?
- What does or did the farm produce: wheat; barley; rye; pulse; mustard; canola; corn; flax; sugar beets; potatoes; vegetables; cattle; beef; dairy; pigs; chickens; lamb; buffalo; other?
- When did you come to live on the farm? Year of arrival?
- Where did you live prior to coming to the farm?
- Were you employed in paid labour prior to arriving at the farm?
- When did you marry your husband? Year of marriage? What was your ages at marriage? Did you have any previous marriages?
- What age are you and your husband presently?
- Were your parents and/or other relatives involved in farming? Where?
 - If not, what were their occupations?
- Are there other family members involved in farming (sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, parents, grandparents)?
- What is your education background?
- Do you have children? How many? Ages and gender?
- Do any still live at home with you?
- Do you have adult children?
 - Are they involved in your farm business? How so?
 - Do they have their own farm business or operate another's farm? What is their gender?
- Did you want your children to go into farming? Why or why not?

- Did any of your children pursue higher education: college; university; technical or other?
- Did you pursue higher formal education while on the farm? What level did you achieve? Did you take special courses or upgrading?
- Were your son(s) and daughter(s) expected to farm as adults? How was this expressed to them?

B. Working on the Farm:

- How would you identify yourself in relation to your husband and the farm ("housewife," "farm wife," "farmer's wife," "partner," "spouse," other)?
- Can you describe or list your daily range of duties, including household and farm duties?
 - Domestic: childcare; cooking; cleaning; shopping; gardening; milking; eggs; poultry production; food processing; other?
 - Non-domestic: summer-fallowing; seeding; swathing; baling, truck-driving (grain, beet, corn, silage); combining; moving or monitoring irrigation equipment; livestock feeding and care; other?
- What were the areas / types of work (household or farm) that were your primary your responsibility?
- What types of work were primarily your husband or partner's responsibilities?
- What types of work were primarily your children's responsibilities?
- What types of work are or were shared between your husband and yourself? With your children?
- Has your husband been involved in domestic household duties? How so?
- Have there been disputes over tasks? How so?
- Are you involved in the farm business (i.e. - do you make business decisions with your husband)? How is this carried out?
- Do you now, or did you produce items that you sell or barter or trade with others: handicrafts; food; garden or other produce? How so?
- Have you owned your own business? How long? Can you describe it?
- What happened with the profits of this business?
- What farm business decisions are/were made solely by your husband: machinery

purchases; cattle or other farm animal purchases; planting plans; other?

- What farm business decisions are / were made solely by you?
- What farm business decisions do you make together?
- Has your farm work changed over the years? How?
- Have you had any off-farm employment? Can you describe what this is and why you pursued it? Is this ongoing? If discontinued, why?
- Do you have legal or financial interest in the ownership of the farm? Can you describe what this is?
- What do you like about living on a farm?
- What do you dislike about living on a farm?
- Do you have any hobbies?

C. Club Involvement:

- How would you describe the club?
- Approximately what year did you join the club?
- How did you hear about the club?
- Did other members of your family belong to this club: mother; mother- in-law; aunt; cousin; male family members?
- Did they encourage you to join? How was this expressed?
- Did friends, acquaintances, or neighbors encourage you to join? What did this involve?
- What was it about the club that most interested you?
- Why did you join the club?
 - to have social opportunities: for self and/or family
 - community interest/involvement
 - liked (project) group activities, work
 - required role for a woman in that community as mother, farm wife, neighbor, resident or other
 - encouragement by family, friends, acquaintances
 - learn new things
 - learn more about the local culture
 - escape farm responsibilities

- enable family and/or farm success
- community needs (fund raising for projects, etc.)

- Approximately how many years were you involved in this club?
- Why did you leave the club?
- Were you involved in other clubs , associations or charities? Which ones?
- If you were, what was your involvement (officer, member)? If not, why?
- Were there geographical boundaries for membership in the club? If so, what were they, and why were they established in this way?
- What did you have to do to be a member of the club? Do you recall what constituted the membership requirements?

- Can you describe the specific club work were you involved in?
 - meetings (hosting); chair, vice-chair, secretary, financial officer, historian
 - organizing club projects (specific projects?)
 - fund-raising projects (specific projects?)
 - catering for weddings, funerals, showers, other events
 - craft production
 - cookbook production
 - dances/dance socials
 - card game socials
 - dinner socials
 - bake sales
 - garage sales
 - raffles
 - food hamper(s) for needy
 - communal food production (canning, food processing)
 - product marketing
 - local or regional initiatives (fund-raising for construction projects, library, primary/secondary education, health care, seniors, etc.)
 - other

- How were you involved? What did you do?
- How did the club decide which projects to undertake? How were they organized?
- Were all members expected to be involved in the club projects or were you able to choose projects to work on?
- Were you an officer of the club or aspire to be one? Why? What did you feel about this responsibility?
- What did you enjoy about being involved in this club?

- What did you not enjoy about the club?
- Did your involvement in this club meet/not meet/exceed your expectations? Why?
- How did your involvement in the club most benefit you; your family; your neighborhood; your community?
- Did you encourage your female relatives (daughters, sisters, sister-in-law, nieces, cousins, aunts) to join the club?
- What did you feel that the club had to offer them or others?
- Do you believe that the club benefitted the community? How so?

D. Meetings:

- How did the club communicate? Did they have regular meetings? When?
- How were meetings organized?
 - Who set the meeting times? How often did the club meet?
 - What was the meeting protocol (i.e. - what did you do at the meetings)?
- Did you work on special projects during the meetings or at a separate time?
 - Who coordinated the projects?
 - How was labour allocated for the projects?
- Did you perceive that catering for showers, weddings, funerals were a club responsibility? A personal responsibility (as a member of the community)? Both?
- How did you perceive your responsibility for work on special projects? Did you enjoy or dislike the responsibility/challenge?
- Did your group have guest speakers or use agricultural extension services as an educational tool?
- What did you learn (about women; community; volunteerism; responsibility; self, other) at club meetings?

E. Perceptions:

- Can you place a value on the work of the club?
- What were your favorite projects? Can you describe it or them?

- How did you your family (husband; children; relatives) feel about your club involvement?
- Did your involvement in the club affect your home life and relationships with others in your family (husband, children, relatives)? How?
- Was your family supportive or were there conflicts? Can you describe these supports or conflicts?
- How do you think your club work was perceived by neighbors and the community?
- Was the work of your club recognized by the community (women, men, local government, other groups)? In what way? How did this make you feel?
- What do you think the men in the community would say about the role of the organization?
- In retrospect, how would you summarize or describe your involvement with the club?
- Did the club personally benefit you? How so? Why?
- Were there drawbacks to your involvement with the group or tensions among individuals? Can you describe these issues?

F. General / Follow-Up

- Do you think that interviewing men would be beneficial?
- Is there anything we haven't covered in my questions you'd like to say or add?
- Do you have any pictures or documents pertaining to your time with the club?
 - May I have your permission to reproduce these documents and return them to you?
- Would you be interested in getting together with some of your former club members to further discuss the club's activities?

II. Group Interview

The group interview was conducted in a semi-structured, open-ended fashion utilizing a format which broadly replicated the protocols of the club meetings. The purpose of the group interview was to attempt to elicit information and generate discussion regarding the form, function and organizational dynamics of the club meetings. The group interview was held at the farm residence of a club member, in her living room. Seven members of the ENC who participated in the individual interview process also participated in the group interview.

Hand out: *provide a demographic survey and have participants fill these out while waiting for others to arrive and become seated.*

Call “meeting” to order: *present the basic agenda for the interview and lay out the ground rules for the discussion (try not to talk over each other for the purposes of clarity in the tapes; bring forward your own questions, comments and perceptions; etc.).*

“Warm-up” activity: *game to recreate a club activity. In this case, a raffle of a tea prize (memento, tea towel, hand-made item); participants asked to put their name on a piece of paper with a brief description of their favorite food served at a club meeting.*

- What year did the club start? What do you believe was its original purpose/goal? How did that purpose or goal change over the years?
- Can you describe a typical club meeting? Would you be interested in stating the club creed? Did the format of the meetings change over the years? How so?
- What constituted the club’s geographic boundaries?
- Did the club identify goals it wished to attain? What were they?
- Was there an obligation to join the club as a resident of this area? Why or why not?
- Were there women who joined the club who were single, divorced, widowed or independent farm owners?
- Why did women come to the meetings? What was their motivation?
- What were the commonalities of the women of the club?
- Where there ever major differences of opinion amongst club members about a strategy or a project? Can you describe what these differences were about? How were these handled within the context of the club meeting? Did these differences go outside of the club meeting?
- How were religious or political differences handled in club meetings?

