

One County School That Woke Up

REGARDLESS of how it may here be told, this is a big story, told in the Spokesman-Review. It relates how a lonely little schoolhouse, partly submerged in Whitman County's tide of growing wheat half the year, was developed into a lively center of community interest and genuine social enjoyment. There is considerably more in it than that when account is taken of new ideas and aspirations awakened, home possibilities uncovered and unused faculties brought into play.

The contrast offered is that between a small uninviting building occupied some of the time by a few children as a matter of routine, and an institution in which all the district inhabitants, young and old, find pleasure and pride of possession.

If this statement correctly conveys the community center objective, Kenova school is an unmistakable guidepost to the new era in farm life.

New Teacher Asked Questions.

N. V. Rowe took charge of the school in September, 1913. It was then a frame building measuring 16 by 32 feet, three and a half miles west of Pine City. He began at once to inquire as to social activities and possibilities and discovered a barren prospect in those particulars. Little of the kind had occurred to anybody for years, despite the fact that the district contained more young people than the average community. They had fallen into the rut of ranch life in which the year offers just two events—sowing and harvest—both of which are widely separated and are mainly suggestive of hard work.

But the new teacher was the kind who recognized that miles of grain can be permitted to become as monotonous as the same area of dry sand and that there is one kind of starvation common to both. He began to look into the situation and likewise to stir it up.

Started With Sunday School.

It proved to be a case of oversight merely, for plenty of parents were found

who recognized the value of keeping the young people in their home community, especially on Sundays. The new teacher founded a Sunday school as an introduction and took the post of superintendent. It is still thriving.

When the district term began Mr. Rowe again prospected for pleasure spots to scatter through the season and the proposal of a rural school fair was the result. The children, of course, were given full sway in the planning and you can imagine how the youth of the very first farming counties on earth entered into the project. They not only organized a fair, but they advertised it broadcast with posters in the language of people confident that they had something to exhibit. In the heat of their publicity campaign a spirit of wholesome local pride was revived that brought grown folks as well as children and young people under its impulse.

They Bought a Cookhouse.

You can't call folks in the country together without figuring that somebody is likely to get hungry and Kenova school prepared for that. They moved a cookhouse upon the grounds. Now a cookhouse fails to compare in several respects with Davenport's, but it is organized to feed harvest hands and any function like a fair is not going to disrupt its serenity noticeably if properly operated. The folks didn't have to go without lunch.

They also had something to listen to, for speakers were present from state and county departments of education, Cheney Normal and the Washington State College. Everybody had a good time and it was a great day for District No. 131, especially for the little folks who had worked and puzzled to make it so. They had no money on hand when the fair opened but their efforts were rewarded by the distribution of nearly \$40 in cash prizes before it closed.

Raising Funds.

Every cent of expense incurred was paid before January 1, together with \$10 for incidentals and \$20 for the purchase of library books. Funds were raised partly by subscription and partly from basket socials, which latter also paid dividends of more fun and closer friendly acquaintance. The result was a general demand for a public Christmas tree, something they hadn't had in the community for ten years. The Sunday school responded and packed the little schoolhouse. They took up a collection and sent the proceeds to the children's home society.

No sooner were the holidays ended than inquiry arose as to what they should have for January. A poultry show was the answer, and the school gave one to crow over. Lacking room in the building, the older boys procured a large tent, in which the birds were shown. That was also advertised as "a school show that's different," and "you miss it if you miss it." Another of those grand old country lunches crowned the happiness of the occasion.

Then a New Schoolhouse.

Folk for as far around as you would care to drive were now thinking and talking of the little schoolhouse and the diversion it offered them. They began to figure that if a little of it was good, more would be better. The board, consisting of John Bach, Sr., chairman; Josiah Edwards, secretary, and L. D. Addington, also went to figuring, and before the end of that January the district was bonded for \$3500 for a new school building.

