

THE ERROL CONSOLIDATED RURAL SCHOOL

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The Errol Consolidated Rural School is situated in the extreme northeastern part of New Hampshire. Access to the school is difficult, since one must pass through Dixville Notch on the west and travel over twenty-one miles of road to reach Colebrook and the nearest railroad. Thirty miles to the south is the city of Berlin, with its railroad and paper mills. Postal service is conducted between Berlin and Errol by stage. During the long winters Errol is well-nigh inaccessible because of bad roads and the Notch, which is rendered almost impassable by snow drifts; but from June until November many tourists pass through the village.

The sparse population of Errol is distributed along one trunk road. The village, consisting of some twenty homes, a hotel, two garages, two stores, one church, and the school, is located at the junction of two streams, which just south of the village become the Androscoggin River. Agriculture and lumbering are the chief occupations of this rural population. The taxable polls number about 107. Errol has no resident physician, minister, undertaker, dentist, plumber, or barber. The people are well-nigh self-sustaining, homogeneous, and intermarried. Although geographically isolated, intellectually the people come into touch with the outside world by means of local and long-distance telephones, automobiles, and the press. Three organizations—the Knights of Pythias, the Grange, and the school—bring the people together at frequent intervals for the interchange of ideas, but the greatest of these is the Consolidated School.

In New Hampshire two or more towns or special districts may, by vote of each, form a district for the purpose of employing a superintendent of public schools, each town or district paying a just share of his salary, one-half of the stipulated salary being paid by the state. About five years ago Errol joined the Colebrook Town and the Colebrook Special Districts to form such a union

and employ a superintendent of schools who should devote his entire time to supervisory duties. At that time Errol had three typical one-room rural schools, with from twelve to fifteen scholars each, located one at each extremity of the town and one in the center. Consolidation was not realized without a bitter controversy; for almost one-half of the citizens held tenaciously to the idea that "the little red schoolhouse" was a most efficient institution, and for several years after 1910 the annual school meeting was the occasion of a severe struggle between the two hostile camps, the one standing for the old order in education, the other for the new. Since consolidation, however, Errol has never gone back to the one-room system and today the school has more friends than ever. At the annual school meeting in March, 1915, in less than ten minutes the citizens voted over \$4,000.00 to support the central school without one hostile vote, and the meeting became a social gathering where co-operation and good-will prevailed.

Consolidation being decided upon, the central school building was raised and completely remodeled at a cost of \$2,000.00. A furnace and modern toilets were installed in the basement, while drinking fountains, supplying spring water from the adjacent hills, were placed on the first and second floors; slate blackboards and an adequate number of windows were added. On the first floor one finds a large, cheerful room for the first three grades, and a spacious entrance hall. A recitation room, used also for the practical arts, the assembly room, and closets for supplies are located on the second floor. The building is rectangular in shape, and thoroughly sanitary in appointment, but it has already proved to be too small a building for the growing school.

A NEW TYPE OF SCHOOL

One-half of the children are transported in school wagons to this central school, the greatest distance being four miles. Under the old system, school held thirty weeks during the year; under the new, school is in session for thirty-four weeks each year. Tardiness has been reduced to a minimum, while the percentage of attendance has been raised to 95. Each driver of a school wagon receives \$2.50 per day, making the total cost for transportation for the two drivers

\$850.00 per school year. The sum of \$150.00 is voted annually for supplies; \$800.00 to support the high school; \$2,500.00 for the elementary school; and \$100.00 for the tuition fees of Errol children who are taking their third and fourth years' work in other high schools. The school costs from \$3,500.00 to \$4,000.00 a year and because of the small enrolment, which is from forty to forty-five pupils, the per capita cost of the school is heavy. But the citizens of Errol demand a graded school, even though the various grades are small. This necessitates the employment of four trained teachers, especially on account of the varied practical arts curriculum. Three of the present teachers are graduates of the Plymouth State Normal, one having taken graduate work last summer and another having spent one summer at Teachers College, Columbia. The fourth teacher has had normal training, several years of experience, and a state certificate. It is exceedingly difficult to procure trained teachers for such an isolated school; and even after finding the teachers the problem of securing congenial boarding places is acute. At present the personnel of the teaching force is far above the average. These young women have not only a good education, but high ideals and a love of country life. By rooming together, two in each group, they have been able to get accommodations, and for the first time in this school we find all four teachers happy and contented—a condition which we regard as a prerequisite for efficient work.

