

The Loudoun County School Plant

by Supt. J. L. Merrick

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~~By~~ By "School Plant" is meant the grounds, ~~b~~buildings, and equipment that are used to provide for the comfort and convenience of our children and teachers during the hours of instruction and also of play. For indeed, the play period is coming to be looked upon as a very educational part of the school day and one over which the teacher's responsibility extends as much as during recitation or study time, not just a responsibility for good conduct but a responsibility for ~~such~~ wholesome, clean, vigorous, and proper play.

Loudoun County now has fifty-nine school buildings in use for white and twenty-five for ~~xxxxx~~ colored children. Seventeen of these buildings are brick, stone, or concrete and all the others are ~~frame~~ frame or log.

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A total of seventeen ~~for~~ for white and none for colored are equipped with modern systems of heating. By modern is meant either a furnace or gas-fired stove. A plain stove heating by direct radiation is not a proper system for heating a school room because it does not give off uniform heat, one side of a child is often cold while another is hot, or children on cold days must crowd around the stove to keep warm and keeping warm in such a case is nearly all they do. ~~This~~ one-fifth of the buildings are equipped with the right sort of heating system, a few of these not working properly because too small. Modern systems of heating are not installed in the other buildings because the cost of the heating plant and of the added fuel needed

can not be met out of funds available. The cost of a good jacketed stove and its installation in an old school-room now averages about \$200.00. Usually the chimney must be rebuilt if good results are to be secured.

All but one white and four colored schools are now equipped with modern patented desks. In spite of the fact that many pessimists say everything and every child is worse than years ago, pupils are somehow learning to take better care of school desks. Knife cuts, initials, and other defacements on our newer desks are now rarely seen.

Nearly all buildings are supplied with a sufficient area of good blackboards without which any teacher is seriously handicapped.

A school room should be lighted from the adjacent sides or from one side only, preferably the latter because the teacher would not face the light. The light area should be at least one-fourth of the floor space. Only twenty buildings or less than one-fourth, meet these requirements. Many of the other buildings bring light from opposite sides. Far too many lack sufficient light and this <sup>is</sup> an extremely serious condition.

All schools have two toilets but some of these can not be kept in good condition because children have never been properly taught along this line. This is one of our big problems and a very important one.

Our school lots average in size about one acre. The State Board of Education has set up for standard elementary schools a minimum of two acres for school lots for one-room and larger

schools. Only twelve of our buildings of any size are located on lots with two or more acres of ground. A number of school buildings have been located on land unfit for any other purpose, rocky, hilly, or wooded, enough room perhaps for children to fight at recess but not enough for play. Not more than six have any playground equipment worth the name.

The largest building in the county is at Ashburn. This has eight rooms and a large auditorium. The smallest is the colored school at Bones. It used to be much smaller than now.

Between our best and worst buildings there exists the sharpest contrast.

Go with me to two of them.

Here first we see a modern brick structure of seven rooms and auditorium with basement shop, heated and ventilated by a modern system in charge of a competent janitor, well lighted, well equipped with furniture, blackboards, and class-room apparatus, with indoor toilets, and good water supply, located on a ten acre lot with orchard, school garden, woods, and spacious playgrounds, all this for the use of high school pupils, a real monument to the energy and devotion of parents to the cause of education, a real statue of liberty whose beacon light will shine through the ages.

The next we marvel indeed at the contrast. We see an old stone building heated by a stove located in the middle of the room and fed by soft coal which makes abundant dirt and gives off obnoxious gases, with less than half enough light brought in from wrong directions, with insufficient blackboards, poor out-door

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toilets, no water supply, except through roof when it rains at which time it is all too abundant, located on and almost in the road, no school lot at all, a monument to the dead past. As this nearly describes several buildings while describing one in particular, no community should take offense.

White American rosy-cheeked precious young children attend both of these schools?

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