

THE VISITOR

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THAT INSPIRING PAST

April 1955 is the month set for publication of the story of the Future Farmers of America in Minnesota. This book will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the FFA. This is the first book of its kind to trace the historical development of the FFA in Minnesota and as such will have widespread appeal to everyone who has been associated with the FFA in any capacity. This applies to former members, advisers, award winners, chapter officers, teachers, superintendents of schools, youth leaders and students of agriculture and its progress in Minnesota.

That Inspiring Past is sponsored by the Minnesota Association of the Future Farmers of America and has been written by Mrs. Agnes Harrigan Mueller. It is truly an unusual and intriguing book that tells the story of the Minnesota FFA from 1930 to 1955. In this book you will see the FFA emerge from a struggling infancy to achieve maturity and take its place as the dominant organization of farm boys in Minnesota, holding true to the traditions of rural life.

That Inspiring Past will find its place in schools, libraries, chapters, reference files, and individual member's homes. Teachers as well as students will welcome its clear, concise and yet fully detailed descriptions of activities, events, and the people who were instrumental in the founding and the growth of the FFA in the North Star State.

Here are some of the things that can be found in *That Inspiring Past*.

The FFA—What it is and what it does
Forerunners of Minnesota's FFA

FFA pioneer chapter advisers

Telling the story of the FFA

American farmers, state farmers, and what became of them

Establishment in farming and community service activities

The FFA boys meet opportunity more than half way

Highlights of 25 years of activity, personal anecdotes and items of local interest will be found under such headings as The Minnesota FFA's First Year, The FFA Steps Up its Activities, Musical Activities in the FFA, The FFA Public Speaking Contest, The State FFA Camp, The FFA Livestock Show, National Officers from Minnesota, Award Winners Over the Years, Present and Past State FFA Officers.

Anyone interested in the development of the youth of Minnesota and in educational opportunities in agriculture will appreciate *That Inspiring Past*. The Visitor congratulates Mrs. Mueller and the Minnesota Association of the Future Farmers of America. A bright future is predicted for *That Inspiring Past*.

A post card to the Minnesota FFA Association in the Shubert Building at 488 Wabasha St., St. Paul 2, Minnesota, will bring information to the effect that the heavy paper cover edition will sell for \$1.25 and the deluxe hard bound cover of *That Inspiring Past* will sell for \$2.00.

This book fills a gap in the reference libraries and home reading rooms. And with this backward look over the past 25 years, The Visitor suggests that "we ain't seen nothing yet" as far as the FFA is concerned.

GOOD LUCK, MR. WELLS!

The Visitor congratulates Mr. J. Delbert Wells, Secretary-Treasurer of the Minnesota Farm Bureau who has been named as the 1955 chairman of the Minnesota FFA Foundation Finance Committee. Mr. Wells is a native of Oklahoma who has traveled widely. He was educated in the public schools of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Illinois, graduating from high school at Lyons, Kansas in 1931. Mr. Wells has a Bachelor of Science degree

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from Panhandle A & M College at Goodwell, Oklahoma, and a Master of Science degree from Oklahoma A & M at Stillwater, Oklahoma with major fields of study in animal breeding and agricultural education.

Mr. Wells is intimately acquainted with vocational agriculture and the Future Farmers of America as a result of his seven years experience as a teacher of vocational agriculture and FFA adviser.

On the more personal side, The Visitor has learned that Mr. Wells still has his original wife plus four sons and one daughter.

Best wishes to Mr. Wells as he undertakes the important job as chairman of the Finance Committee of the Minnesota FFA Foundation.

Know Your Minnesota Crop Improvement Association

by WARD MARSHALL*

The Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, one of the oldest farm organizations in the State, serves as the field seed certification agency. Organized in 1904, the Association has shown continued expansion and now carries on a diversified program of crop improvement.

The governing body is a board of directors elected by the membership which now annually consists of 1500 seed producers and others interested in good seed.

Seed certification requires careful field and seed inspections which are handled efficiently by a staff of well-trained representatives. Standards have been established for each crop and to assure high

* Mr. Marshall is Seed Registrar of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, University of Minnesota, St. Paul 1, Minnesota.

quality seed the requirements are rigid.

While seed certification is the basic function of the Association, there is another and more intangible responsibility which is education on crop improvement. Unfortunately the use of certified seed on farms of Minnesota is very limited, and it is only through an intensive educational program that the volume can be increased.

The Minnesota Crop Improvement Association now has three field supervisors available to present discussions on all phases of crop improvement. They will welcome the opportunity to talk to Vo-Ag classes upon invitation by instructors. Please feel free to call upon these men at any time. They are:

Mervin R. Syverson, Olivia, Minnesota
Robert J. Lambert, Northwest School and Station, Crookston, Minnesota
Richard A. Johnson, Southern School of Agriculture, c/o Ray Gallagher, Waseca, Minnesota

Vo-Ag departments within close proximity of the Twin Cities can contact Association headquarters, St. Paul Campus, University of Minnesota, St. Paul 1, Minnesota, for scheduling talks on crop improvement.

Efficient Corn Growing Program

In 1954 the Spencer Chemical Company initiated a co-operative educational program with vocational agriculture groups in Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa. The response to this program was so encouraging that it is being expanded into seven additional states this year.

This efficient corn growing program is another tool for an agriculture instructor to use in promoting the best corn growing practices and sound soil management. The information piece used by this program is a booklet called "Five Tested Steps to Maximum Profit Corn." This booklet contains the latest information available on corn production and is intended to be used as a guide for teaching the efficient production of corn.