The salaries of rural teachers in New Hampshire are low, especially in the northern part of the state. Yet teachers' expenses are much lower than in other parts of the country where the salaries are high. Good board and room, if procured at all, can be secured for \$4.00 a week. The salaries are as follows:

The principal	\$16.00	a week
Assistant in high school	13.50	"
Teacher of fourth, fifth, and sixth grades	12.50	"
Primary teacher	12.50	"
Superintendent	15.00	" (40 weeks)
(one-half paid by state)		

The equipment of the school is splendid, especially along the line of modern textbooks and supplementary reading. A great

deal of good reading-material is furnished and history classes are taught to use the best periodicals for reference work. In the manual arts equipment we find three Sheldon benches, each having two rapid-acting vises, steel bar clamps, hand-screws, a Stanley miter-box, a foot-power tool grinder, and the best hand tools obtainable. For the courses in household arts the girls have a new White sewing machine, running water, a porcelain-enamel sink, a three-flame oil stove, and an adequate kitchen equipment. Science apparatus is being added as needed. The students taking manual training construct the shelves, racks, and other equipment needed by the school. At present they are working on a large and substantial science table. The School Improvement League has recently purchased a piano, but this somewhat heavy undertaking was rendered possible by the hearty co-operation of the more progressive women of the town. Although music does not appear in the regular program of studies, not only music but also drawing receives some attention by the present force of teachers.

The work of the high school begins with the seventh grade and continues for four years. Upon the completion of this work, we find that some children are anxious to go farther and plan a normal course or four years at college, while others return to the farm. The transition from the work of the grades to that of the high school is gradual, the students receiving no severe shock in passing from one type of work to the other. Inasmuch as the teachers often alternate their work, the children become accustomed to the methods and personalities of the entire teaching force. The teachers direct and organize the play activities, enjoying the intermissions with the children no less than they. When school is in session, this institution approaches Dr. Dewey's ideal of a co-operative society working happily toward educative ends. One seldom finds so many different types of educational activity going on at one time as he does on the second floor of the Errol Consolidated school.

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum reflects in a striking manner the activities of the community. The people devote most of their time to agriculture and lumbering, and exhibit considerable ingenuity in

mechanical ability. The school aims to prepare rural children for a richer life in their environment and to give each child as far as possible his heritage in science, literature, and government. The dominant features, then, of the course are as follows:

- 1. Emphasis upon the practical arts, devoting as much time and attention to toolwork for the boys and to cooking and sewing for the girls as is given any other subject.
- 2. A great deal of attention to nature-study and elementary science as related to agriculture and forestry.
- 3. A course in constitutional history in the tenth year, with special reference to the struggle for democratic government and to the active participation in local town affairs.
- 4. The study of masterpieces in literature, chiefly to inculcate an appreciation for and love of good literature.
- 5. An effort to relate mathematics as given in arithmetic and bookkeeping to the life of the village and the farm, and also to teach enough algebra to enable all those children to go higher who show ambition to do so. The work below seventh grade is very similar to that of any well-graded school, but the spirit of, and the approach to, the work are well expressed in the following words of the teacher of Grades IV-VI, with regard to the study of denominate numbers:

The plan of the farm was worked out, involving square measure. We discussed the seed planting and average crop expected, involving dry measure. When estimating the harvest it was necessary to consider the herds and the length of time they were fed in the barn. It was also important to consider help on the farm, thus bringing in time measure. As every farm should contain woodland, so we had ours; we cut and sold wood from the same, thereby using cubic measure. Poultry, sheep, beef, and hogs were killed and vegetables sold, thus employing the table of weights and measures. Supplies were bought for the house and milk sold, using liquid measure. An account of the work was kept, introducing elementary ideas in farm accounts.

THE CURRICULUM OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

SEVENTH YEAR		Per Week			Per Week
English		4	Cooking and sewing (girls)		4
Geography		4	Spelling		5
United States History		4	EIGHTH YEAR		
Manual training		4	English		4
Agromony (boys)		4	Geography		4

EIGHTH YEAR— <i>Cont.</i>		Per Week		Per Week
United States History.....	4		Practical mathematics.....	5
Manual training.....	4		Horticulture (boys).....	5
Animal husbandry, dairying (boys).....	4		Household sanitation and	
Cooking and sewing (girls).....	4		mechanics (girls).....	5
Farm and household arithmetic... ..	4			
Spelling.....	5			
			TENTH YEAR	
NINTH YEAR			English.....	5
English.....	5		Elementary science.....	5
Bookkeeping—			Advanced physiology and hygiene,	
<i>a</i>) General and farm.....	5		nursing (girls).....	5
<i>b</i>) Household.....	5		Practical mathematics (boys).....	5
Elementary science.....	5		Constitutional history of the United	
			States.....	5

THE PRACTICAL ARTS

The work in the practical arts—sewing, cooking, and bench-work—deals with fundamental principles and lays stress on projects which relate to domestic use, in the home and on the farm. Shopwork has progressed along three lines, viz.: repair of doors and windows in the schoolhouse; the construction of fixtures and models for school use (as shelves and a large sand-table); and making models for home use. Work thus far has been in wood, but a plan is under way to teach concrete construction. The boys have made a cold frame and tree-protectors, book-racks and tabourets, and models for home use, according to individual choice. About $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours a day are devoted to work of this kind.