- Did the activities the club undertook build trust within the context of the group? Was trusting other members ever become an issue to you?
- How important to the purpose or mandate of the club was doing “good work” for your community?
- Did the activities of the club (fund raising, etc.) give the club a sense of power in the neighborhood? In the Warner Community?
- Was the work of the club recognized by men? If so, in what ways?
- Do you feel that there is a connection between the work of the club and the strength or success of the community? In what way?
- Who was able to join the club? Who was not? What were the geographical boundaries, if any, for club membership eligibility?
- What was required to maintain membership in the club (meeting attendance; payment of dues; active; participation; volunteering for projects; other)?
- Were there members that quit the club? Can you explain why?
- What, if any, were the effects of these women leaving the club?
- How were conflicts among group members resolved?
- What was more important to you: involvement in the club for your own personal benefit; involvement for the benefit of your family; involvement for the benefit of your husband; involvement for the benefit of your neighborhood; involvement for the benefit of the Warner community? Other?
- How important was project work and fund-raising to the club? Why? Did this priority change over the years? How?
- Was helping others more or less important than socializing (sociality)? Why? How did this change over the years?
- How did the club help your family?
 - What did the club do for the members and their families during times of birth, marriage, illness, death, divorce; extraordinary demands in farm work (seeding; harvesting; summer fallowing; swathing; farm building construction; cattle/livestock), household work (cooking; cleaning; preserving food; child care, etc.) fires, hail-outs, drought, etc?
- How did the club benefit the Warner Community?
- How did the club work benefit the East Neighborhood area?

- How did the club benefit women?
- What factors made the club successful for so many years?
- What was your favorite memory from your years as a member of the club?
- What year did the club fold?
- What do you believe were the primary causes for the folding of the club?

Discuss the future perpetual storage options for the club minutes and photo albums

Draw for the tea prize

Refreshments and social time to follow

Appendix B

East Neighbourhood Club - Donating and Earning Activities

The following chart represents a generalized list of the activities of the ENC from 1949 to 1991 (n.d. East Neighbourhood Club), as extracted from the club's minute books (with the exception of the records for 1964 through 1973, which records were destroyed in a farm fire). Although the club maintained a general balance sheet or description of the funds controlled by the club (located in a cash box or deposited in a financial institution), the actual reports and details of the club's earnings, expenditures and activities, as recorded in the club's minutes, varied over the years.

The following expands upon some the club's activities, earnings and expenditures, as referenced in the attached chart:

- Dues:** Yearly club dues have not been included in this accounting of club activities, but membership fees ranged from twenty-five cents per year in 1949 to five dollars per year in 1991; these fees were deposited into the club treasury.
- Tea fees:** Members donated a small fee every meeting in order to be included in a raffle for a small gift provided by the meeting hostess or hostesses; these fees were five cents per person in 1949 and twenty-five cents per person in 1991.
- Catering:** The club would cater luncheons, weddings, and community dinners and other special activities to raise funds. A committee was struck to organize and provide food and labour for each event. The club would reimburse members for the ingredient purchases for a portion of the food which members provided for the event, including the meat (usually turkey, beef, etc.), potatoes, salads, buns, etc.; the club would purchase the condiments and beverages. For auction sales, the club would be responsible for running the food concession; this would involve the purchasing and preparation of the food and providing the snacks and beverages which would be offered for sale during the event. Members would volunteer their labour for each event. The cost charged for the club's catering services was usually based on an estimate of the number of plates or people to be served at the event.
- Showers:** The club would offer ("hostess") a wedding shower for a local bride-to-be who was the daughter or future daughter-in-law of a club member. A committee of volunteers would be struck to organize the labour, food, decorations and programming for the event and to rent the hall and dishes, if held in town (in the early days of the club, such showers were held in a club member's home). Members donated the food for the event, depending on the menu selected by the honoree, which might include squares, cakes, desserts, fancy sandwiches, salads and pickles; the club usually purchased the beverages and decorations. Members would

donate funds for the purchase of a club shower gift. The club also managed a community donation list (variably recognized as the "Reid's List") in the local hardware store to allow members of the community to donate funds toward the purchase of a shower gift.

When a newly-married woman came to reside in the neighbourhood, the club would offer a "Tea" in honour of her marriage, usually in the home of a club member; members would donate food and funds toward the purchase of a club gift.

Donating Activities

1948

- used clothing and scrap books donated to the Lethbridge Welfare Society
- Wedding gift for local bride and groom (pillow cases)

1949

Members: 28

- rural school benches given to the Warner Community Park
- Wedding gift (set of dishes)
- used clothing from members for charity
- party for newlyweds, including entertainment, decorations and food
- held a wedding shower for local bride-to-be
- members bring "articles" for a gift parcel for Welfare Society
- Christmas party for members and family catered by the club; members donate small gifts for draw

1950

Members: 25

- donation to the March of Dimes (amount unknown)
- donation to Manitoba Flood Relief Fund
- held picnic for club members and families; members responsible for their own family's dinner; the club supplied refreshments
- held wedding shower for daughter of member; three members on committee and two members responsible for entertainment; one member donated home and was assisted by co-hostess
- \$50.00 to the Isolation Hospital
- club-sponsored, member and family Christmas party (one hundred people in attendance)

Earning Activities

-
- unknown

-
- members brought small articles for an in-house auction; earnings - \$2.70
 - three members donated \$1.00 each
 - yearly Tea Fees - approximately \$19.60 (members paid a small fee to be entered into the in-house raffle of a small gift provided by hostess(es))

-
- community card party earnings - \$12.05 (held monthly in member's homes; spouses included)
 - managed the concession for a local farm auction
 - catered the Home and School Benefit Auction for school playground equipment (six members; club purchases some food; prices include \$.05 for coffee and \$.15 for hamburgers)
 - Pantry Sale (earnings directed to the Isolation Hospital in Lethbridge); six members on the committee; each member to bring article worth \$2.00; Sale earnings - \$51.35.
 - in-house auction of leftover pantry sale items; earnings - \$3.75.
 - yearly Tea Fees earnings - \$19.60

Donating Activities

1951

Members: 31

- held wedding shower (thirteen members on committee) for new bride in member's home; supplied gift (sheet set), food, entertainment; expenses incurred for shower: \$29.15
- held picnic for family members at member's home (\$30.00 applied to expenses)
- club purchased song sheets for sing-a-longs
- club hosted three showers in one month
- club decided to help the Nursing Mission as their project
- \$25.00 to the Warner School Auditorium
- held Christmas party for members and spouses

1952

Members: 20

- held a community picnic at a local park
- \$25.00 to Senior Citizen's home in Lethbridge
- \$70.00 to Home and School Association of Warner for sink for new auditorium
- \$15.00 for Christmas treats for children of members
- Club held members and spouses Christmas party; ninety-three people in attendance

1953

Members: 28

- club purchased flowers for a member's ninetieth birthday
- held a Tea for a new bride in the area; members donated \$1.00 each for the gift (bedspread and pillow cases)
- held a picnic for members and their families
- \$20.00 to Warner Home and School Association
- \$20.00 to Warner Cemetery Fund
- forty-seven greeting cards sent to members and their families for birthdays, illness and condolence.
- held a Christmas party; community invited

Earning Activities

-
- members donated an article worth \$1.50, a first aid item and soap for roll call boxes which were then auctioned in-house; earnings - \$42.00
 - money collected from club members for shower gifts - \$76.00
 - yearly Tea Fees earnings - \$17.90
 - yearly Card Party earnings - \$19.50

-
- member donated a quilt top for raffle at bazaar at the Warner Memorial Library; club members met to complete the quilt; raffle tickets sold - three for \$.25; earnings - \$70.00
 - members donated hankies and baking for a bazaar; earnings - \$111.00
 - sold leftover bazaar items in-house; earnings - \$2.75.
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$21.00
 - yearly Card Party earnings - \$26.53

