

The Rural School

REVERTING TO THE UNGRADED SCHOOL

Partially, at least, there is a tendency in some of the big cities to revert to the old ungraded school system, in which the pupil stayed under the direction of one teacher for several grades. In Portland, Oregon, the modern system of changing teachers every year or half year has been altered so that the pupils stay with the first teacher for the whole of the first year. The next teacher takes them thru second and third grades. They continue with the third one thru the fourth, fifth and sixth, while the fourth completes their education in the grammar school.

The idea behind this change is that it gives the teacher an opportunity to become more familiar with the child and its abilities. Usually she gets to know something of its environment, which is a great help in dealing with any child, and she comes to know what are likely to be its difficulties and so is prepared to help the child to meet them.

Same Method in Consolidated Schools

The same idea is in force, in a slightly different way, in one of the most famous consolidated schools in America, according to "The Farmer's Wife." This school is situated at St. Francis, a small village with a population of about one hundred, situated in a farming community. Seven little one-roomed schools were abandoned when St. Francis consolidated school was built.

The new school, containing fourteen rooms, not including the library and others for general purposes, stands in ten acres of grounds.

In the basement is situated the gymnasium, with a movable stage for entertainments and the domestic science department. This department takes charge of the school lunch in a new and practical way. The menus for the week are posted up by the domestic science department. The children bring each day the dishes that will be required and any cold food which they may care to add to the lunch. The meals are eaten sitting at the desks, and as an encouragement to good digestion the children are obliged to remain for twenty minutes so that the incentive for hurrying thru the meal is removed.

There are ten teachers and the superintendent on the staff of this school, and, as has already been intimated, instead of each teacher having a room, where all the subjects are taught to one group of pupils for a few months, each teacher specializes on certain subjects and teaches them to all the pupils, following them thru the grades.

In addition to providing the children with better educational opportunities and equipment than would be possible in the ordinary graded school, the establishment of a consolidated school at St. Francis has enriched the life of the whole community. The library, which is for the use of all the residents, consists of more than twelve hundred volumes, and the district has got into the excellent habit of making good use of it.

In developing the musical ability of the young people of the district its influence has been very great. Whereas only a few young girls could even play the piano before the day of the consolidated school, there are now numbers of them, thanks to the energy of the superintendent's wife and a teacher of music. There has also been organized a thirty-piece high school band, a seven-piece high school orchestra, boys' and girls' glee clubs and choruses.

The school owns a big moving picture machine and gives entertainments, the proceeds of which, at ten cents a head, go to pay for band instruments and other sources of culture. It has also purchased six hundred slides for the teaching of geography, history and science.

Rural Home Economics

You will remember that in 1914 the United States Congress passed a bill called the Smith-Lever Agricultural Extension Act, which appropriated a sum beginning at half a million dollars for the first year, and adding another half million every year until 1923, for the teaching of agriculture and home economics in rural districts. As this grant is to be made conditionally upon the state or county raising an amount equal to its share of this

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOMED

The editor wishes to thank the readers of The Guide for their sympathetic co-operation in bringing the question of the betterment of rural schools before the public, and will be glad to hear from others as to the work they are doing in order to bring their schools up-to-date.

As some compensation for the time and trouble involved, letters and photographs which are used will be paid for at our regular rates.

appropriation for the same purpose, in 1923 the United States will be spending nine million dollars a year in the teaching of these two subjects.

Already men and women county agents are being sent all over the country. Sometimes they are welcomed into the homes of the farmers, but again there are people who resent an expert visiting their homes, and in these cases clubs of boys or girls are formed, which lead indirectly to the visit of the expert to the various homes.

While Canada is not in a position to emulate this excellent example in its entirety, it should be possible for us to do something in the direction of having regular visiting agents in rural districts, particularly as no investment that could be made will yield such returns in solid dollars and cents as well as in comfort and happiness.

THE UNIVERSITY AND RURAL SCHOOL

An event of great educational value was the



Some of the party listening to Prof. J. A. Allan, University of Alberta, describing the formation found in a limestone quarry during the field day held in the Fair School District, Water Glen, Alta.

field day of rural schools, under the leadership of Prof. John A. Allan, of the University of Alberta, September 23, 1916. "Know your environment" is the motto of Fair school at Water Glen, Alta., and in pursuance of that policy we asked Prof. Ottewill, in charge of the Extension Department, to arrange a trip for us under the leadership of Dr. Allan, who is a prince among teachers. We then got busy to spread the good work as far as possible, with the result that a party of 94 was able to accompany him thru the entire trip, and the evening audience filled the hall.

