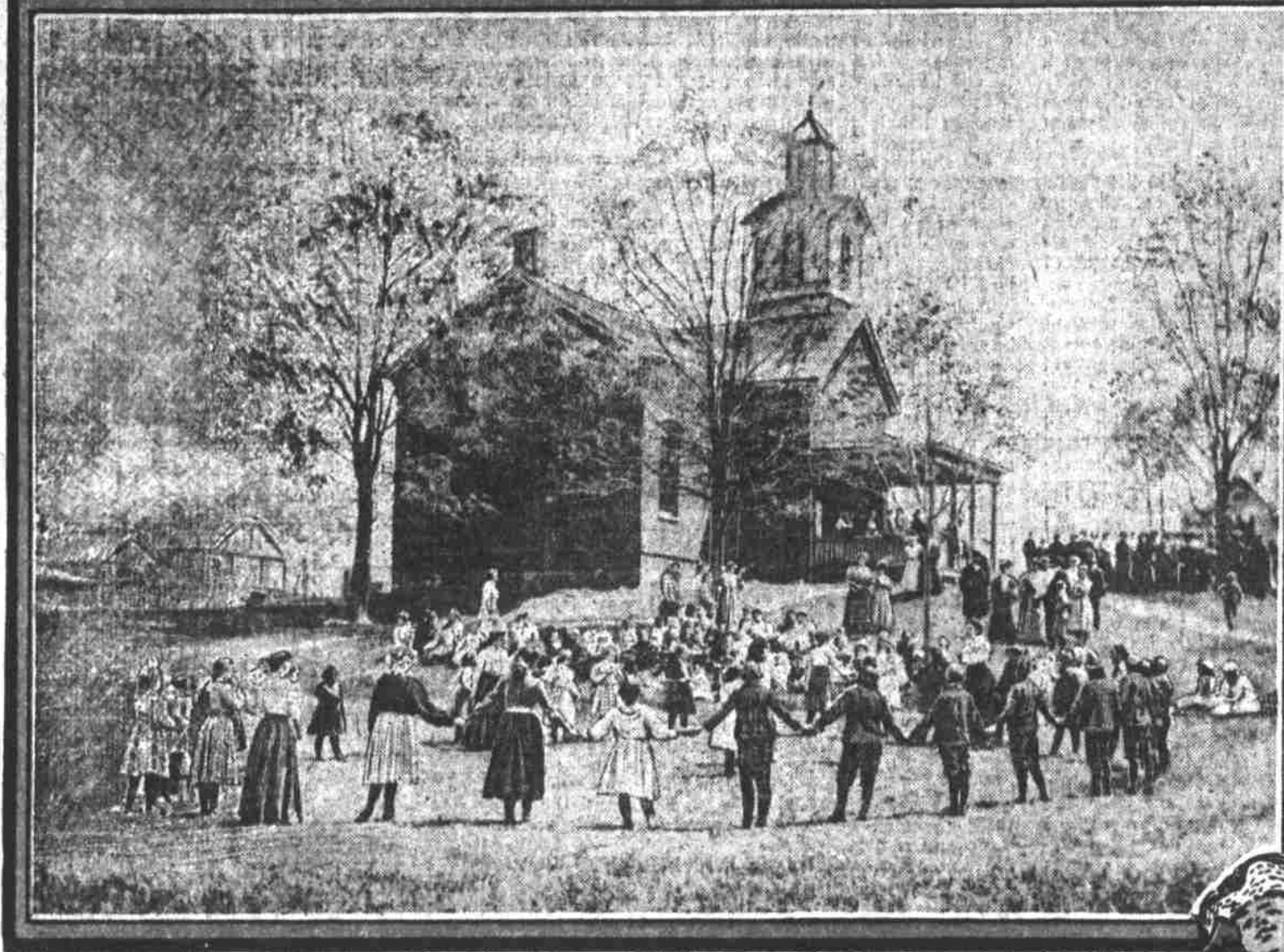


PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 21, 1909.

## TEACHING the COUNTRY CHILD to PLAY



Children from Several Ulster Co., N.Y., Schools Learning Folk Dances.

### New Educational Movement from Which Great Results Are Expected

TEACHING the country child to play, an enterprise in altruism which has quietly but steadily grown in extent and utility during the past two years, is assuming proportions now so great that the spring and summer of 1909 promise a development strong enough to take root all through the states of the middle West and middle Atlantic districts.

