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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm

other names/site number NEHBS GA00-397

2. Location

street & number rural not for publication [ ]

city or town Beatrice vicinity [x]

state Nebraska code NE county Gage code 067 zip code 68450

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [x] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [x] statewide [ ] locally. ( [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official [Handwritten Signature]

Date 10/30/97

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ( [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

[x] entered in the National Register.

[ ] See continuation sheet.

[ ] determined eligible for the National Register.

[ ] See continuation sheet.

[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.

[ ] removed from the National Register.

[ ] other, (explain):

[Handwritten Signature: Edson H. Beall]

12/8/97

Signature of Keeper [Handwritten Signature]

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
4	1	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Institutional Housing \_\_\_\_\_  
 AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility, agricultural outbuildings \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instruction)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling \_\_\_\_\_  
 AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: outbuildings, storage \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Dutch Colonial Revival \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete \_\_\_\_\_  
 walls brick \_\_\_\_\_  
 roof asphalt, wood shingle \_\_\_\_\_  
 other \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Social History**

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**Period of Significance**

c1930-1947

**Significant Dates**

1935

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location for Additional Data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** approximately 9 acres

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>		<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
1.	14	696520	4460540	3.			
2.				4.			

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Carol Ahlgren, Architectural Historian  
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date September 1997  
street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402 471-4773  
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Floyd and Jody Forke  
street & number RR 2, Box 216 telephone 402 223-3891  
city or town Tecumseh state NE zip code 68540

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet

Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm  
Name of Property

Gage County, Nebraska  
County and State

Section 7 Page 1

**Description**

The Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm is located in southeastern Nebraska, in rural Gage County one mile east of the main institution now known as the Beatrice Development Center. The farm was used from c.1930 to the mid 1970's when the Institution supplied the majority of meat, dairy, and produce for its residents. The nomination includes three contributing buildings: the 1935 residence/dormitory; the 1935 dairy/hay barn; the c.1930 chicken coop; and one contributing structure: a windbreak and allee of Austrian pine and cedar trees. A non-contributing c.1990 garage is located east of the house. Integrity for all contributing resources is uniformly high.

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The Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm is located in rural Gage County, Nebraska approximately three miles from Beatrice, the county seat (1990 population: 12,354). The Farm, which consists of the house/dormitory, barn, and chicken coop is bordered to the north and west by a windbreak of pine and cedar trees. The main institution complex visible from the farm, is located one mile west. The two properties are separated by agricultural fields.

The Farm retains a high degree of integrity in terms of buildings and setting; it is the only known extant example of a farm complex historically associated with a public institution. Available records suggest that when the farm was purchased in the 1930's, several buildings were located on the site. These buildings were apparently demolished in the early 1930's when Public Works Administration funds enabled the Institution to construct the house and barn. Although the chicken coop appears stylistically to have been constructed during the same period, its specific date of construction cannot be determined through available records.

The contributing features are described as follows:

1. **Residence/dormitory** The house served as both dormitory for male residents engaged in farm work and the farm manager's residence. Constructed in 1935 with Public Works Administration funds, it is a two story brick and frame Dutch Colonial Revival style residence. The building measures approximately 34 ½ by 53 ½ feet and features a gambrel roof, four pedimented second story dormers, and wood shingle siding on the second level. A full front porch with square columns extends along the main (south) facade continues several feet along the southwest facade. The building faces north toward the yard, driveway, chicken coop, and barn.

The house was used for its original purpose from the time of its construction through the mid 1970's. The interior features and spaces have been largely retained. The first floor was used as the farm manager's living quarters with kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms. According to available information, some of the first floor also provided living quarters for residents.

The second level, accessed by a stairway located immediately inside the main door, features a six foot wide corridor flanked by rooms which functioned as dormitory style living quarters for the male residents. On the north side of the hallway the former dormitory area was divided into two rooms measuring 12 x 6 and 16 x 9 feet respectively in the 1990's for the building's use as a bed and breakfast establishment. The rooms however, retain their original woodwork and windows and still convey a sense of their original function.