The itinerary included a limestone stone quarry, gravel pit, coal mine, spring, Red Deer Lake, and inspection of Fair school premises, its embryo museum and work of pupils. At each of these stops Dr. Allan explained the formation and traced its history thru the past, then answered the questions asked, and they were numerous, as all were eager for information of one kind or another. The Doctor has the happy faculty of interesting young and old at the same time. Arrived at Water Glen, the ladies of that community served a dinner worthy of their distinguished guest, and the social hour

was a buzz of enthusiastic comment on the events of the trip.

The evening lecture was on the geology of Alberta and was profusely illustrated. Many saw, for the first time, how wonderful the life of carnivorous and herbivorous dinosaurs had been, right in our own province, in ages past, and perceived how much science had been enriched by the eight perfect skeletons taken out of the banks of the Red Deer River in the past few years by Barnum Brown and the many skeletons and fossils found there and elsewhere by our Canadian geologists.

All appreciated the Doctor's splendid lessons and went home with a new interest in their district and their province, and with profound respect for observation lessons under teachers who really know their subject. We hope to have other field days in geology and also in other natural sciences and we are convinced that the ranks of university students will be largely recruited from the country, whenever that institution sends its best to leaven the minds of our pupils with their tactful instruction, their personality and their superior knowledge.

EMMA J. ROOT,

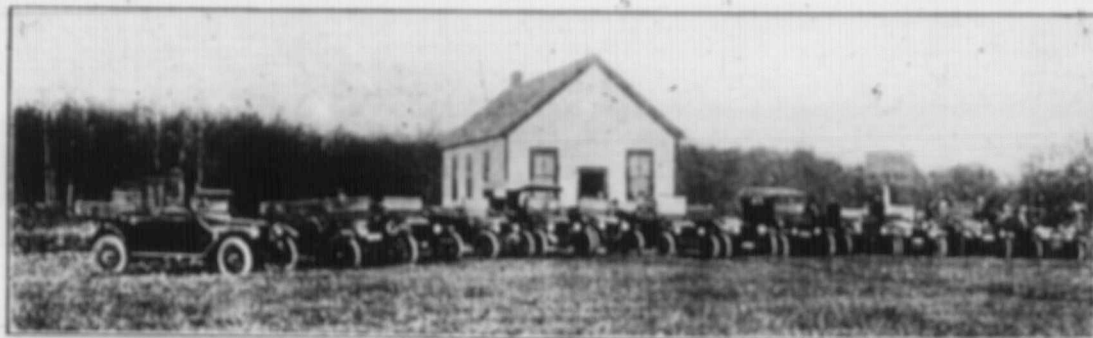
Chairman, Trustees of Fair S.D.

PARENTS TO BLAME

I have been reading with interest the letters which appear in The Guide dealing with rural school problems, and agree with you that there is room for a great deal of improvement in most of our country schools. As I write I have in my mind a picture of the one-roomed rural school which I attended when a child. The picture is not a lovely one. It costs me much to say this, as I was born and brought up in the country, but nevertheless the ugly fact remains and I cannot get away from it. I remember as well as if it were yesterday the long hours which I spent in the unlovely school room where we children were blistered and boiled by the hot summer sunshine pouring in thru the curtainless windows, or in winter roasted and frozen by turns, according as the fire was replenished or neglected. The floors were unscrubbed and rough and the walls were dingy and smelled dreadfully of mice. The exterior of the school was painted an ugly brown and had a forsaken, cheerless look about it. Altho the building was situated in a beautiful spot the grounds were neglected and unattractive. When the little school house was built it was surrounded by poplar and silver birch, but the careful builders removed every tree from the premises before they considered their task complete.

Have I not given a pretty fair picture of the average rural school as it is today? Who is to blame for this state of affairs? It seems to me that we are in the habit of laying too much blame upon the teacher. I think that most of the fault lies with the parents. If they have the welfare of their children at heart they should see to it that the exterior of the school which they attend is made attractive and the interior at least sanitary. The average rural school is not sanitary. Indeed it is far from it. You do not believe me? Let me put it this way. The average farm kitchen, which is used more than any other room in the house is scrubbed thoroughly at least twice a week. The school, which the children of these careful housekeepers attend, is scrubbed out twice a year, and sometimes not so often. Just think of it! A floor which twenty children or more tramp over every day is scrubbed out two or three times a year. The trouble is that people do not think, and so the dreadful filthiness of many of our rural schools is still a fact, whether people like to face it or not. The dangers of the common drinking cup have been discussed until the subject is almost threadbare, yet how many schools still cling to the old pail and the tin cup? People of ordinary intelligence know the effect of bad ventilation and uncertain heating upon the health and yet ventilation in the school room is usually very poor and the heating worse. Nor is cleanliness the only thing to be considered. What a bare, unattractive appearance the average

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The line of cars in which farmers and their wives came to attend a field day held by the trustees of Fair School District, Water Glen, Alta., in co-operation with the Extension Department of the University of Alberta.