

*file School News or Publicity*

The Improvement and Beautification of School Grounds.

The older school lots in Loudoun reveal in many instances the conception held by those in authority in former days of the purposes to be served by the school grounds. It is very evident that very little thought was given to play ground facilities and to aesthetic values. Very often the lot chosen was selected because it had almost no value for any other purpose. Too frequently the land was donated under proviso that it would revert to the estate when no longer used as a school property.

Practically all of the school buildings erected in Loudoun County within the past 15 years have been erected on grounds purchased outright by the board or donated and all of them have been selected from the standpoint of suitability of location, ~~size~~ suitability of site, for a building and adequacy of playground space. The minimum size of lot prescribed for a one-teacher school has been two acres and larger schools have usually required proportionately larger acreage.

Up to this time not a dollar of public school money has been used for the beautification of school grounds through the planting of shrubbery or trees and practically nothing has been spent either in clearing and grading grounds or in sowing grass or even in mowing weeds which accumulate during the summer.

The question might naturally be raised: "Should the school authorities devote any public money to the improvement and beautification of school grounds?"

Directed physical activities are now a part of the regularly supervised program of the schools in Virginia. It is advocated that wherever and whenever possible the physical education program consist almost entirely of organized games rather than formal sitting

up exercises. This requires a good allowance of playground space that is level, smooth and free from obstructions. Hence, in order to be able to carry out the required educational program of the future the school boards must provide improved play space. The value of this program and the justification for it have been well proven in the past.

The function of the public school is not to impart knowledge, primarily, as too commonly thought but it is rather to teach children how to behave by giving them those experiences in child life that they are most likely to use in adult life. The school must develop tastes, likes and dislikes, habits of thought, and build character. The school should develop in the child a love for beauty wherever found and especially in nature. How can this be done in the midst of sordid surroundings ~~in~~ or in a school ~~xxxxx~~ home that lacks beauty?

Again, a school should lead the people of the community for the most part through the younger generation, into better living. Then school architecture and school landscaping should lead the community. It does not do that in Loudoun County and can not so long as the state prescribes that so great a share of the school funds must come from a tax on real estate, unless the people become more willing than now to increase their legacy to the next generation. At present the State contributes annually to the road system in Loudoun County about three times as much as to the school system and is carrying on a program of expansion and improvement throughout the commonwealth while the school system of Loudoun has been forced to discontinue a building program in order to permit tax reduction. Yet roads are built in great part for the pleasure of the people while schools are essential to the perpetuity of our ~~xi2~~ civilization.

The yard of the average home in our county has some trees, shrubs, and flowers in it. These are provided, of course, by the owner. Then the owners of school lots who are all the people of the community should provide for school yard plantings.

Trees for shade are of very little value to a school because of summer suspension. They do protect the building from the blistering effects of the sun's rays if planted near but at the same time too much light is often shut out from the class-room. However, trees are among nature's most beautiful ornaments. Every school property in Loudoun County should be beautified by trees, shrubs, and flowers planted in corners, along borders and near buildings in a manner not to obstruct the playground. Grass is most difficult to maintain except in very restricted places. School grounds ~~ex~~ should be beautified because under such surroundings the mind functions more satisfactorily and because such environment will tend to perfect an esthetic sense so important to complete living.

While those in charge of public funds have not found it possible to beautify the school grounds considerable work has been done in a few schools by the teachers, pupils and community residents. The Lovettsville, Hamilton, Lincoln High, Purcellville, Middleburg, Ashburn, Aldie and other schools have made a good start. The most complete plantings are to be found on the Purcellville lot. This work was begun through the generosity of Mrs. C. L. Robey who contributed a great deal of her time and various kinds of shrubs and trees to the value of several hundred dollars. It has since been carried on by the Community League who have added plantings and cared for those already in place.

It is the dream of the writer that the time may quickly come when by some means all of the schools of Loudoun may become beauty spots where happiness is a natural by-product of education and active boys

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IN 1920  
CLARENCE L. ROBEY  
WAS A BANKER  
MARRIED TO  
GERTRUDE.