

In the days of early settlers, parents paid the cost of education themselves, both in money and by donating firewood to the school's fireplace and taking turns in boarding the teacher.

25. Schools for the Farm Boy and Farm Girl

M. L. CUSHMAN, *Rural Education*

WHEN IOWA ENTERED THE UNION IT BROUGHT WITH IT A number of schools and even a school "system" established during the territorial period. The first school in Iowa was taught by Berryman Jennings between October and December, 1830. The school, located on the Half-Breed Tract close to Nashville in Lee County, was a one-room log cabin with greased paper windows, a fireplace, dirt floors, clapboard roof, and rough-hewn split-log desks along the wall.

By 1848 there were 673 organized districts in the state, although only 105 schools were actually operating. Of more than forty thousand persons between 5 and 21 years of age, only about seven thousand or less than one in five were attending school. Ten years later 2,200 district schools were in operation. By 1858 there were 1,725 school-houses in the state. At least 375 were made of logs, 852 of frame construction, and 119 of brick or stone. Many of the first teachers were men. In 1848 there were four men to every woman teacher. By 1858, however, women teachers outnumbered men three to one.

Such pioneer schools as that conducted by Berryman Jennings lasted many years. As the frontier moved westward across Iowa in the fifties and sixties, schools were established by the initiative of the pioneers. Many of the county superintendents of this period were ministers. Rev. C. Taylor, superintendent in Kossuth County in 1867, reported on conditions of the rural schools of his county as follows:

But the inhabitants in the county do not wait for the public to provide school-houses. Schools they *must have*, houses or no houses. In visiting the schools in the county, I have found two in private houses, with only a slight partition between the school and the family. One was in a forsaken log shanty, which needed neither door nor window to let in light and air, the crevices between the logs answering for windows, though not quite large enough for a door. One school was in a

mere temporary board shanty, without any floor, put up just for the summer. They have a new house nearly or quite completed. Two schools were kept in sod houses, a style of building which is becoming very fashionable in this country, and which will become more common in other places when people learn how comfortable such houses are.—*Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1868.*

By 1857 a legal school organization and a method of financing it had been developed. Under laws enacted prior to the adoption of the new Constitution in 1857, school districts had been of two kinds—township districts and city, town, or village independent districts. These districts, when authorized by a vote of the electors, could borrow money to erect buildings, levy taxes, and otherwise provide for the maintenance of schools. There was considerable dissatisfaction with the organization of local school districts in rural areas. The seventh session of the Iowa General Assembly provided that "Each Civil Township is hereby declared a school district and such districts as at present organized shall become subdistricts." The effect of this law was to reduce the number of districts from 3,500 to less than 900, but there followed quickly a demand for independent district organization. The General Assembly in 1872 enacted a law whereby all township subdistricts might by a vote of the electors of the township at large become independent. This resulted in the creation of almost innumerable school offices.

The local independent district plan was expensive from the standpoint of having too many salaried officials. It also left many districts so weak and with such reduced support that the maintenance of schools became exceedingly burdensome, while other districts were able to maintain much better schools at a very low assessment upon the property of the districts because of their greater population and greater property valuation. In 1900, there were 330 schools in the state that had fewer than five pupils in attendance; 3,600 with less than ten; 6,370 with less than fifteen; and 9,300 with less than twenty.

Not only was the organization of school districts for rural people divided among a large number of independent districts, but after 1860 there was a tendency to separate the education of farm people from the education of those people who lived in Iowa's budding villages. The legislature permitted each village to organize independently. The minimum population of the village varied from year to year as is shown:

1856.....	200	1868.....	200
1860.....	1,000	1895.....	100
1866.....	300	1915.....	75

The general trend was downward, so that more and more smaller and smaller districts could be organized. Thus, when the movement for school consolidation was well under way just prior to World War I, school districts for rural people were exceedingly small in area, in number of pupils, and in assessed valuation. The history of rural education in Iowa is largely the history of a struggle to overcome the difficulties imposed by the one-room school district system. Until 1900 lack of transportation and such other factors as the tendency for pupils to leave school after the completion of the eighth grade made the one-room school system rather feasible. Hence, efforts to improve education up to 1900 were largely efforts to make the one-room school system function effectively.

THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY

The most important single agency for improving the established one-room district system was the county. The "free school" act of March 12, 1858, which made the civil township the basis of local district organization, also provided for the election of a county superintendent of schools biennially in March. The county superintendent had authority to issue teaching certificates, to conduct examinations in such subjects as orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and grammar, and to organize teachers' institutes. In 1859 the supervisory powers of the county superintendent were repealed, but in 1866 the Iowa Legislature restored them and required the county superintendent to visit each school in his county at least once in each term and to remain at least one half day at each visit. His minimum salary was established at three dollars a day.

In 1890 a law provided for county-wide uniformity of text books. This was an attempt to overcome the difficulty previously encountered where the pupils in many country schools each had a different text book, usually inherited from older brothers and sisters or even parents. This year also saw the creation of the county board of education, consisting at that time of the county superintendent, the county auditor, and the county board of supervisors.

The qualifications of the county superintendent were progressively raised after 1900. In recent times the office of the county superintendent has been given greater permanency, a greater degree of prominent standing, and a more adequate compensation. But the many clerical duties with which the county superintendent is confronted, the lack of fiscal independence by the county board of education, and the lack of assistant superintendents specializing in

various aspects of rural school supervision has made the office less effective than it might be in improving the education of rural people.

FINANCE

Paying for the education of rural boys and girls in Iowa has always been a difficult problem. Originally, when Iowa became a state, parents paid the cost of education themselves both in money and by donating firewood to the school's fireplace and taking turns in boarding the teacher. Also early in Iowa's history, when practically all education was rural, the permanent state fund was an important source of income for local school districts. But owing to the mismanagement of this fund, it ceased to be important soon after Iowa became a state.

In 1913 the Iowa General Assembly authorized state aid to encourage formation of consolidated schools. Additional state aid for rural schools was made available in 1919 in the act providing for the standardization of the one-room schools. After that time there was a conscious attempt to improve qualifications of teachers, usefulness of the one-room building, and the quantity of equipment. The program was only partially successful, however, since on the average no more than 20 per cent of the one-room schools in the state had achieved the standard school rating between 1919 and 1942. During the depression of the thirties, the legislature required all school districts in the state to reduce tax rates.

In general, throughout the history of rural education in Iowa, rural people have had to depend upon the rural property tax for financing the education of their children.

TEACHER PREPARATION

When Iowa became a state, teachers for rural children were not required to have professional training. The first provision for professional training of teachers is found in the act of 1847 establishing the State University. This act provided for free instruction of fifty students each year "in the theory and practice of teaching." At this time no legal requirements for the examination of teachers were made, but the legislature in 1858 provided scholarships in the high schools and in the University for selection and education of youth for the teaching profession. "It was the design," explained M. L. Fisher, superintendent of public instruction, "to make teaching the most honorable, the most intellectual profession; to attract talent from the barren, rugged, boisterous field of political strife, to the quiet, fertile, flowery gardens of science."

In general, most rural teachers were certified by the county superintendent, but certification of teachers was centered in the state by an act of 1882, which created the State Board of Educational Examiners. In 1890 this board was authorized to issue certificates to graduates of the State Normal School at Cedar Falls, which had been established in 1876. That county superintendents found it difficult to secure well-qualified teachers is evident from the report made by T. R. Eastman, superintendent of Linn County in 1868:

It is preposterous to attempt to employ qualified, efficient, industrious workers, at this time, at one hundred and seventy dollars per year. . . . We pay thirty thousand dollars annually for the education of ten thousand children, \$3 for each child—not half what is required to keep a steer so long. Now if we pay double for the raising of steers that we pay for the education of children, we must not be surprised if the oxen make the best appearance in the world, and discharge their duty best.—*Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1868.*

In 1911 normal training programs in the high schools of the state were established, and in 1913 state aid was granted to the approved normal training high schools with twelve weeks of normal training required of all applicants for teachers' certificates. In 1929, completion of a four-year high school course was required of all applicants for the teacher's certificate.

The law of 1945 provided for the discontinuance, by September 1, 1948, of the high school normal training courses. After September 1, 1952, the lowest certificate recognized in the state will be the standard elementary teaching certificate which requires a minimum of two years of college credit. It seems certain, therefore, that after 1952 rural people may be sure that their children in the one-room schools will be taught by teachers with a minimum of two years' professional preparation. Throughout the one hundred years of the history of rural education in Iowa, country people have had to be satisfied with teachers with little training who frequently used the one-room schools as a training ground for teaching in the village and city schools. The example set by Iowa's first rural teacher, Berryman Jennings, who in 1830 went from the teaching of the one-room log cabin school in Lee County into the profession of medicine, has been followed too frequently throughout the century.