The work in household arts is comprehensive, comprising hand and machine sewing, begun in the seventh grade; practical cookery; invalid cookery and elements of nursing; a study of household accounts and appliances and sanitation. The idea in sewing is to make a garment or article of use; hence, instead of spending time on learning stitches as such, the girls make dishcloths, towels, pillow shams, sheets, and aprons. A great deal of the work in cookery is given over to the preparation of hot lunches for those children who come from the country. Here cooking has the best kind of motivation, that of satisfying hunger, and sufficient quantity of food is prepared to serve some twenty-five pupils. Vegetables are often furnished by the parents. It often happens that the instructor requests each child to bring a potato, turnip, or apple.

DAILY PROGRAM OF HIGH SCHOOL

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:05 9:05-9:15	Basement Opening exercises	Basement Opening exercises	Basement Opening exercises	Basement Opening exercises	Basement Opening exercises
9:15-9:40	Practical Mathematics 9 Agronomy 7	Practical Mathematics 9 Agronomy 7	Practical Mathematics 9 Study	Practical Mathematics 9 Agronomy 7	Practical Mathematics 9 Agronomy 7
9:40-10:05	Elementary Science 9, 10 Study Arithmetic 7	Elementary Science 9, 10 Study Arithmetic 7	Elementary Science 9, 10 Arithmetic 8 Arithmetic 7	Elementary Science 9, 10 Arithmetic 8 Arithmetic 7	Elementary Science 9, 10 Arithmetic 8 Arithmetic 7
10:05-10:25	Algebra 10 Geography 7, 8	Algebra 10 Study	Algebra 10 Geography 7, 8	Algebra 10 Geography 7, 8	Algebra 10 Geography 7, 8
10:25-10:30	Basement Recess	Basement Recess	Basement Recess	Basement Recess	Basement Recess
10:45-11:05	Civil Government 10 Spelling 7, 8	Civil Government 10 Spelling 7, 8	Civil Government 10 Spelling 7, 8	Civil Government 10 Spelling 7, 8	Civil Government 10 Spelling 7, 8
11:05-11:30	Bookkeeping 9 Study	Bookkeeping 9 Cooking 7, 8	Bookkeeping 9 Cooking 7, 8	Bookkeeping 9 Cooking 7, 8	Bookkeeping 9 Cooking 7, 8
11:30-11:55	Music	English 10 Cooking 7, 8	English 10 Cooking 7, 8	English 10 Cooking 7, 8	English 10 Cooking 7, 8
11:55-12:00 12:00-1:00 1:00-1:05	Basement Noon Basement	Basement Noon Basement	Basement Noon Basement	Basement Noon Basement	Basement Noon Basement
1:05-1:25	United States History 7	Music	United States History 7	United States History 7	United States History 7
1:25-1:45	Horticulture 9 or Forestry English 7, 8	Horticulture 9 or Forestry English 7, 8	Horticulture 9 or Forestry Study	Horticulture 9 or Forestry English 7, 8	Horticulture 9 or Forestry English 7, 8
1:45-2:05	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 English 10	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 History 8	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 History 8	Study History 8	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 History 8
2:05-2:25	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 Drawing (girls) 7, 8, 9, 10	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 Drawing (girls) 7, 8, 9, 10	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 Drawing (girls) 7, 8, 9, 10	Music	Manual Training 7, 9, 10 Study
2:25-2:30 2:30-2:45	Basement Recess	Basement Recess	Basement Recess	Basement Recess	Basement Recess
2:45-3:15	Advanced Physiology 9, 10 Study	Advanced Physiology 9, 10 Penmanship 7, 8	Advanced Physiology 9, 10 Drawing (boys) 7, 9, 10	Advanced Physiology 9, 10 Drawing (boys) 7, 9, 10	Advanced Physiology 9, 10 Physiology and Hygiene 7, 8
3:15-3:45	English 9 Sewing 7, 8	English 9 Sewing 7, 8	English 9 Sewing 7, 8	English 9 Sewing 7, 8	Special Program

In the fall attention centers around the problem of canning and preserving, the homes again supplying the fruits, and in the spring the class in agriculture provides fresh vegetables. The class in cookery meets four times a week for laboratory work and once a week for the discussion of principles. A few parents revolt against the introduction of such practical work into the school, but we find that the children from these homes cannot thread a needle or prepare the simplest meal. The science-teacher has charge of these courses, while the superintendent directs the toolwork.

