

Educating the Non-English

The revival in Manitoba---The characteristics of these young Canadians---Teachers' residences.

By E. A. Weir

Education is the greatest force today in the maintenance of national unity. It is the lack of understanding by peoples of one another that leads to distrust, to the manipulation of the crowds by those interested in selfish ends. Ignorance is the breeder of war and the disrupter of national harmony. How quick do racial hatreds and religious prejudices break down when people are brought into closer personal touch and come to understand one another by association and education.

Much of this is especially applicable to Canada. Here is a country with a border line of three thousand miles, peopled by the most cosmopolitan population in the world, and one in the ultimate welding of which none but statesmanship of the highest order can succeed. We have an empire the size of Europe, whose problems we must work out. We are facing now one of the most critical periods Canada has ever had or ever will face in her march toward strong national development. May that period be carried forward in unity, not in disruption.

After such a political struggle it is pleasant to turn from the disrupting politicians to the work of those who are doing more to cement the many elements of this country into one unified nationality than any other force within our borders. That force, to my mind, is the work of the teachers in the rural and urban schools of Western Canada, among the children of those people who have come to us from foreign lands. There, in my estimation, is the most unselfish missionary service in this whole Dominion to-day. They are the real hope of Canadian nationality. They are the boys and girls—some of them too immature to fully realize the importance of their work—who, "hatching it" in prairie shanties, amid the isolation of foreign settlements, are preserving Canada's national ideals.

An Official Trustee Selected

I want to instance one small section of Western Canada where such work is being carried on, where expression is being given to the promises made to these people when they were induced to make Canada their home. That section is in the province of Manitoba, east of the Red river and north of the Canadian Pacific Railway main line. I visited a number of schools in that area during October this year. I have also corresponded with a number of the teachers in that section and I want to set down a few facts and impressions in regard to the work being done there. This is the section of Manitoba containing a larger proportion of Ruthenians, Galicians, Austrian and Russian Poles and Germans than any other. It is the section in which the education of the people has till recently been most flagrantly neglected. If you don't believe that I will prove it to you by facts.

Three years ago a deplorable situation in so far as school accommodation was concerned was found in this as in many other sections. Vacant schools and lack of attention to the neediest things were depressingly apparent. The necessity of helping out these people and others in a similar condition, of getting the district organized, of getting money raised, and plans formed, getting schools built and securing suitable teachers for them, etc., led the department of education of Manitoba, under Dr. H. S. Thornton, to appoint an official trustee to undertake this work. A man with wide experience in educational matters and with the best interests of the people at heart was chosen in the person of Ira Stratton.

There are almost anywhere always a large number of trustees who have never managed a school and never erected a school building of any sort. In this district most of the people had never even attended a Canadian school, and were handicapped in getting properly started without such assist and as an official trustee could give. Whether the results to these people and to Canadian national life have justified this appointment, I will leave the reader to decide from the few instances I give. The period covered in this article dates from October, 1915, when the official trustee began his work, up to the present time.

The Condition in Melrose District

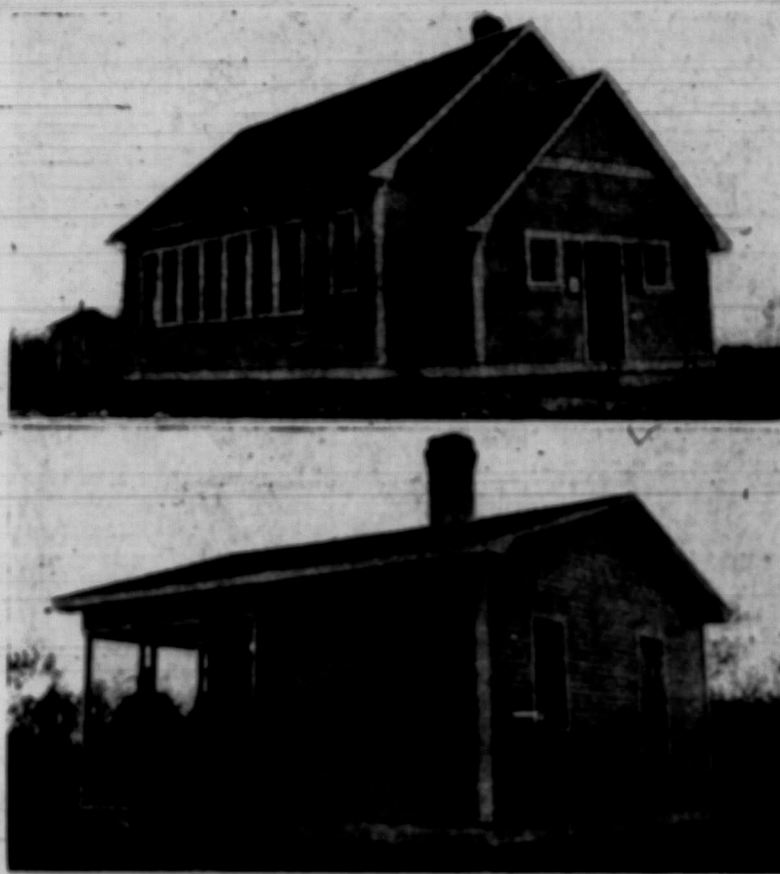
In the district of Melrose, in the spring of 1915, there was a heavy enrolment, but a poor average attendance in proportion. There was a miserable little one-roomed school that would hold, perhaps, 30. A second room was soon built by Mr. Stratton, one and one-half miles away. This school was soon

filled, and accommodation again became deficient. This year a school census was taken in June. The following gives the result of that census.