IMPROVING THE CURRICULUM

From early days there have been many attempts to improve the program of studies for rural boys and girls. Readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic, the three R's, characterized the earliest log cabin school program of studies. It was not until 1878 that the first state course of

study for graded elementary and high schools and for rural schools was established. In 1886 the teaching of physiology and hygiene, with special reference to the effects of narcotics and stimulants, was required. In 1900 a law required the teaching of music in all public schools, and one in 1913 required the teaching of agriculture, domestic science, and manual training. This provision was changed in 1917 so as to make the teaching of such courses optional in the one-room rural schools. The teaching of American citizenship was required by law after 1919, and the teaching of the Constitution of the United States was required in all Iowa schools after 1921. Ten years later all elementary schools were required to teach Iowa history.

Iowa's acceptance of the provisions of the federal Smith-Hughes Law in 1917 greatly stimulated vocational education in agriculture and home economics in the rural high schools. By 1942 approximately two hundred high schools in Iowa were offering vocational courses in agriculture, and somewhat less than this number vocational courses in homemaking. With approximately eight hundred rural high schools in the state, the vocational education programs in agriculture, homemaking, and farm shop are probably reaching not more than 25 per cent of the rural youth who might take advantage of such courses of study. It is fairly certain that, particularly because of their smallness, Iowa's rural high schools are still dominated by an academic curriculum.

HIGH SCHOOLS

It has been a struggle just to get high schools established in rural areas. Cities established high schools before rural towns did, but in 1858 a law authorized counties to establish a county high school. Modifications of this law in 1870 and 1873 authorized each county to provide a county high school with instruction in any subject and a tax sufficient to pay tuition of any pupil in the county. Only one high school was ever organized under these statutes, the Guthrie County High School at Panora. At its opening session in 1876, fifty pupils were enrolled under two teachers and throughout most of its history as a county high school, Panora trained many teachers for the county's one-room schools. When the legislature repealed the law in 1933, Panora became by law the village independent district—which it had long been in fact.

Because the county was too large an area for high school attendance, several township high schools were established in the sixties and seventies. The law of 1858 appeared to grant full authority for the

establishment of township high schools. A township grade school was developed in 1865 for St. Charles Township in Floyd County, and in 1866 a high school department was established in Monticello Township in Jones County, with classes for special instruction and drill in the theory and art of teaching. During the fall and winter terms following 1866, the school recorded a total attendance of a little less than four hundred pupils, most of whom came from the rural districts. Clarence Aurner reports:

In 1903 the township high school at Moorehead in Monona County held its first commencement, which seems to have been of such importance that it attracted wide attention. Indeed it was considered an event in Iowa school history inasmuch as it was experimental. The school having been opened in 1900 in a village of 200 population, it was noted that of the 16 pupils who completed its course of study, only three resided in the town. Its curriculum, however, included not more than two years of high school subjects, but the fact that some of those in attendance had come from long distances without losing a recitation indicated the value placed upon such instruction. Graduation exercises were an event entirely new to many parents and friends. As a matter of fact the whole undertaking had to overcome considerable opposition.—*History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. 3.

The period around 1900 seems to be the time when rural people began to recognize that if their children were to receive secondary education, it would be necessary to make use of the high schools which were rapidly becoming established in the towns and villages.

Since the towns and villages had been permitted early in the century to establish school districts independent of the surrounding farm territory, it was necessary for farm people to pay tuition to the high schools in the growing villages. At first this tuition was paid by the parents, but after 1911 tuition was paid by the district of the pupil's residence. In 1904 and 1905 State Superintendent John F. Riggs reported 560 public high schools offering two years or more of high school work. A great many doubtless accommodated pupils from outlying rural districts. Since 1911 attempts to provide high school education for rural youth have taken two forms: nonresident attendance at the village high school by farm boys and girls with tuition paid by their sending districts, or a reuniting of farm territory with the town and village in order to make a single high school district.