-
- members donated two handmade articles (worth \$.50 each) and clothing for the Fall Bazaar
 - member donated a quilt top and members completed quilt during a bee lasting three days; in-house quilt draw with members donating \$1.00 each for tickets; earnings - \$21.00
 - member donated quilt top and members completed quilt at bee lasting 4 days; quilt raffled at Fall Bazaar; members also donate baking; earnings - \$162.40.
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$16.50
 - yearly Card Party earnings - \$28.00

Donating Activities

Earning Activities

1954

Members: 19+

- held a wedding shower for a member's daughter-in-law
- used clothing or towel brought by members for Lethbridge senior's home
- club served lunch and supper at Blood Donor Clinic in Warner
- annual picnic for members and their families; club to provide some supplies
- Tea held for daughter of member who was a bride-to-be
- members bring packaged homemade candy for future donation
- \$5.00 for Walter Callow Coach (transportation for the disabled in Southern Alberta)
- clothing donated by members for Crippled Children's Hospital in Calgary
- members-only afternoon Christmas party held

-
- bake sale in Warner; earnings - \$45.00
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$14.50
 - yearly Card Party earnings - \$26.14

1955

Members: 16+

- members made and donated scrapbooks for Crippled Children's Hospital in Calgary and donated \$25.00
- held a Mother's Day party for the mothers of members: potluck lunch and the club supplied flowers and entertainment
- \$10.00 to the Canadian Cancer Society

-
- members donated two items for Pantry Sale; earnings - \$33.30 (net)
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$12.75

1956

Members: 15+

- club members decided to be a "fun" club; records scanty
- held the annual member and family picnic
- held the annual members and spouses Christmas party

Donating Activities

1957

Members: 14+

- club considered a rural community hall project; consulted their husbands: project turned down
- members donated used clothing to the Salvation Army in Lethbridge
- \$10.00 to Scout Band
- club served at a local funeral
- separate adult and children's Christmas parties held (forty-three adults and thirty-five children attended)

1958

Members: 13+

- held a wedding shower in Warner
- members donated used clothing for the Salvation Army
- sent \$5.00 for a church memorial for a past member
- members donated cookies to Galt Rehabilitation Hospital in Lethbridge
- children's books donated by members for Children's Hospital in Calgary
- held the yearly family picnic at a local park
- \$61.50 donated to the Mental Health Organization
- members made and donated jams and jellies to the seniors home in Lethbridge
- held a children's Christmas party (thirty-two attended) and adult/teen Christmas party (forty-seven attended)

Earning Activities

-
- member donated a quilt top for raffle at a bake sale in Warner; members donated baking; one member made and donated a flower planter for the raffle; earnings - \$40.25 from quilt raffle, \$47.05 from baking and \$8.25 from planter raffle
 - managed concession at a local farm auction sale; earnings - \$43.97 (net)
 - members donated handmade articles for the Fall Bazaar; earnings - \$58.80
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$6.75

-
- members donated two items of baking, including doughnuts for bake sale; earnings - unknown
 - made and entered a float for the Warner Farmers Days parade; earnings - \$25.00 (for first prize)
 - canvassed the community for fire equipment; earnings - \$210.00 (these funds were returned to the donors as fire officials could not identify their equipment needs)
 - held bake sale in Warner; quilt top donated by member and completed by club members and then raffled at the bake sale; earnings - \$52.30 for baking and \$48.25 for quilt raffle
 - held an in house white-elephant sale; earnings - \$5.50
 - members sold Watkins products; earnings - \$275.00 (club also won a large coffee percolator for their work)
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$5.45

Donating Activities

1959

Members: 16+

- members donated old Christmas cards for the senior's home in Lethbridge
- club members donated scrap books and colouring books for the Lethbridge Hospital
- held the yearly family picnic at a local park
- held a "Welcome Home" Tea for member's daughter and gave a gift
- \$10.00 to the Warner Cemetery
- hosted a wedding shower for member's daughter-in-law
- members donated homemade jams and jellies for seniors' home in Lethbridge
- held two Christmas parties for children of the area
- held an adult Christmas party in Warner and had this catered

1960

Members: 20+

- homemade cookies donated to Lethbridge seniors' home
- members each donated a children's toy for Christmas fish pond game
- club hosted an anniversary party; members donated \$1.00 for gift (silver tray)
- club helped with a farewell party for community members; members donated \$1.00 for gift (silver tray)
- \$5.00 to the Bonnie Doone Pipe Band (Lethbridge) for their trip to Scotland
- members donated scrapbooks to the Dorothy Gooder School (mentally challenged children) in Lethbridge
- held community wedding shower in Warner for daughter of a member; club members provided lunch and each donated \$1.00 for a club shower gift
- members brought used goods, jams and jellies for donation to the Salvation Army
- members donated tea towels to the club (to be used in their catering activities)
- held a children's Christmas party; 43 bags of candy were distributed
- teenagers of the community given movie tickets in lieu of Christmas party by the club
- held an adult Christmas party

Earning Activities

-
- club made and entered a float in the Warner Farmer's Day Parade (prize unknown)

-
- members donated \$.01 for each year of age for an in-house "Birthday Box" (this activity continued for a number of years)
 - held pantry sale in Warner; earnings -\$54.30
 - made and entered float in Warner Farmer's Day Parade; earnings - \$15.00 (second place prize)
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$9.61
 - Birthday Box earnings - \$9.60

Donating Activities

1961

Members: 20+

- held a community shower for a member's daughter; members that attended provided own gift
- Tea held for a new bride in the neighborhood
- \$10.00 to the Warner Memorial Library for wages for librarian
- club sent a \$5.00 bouquet to an honorary member in the hospital
- each member donated a pencil for use in games, showers and card parties
- held a Mother's Day Tea with members' mothers and honorary members attending
- held two wedding showers
- club purchased a wheel chair embellished with a plaque (recognizing the club) with money earned from the Magazine sale; the Public Health Nurse to make this available for community members in need
- club served at a Blood Donor Clinic in Warner
- donated two trophies for scholastic achievement at Warner School and individual trophies for the students
- members each donated a tin of cookies for the Raymond Mental Hospital
- \$10.00 to the Warner School Band
- club held Christmas parties for adults and children

Earning Activities

-
- yearly club dues raised to \$1.00 (from \$.25) per member
 - catered the evening luncheon for the Farmer's Union Dance; food provided by club and members; earnings - unknown
 - club catered and served lunch at the Lion's Club supper; earnings - \$66.05
 - held "cake walk" with donated (homemade) cakes; earnings - \$5.10
 - held in-house raffle of three cakes; earnings - \$6.90
 - club made and entered a float in the Farmers Day Parade; earnings - \$25.00 (first place prize)
 - held a magazine sales drive; earnings - unknown (earnings applied towards the purchase of a wheel chair)
 - served for the Baseball Club banquet; earnings - \$75.00
 - Club dues collected - \$28.00
 - Birthday Box earnings - \$9.70
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$9.95

Donating Activities

Earning Activities

1962

Members: 22+

- \$10.00 to the Memorial Library
- members donated candy for a Valentine's Box for residents of the Raymond Mental Hospital
- members donated jams and jellies to the Raymond Mental Hospital
- members donated used clothing to three families
- \$50.00 to the Warner Band for uniforms
- members donated bingo prizes for the club's Christmas party
- club organized a farewell party for a member and her family
- purchased a large granite coffee pot for outdoor community activities
- flowers of condolence sent to a member
- members each donated \$.50 for the children's Christmas party
- members donated books and magazines to the Lethbridge Municipal Hospital
- club adopted a child through Unitarian Service Committee; donated \$96.00
- Halloween party held for members' children
- held Christmas parties: teenage bowling party for 27 youths and an adult party
- club yearly expenditures on donations, picnic, parties, etc. - \$405.40

- catered the luncheon for the local Agricultural Meeting; earnings - \$104.00
- catered the midnight luncheon for the Farmers Union Dance; earnings - \$32.50
- managed the concession at a local farm auction sale; earnings - \$125.15
- made and entered a float in Warner Days Parade; earnings - \$15.00 (second place prize)
- in-house mystery bag draw; earnings - \$9.80
- Birthday Box earnings - \$10.51
- yearly fund-raising earnings - \$384.75 (dues, Tea Fees and fund-raising projects)