The organization of Kenova Grange followed shortly, which opened the way for more lunches and social gatherings as the Grange met in the schoolhouse. In that country plenty of the best there is to eat is readily forthcoming on slight provocation and there is no known method of making the provocations too numerous to be appreciated, once you get those Whitman County cooks started.

Outsiders Take Notice.

By this time Kenova had begun to raise a ripple out in the world. They held a community center meeting, which Josephine Preston, State Superintendent, and Katherine Montgomery, of the Bellingham Normal, came from the coast to attend. Likewise everybody had plenty to eat on that occasion, as they have had on every other here enumerated.

When school closed the classes put on their visiting clothes and held a joint picnic with two other schools. This was in the deep green growing season, when the finest privilege anyone can ask is simply that of being outdoors. But a boy or girl can't get the full value of it around the house or at work instead of letting loose at a regular picnic once in a while.

On September 26 of this year Kenova held its second fair under the following statement of purposes:

"To boost for our school and community, to help the boys and girls to take a greater interest in the possibilities of farm life; to encourage them to do things for themselves; to encourage true home-building; to cultivate among the grown-ups a get-together spirit, so essential to the progress and welfare of every wide-awake community."

"Crank up and come," was the advice they offered in their advertising and it

wasn't wasted. They offered special prizes, the practicability of which is indicated in the following samples:

Best and most attractive parcel post package containing at least three kinds of farm produce.

Best basket of two dozen eggs considering shape, weight, uniformity and color.

Best two or three ears of corn on a single stalk.

Then they auctioned the prize exhibits to the highest bidder.

They had a programme of sports, one of the events being a test of how rapidly and accurately men could measure clothesline. The girls and women had a tug-of-war that was a classic. Among the parade prizes was one for the most beautifully decorated automobile and right with it another for the best saddle horse. As an item of interest from the wheat country it is likely that more automobiles than saddle horses were assembled at the fair.

The education features were as prominent as before, with speakers on the programme from the state's advanced institutions.

By this time they had the new schoolhouse, a white brick veneer building, plastered inside, with a 36 by 40-foot basement. The two main rooms have the rich appearance given by light tan and cream tints. In addition to a classroom, the school has a library and a manual training department. It commands the advantages of a branch station for the state traveling library.

Grange Hall Open to All.

In the basement of the new building the Kenova Grange has its home, and the same apartment furnishes a handsome place for all public meetings of the community. A new piano occupies a place on the platform, there are 10 bur-lap curtains on the windows, and comfortable seats await everybody, due to the care and foresight of the grange in furnishing the hall.

In the manual training department the girls are as energetically engaged as the boys. Mrs. Rowe gives them practical instruction in needlework and operation of the sewing machine. They make dresses, aprons, handkerchiefs, shopping bags, embroidered lingerie and numerous other articles it pays womenfolk, big and little, to know about. Mrs. Rowe was busy with them all last year, and the character of her achievement has attracted general attention.

Although the boys got a later start in their branches of special training, they are showing amazing results. In order to avoid interference with regular lessons they began the manual course at 8:30, the time when city youngsters are getting ready to start to school. They work until 9:15, when lessons begin, and on Saturday they have the teacher's time and use of the tools until 10:30. They also receive training in drawing and drafting.

Old House Utilized.

With all that the old schoolhouse is not abandoned. The teacher and family are living in it and the building is to be remodeled into a cottage.

And that is the record of a school for a single year with but one teacher, aided by his wife. Beyond what has been accomplished other new ideas will be tried out as they develop values. Officers and patrons of the district modestly believe they have done something worth while and that the extra effort has been entirely justified.

To the readiness of a majority of patrons in helping the work along and the untiring persistence of members of the board Mr. Rowe credits results exemplified in the new building and its excellent equipment. They say the rest of it depends upon the teacher with grit enough to tackle big, new departures and willingness to stay on the job continuously in order to keep things moving. Altogether they have put a new and alluring aspect upon the daily affairs of the community.

Daisy T. Busbey, School Superintendent of Whitman County, said no district in the state can show a better record of actual achievement than this made by what used to be the little frame schoolhouse by the roadside at Kenova.

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