POPULAR ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

That the state and its rural people have been aware of many shortcomings of rural education in Iowa is evident by the numerous survey commissions proposing remedies for improvement. The First Iowa School Commission in 1839 recommended a system of education for the new territory. The Second Iowa School Commission in 1856,

with Horace Mann as chairman, urged revision of the school laws, but many of its recommendations were ignored, particularly those calling for a larger rural school district. The Third Iowa School Commission in 1907 revised the school laws, but the proposed code was rejected by the Thirty-third General Assembly. In 1911 the "Better Iowa Schools" Commission made a study of current educational problems. In 1942 the General Assembly created an Iowa School Code Commission to revise and recodify the school laws, but its recommendations were not enacted into law. In 1944 another School Code Commission made a report to the General Assembly and thirteen of its twenty proposed bills were enacted by the Fifty-first General Assembly. Many of these were designed to assist in improvement of rural education. These included agricultural land tax credit, discontinuance of school facilities and transportation to graded districts, fixing of tuition rates, state aid for transportation, and the school district reorganization law by which the initiative for reorganization was given to county boards of education. It is now generally recognized that reorganization of rural school districts into larger units is a prerequisite to further improvement of conditions of rural education in Iowa.

SINCE 1900: SEEKING LARGER SCHOOLS

Until 1900, rural people were able to get better education for their children by improving the curriculum, providing better training for teachers, and other measures. Since 1900 it has become increasingly clear that better rural education depends upon larger schools.

A hundred years ago, even fifty years ago, the farm and its immediate neighborhood were self-sufficient. The farm family produced nearly all its food except salt and sugar, and nearly all its own clothing. Local grist mills ground the farmer's grain into flour. Local blacksmith shops fashioned his plows and wagons. But railroads came, and automobiles and telephones, and with them a breakdown of local self-sufficiency. Once the district formed around the one-room school was the center for box socials, husking bees, threshing crews, barn-raising, and house-warmings. Today the rural social center has moved to the village. Village-centered high schools and a decline in farm population made the small school district less and less a natural unit.

At the same time, as the farm population fell, each farm taxpayer had to pay a larger share of school costs. Education offered was poor and pupils' progress slow and uncertain. Many schools had fewer than ten pupils, and their attendance was often irregular. Low salaries

meant poorly-trained teachers, sometimes two or three different teachers in a single year.

It was out of these conditions that the consolidated school movement in Iowa developed. Though many other states had established the system, Iowa did not make a beginning until 1896, when the first consolidated school in Iowa was organized at Buffalo Center in Winnebago County. Previous to this time Buffalo Township had been divided into nine subdistricts. Since there were no consolidation laws on the statute books at this time, the township first organized into an independent district with five directors in place of the nine. The purpose was apparently to centralize administration, for at first it was not proposed to close the country schools and transport the children. There arose at once a demand by the people in the rural districts for better school facilities, and in 1897 all outlying districts except three sent their pupils to the centralized school at Buffalo Center with transportation provided by horse-drawn vehicles. In that same year a law was passed which legalized the transportation of children to and from school in the same or in other school districts, with expenses paid from the school's contingent fund.

The second consolidated school was organized at Terril in Dickenson County where nine subdistricts were closed in Lloyd Township in 1901. The third was at Marathon in Buena Vista County in 1902, and the fourth was in Lake Township in Clay County in 1903.

Though it was a voluntary union of subdistricts, such an organization was technically illegal until adoption in 1906 of a law legalizing the organization of the consolidated independent school district. The act required a contiguous territory of not less than sixteen government sections of land. It required also that a petition requesting consolidation be signed by one-third of the electors residing in such territory, approved by the county superintendent of schools and filed with the school district board having the largest number of electors. This board had to call an election within ten days. If the proposed district included a town, rural voters were allowed to vote separately by presenting a petition signed by 25 per cent of the voters. A majority vote was necessary in both town and in rural farm territory. This law has since been modified many times, but these basic features have been retained and they are the foundation of the consolidated school movement in Iowa.

Rural people were becoming convinced that a larger school district was the solution to the perplexing country school problem because it gave advantages of organization and classification of the pupils that

was impossible in the one-room school. It offered high school provision within easy reach of children's homes. Most important, it made the school the community center, and people began to take more interest in education.