1963

Members: 21+

- \$10.00 to the Memorial Library Fund
- \$5.00 to the Warner Cemetery Fund
- \$10.00 to the Warner Band
- served at the Scout Banquet (150-130 plates)
- held a wedding shower for a local bride
- provided and served refreshments at the opening reception at the new Border Counties Hospital in Milk River
- held a Tea for a bride-to-be and served at the wedding reception
- \$15.00 to the Unitarian General Fund
- members donated children's toys and books to the Border Counties Hospital
- held three Christmas parties (two for the children and one adult party)
- donated a wheel chair to the Border Counties Hospital

- \$5.00 donation to Birthday Box by a member
- managed the concession at a local farm auction sale; earnings - unknown (report may have been included in the club minutes lost in a farm fire)
- made and entered a float in the Warner Farmers Day parade; earnings - \$25.00 (first place prize)
- Birthday Box earnings - \$10.34

Donating Activities

Earning Activities

***Minutes from 1964 to November 1973
lost in farm fire**

1973

Members: 11+

- held a luncheon for an honorary member's fiftieth wedding anniversary
- held an adult Christmas party and a children's Christmas party (which included community children)
- held a shower for a member's daughter-in-law
- \$10.00 to the Memorial Library Fund
- \$10.00 to the Warner Cemetery Fund
- members brought gifts for Devon (senior's?) Home in Lethbridge
- \$10.00 to the Milk River swimming pool

1974

Members: 17+

- \$10.00 to the Warner Cemetery Fund
- purchased a one month subscription for the Lethbridge Herald newspaper for Milk River-Border Counties Hospital
- flowers purchased and sent to hospitalized members
- club donated \$1.00 per child to the annual children's Christmas party

1975

Members: 16+

- held two, twenty-fifth wedding anniversary parties
- each member donated two gifts for the Devon Home residents
- held a Tea for member moving from the area
- members donated gifts for the Parkland Home (nursing home)

-
- a rock clock made by a husband of a local member raffled in Milk River during Bonanza Days; earnings - \$315.50
 - made and entered a float in the Warner Farmers Day parade; earnings - \$10.00 (third place prize)
-

-
- managed the concession at a local farm auction sale; earnings - unknown
 - Birthday Box earnings - \$6.13
 - "Surprises" (donated gifts from three members, costing \$2.00 or less) earnings - \$13.50
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$6.10
-

-
- Birthday Box earnings - \$5.48
 - Surprises earnings - \$16.30
 - yearly tea fee earnings - \$9.70
-

Donating Activities

1976

Members: 14+

- held a wedding shower for a member's daughter
- served one hundred and fifty people at a local funeral
- purchased an anniversary gift for a member and her spouse
- held Christmas parties (details unknown)
- members brought three gifts each for Devon Home residents

1977

Members: 14+

- \$20.00 to the Memorial Library Fund
- \$20.00 to the Warner Cemetery Fund
- T.V. trays donated to Prairie Rose Lodge (nursing home) in Milk River
- \$110.00 for two-way radios for Warner Volunteer Fire Department
- two coffee servers to Warner Memorial Library
- held wedding shower for a member's daughter
- purchased and donated a book to the Warner Library in memoriam of a deceased member
- bouquets sent to three members
- club helped to pay for an anniversary celebration; members each donated \$2.50

1978

Members: 15+

- held two wedding showers for the daughters of members
- \$40.00 to the Prairie Rose Lodge, Milk River
- \$10.00 to the Memorial Library Fund
- \$10.00 to the Warner Cemetery Fund
- \$50.00 to the Minor Baseball Association in Warner
- five members volunteered their labour at a concession at "Warner Whooperee Days"
- members donated thirty-four women's gifts and twenty-five men's gifts to the Devon Home

Earning Activities

-
- members supplied baking for a basket raffle at Easter; earnings - \$304.75
 - membership fees (dues) raised to \$2.00 per person
 - member crocheted and donated an afghan for raffle (club paid for yarn); earnings - \$261.00
 - Surprises earnings - \$13.10
 - Birthday Box earnings - \$6.60

-
- made and entered a float in the Warner Parade; earnings - unknown
 - yearly funding statement and activity report placed in county newspaper
 - Surprises earnings - \$14.20
 - yearly Tea Fees earnings - \$10.40

-
- flea market donations table; earnings - \$145.66
 - flea market donations table from members (two items each or donation of \$5.00 each) earnings - \$80.00; associated cake raffle earnings - \$18.20
 - Surprises earnings - \$9.70
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$10.00

Donating Activities

1979

Members: 14+

- members donated cups and saucers to the Prairie Rose Lodge, Milk River
- club purchased a used vacuum for the Warner Library
- members donated gifts for men and women of the Devon Home
- \$145.20 to Warner Library Board
- club member donated couch to be recovered by club for Warner Library
- club donated \$100.00 for foam for the couch
- hosted seventy-ninth birthday party for Clara Curry, founding and honorary member

1980

Members: 12+

- held a shower for a member's daughter
- members volunteered for a luncheon and a bingo evening for residents of Prairie Rose Lodge, Milk River
- "Walk-a-thon" donation in support of participating members - \$51.00
- members donated Christmas gifts to residents of the Devon Home

1981

Members: 15+

- held a bingo night for residents of Prairie Rose Lodge, Milk River
- \$300.00 donated for playground equipment for the Warner School
- members donated Christmas Devon gifts; (\$3.00 for each gift)
- members served at a funeral luncheon

Earning Activities

-
- club reported yearly earnings and activities in local county newspaper
 - catered the lunch for the Library Variety Show fund raiser; earnings - \$145.20
 - flea market table donations and cake sale: earnings - \$113.50
 - Surprises earnings - \$8.40

-
- non-residents to pay \$15.00 to be involved in club activities
 - Tea Fees raised to \$.25
 - membership fees raise to \$4.00 per year (from \$2.00)
 - individual member's donations for shower gifts raised to \$3.00 (from \$2.50)
 - made and entered a float for Warner Whooperee Days parade; earnings - \$30.00 (first place prize)
 - Easter Baskets of baking raffled; earnings - \$330.00
 - members donated to table at flea market and helped at the table; earnings - \$181.55
 - Surprises earnings - \$23.20
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$26.50

-
- club submitted a report of their activities and earnings to the county newspaper
 - members donated two items of baking and a handicraft to flea market table; members not donating items donated \$10.00 each; earnings - \$160.20; baking basket raffle earnings - \$81.00
 - Surprises earnings - \$11.35
 - Birthday Box earnings - \$4.20
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$23.50 (approximate)

Donating Activities

Earning Activities

1982

Members: 15+

- wedding shower held for the daughter of a member; members donated a total of \$137.00 for the shower gift
- held a Bingo night for the members of the Prairie Rose Lodge, Milk River
- donated a clock to the Dri-landers Apartments for senior citizens in Warner
- \$50.00 scholarship for two students with highest averages in Science at Warner High School
- donated two poinsettias to the Prairie Rose Lodge and the Dri-landers Apartments

- yearly dues to be raised to \$20.00 (from \$15.00)
- members donated two craft items and one baked item for a bake basket raffle at Bake and Craft Sale; earnings - \$197.53 for table items and \$96.00 for bake basket raffle
- Surprises earnings - \$11.35
- yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$21.25

1983

Members: 11+

- \$100.00 to Warner Historical Society for local history book
- held a Bingo night and served lunch at Prairie Rose Lodge
- \$50.00 for Scholarship and Scroll for Sciences graduating student
- purchased gifts for a member's 25th wedding anniversary
- held a children's Christmas party
- donated poinsettias to Dri-lander Apartments and Prairie Rose Lodge
- purchased four comforters for Prairie Rose Lodge for \$190.00

- members donated baking and items to a flea market sale; earnings - \$198.20 for the flea market table items and \$80.00 for the bake basket raffle
- Surprises earnings - \$17.40
- yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$18.25

1984

Members: 9+

- provided lunch and served at a funeral of a former member's husband in Lethbridge
- provided lunch and served at a funeral in Warner
- held a bingo and luncheon at the Prairie Rose Lodge
- \$100.00 to the Warner Civic Centre expansion
- held a wedding shower for a member's daughter-in-law
- held a wine and cheese party for a member's Christmas Party
- held a children's Christmas party

- received a \$50.00 donation for help at a funeral (usually not paid for these services)
- members donated to a flea market table; earnings - \$314.95; also earned \$88.64 for the bake basket raffle
- Surprises earnings - \$11.50
- yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$12.35