A unique feature of this program is that it is not a total yield contest but rather the objective is to secure the maximum increase in efficiency gained by the use of

a combination of practices. Efficiency can only be obtained through the proper use of cultural and management practices including the use of fertilizers based on soil tests. Practices which experimental work have shown to be of practical value can be applied in this program in an effort to secure maximum increase in efficiency of growing corn.

One good feature of this program is that a student in an area of sandy soil has as good a chance of success as another boy in a heavy soil area if he applies the practices adapted to that particular soil type. Since modern agriculture is advancing so rapidly it is becoming more and more essential for a young man who will soon be operating a farm business to have the advantages of instruction in modern technology and management. However, these new techniques and methods are fruitless until and unless they are put into practice on an individual farm. This type of activity which ties in so closely with the supervised farming programs of high school boys studying vocational agriculture will undoubtedly have beneficial results. The Visitor would be glad to hear from vocational agriculture departments that have participated in this program and to have their evaluation of its worth as a teaching tool in efficient corn production.

Are Consolidated Schools Short-changing the Country Child?

By PAUL WOODRING*

Let's not lose the good things we have in the country school when we send our kids to town.

Bill Martin is a young friend of mine who attended a one-room country school for five years. Last year the district was reorganized and now he is a sixth-grader in a larger consolidated school located in a good-sized town ten miles from his home. Bill is not very happy about the change.

At first glance it would appear that the new school is a great improvement over the old one. There is a fine new building with excellent heating, lighting, and ventilation, and this is a far cry from the one-room school where it was always too hot

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near the stove and too cold near the window; where it was hard to see the blackboard on cloudy days and a draft came through the cracks in the floor. But a school is more than a building. A school is a way of living for several hours each day and Bill is not sure that the new way is an improvement over the old.

This school district probably needed to be consolidated, but in the consolidation several mistakes were made—mistakes which are being made all over the country.

The first mistake was in locating the new school in town instead of in the country and because property values were high, they bought too little space for the schoolyard. At the country school there was a playground with trees to climb, a little stream on which Bill could build mud dams and a sand-lot baseball diamond. At the new school the playyard is covered with asphalt and is much too small for the several hundred children who use it. In place of trees to climb there is a steel jungle gym. But Bill finds playing on an asphalt playyard pretty dull and now spends his noon hour at the drugstore across the street drinking pop and reading the comic books.

The second mistake was in locating the school on the busiest street in the county where the traffic hazard is serious and the noise of passing trucks often interferes with school activities.

The third error was in thinking that a teacher who handles only one grade can adequately supervise the work of thirty-five or forty children. At the little country school the teacher had eight grades in one room, but she had only fourteen children in all, so that Bill got much more individual attention than he gets this year.

The fourth mistake was most serious of all. When the country schools and the city schools were combined the curriculum or program—including the after-school activities—became those of a city school with no allowance being made for the fact that farm children have chores to do at home and must go home on the bus which leaves right after school.

None of these mistakes were an inevitable result of consolidation. A country school, whether it has one room or fifty, ought to be located in the country. Little

is gained and much is lost by placing it in a town near busy streets, poolrooms and drugstores with their soda fountains and comic books. The program of the country school ought to be planned with the special needs, the special problems and the special knowledges and abilities of farm children in mind.

In those schools which are at the same time village schools and rural consolidated schools, the farm boy or girl is at a real disadvantage. The village school, like the city school, finds it necessary to provide something for the children to do after school and in the evening. This is necessary because many city children have no work to do at home and they can find little to take up their afterschool hours that is either useful or instructive. Often both parents are employed outside the home and the children have no supervision unless the school provides it. So the school offers a broad program of afterschool and evening activity and much of the social life of the school centers around this activity. The child in such a school who must miss these activities often feels he does not quite belong, and I think this is why Bill is unhappy in the new school. Yet the farm boy or girl is needed at home after school and there is much for him to do that is both educational to him and useful to his parents.

Even the activities of the regular school hours are planned for the city child rather than for the farm child. The farm boy can profitably have some experience with sports, but he has much less need than does the city child of exercise in a gymnasium, for he gets his exercise in a more normal fashion. Nor does he need to be taken on field trips into the country to learn how crops grow and where milk comes from. He knew all about these things before he even started to school; yet, the city child does need such experiences and a school program planned for city children often includes them. This makes it difficult to plan a program that is appropriate for both urban and country children. It would be possible to compromise, but what most often happens is that the curriculum is planned for city children and farm children are neglected.

The city educator often overlooks the fact that growing up on a farm is a very educational experience in itself. When I first taught in a city high school, I discovered one day that my eleventh graders did not know the meaning of the word "pullet." Because I was curious, I tried them out and found that they did not know the difference between wheat and oats or between straw and hay. They thought all corn was sweet corn. Several out of a class of thirty did not know that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and only three could tell a maple tree from an elm. Yet any farm child of half their age who did not know these things would be considered an ignoramus.

A good school starts with what the child already knows and takes him on from there. Many of our school programs start with what the city child knows rather than what the farm child knows.

The farm boy needs to learn many things which are unnecessary for city children. By the time he completes the eighth grade he should be able to compute accurately the number of acres in a field, the number of bushels in a grain bin and many other things which are easily learned in an arithmetic class but are being omitted from the books intended for city children. This is just another reason why it is a mistake to move the country school into town.

In all too many cases the consolidated school has become a weak imitation of the big-city school with the disadvantages of the urban institution, for city schools have always worked under handicaps. Not only are they overcrowded and often so big that the individual child gets lost in the crowd, but even more serious is the fact that the teachers are frustrated by far too many rules and regulations handed down by a complicated hierarchy of assistant superintendents, principals, supervisors, curriculum directors and department heads. In consolidating our schools, we have quite unnecessarily saddled them with these same disadvantages.

(The remainder of Professor Woodring's article will appear in the July issue of the Visitor)