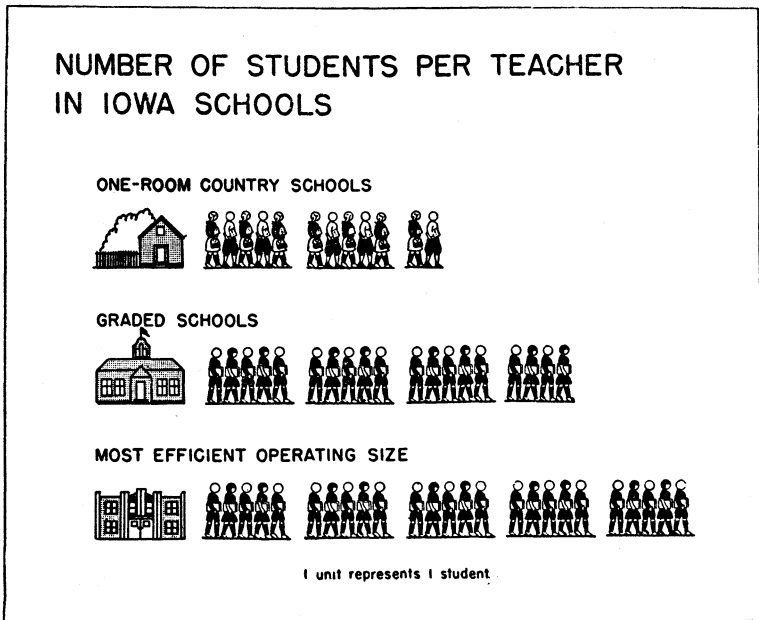


FIG. 9.—Farmers have learned that per pupil costs to teachers' salaries are lower in larger schools.

Much of the prejudice against consolidation at that time was overcome by the fair-minded investigation of taxpayers. Best information was obtained by visiting some of the successful consolidated schools such as those at Milford, Marathon, Buffalo Center, and Crawfordsville. The winter of 1910 was a good time to test the question of transportation because it was unusually severe. Investigation showed that attendance was as good from the farm areas as from town in consolidated districts. Approximately fifteen consolidated schools had been formed when the General Assembly in 1913 provided state aid to schools which maintained certain standards. State funds were provided amounting to \$200 annually for a two-room building plus \$250 for equipment; \$500 annually for a three-room building plus \$350 for equipment, and up to \$750 annually plus \$500 towards equipment for buildings of four rooms or more. Other conditions

pertained to size of grounds; equipment for teaching agriculture, home economics, manual training and other vocational subjects; and the certification of teachers.

SPREAD OF CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS

The effectiveness of this law is evidenced by the fact that up to April, 1913, only eighteen consolidated schools had been established, but from that time to September, 1914, nearly sixty were organized. The law of 1913 had appropriated only \$25,000 for consolidated schools for 1913 and \$30,000 for the four years following, but a new law was passed in 1915 increasing the total amount to \$100,000. By June 30, 1916, the number of consolidated districts had increased to 187, and at that time no school that had ever completed its district organization and transported children had gone back to the one-room school. These 187 schools were located in seventy counties.

There was some tendency at this time to increase the size of the districts beyond the minimum requirements of sixteen sections; the average at this time was approximately twenty-four. Several districts had over forty sections and the Whiting Consolidated School District in Monona County had over fifty sections. Even so, many students in consolidated schools came from outside the consolidated district. Surrounding neighborhood one-room districts paid tuition to these schools in the amount of \$17,000 a year for nonresident pupils. High school advantages were provided in practically every instance. One hundred and two schools reported an average or thirty-five pupils per high school.

From 1917 to 1921, growth was even more rapid. Up to July 1, 1917, the number of consolidated schools had increased to 238, and they were found in all but seventeen of Iowa's ninety-nine counties. Twenty-seven of these schools were in the open country; 179 were in towns of five hundred to one thousand, and 14 in towns of over one thousand inhabitants.

Transportation to these schools was mostly by wagon, although drivers sometimes used their own automobiles. One district purchased motor buses in 1916 and depended upon them entirely for transportation. Some districts provided wagons with heater attachments, but most depended upon proper clothing, robes, and foot-warmers. In most cases the length of the ride to school need be no longer in a 36-section district than in a 16-section district, if transportation routes were properly organized.

World War I prosperity influenced farmers to establish larger

districts and better schools. By June 30, 1917, 235 districts had been organized. During the year ending June 30, 1920, there were ten new consolidated districts formed every nine school days, on the average. For two months an average of one a day was formed. Horse-drawn vehicles changed to motor trucks and this change overcame much of the real objection to transportation. Up to July 1, 1920, 430 schools had voted to organize; 350 were maintaining a centralized school and transporting pupils.