Donating Activities

1985

Members: 9+

- held a bingo and luncheon at the Prairie Rose Lodge
- \$100.00 to the Warner School Scholarship
- \$100.00 to the Border County Hospitals for sheepskin
- \$25.00 to the Heart Fund
- \$640.60 to Ronald McDonald House (Calgary)
- club paid \$23.84 for gifts for the children's Christmas party

1986

Members: 12+

- \$200.00 to the Border Counties Hospital for Lifeline Project
- held a bingo and luncheon at the Prairie Rose Lodge
- held a Tea for a bride-to-be
- sponsored a Chili Contest at Warner Whooperee Days and supplied a trophy: \$30.55
- \$100.00 to the Special Needs Society
- \$100.00 to the Warner School for the Science Scholarship
- held an in-house "Chinese Auction"; earnings went to adopt an area family for Christmas
- members donated food items for the Care and Share Program, as part of the adult Christmas party

Earning Activities

-
- club held a Mother's Day Bake Sale and Tea; members donated two baked items and one strawberry pie; funds to go to Ronald McDonald House (Calgary); earnings - \$426.10
 - held a garage sale for the benefit of Ronald McDonald House in Calgary; earnings - \$314.50
 - member donated \$25.00 to the club
 - club members donated to a flea market table; earnings - \$282.10
 - Surprises earnings - \$11.25
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$14.90

-
- club members donated items to a flea market table and to baking for raffle of two bake baskets; earnings - \$214.07
 - held a Warner Library "clean-out" sale; earnings - \$274.66
 - Surprises earnings - \$17.25 (approximate)
 - yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$16.25

Donating Activities

Earning Activities

1987

Members: 16+

- club purchased a shower gift for a local bride-to-be
- purchased a food hamper for a needy family
- held a shower in Warner for the daughter of member
- bought a bridal gift for the daughter-in-law of a member
- re-donated the \$100.00 returned to club from Warner Historical Society to the Warner Curling Club
- held a bingo and luncheon at the Prairie Rose Lodge
- \$100.00 to the Warner School for the Science Scholarship
- \$100.00 to the local Special Needs Society
- \$100.00 to the Lethbridge Soup Kitchen
- held adult's and children's Christmas parties

- hosted a Bake Sale and Strawberry Tea; earnings - \$236.95
- members donated items to a flea market table and donated three items for a bake box raffle; earnings - \$241.50
- Surprises earnings - \$27.00
- yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$15.05
- members held "Chinese Auction" at adult Christmas party; earnings - \$90.00

1988

Members: 10+

- \$100.00 to the local Special Needs Society
- \$100.00 to the Lethbridge Soup Kitchen
- held a Mother's Day Tea
- held a sing-a-long and luncheon at the Prairie Rose Lodge
- \$50.00 donated for two students to attend Forum for Young Albertans
- \$100.00 to the Warner Volunteer Fire Department (for a stretcher)
- members donated old sheets and blankets to the Warner Volunteer Fire Department
- \$100.00 to the Warner School for the Sciences Scholarship
- \$100.00 to allow two students to attend the Terry Fox Centre
- held wedding shower for member's daughter
- members sang Christmas carols at the Prairie Rose Lodge
- purchased two poinsettias for the Dri-lander Apartments and the Prairie Rose Lodge
- sponsored a children's Christmas party

- donating history and club activities reported in the county newspaper
- members donated to a table at the Warner Flea Market; earnings - \$250.00
- Surprises: earnings - \$30.25
- yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$12.25

Donating Activities

Earning Activities

1989

Members: 10+

- \$100.00 to a member's husband running the Boston Marathon
- held the club's Fiftieth Anniversary celebration at Warner, in April, with many out-of-town guests participating
- \$100.00 to the Warner School Science Scholarship
- founding member's birthday celebrated
- held moving-away Tea for a member
- members sang Christmas carols at the Prairie Rose Lodge and the Dri-lander Apartments and helped with the lunches; purchased two poinsettias these facilities
- \$200.00 to the Warner Volunteer Fire Department (for new hose nozzle)
- \$100.00 to the Border Counties Special Needs Society
- \$50.00 to the Soup Kitchen and a donation of non-perishable foods

- made and entered a Fiftieth Anniversary club float in Warner Daze Parade; earnings - \$15.00 (second place prize)
- managed the concession at a local farm auction; earnings - \$642.82
- Surprises earnings - \$32.70
- yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$14.00

1990

Members: 8

- club held farewell parties for two members
- \$300.00 to the Warner School Quest Program
- \$200.00 to the Warner Elks Club building renovation
- \$100.00 to the Warner Volunteer Fire Department
- club members held Christmas party (but no children's party, as there are few children left in the area)
- members sang Christmas carols for the Prairie Rose Lodge and donated lunch and small gifts
- \$50.00 to the Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank

- managed the concession for a local farm auction sale; earnings - \$698.27
- held a Strawberry Tea; earnings - \$289.33
- Surprises earnings - \$21.00
- yearly Tea Fee earnings - \$12.50

1991

Members: 6 or less (active)

- Three meetings held this year
- donated tea towels to the Warner Library
 - funds from the bake sale donated to family whose farm buildings were burned
 - sang at the Warner Senior's Drop-In Centre and had supper with them

- held a bake sale in Warner

Donating Activities

Earning Activities

Ongoing: The club was formally disbanded in 1991. Former club members continue to meet, on a social basis, for a yearly Christmas celebration.

Appendix C

Informal Farm Women's Groups in Southern Alberta

Barons

Garden Prairies Women's Club

1914-1972(+) Women from the district organized to sew and knit for the Red Cross. Although this group became a Women's Institute in 1918 (in 1925 they formed an Institute Girl's Club), they decided to end this affiliation in 1944 due to the cost of provincial dues. The group carried on as social club for the community; they conducted bingos, held Christmas parties, gave birthday and anniversary flowers and farewell gifts and donated to the Callow Coach (later called the Rotary Coach), which provided transportation for handicapped persons in Southern Alberta. This club also gave Easter baskets to the disadvantaged and donated jams and jellies to seniors citizens (*Barons History Committee 1972:115-117*).

South Priscilla Club

1913-(early)1950's

This club was composed of community women residing east of Barons. During the settlement period, women were looking for opportunities to meet their neighbors and have social afternoons (travel was by foot, horse or buggy). The group met in member's homes twice per month and "club-time" was considered "Time-off for Fun and Laughter." Women were often driven to the meeting by men who would socialize in another room until it was time to eat the meal that was provided. Children were also brought to club meetings. Within four or five years, the club grew and divided into the *South Priscilla Club* (farm women living east of Barons) and the *North Priscilla Club* (farm women living east of Carmangay). The club's charitable work included: helping neighbors in distress; sewing for institutions; quilting; hampers for the needy; bridal showers for daughters of members; and baby showers for new babies. The club folded because "progress and modern transportation brought more means of relaxation, and a busier life," thus the club's membership and interest level dropped until the club was disbanded in the early 1950's (*Barons History Committee 1972:122-123*).

Blackie

Blackie Ladies Community Club

1956-1971+ Blackie and district women formed a club which was originally called "The Evening Circle." The club had officers and their meetings were originally held in United Church basement. The club's earliest function was to furnish the United Church. In 1957, the club decided to no longer affiliate with the United Church Presbytery and meetings were subsequently held in member's homes. Club projects included helping with the mobile tuberculosis x-ray unit and donating money to the Chamber of Commerce for a skating rink. The club raised money by organizing parties and an annual Fashion Show and Sale; they also sponsored a sewing course.

The club donated money for the Community Centre and held work bees to paint and varnish the Centre's tables. In 1965 the club changed its name to the *Blackie Ladies Community Club* and held card parties and catered banquets in the Community Centre, with the proceeds being donated to finance building improvements. By 1968, most of the club meetings were held at the Community Centre. In 1971, the club had over twenty members (*Fencelines and Furrows History Book Society 1969:124-125*).

Carmangay

(North) Priscilla Club

1910-1968+

This club started as an afternoon get-together for the wives of farmers. Members included women from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Hungary, Finland, Czechoslovakia, the British Isles, Eastern Canada and the United States. Members were drawn from east of the villages of Carmangay and Barons in a radius of 25 miles (see also the *South Priscilla Club* of Barons). Originally, the aim of the group was purely recreational; club members considered that because farm women worked hard at home, they needed to get together to relax and be sociable, rather than expending energy on projects. The club had no rituals and they did not do extensive charitable work, but helped out where there was a need (which included during the illness of members and neighbors). Club members also provided Christmas hampers for the Woods Christian Home in Calgary, produced quilts and provided baby clothes for individuals and institutions. The club divided into the north and south groups in 1913. Club meetings were held at a member's house two times a month. By 1968, only the north branch of the club remained operational: donating baby clothes and silver cups to new mothers; paying for camp for two children; entertaining senior citizens at a hot turkey dinner; and sending cards to shut-ins at Christmas, Easter and on special occasions (*Carmangay and District Home and School Association 1968:119-121*).