It is a curious expedient; yet even less curious as an expedient than it is as a discovery.

For who, thus far, has so much as imagined that the average country child doesn't get pretty nearly all the play there is in the world?

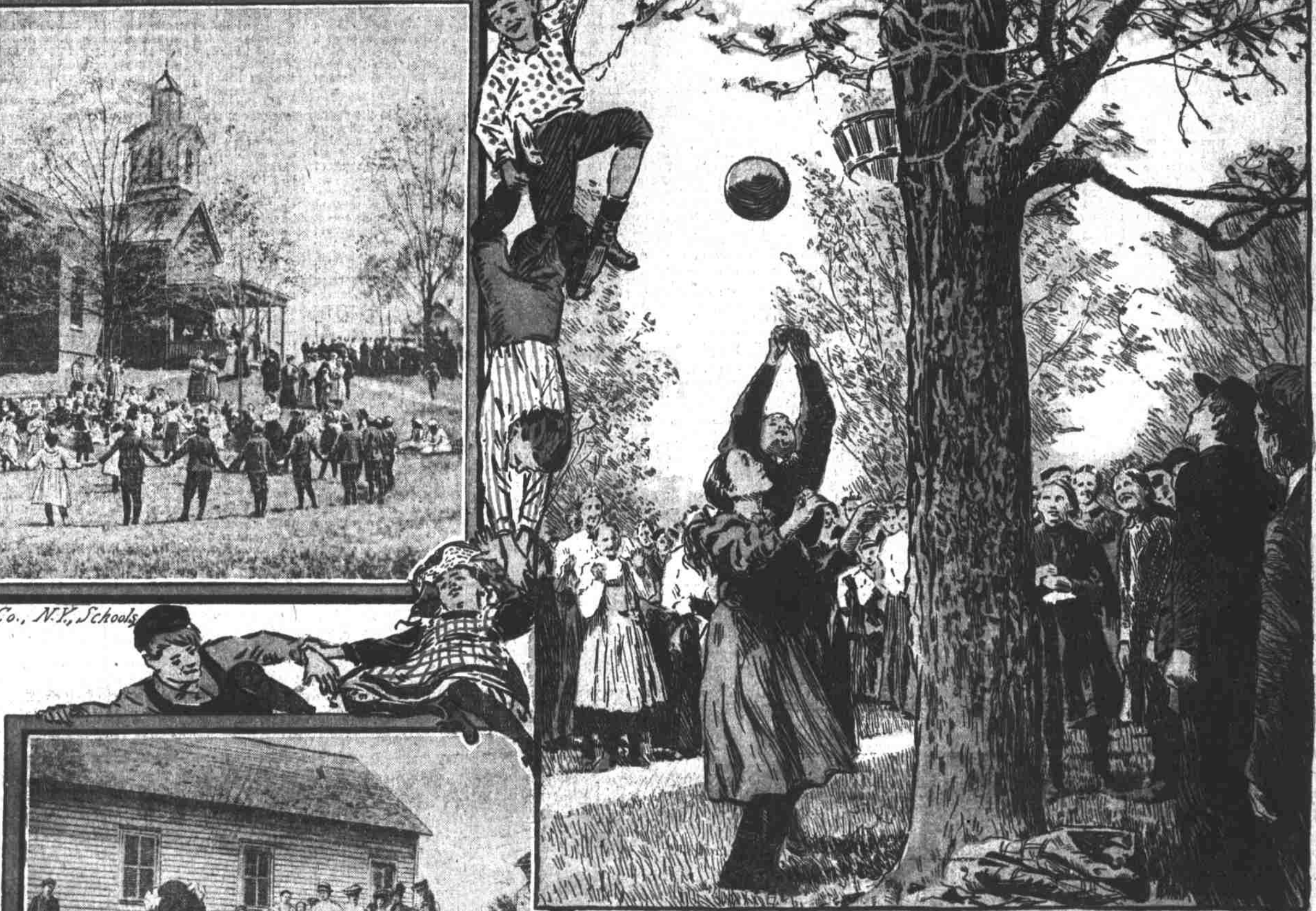
The city man will aver, promptly, it is for just that, above everything else, that people want to live in the country. The farmer, though his boy be at that very moment doing chores which never end from dawn to dark, may declare that the country boy generally gets a good deal more play than is good for him.