Children of school age	216
Enrolled during year	147
Absentees, 7 to 13 years (inclusive)	6
Absentees, 8 to 13 years (inclusive)	1
Children, 13 to 18 years	44
Children, 0 to 7 years old of school age in 5 years	115
Total 18 years down school age	296
Total 5 years hence, barring death or removals	252
Total area of school section, 6,720 acres (10 1/2 sections).	

What were the prospects of proper education for these future citizens of Canada, and what must have been their condition before. Today the third room is being built in that section, and is ready to open. The Official Trustee is now building a teachers' residence for the accommodation of the two teachers there and the new one who will come.

The situation in Sapton, the next school district lying to the east, which is almost equally populated, was met immediately by a new building on the



Below is one of the new schools built in the foreign-born section of Manitoba. Below is the teacher's residence with this school. This is a three-room residence, built at a cost of \$700. There should be more of them.

old site, so that there are now two schools there. But three and one-half sections of land were cut off from this school district and some from two other districts, and a new district, that of Hazelgreen was thereby formed. A new school has been built in this district and an efficient teacher put in charge. The Zorra district to the south was equally crowded, and in 1916 a new room was added.

35 Children on 105 Square Feet

At Ladywood, north of Beausejour, a new two-roomed school was built last year. The Official Trustee, on visiting that section in May, 1916, found 110 children in one room, 35 of whom were sitting on floor space 10 feet by 10 1/2 feet. There was one teacher. The average attendance was over 105 for the month of May, 1916, all in one small room, and they looked like very teachable children. A meeting of the ratepayers in this section was held, and by a vote of 70 to 19 they decided to build the present two-roomed school by endorsing the spending of \$4,000, and at the same time voted away four sections of land (2,560 acres) from their district to make a part of another new district west.

On the day I visited this school in October, 1917, I found 126 present in the two rooms. The principal

of the school is a keen, bright young man of Russian-Polish extraction. The new school is a pride to the community and is giving to the people of that section a service and education they never dreamed of before.

At Brokenhead, four miles north of Ladywood, a section which is almost equally crowded, the people unanimously voted in 1916 to build a second room without any delay. Two regular professional certified teachers were put into these rooms. Indeed, the teachers put in all these schools are distinctly high-class.

North-east of Ladywood another school was organized, built and opened. This is called the Bonar Law school, and it is in charge of a lady whose husband is now a prisoner of war in Germany. At Cowan, a school district was organized about 12 years ago, but no school was built until 1916.

For 25 miles north of Beausejour there are only two English-speaking settlers. From Ladywood, which is eight miles north of Beausejour, the school accommodation has been increased by three rooms added to the existing schools, and by four new districts opened up and new schools built. This means additional accommodation for 350 pupils. There are seven new teachers, or 11 teachers now where formerly there were only four. Four new schools have been added in the Molson district.

To summarize, here are some outstanding results of this work: North of the Canadian Pacific Railway main line and east of the Red river and Lake Winnipeg, through the efforts of the Official Trustee, 28 additional schools or school-rooms have been provided since October, 1915. All of these are now overflowing and the average attendance per room is 35. In the whole province in that time there has been provided 102 new schools or rooms and 43 teachers' residences.

The Teachers' Residence

The teachers' residence idea is one of the newest and most constructive in public school work in Western Canada. It has been used in other parts, notably in the state of Minnesota, and seems to be part of the coming school system in Western Canada. Until some better accommodation can be provided for teachers in the rural districts in this country, we cannot expect to secure any permanency amongst these instructors of the coming citizens of this country. In building this large number of teachers' residences, the Official Trustee of Manitoba has made a contribution to the solution of the rural school problem in this country which is enormous. These residences are comparatively cheap. The first ones built were three-roomed, but now most of them are four-roomed residences. The floor-plan of one is illustrated in this article.

They cost from \$700 to \$850, according to the furniture put in them. None of those built yet in Manitoba have cost over \$800 furnished. A small monthly rental is charged the teachers, which more than pays the interest on the money borrowed to build the residence, and will also provide a sinking fund, which in time will pay off the total cost of the building. The teachers' residence idea is something which can and should be taken up by very many of the schools in all three western provinces. Ministers of education generally should interest themselves in this idea, because it promises to be one of the real helps in solving the educational problem, particularly in our non-English speaking districts. Mr. Stratton says: "It seems to me that the teachers' residence in the pioneer settlements is almost as essential as the teachers' desk and chair."

The Work at Gonor School

In all the schools I visited the children were proving most efficient in acquiring the English language and were anxious to demonstrate their ability at reading. Their work on the blackboard showed that they were equally proficient with the use of figures. They were also clean, neat and well dressed.

At Gonor school, near St. Andrews Locks, there are three rooms. The principal, Miss Griffiths, showed me the roll. Practically all the names are of central European origin. Most of the boys were at home as the season was very busy, and they were needed to pick potatoes and clear up the fall work. But the girls were there, and I have not seen a keener, brighter, more intelligent bunch of children. In the second room the teacher was teaching singing, and while the girls sang the boys whistled.

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