Champion

Felicity Club

1947- 1971+

This group of rural neighbors was located in the Washington School District, north of Carmangay. They described themselves as a social club. The club membership had geographic boundaries. The club members chose their name because it means "anything producing happiness" (*1970:139*). Meetings were held every two weeks in member's homes (until 1953, when this dropped to once a month). The group helped handicapped children, the Woods Christian Home and gave materials to the Little Bow Hospital. Throughout its history, there were fifty-three ladies that were members of the club and, as of 1971, the club had held two hundred and eighty-two meetings. Their activities included organizing picnics, skating, curling, bowling, quilting bees, hobo teas, and raffles. They created traveling baskets, provided demonstrations and hosted guest speakers. They studied tapes, films and reviewed books. The club also entertained at seniors' lodges and nursing homes (*Champion History Committee 1970:139-140*).

Coalhurst

Helping Hand Club

1939-1972 This group drew its membership from the Coalhurst, Kipp and Park Lake areas. The club met twice a month and their activities included holding teas, bake sales, raffles, bridal showers, baby showers, card parties and dances, and an annual Christmas party. The club: donated to the Cancer Fund and the Dorothy Gooder School in Lethbridge; sent parcels overseas to soldiers; gave Christmas hampers to the needy; provided awards to the local school for Shop (industrial arts) and Home Economics; and donated funds to the Cup of Milk Fund (*Coalhurst Historical Society 1984:78*)

“Coyote Flats”

(An area located between the Little Bow and Belly Rivers, and included the towns and areas around Turin, Picture Butte, Kehoe Lake, and Enchant)

Barrhill Social (Sunshine) Club

1939-1965+ In 1950 this club changed its name from the *Sunshine Club* to the *Barhill Social Club*. The club met once a month and their activities included: bake sales; sewing; knitting for the Red Cross; making Christmas boxes for local servicemen overseas; making rugs and quilts, which were then raffled; and catering of auction sales in the community. The club contributed to Polio Fund and Dorothy Gooder School (*Coyote Flats Historical Society 1967:319*).

We-Ho-Lo Club

1926-1965+ This club was located in the Kehoe District, with club meetings being held on a monthly basis. The club's name was derived from a combination of the words “work,” “health” and “love”. The club activities included staged plays, with the proceeds contributed to the Red Cross. The club also held a bake sale in a Lethbridge mall and donated to a service organization (*Coyote Flats Historical Society 1967:318*).

Del Bonita

The Rinard Club

1920-1970+ This group considered themselves a “social club” and was located in the Rinard District. The club earned money for a piano for the Rinard school, organized showers and held Christmas parties and dances. The club did not consider themselves a money making club, but they did raise money to donate to several interests, including the Cancer and Heart Funds and the Callow Coach in Lethbridge (*Del Bonita Historical Society 1981:121-122*).

Good Neighbor Club

1963-1970+ This community social club in the Delbonita organized wedding showers and helped in community projects. The club funded trophies and held farewell parties and also helped in times of emergencies. The club had formal officers (*Del Bonita Historical Society 1981:136*).

The Readymade Club

1940-1970 This club was initially named the "Lens New Hope Club" and was formed as a recreational group in the early 1940s. The club was originally organized by young women for the purpose of doing handiwork. Later on, club members held card parties, suppers, canvassed for the Cancer fund, helped in times of tragedy, put on showers, sent cards and gifts to people in the hospital, and catered to local banquets. The club donated to several charities and donated equipment to the local school, where they also awarded a scholarship to a grade twelve student, in 1956-57. The club also held a Grandmothers' Tea for local grandmothers and raised money through raffles, bingos and catering. It was noted that almost every woman in Del Bonita was a member of the Club at one time, though declining membership eventually resulted in the folding of the club (*Del Bonita Historical Society 1981:122-123*).

Ensign

Ensign Ladies Community Club

1947-1965+ This was a women's community club that held meetings once per month. The meetings had a formal roll-call and members gathered articles for bazaars, had surprise box draws and a theme song called "Pack up your troubles." Club members organized a father's "Bean Supper" in June, held an annual picnic and held suppers with a bazaar and fish pond; they also organized a Christmas social for children, had a fruitcake raffle, held card parties, dances, and put on showers for brides within the district. Club earnings went toward coal to heat the community hall, curling rink expenses and charitable organizations (*Vulcan and District Historical Society 1988:36-37*).

Etzikom

Community Club

1914-1988 This group was originally organized as a chapter of the Women's Institute but changed to the "Community Club" in the 1930s. Little is known about this club, excepting only that it split into two separate clubs in 1972 and that club members held showers. The club eventually disbanded due to lack of members (*Etzikom Historical Society 1990:102-103*).

Etzikom Sunshine Circle

1972-1990+ This club had formal officers and held meetings once per month. The club catered to auction sales, weddings, suppers and contributed to Salvation Army, Christmas fund for local children, and did sewing for Red Cross (*Etzikom Historical Society 1990:105*).

Fort Macleod

The Country Beavers' Club

1948-1989+ This club was composed of rural neighbors living south of Fort Macleod and started as an informal gathering of neighbors for the purpose of making crafts. Children were brought to club meetings and the club performed good deeds and rendered assistance where needed. Club members would visit the Auxiliary Hospital (where they would serve lunch

monthly) and would also entertain seniors at picnics (using the Callow Coach for transportation). The club donated coffee, tea, sugar, new bedspreads, Christmas gifts and monetary funds and donated to formal charities such as the Cancer Fund, Tuberculosis Easter Seals Fund, the Red Cross, and the Heart and Stroke Fund and also helped in times of tragedy. The club catered to banquets, wedding receptions and farm (auction) sales and held bake sales, raffles, dances and concerts and an annual Turkey Supper. The club assisted in the upkeep and furnishing of the South Macleod Community Hall by providing chairs, tables, curtains, and lights. The club held sewing sessions, bridal and baby showers, picnics, Christmas concerts and Halloween parties for children and adults of area. The club also went on bus tours (*Fort Macleod History Book Committee 1990:192-194*).

Jolly Howe Ladies Club

1932-1989+ This group originally organized as an afternoon get-together and, in 1945, became the "Howe Ladies Club," being named after the Howe School District, located five miles north of Fort Macleod. The club later changed its name to the *Jolly Howe Ladies Club* and did sewing for auxiliary hospital patients, held bake sales, rummage sales, bingos, annual summer picnics and Christmas parties. The club also canvassed for donations for the Cancer, Kidney and Heart Funds (*Fort Macleod History Book Committee 1990:195-196*).

MAE Belle Club

1948-1989+ This group originally formed as a handicraft club, comprising farm women located south of Fort Macleod and was named after the nearby rural school districts of McBride, Ardenville and Enwelme. The club later became a benefit organization which held monthly meetings and organized most of social activities for the community, including concerts, card parties, Halloween parties and Christmas concerts. The club also held a yearly "Husband's Party" (in appreciation of their spouses), put floats in the parade, catered events, held pancake suppers, bake sales and ran concessions at farm auction sales. The club also published a cookbook. Social functions were held at the Ardenville Social Centre, which was formerly a school (*Fort Macleod History Book Committee 1990:196-197*).