By September 1, 1921, the number of consolidated school districts authorized by vote totaled 439. As of June, 1921, 68,619 pupils were enrolled in these schools, 34,743 of them transported. The total cost of transportation was over \$1,600,000 with an average cost per pupil of \$47.23. Ninety-three new consolidated school buildings had been erected at a cost of ten million dollars since January, 1920.

A survey of sixty-nine Iowa counties showed that only 58 per cent of the pupils completing the eighth grade in one-room schools in 1932 entered high school and that only 44 per cent were graduated. In consolidated districts 91 per cent entered high schools and 73 per cent were graduated, a better showing than towns and cities made. There the figures were 91 and 68.

Naturally, financing the increased cost of all these services—transportation, new buildings, better teachers—and of such new subjects as manual arts, agriculture, home economics, music, and athletics—cost town and country people alike more for school operation than the system of little village and one-room country schools which consolidations had replaced. Costs also were high because a larger number of pupils attended these better schools and remained through the full twelve grades, and because buildings were erected at a time when materials were exceedingly costly. The farmer had found the answer to the century-old problem of adequate education for his children, but when hard times came he discovered he could not pay the cost. As a result, the movement for consolidation of school districts in Iowa came to an abrupt end after 1922.

OPPOSITION

During this period of rapid organization of consolidated school districts there was more opposition to the movement than figures above indicate. The *Lamont Leader* gave the attitude of one community toward the movement in 1921.

The country schools that had so long served as a place of public meeting . . . as a church in pioneer days [and] . . . where the children of our sturdy pioneer

farmers received the first elements of knowledge were closed by the strong arm of the law (so called). The flag, the emblem of liberty, ceased to wave from the time-honored landmarks. With it has gone the rights of the people. Schoolhouses were padlocked and farmers were forbidden to enter for any purpose. They were threatened with arrest if they did. Schoolhouses were junked, the fixtures hauled to Lamont and thrown in a promiscuous heap behind the high school to lie there exposed to the elements, a mute inglorious monument to the rights of wronged and outraged people. Taxes have soared to an alarming note and the end is not yet reached. The farmers have become aroused over the high handed way that the affairs of the school have been run. . .

Children are taken from their warm beds in the gray dawn of a winter morning (against the will of their parents), hurtled into a kid wagon, hauled seven or eight miles through all kinds of weather to spend the day in an improvised schoolhouse, hauled back again in the evening [and] dumped out along the route long after the sun has set. This is the new way of educating the farmers' children. . . . A sure way of subjecting a child at an impressionable age to the evils of town and weaning him away from the wholesomeness of country life. John M. Freeman. *The Consolidated School Movement in Buchanan County Iowa*. Master's thesis. State University of Iowa, 1939.

In spite of opposition such as this in several communities, the attitude of most patrons toward the reorganization of Iowa's rural school districts has generally been favorable. When more than eleven hundred people were interviewed it was found that 71 per cent had voted in favor of the consolidation and that in 1943, 84 per cent were favorable. When another group of nine hundred people were interviewed, 90 per cent indicated that they would prefer to rent inside consolidated districts, and 85 per cent of the people with children and 65 per cent of the people without children indicated that they would not avoid buying farms in consolidated districts. Approximately 90 per cent believed that the social advantages, the quality of instruction, and the extracurricular program were all superior in the consolidated districts to what the children previously had in the one-room schools.

During the thirties Barton Morgan and W. H. Lancelot found that a majority of ungraded rural schools had enrollments too small to operate economically. They proposed that a number of one-room schools be closed and their children sent to the nearest community center. If their proposed reorganization had been carried out in the 227 communities studied, the pupils from 1,341 rural schools—44 per cent of the one-room schools in the 30 counties studied—could have been transferred to existing graded school systems without increasing the cost in any community over 3 per cent.

The closing of one-room schools and the attendance of rural elementary pupils at graded schools has resulted in an increase in the number of tuition pupils below the ninth grade from fewer than seven thousand in 1931 to more than ten thousand in 1945. These ten

thousand pupils come from nearly one thousand districts where rural people have no schools of their own, either elementary or high school. From four to five times as many farm children now attend high school under the tuition plan as attend consolidated schools in their districts.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

The nature of the financial difficulty which caused the consolidation movement to come to an end in 1922 was revealed by Lancelot in 1943 when he discovered:

The taxable property per child in the farm communities was found to be roughly three times as great as in adjoining towns and cities. . . It follows that if farm and nonfarm communities should unite for school purposes and a uniform millage rate be applied to all property, there would be a substantial reduction in the taxes paid on nonfarm property and a considerable increase in many communities in the taxes paid on farm property. This would mean an arbitrary shift of the burden from the owners of nonfarm property to the owners of farm property. —*Bulletin P-55, Iowa State College.*

Farmers could pay three times as much school tax as town people if they had three times the income, but their per capita income is even less than that of their town neighbors.