Handicapped at the outset by the lack of a school farm of good proportions, the courses in science and agriculture and related subjects are nevertheless made as vital and practical as possible. For the present, courses in animal husbandry and horticulture are merged into two courses, the first being a course in general elementary science, and the second dealing with agricultural science. Considerable attention is given to agronomy; to farm friends and foes in the way of insect life; to a detailed study of forestry, which is rendered vital because of the amount of lumbering carried on in this region. A number of experiments in biology and chemistry are made and observations recorded, which, together with the variety of science-reading required, stimulate the minds of the children and train them in the observation of natural phenomena.

A state law of New Hampshire requires that the constitutional history of the United States be taught in the Senior year. This course deals with local town government; the election and duties of selectmen; a discussion of town administration; the state and federal constitutions with reference to their development and particular emphasis upon the struggle for the civic rights of citizens. In Errol the annual town meeting is held in the forenoon of a Tuesday in March, and the school meeting in the afternoon. This is the big day of the year, men, women, and children attending, many remaining at the town hall to enjoy the dinner prepared by the women. At these meetings the children are introduced to the machinery of town government; at school they get the historical setting of the same. At the annual meetings, in a few minutes thousands of dollars are raised for improvement of roads, support of schools, and general upkeep of the town; in the school, teacher

and children discuss the value of good roads, the modern school, and civic improvement.

In the study of literature those classics are read which the College Entrance Board has recommended for admission to college. Four or five masterpieces are studied in class and the same number reported upon as supplementary reading. As a rule, a classic is read twice—the first time hurriedly, to learn the story and plot; in the second reading a more intensive study is made in order to acquire the author's message and to note his style and beauty of diction. The aim is always to stop short of that point in minute analysis where the children begin to revolt against the study of good literature. We want to create a love of good reading by the reading of classics in an enjoyable manner.

In the high-school mathematics of the ninth and tenth grades time is given to a review of arithmetic; to bookkeeping based on original work and later on a standard text; to farm mathematics (accounts and arithmetic directly relating to farm pursuits); and to algebra if any of the children desire such work as a preparation for the Junior work of the secondary school. A constant effort is made to relate mathematics to the life of the children, and with this object in view considerable original work is done, one child keeping the accounts of his hotel business, another of his farm, and another of his specialized pursuit—poultry business, etc. At present it is necessary to limit practical work in agriculture to experimental work on a small scale at the school, and to the assignment of project work to the boys who live on farms. In the near future we hope to acquire an acre of land near the school for experimental work on a larger scale.

In order to realize a finer school spirit and to bind the children together in a common purpose, the School Improvement League was organized. The management of this League gives the children parliamentary drill and thereby a degree of ability in public speaking and brings out latent ability in leadership. Parents unite with the teachers and children in a co-operative effort to raise funds for a musical instrument or a school library. Entertainments consisting of recitations, dramatizations, readings, and folk-dances are given by the children, being generously patronized by the parents.

The absence of serious problems in discipline is one of the most striking and commendable features of the school. The children of Errol have no moving pictures to attend; none of the manifold and often evil diversions of the village and city streets to distract them; and the majority, being transported in the "school barge," enjoy the ride with an abundance of innocent fun, and upon arriving at school exhibit a willingness and spirit for school work quite uncommon among children of their age. In this school, therefore, discipline is reduced to a minimum. Within the last two years the general conduct of the children on the school grounds and within the building at noon and recess periods has improved in a remarkable manner. The larger boys are quite noisy but kind-hearted and will respectfully listen to the advice of school officials. The teachers are now working on a plan to organize plays and games, for these rural children have little conception of organized play or competitive games.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCHOOL

This discussion of the Errol Consolidated School has not been submitted with the idea that other rural districts should organize their schools according to this plan, for many conditions exist at Errol which are peculiar to that locality. We feel that this school in certain respects might well be a type of school appropriately adapted to the needs of rural life in New Hampshire. This school is one of the first of its type to inaugurate a new era in rural education for New Hampshire. While village and city schools have advanced in efficiency by leaps and bounds within the last twenty-five years, our rural schools have not held their own, even deteriorating and receding from an alleged passable condition which prevailed a generation ago. The subject-matter taught in this old type of school, and still generally common in all parts of this country, relates to the life of rural children only in a most superficial and visionary manner. The unsanitary conditions, poor teachers, dilapidated buildings, and low ideals on the part of teachers and children, all contributed to make the typical rural school an unattractive place, and consequently to drive the children from life

in the country and agricultural pursuits. The Errol school aims to enrich the lives of rural children, making of them potential citizens of high ideals and lovers of country life who will be able to establish their work upon a scientific basis. And those who leave the country will later discover that their course has given them a practical and comprehensive foundation for constructive work in a larger field, for today the world demands men and women who can reveal to the world the potency of their thinking by action.