Spring Point Community Society

1945-1989+ This formal society was more commonly known as the "Spring Point Community Club." The women of Spring Point and the surrounding district originally organized themselves as the "Foothills Community Club," with the common goals of providing assistance to neighbors in distress and to contribute to charities. The group held meetings twice a month at the community hall and, later, in member's homes where they would socialize, plan community events and fund-raising projects. The club honoured newly weds, twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebrants and departing residents with showers, dances or parties. The club raised money through: dances; sewing and pantry sales; teas; pie and coffee breaks (held in stores or at the Fort Macleod Town Hall); members cooked

dinners and suppers for the fall cattle sales in Pincher Creek (1949 and 1950); held bingos in Fort Macleod; produced a cookbook (1959); and held an annual "Calf Sale" (where women's "legs" were auctioned and the successful bidder received a partner for the supper waltz and luncheon). In 1959, in order to purchase one and a half acres to relocate the Community Hall, the "Foothills Community Club" became the *Spring Point Community Society* after formally registering the club as a society under the *Societies Act* (Alberta); the club bought the land for \$30.00 and moved the community hall building on to the land for \$500.00. The club/society conducted walk-a-thons to raise funds for the construction of a "comfort room" within the hall and, in 1980, put an addition on the Hall with assistance from a government grant and labour provided by the men of the community. The club sponsored turkey suppers, a party for children at Christmas and members of Extendicare (senior's nursing home) were provided with annual treats and entertainment by club members. The club was also instrumental in having signs set up for safety on rural roads. The club celebrated its eightieth anniversary in 1985 (*Fort Macleod History Book Committee 1990:198-200*).

Granum

Jolly Howe Ladies Club

1932-1977+ (see also Fort Macleod Clubs) This club was named after the Howe School District. Club members sewed for the Auxiliary hospital and entertained the patients. Funds were raised through bakes sales, rummage sales and draws; a bingo was also held for a family of the district who lost their farm in a fire. Members served lunch at auction sales, held bingos, and organized summer picnics and Christmas parties (*Granum Historical Committee 1977:100-101*).

Granum/Willow Creek Happy Gang Club

1942-?? This club's motto was: "When you think of all they are giving and how much it means to us, anything we can do is so little." The club was composed of farm wives who raised funds to purchase items for soldiers overseas; members would sew for the Red Cross and send parcels and cigarettes to servicemen. The club never canvassed the public for funds and chose to raise money for cemetery improvements by catering to dances, holding auction sale luncheons, raffles and teas. The club compiled and produced a cookbook (300 copies) which contained the favorite recipes of the members of the club. The club operated for "some years after the war" (*Granum Historical Committee 1977:101-102*).

Meadow Creek Ladies Club

1933-1976+ This club was considered a social club, consisting of "homemakers" from the Meadow Creek area, who came together to "uplift" their spirits during the Depression by having an afternoon of entertainment. The club had membership fees and charged a fee for lunch at each meeting. The club earned money through raffles, benefit dances, concerts, and catering and serving at luncheons, wedding receptions and auction sales. The club organized a yearly children's Christmas concert for the district and their work also benefitted a hospital in Claresholm (*Granum Historical*

Committee 1977:102-103).

Hillspring

The Friendly Club

mid-1930s-?? This club was organized to bolster the social status of the community. Members met every third Friday of the month and would purchase items for their church, flowers for funerals, and celebrated birthdays (*Hill Spring Cultural Society 1975:73-75*).

Bide-A-Wee Club

1928-?? This club met every two weeks to do quilting (produced two quilts per month for more than 46 years) and handiwork. Club members held Christmas parties and picnics and kept gardens and processed food for storage (*Hill Spring Cultural Society 1975:75-76*).

Jolly Jills Club

1950-1973+ The club held wedding showers, baby showers and gave money to the needy. Club members would also hold parties, banquets and conduct gift exchanges (*Hill Spring Cultural Society 1975:76*).

Lucky Strike

Lucky Strike Community Club

1939-1974+ This club began as the "Lucky Strike Women's Institute," in 1936 and operated under that name for three years; the distance which members were required to travel in order to attend the Institute fairs and conferences eventually made its members decide to organize a community group instead. Club meetings were held once a month at a member's home where they would organize card parties and dances to raise money. The club also did handiwork and made quilts and other items to raffle. The club performed maintenance for Prairie Round Cemetery and, during WWII, assisted the Red Cross, helped provide parcels to soldiers and organized a community welcome-home party for servicemen. In 1940, high membership numbers caused the club to outgrow their farm household meeting venue, thus resulting in the local teacherage (residence for the teacher) becoming their new clubhouse (which was also utilized for card parties). In 1947, the club purchased the Prairie Round School and became a charter club in 1948. The club moved the school to land which they purchased and the school was eventually electrified, with bathrooms, a cistern and water pipes added shortly thereafter. The clubhouse was used for dances, short courses, parties and church services. From 1939 through to 1964 the club held an annual bazaar and dance; club members made tea towels, pillow cases, aprons, table cloths and other items which were then auctioned. The club also held an annual Strawberry supper and Christmas parties and would donate boxes of goodies to the elderly. The club published a local cookbook in 1958 (*Shortgrass Historical Society 1974:138-141*).

Goddard Community Club

1940-1969 This club consisted of a small group of farm women who came together to make quilts and articles for the war effort and the Red Cross (made fifty-

four quilts during war years). In order to raise money, the club held bazaars and sold their handiwork, including tea towels, table cloths, doilies, and other items. The club purchased the Kings Lake School for a clubhouse and subsequently became the "Goddard Community Society." Later, when the club needed a larger building, the society purchased one from Kenyon Air Field, in Lethbridge, and moved it to the site. The society held chicken suppers, strawberry teas, dances, card parties, wedding showers, anniversary, Christmas and New Years parties; they donated to the Cancer Society, the Red Cross, the Heart Fund; the Institute for the Blind, CARE, sponsored a foster child in Korea, and produced baby layettes for the Unitarian Service Committee. The younger membership eventually disbanded the society and sold the clubhouse (*Shortgrass Historical Society 1974:142-143*).

Thistle Ridge Neighborhood Association

1949-1974 This club was first organized as the "Friendly Club," to permit women to visit together once a month and exchange ideas. The club held card parties every two weeks and later purchased the local school and became the "Thistle Ridge Neighborhood Association," under the *Societies Act* (Alberta). The club had fourteen charter members and hosted church picnics, lunches and farewell parties. At each meeting, club members would sing a hymn, experience entertainment, give a hostess prize and hand in bazaar handiwork. Club members also worked on Red Cross quilts and would hold a Christmas party, with treats for the children. The club paid the local minister for church services (this was a change from a "social club" mandate to a goal of helping the community and church). The club also built a kitchen, outhouses and a cistern and purchased chairs for their community hall. Club members held an annual bingo and bazaar, put on showers, catered and served at wedding dances and auction sales, made traveling baskets and produced floats for the local parade; they also provided an award for the 4-H clothing club (for the third place winner). The club held oyster suppers instead of chicken suppers. The association tried to rejuvenate in the 1970's but ultimately folded and then sold their property (*Shortgrass Historical Society 1974:143-145*).

Magrath

Aute-O-Zelle Club

1925-?? This club had eighteen original members and was known to be project oriented (Magrath and District History Association 1974:382).

Helping Hand Club

??-?? This club worked for the Red Cross and carried out other projects; they produced 25 quilts one year (*Magrath and District History Association 1974:386*).

Work and Chat

1940-1974+ These club women met every two weeks and would collect dues. The club furnished a room for the new hospital and also donated chairs and a highchair; they also purchased glass blackboards for the elementary

school and produced parade floats. Club members raised money by dressing dolls for raffles and producing candy (*Magrath and District History Association 1974:386*).

Milk River

Sleepy Hollow Community Club

1941-1989+ This was a social club of neighbors located east of Milk River. Club meetings were held at member's homes, where members recited a creed, had a formal roll call, paid membership fees and enjoyed potluck lunches. The club took on various community projects, including: sending parcels to local people in the services during the war; donating baby gifts (baby spoons) to club member's children; and there was a custom of sending birthday and anniversary cards to members. Club members would hold card parties, anniversary parties and house warming parties for newcomers, an annual Christmas party (turkey dinner for families) and community club picnics (during the 1940's). In the 1980s, club members entertained seniors in the Prairie Rose Lodge in Milk River, sent funds to Bangladesh and clothing to the Unitarian Service Committee and donated to the Red Cross, the Aid the Children Fund, the Cancer Fund, the Cup of Milk Fund, the Callow Coach Fund, the Milk River Memorial Library and to the Hospital Auxiliary for the Border Counties Hospital (*Milk River Historical Society and Milk River New Horizons Society 1989:272-273*).

Monarch and Nobleford

Monarch Beaver Club

1958-1977+ This club's main purpose was to aid any charitable organizations within the community of Monarch. The club had a formal constitution and membership was available for any woman within the district. Club members attended regular monthly meetings which were held at the Monarch School. Club activities included a regular spring and fall tea and bazaar and catering to banquets at the Hall (*Nobleford, Monarch History Book Club 1976: 83-84*).