2. **Barn.** The barn is located at the east edge of the complex. The large, clay tile gambrel roof building measures 83 by 38 ½ feet. The south (main) facade has an eight foot wide central entrance with wooden sliding doors. A wooden hay mow door is located on the south facade, flanked by two symmetrically located windows. Both the east and west facades of the barn feature double hung windows which measure 3 ½ by 3 1/2 feet and are flanked by flat brick buttresses which extend the height of the building. The interior features a wide central alley with stalls on the east side. A wooden stairway, located at the southwest corner of the building, leads to the open mow on the second level.

3. **Chicken coop.** The former chicken coop is located north and west of the barn and house. The rectangular frame, three bay building measures approximately 111 by 24 ½ feet. A central entrance with a gabled roof separates the

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Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm

Name of Property

Gage County, Nebraska

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east and west bays of the building which feature symmetrically located entrances. A central entrance with gabled roof is also located on the north facade. The windows measure approximately 7 by 4 feet with two over two panes. The east and west bays are accessed by centrally located wooden doors.

- 4. Windbreak/alley** The farm buildings are bordered to the north and west by a windbreak of Austrian pine and cedar trees. An alley of mature Austrian pines is located in the lawn area south of the chicken coop. The trees are representative of the extensive landscaping that characterized the main institution grounds and the farm complex.

The Farm was used by the Institution from 1935 until the mid 1970's. At that time, public institutions could no longer utilize unpaid labor of residents and the property was vacant for several years. In 1992 the Beatrice Developmental Center sold the farm buildings and approximately nine acres of land to the current owners who operated it for several years as a highly successful bed and breakfast. Currently, the property serves as their residence.

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**Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm**

Name of Property

**Gage County, Nebraska**

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**Statement of Significance**

The Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion A on the state level for its association with social history. The Institution, now known as the Beatrice Developmental Center, was established in 1885 for the care of the developmentally disabled. The Farm buildings represent a period of the Institution's history when it was largely self sufficient with the majority of dairy, meat, and produce raised and processed by residents and staff. The period of significance, c.1930 - 1947, encompasses the construction of the buildings through the final year in which the 50 year age criterion is fulfilled.

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The Institution for Feeble Minded Youth was created by state legislation in 1885. The city of Beatrice donated 40 acres and \$4,000 for the Institution which would be located two miles east of the city limits. The purpose of the Institution was "to provide special means of improvement for that unfortunate portion of the community who were born, or by disease, have become imbecile or feeble minded." The Institution was also charged with the mission of providing training for residents to fit them, "so far as possible for usefulness in Society." These goals would be accomplished through instruction in "agricultural and mechanical education." (Dobbs, 1918)

The establishment of the Institution for Feeble Minded Youth near Beatrice paralleled national policies regarding care of the developmentally disabled. Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their care was seen as the responsibility of families, local charitable organizations, or their placement in almshouses. Public responsibility for such individuals was urged by eastern United States social welfare advocates such as Samuel Howe and Dr. Henry Wilbur (Ferguson, 1994). Initially, individuals were placed in residential settings or existing hospitals in urban centers. The early reformers advocated better environments, medical care, and educational opportunities, which could effect a "cure" (Kanner, 1967). These policies evolved into the establishment of separate institutions in rural settings, following European precedents. Segregation from society was initially seen as providing a better environment for the developmentally disabled to protect them and provide educational opportunities for their re-integration into the community.

As the number of public institutions increased during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were characterized by rural settings, campus-like grounds, and a recommended one acre per resident. Almost all of the institutions were engaged in raising and processing food with the goal of self-sufficiency. Such agricultural activities, which employed capable residents without compensation would, it was believed provide them with useful training (Wolfensberger, 1975).

Although the creation of separate public institutions for the developmentally disabled was undoubtedly an improvement over their previous care, the initial belief in providing training for re-integration soon faded and institutionalization became an end unto itself (Kanner, 1967). The acquisition and application of residents' training in domestic or agricultural sciences instead, benefited the Institution.

The establishment of the Institution for Feeble Minded Youth outside the Beatrice city limits in 1885 was viewed favorably by local citizens who realized the economic benefit. Two years later, in 1887, the first residents were admitted. During the following decade, five buildings were constructed on the original 40 acres, including a hospital, dormitory, and main building. The Institution continued to expand throughout the following decades in terms of resident population, buildings, and acreage for food production.