In spite of the financial handicap under which they must form larger community-type school districts, rural people find the necessity for school district reorganization greater than ever before. The Iowa State Education Association in 1943 showed that 472 of Iowa's 7,907 one-room rural schools had five or fewer pupils and that the average daily attendance of all one-room schools was fewer than eleven pupils. The association's study indicated that small schools with five or fewer pupils cost Iowa farmers four times as much as schools with twenty or more pupils. Although a four-year high school, including grades nine to twelve, should have a minimum of two hundred pupils, 17 high schools had fewer than ten pupils; 28 fewer than twenty-five, and 624 fewer than one hundred pupils.

Since rural education in the public schools was developed on a small-district basis, it has been quite impossible for rural people to obtain through their school system many types of the informal educational services which they desired. For example, the informal education of rural people through public libraries has been much less successful than it has through the medium of the Extension Service. Many rural communities have a village library for village people and a high school library for youth, but there are few libraries for farmers. In general, farmers have not organized library districts. Only twenty-three out of every one hundred Iowans

living on farms or in small villages are in a free public library district. The family bookshelf since territorial days has been and still remains the only source of reading material for more than three-fourths of the rural folk of this state. Iowa farmers are far above those of other states on the income scale, yet Iowa ranks thirty-eighth among the states for rural library service. A possible solution would be to make the new community unit school district the area for rural library service by combining the village and school libraries.

The early farmers' institutes recognized the need for a more satisfactory method of interesting farm boys and girls in the appreciation of rural life. A plan was developed for assisting farm boys and girls in conducting demonstrations on their farms. In many cases the county superintendent of schools organized boys' and girls' clubs, and farmers' institutes supplied a high-quality seed. The county fair association co-operated by offering prizes to boys and girls who exhibited products which they had made or grown. An important step in the early development of such club work in Iowa was the inauguration of a seed corn contest for boys by *Wallaces' Farmer* in 1902. The magazine furnished boys with seed corn and offered prizes for corn produced.

The first boys' club in Iowa was organized in March, 1904, in Keokuk County by C. E. Miller, county superintendent of schools. In 1905, O. H. Benson, county superintendent of schools in Wright County, and Mrs. Jessie Field Shambaugh, superintendent of schools in Page County, introduced club work in their schools. Benson can properly be considered the founder of the 4-H Club movement in the United States. This movement was established officially in 1914 with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act. In 1942 there were twenty-five thousand boys and girls enrolled in 4-H clubs in Iowa, ten thousand in home economics clubs and fifteen thousand in agricultural clubs.

Judging by the number of people reached and the educational programs carried on, such informal educational agencies as the Agricultural Extension Service, rural libraries, Farm and Home Bureaus, newspapers and journals, the radio, and motion pictures appear to have made contributions to rural education which have compensated to a considerable extent for the deficiencies of the rural public schools.

TO LOOK AT IT NOW

When the one-room school was originally organized, it corresponded to the rural neighborhood. However, since the period World War I, the social organization of rural people has changed from the rural neighborhood to the village-centered town-country community. In

their social and economic relationships farmers are today integrated with their nearest towns or villages, but their schools no longer correspond to their method of social organization. Until the administrative organization of rural education in Iowa more nearly corresponds to the natural social grouping of rural farm and village people, their schools will continue to be both expensive and ineffective.

One cannot study the century-long history of rural education in Iowa without acquiring a profound admiration for the men who have labored so industriously to find the solution to "the rural school problem," and without at the same time noting that many of their efforts were almost tragically pathetic. It is clearly evident today that the solution is by reorganization into rural community units, and not by the temporary patchwork devices so frequently used throughout the century. Enough experience has been gained in the last three decades in the use of the rural consolidated school to point the way toward a better system of education for rural people. Such rural community schools as Alta, Grand Junction, Jessup, Mediapolis, Reinbeck, Shelby, Tipton, Whiting, and others are bringing to the children and adults in their respective communities a type of modern education that is remolding and redirecting rural life, and the path which they lighted is clear for others to follow.