Helping Hand Club

1939-1972 This club consisted of women from the Kipp area. Meetings were held twice a month and club members held bake sales, quilt raffles, baby and bridal showers, parties and dances in order to raise funds. The club also hosted an annual Christmas party and dinner. The club gave awards to industrial arts home economic students at the local school and donated to the Red Cross, the Dorothy Gooder School, CARE and the Lethbridge Red Feather. Dwindling membership eventually caused the club to dissolve (*Nobleford, Monarch History Book Club 1976:82-83*).

We He Lo Club

1923-1977+ This club emphasized work, health and love and was primarily a social club. Club members would put on plays and sold handicrafts. This club is also mentioned as a Coyote Flats Clubs (*Nobleford, Monarch History Book Club 1976:86*).

Purple Springs

Priscilla Club

Early 1930s-?? This club had a large membership and meetings were held once per month. One club project involved the cleaning of the local graveyard and the marking of graves with stones. The club also made quilts that were occasionally raffled (*Purple Springs Historical Society 1981:367-368*).

Sherburne Ladies Club / Hudson Community Club

1936-1981+ This club originally organized as a Ladies' Aid branch of the Taber United Church. In 1939, the club changed its name to accommodate the inclusion of all women within the community. The club sewed for the Red Cross, held dances and raffles to make money for "War Work" and produced Christmas packages that were sent to service men. The club also made quilts (some of which sent overseas), donated money to the Taber Hospital and helped to furnish the Sherburne Hall. Club members raised funds by cleaning the Hudson School (*Purple Springs Historical Society 1981:369-370*).

Rosemary

Rosemary Ladies Social Society

1923-1966 Members of this club were women from the hamlet of Rosemary and the surrounding vicinity. Club meetings were informal but held at regular intervals. In 1925, the membership was growing so large that the members decided to add more formality to the club structure: officers were appointed; ways of generating funds were explored; and plans were made to involve the club in community activities. In 1931, the club became a chapter of the Women's Institute, but dropped out in mid-1930's (as club commitments simply required too much effort during the Depression years). In 1939, the club incorporated under the *Societies Act* (Alberta) and purchased 21 lots in the hamlet, using money raised by the club from bazaars, suppers, raffles, dues, and the serving of lunches at auction sales. The club leased a portion of these lands to other community organizations (which, in turn, constructed a hockey rink and curling club) and was eventually able to build its own club house in 1952 (the club designed the building, which was constructed for \$1,600.00 for materials; the construction labour was donated). The club used the club house to hold its meetings, conduct the club bazaars, suppers and Christmas parties; the community utilized the club house to accommodate the community health nurse's visits, as a polling station and as the community band practice facility. The club made regular contributions to the Red Cross, the Crippled Children's Hospital and Wood's Christian Home and to local needs. Over time, the village appropriated the society's lands and, by the 1960's, other clubs had taken over many of the society's remaining community responsibilities. The membership declined and the society

sold the club house and liquidated its remaining assets in 1966 (which were then donated). More than two hundred and fifty different women were members of the club/society during its history (*Rosemary Historical Society 1977:65-67*).

Skiff

Skiff Ladies' Variety Association

1953-1980+ This club met twice a month: "... with not much in the line of entertainment and breaks from our households, decided to get together once a month for a visit session . . ." (*Skiff History Book Committee 1980: 105*). As part of their activities, they played card games, visited and paid dues that were used for going away gifts, flowers for the hospitalized and baby gifts. The club was originally a social club and then moved toward fund-raising ventures to support the renovations of the old school into a community hall. In 1953, the club adopted their name and developed a constitution; membership was open to women of the district and members were required to pay dues. The club held many fund-raising activities, including: dances (several times per year); raffles; turkey suppers; catering of weddings; Board of Trade suppers; Masonic Lodge banquets; and the Ellison's Pancake Supper. The club produced and sold the "Skiff Community Cook Book," put floats in parades, entered rodeo queen contestants and had tea and bake sales. In later years, club members engaged in social evenings, instead of dances. Most of the funds earned by the club were donated to the Community Hall for dishes, flatware, stoves, tables, coffee urns, curtains, stacking chairs and cupboard materials. Club activities included supporting walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, skate-a-thons, minor hockey, the Foremost Band, the Foremost High School, transportation for children to swimming, funding local students to travel to Paris and a leadership course. The club also donated to families who lost homes in fires and contributed toward a two-way communication system for the Bow Island Hospital. For many years the club held picnics in Lethbridge and members would take their husbands out to supper once per year (*Skiff History Book Committee 1980:105-106*).

Sundial, Enchant, Retlaw

Enchant Community Club

1930s-1967 The "Enchant Sewing Circle" originated as a chapter of the UFWA and was involved in knitting and sewing (which were sent overseas for refugee children, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army). The club sent parcels to soldiers from the District area and assured that war brides were given a community shower. The club raised money through bake sales, strawberry teas, bazaars, suppers, raffles, banquets and catering of various receptions. Initially, meetings were held at the club member's homes. In 1948, the club became the *Enchant Community Association* and meetings were then held then at the community hall kitchen. The club raised funds to support furnishing of and renovations to the community hall, including a new kitchen, tables, chairs, painting, gas and power, furnaces and indoor washrooms. The club also compiled a local history book (*Book Committees of Sundial, Enchant and Retlaw 1967:203-204*).

The Retlaw Sunshine Club

1942-1967+ This club made and raffled quilts, held bake sales and supper bazaars to raise funds. The club sent food and clothing to soldiers overseas, contributed to the Red Cross, a polio organization, the Salvation Army and the Cancer Fund. The club was responsible for their community hall and held card parties, dances, farewells and showers for the community. The club also aided in compiling the local history book (*Book Committees of Sundial, Enchant and Retlaw 1967:316*).

Vauxhall

Willing Workers' Club

1942-?? This club was formed through the amalgamation of the "Country Girl's Club" and the "Country Women's Club." The club sponsored a Korean orphan for two years, sewed and knitted for the Taber Municipal Hospital for number of years and donated to several community projects, including the Vauxhall Library and the sick and needy (*Vauxhall and Districts Book Committee 1969:359*).

New West Ladies Club

1919-1921 This group consisted of community ladies who organized to do good for their community. Officers were appointed and the membership paid dues. Club activities included a Box Social (held at the school), Christmas treats for school children and neighborhood children. Club members collected library books for the school, put on plays and held baby showers. The club attempted to obtain a local post office, but was unsuccessful as a rural post office during that time was required to be located in a home, no residents offered this space. The club used its surplus funds to erect a community hall and an acre of land was donated to the club for this purpose. The club organized work bees to construct the hall and the club donated money to United Church until the hall was completed. In order to facilitate the holding of legal title to the community hall lands, the club elected to become a Women Institute in 1921 (*Vauxhall and Districts Book Committee 1969:223-225*).

Vulcan

Eastway Ladies Social Club

1923-1972+ This club consisted of farm women who needed a regularly scheduled social organization to bring the neighbors together. The club started as the "Eastway Women's Institute" and their activities included card parties, dances and donation of gifts for the children of the District at Christmas (the children were also provided with strawberries and ice cream at the end of the year). New babies in the area were given a silver spoon and a token bank account by the club. Due to the financial stress of the Depression, this club disbanded and reorganized as a social group in 1933-34. The new club catered for sales, receptions and suppers and their fund-raising activities included chicken suppers and bazaars every fall. The club produced and donated quilts and quilt-tops and held "Hobo Teas" and a Mother's Day tea for the grandmothers (*Eastway Ladies Club 1971:7-9*).

Mayview Ladies Club/Ladies Sunshine Social Club

194?-??

These community women originally came together to help the Red Cross during war years. After the war ended, club members organized as a social club called the *Mayview Ladies Club* and dedicated themselves to community and social welfare. In 1945, was renamed the Ladies Sunshine Club. The club's work included the entertaining of the returning servicemen, catering auction sales, holding quilting bees and organizing working bees for the local cemetery. Club members collected clothing for orphans and needy families, gave to charitable organizations and helped with community projects. The club also hosted bridal parties, and "hobo teas" which involved one club member picking up another club member along the way to come "dressed as you are" to help another member before "tea was served." The club also adopted a Korean orphan (*Eastway Ladies Club 1973:214*).