Yet it is among those very farmers, and in sections where every man of them has sincerely believed his children were living in a paradise of rural pleasure, that the imperative necessity for systematic instruction in child's play is being most cordially, even anxiously, recognized.

So it looks as though this country, believed the world over to be the land where children rule their elders and range from play to mischief at their own sweet will, were just on the eve of awakening to the fact that it acts as slave-driver to its childhood, and, with the awakening, were on the eve of organizing to emancipate them into their rightful inheritance of play.

Man made the city, God made the country, but the Devil made the little country village.—Anon.

It happens that the authorship of that familiar epigram must remain anonymous. But it has been the text for many moralists and many educators, and has served as a text for a considerable portion of the discourse in which Professor Myron T. Scudder, head of the Rutgers Preparatory School, in New Brunswick, N. J., outlined the imperative need and the vast possibilities of the country playground while he was principal of the State Normal School, at New Platz, N. Y.



An Exciting Game of Basket Ball.



A Potato Race at Pancake Hollow, N.Y.



Showing Great Interest in Games at New Platz, N.Y.



Prof. Myron T. Scudder, New Brunswick, N.J., Father of the New Movement.

who, during recent years, has been in positions where, instead of imagining bucolics, he could see with his own eyes toward what banal conditions rural tendencies conduced.

It was only a little more than three years ago that the birth of this remarkable movement occurred, and that in the small, trivial beginnings which, natural outgrowths of needs long endured in the silence of habit, so often astonish a people by suddenly springing into national prominence.

The State Normal School of which Professor Scudder was in charge at New Platz, N. Y., is located in a village of about 1000 people, in a prosperous farming section just west of the Hudson and about as far north as Poughkeepsie. The faculty conceived the idea of holding Saturday conferences in the neighboring country schools, and teachers, parents and children, members of local granges, and others more or less concerned with the life of the countryside, were invited to attend.

All sorts of subjects were discussed and explained, from cooking to tree grafting. In the course of the conferences, which was as much Saturday picnics as they were demonstrations, the topic of the natural play, of which all the children seemed to be deprived, came up.

The organization of the Country School Athletic League of Ulster County, New York, followed almost immediately. It made its object that of fostering all forms of clean athletics among country school children. Not only must they be taught to play, but their teachers must be instructed in indoor as well as outdoor games suitable for children of various ages.

It was resolved to bring together the schools at least once a year for a field day and a "play

picnic." The athletic standards of the Public School Athletic League of New York City were adopted, with the proviso that an appropriate button should be awarded every child who attained the standard. The country play movement was inaugurated.

Almost immediately there followed an amazing demonstration of the truly dire need which existed for just such athletic exercise.

At one of the conferences devoted to the topic of physical exercise, the Normal School's specialist in athletics suspended in a doorway a horizontal bar and put some of the farm boys present through the chinning exercise, in order to determine how closely they could conform to the standards required for boys of similar ages in the city of New York.

Not one of them could approximate the standards—and they were the boys whose parents held the theory that they became "strong" by work on the farm.

The movement, urgently requisite as it was, and pushed with large enthusiasm by the teachers of the country schools and the more progressive people of the granges, nevertheless encountered many obstacles. The handicaps of tradition and the unmitigated "help" of a family of growing children on the innumerable chores of farm and home, are not to be dispensed very eagerly.

Many teachers, only too desirous of introducing athletics as a recognized form of instruction as well as play, found they might not essay the innovation without the permission of parents; and many parents, approached with the appeal that their boys and girls be given the opportunity to make strong and healthy men and women of themselves, positively refused the permission.

But the need was too flagrantly apparent for the movement to fail, whatever the extent of the individual opposition that at first existed.

With the following June the bull was taken fairly by the horns, and a field day was held which proved to be even more educational for the elders than it was for the children.

There were assembled at New Platz 1000 people, half of them adults and the other half children, who realized before nightfall what happiness, as well as health, could come out of meetings that made play, fun and happiness for everybody.

More complete organization was the immediate result. A markedly improved attitude toward school play was assumed by many parents who were previously disapproving. School grounds were cleared up, barns and horse sheds near the schoolhouses and at home became the scene of athletic performances, while the farm crowbar or hated rake handle served the uses of the horizontal bar.

Sometimes it cost school or parents a little cash; as often it cost neither a cent.

(CONTINUED ON INSIDE PAGE)