By 1923, the Superintendent reported that the Institution had expanded to 303 acres, 260 of which were under cultivation. The population had expanded to 738 residents and there was a waiting list for admittance. Agricultural buildings such as horse, dairy, and hay barns, green houses, potato cellars, chicken coops, and a canning facility had been constructed; none of these buildings survive. In his 1922-23 biennial report Superintendent S.J. Stewart noted that "the farm, garden and dairy have again proved to be the most popular departments of the Institution for the boys during the summer months." Stewart claimed that while agricultural and financial yields were important, the benefits to the residents was also of note: "Institution boys, quite like other people, want to show some tangible result for their efforts, and on the farm this joy can be experienced to the full." (Biennial report, 1923).

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The construction of a separate farm complex in 1935 provided the Institution with a means to continue agricultural productivity and also alleviate a housing shortage. The farm "cottage" as it was called, provided housing for 20 male residents, the farm manager and his family, separate from the main complex. At the time, the resident population had increased to 1,171 and the Institution had expanded to 519 acres. An additional 108 acres were leased from area farmers and 346 acres were under cultivation. (Biennial report, 1935)

The 20 farm residents were employed in field and garden work, or the care of the chickens and hogs. Although available records are minimal, it may be assumed that the boys and young men selected to live at the farm were capable of performing the related work. The farm was used until the 1970's when restrictions were placed on the use of unpaid labor by Institution residents. This change in policy toward the developmentally disabled paralleled similar changes at public institutions throughout the country. Policy toward the developmentally disabled had come full circle; instead of segregation in large rural facilities, small scale residential settings, and integration into larger society was advocated. The institutions themselves were no longer engaged in self-supporting agricultural activities.

The Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm near Beatrice is significant on the state level for its association with social history. At the time the farm buildings were constructed, there were 17 public institutions in Nebraska, including the Institution for Feeble Minded Youth. All of these institutions were engaged in agricultural activities to varying degrees. Although not part of the current nomination, the main complex of the Beatrice Institution is also considered to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register with its range of buildings from c.1890 to 1945. The Farm, however, is also significant as the only known complex of its type in the state which provided a dormitory for residents engaged in the farm work. Additionally, the Farm is eligible as a separate entity because of its significant association with the evolution of institutional treatment for the developmentally disabled.

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Institution for Feeble Minded Youth Farm

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**Bibliography**

- Biennial Reports of the Superintendent of the Institution for Feeble Minded*, 1900, 1902, 1916, 1923, 1935. (Beatrice, NE: the Institution).
- Dobbs, Hugh J. *History of Gage County, Nebraska*. (Lincoln, NE Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1918).
- Ferguson, Philip M. *Abandoned to Their Fate: Social Policy and Practice Toward Severely Retarded People in America, 1820-1920*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
- Kanner, Leo. *A History of the Care and Study of the Mentally Retarded*. (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas 1967).
- McAlester, Virginia, and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).
- Ray, Willa Mae. *Learning for Living: A Brief History of the Beatrice State Developmental Center, Beatrice, Nebraska, 1885-1979*. (Beatrice, NE: the Center, 1980).
- Wolfensberger, Wolf. *The Origin and Nature of Our Institutional Models*. (Syracus, NY: human Policy Press, 1975).

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated area is a tract of land described as follows: a part of the northwest quarter of Section 31, Township 4 North, Range 7 east of the 6<sup>th</sup> Principal Meridian, Gage County, Nebraska, more particularly described as follows: commencing at the northwest corner of the northwest quarter of said Section 31, thence southerly along the westerly line of the northwest quarter of said Section 31 a distance of 691 feet to the point of beginning, thence continuing southerly along the last described course a distance of 531 feet to a point, thence easterly along a line bearing 90 degrees left from the last described course a distance of 820 feet to a point, thence northerly along a line 820 feet easterly from and parallel with the westerly line of the northwest quarter of said Section 31 a distance of 531 feet to a point, thence westerly along a line bearing 90 degrees left from the last described course a distance of 820 feet more or less to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated area encompasses a tract of land containing the extant buildings historically associated with the Farm.