CHAPTER XI.
THE SCHOOLS OF POLK COUNTY.

By N. A. THORSON.

BASIS FOR SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT—THE COMING OF THE COUNTY’S SCHOOLS—COUNTY SCHOOLS IN 1877 AND IN 1878—FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER, LUella MAY THOMPSON—OTHER EARLY TEACHERS—THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS—REPORTS OF SCHOOL YEARS FROM 1882 TO 1908—THE CONDITIONS IN 1910—SOURCES OF SCHOOL SUPPORT—APPORTIONMENT—STATISTICS OF STATE AND OTHER AIDS—PRESENT CONDITIONS OF POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS.

MATERIAL BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOLS.

The State school system embraces the schools of each individual county, and one cannot be considered without the other. In order to understand better why the schools in Polk County have developed thus, we need to call to mind some of the factors in education in Minnesota.

The Federal Government gave to the people of Minnesota certain tracts of land, the benefits from which were to go to the common schools, the University and other public institutions. No grants were made to normal schools. The people were given these lands in trust, and, as trustees of a great wealth, it was their duty to increase the same for the benefit of themselves and the generations yet unborn. No restrictions were placed upon the State as to the disposition and use of school lands, and as a result, through the wise planning of our early law-makers, we own a permanent school fund excelling that of every other state. Amounting to $3,191,042 in 1875, shortly after Polk County was organized, it had grown to $24,668,248 in 1914, and is now increasing at the rate of nearly a million dollars yearly. Sections 16 and 36 in every congressional township were designated as “school lands,” as the result of an act of Congress of 1849, when Minnesota was formed into a Territory. In 1851, by a similar act, grants for the State University were made. These were doubled in 1857.

To one man more than to any other perhaps, must be given credit for the satisfactory condition of our permanent school fund, and that man was Governor Alexander Ramsey. In Minnesota history he is styled, “the Father of the School Fund,” which title he justly earned in bringing before the people the question as to whether the school fund should be one with deferred blessings and administered along the sanest and safest lines, or if we should look for immediate benefits which would prove to be premature before long. In his message to the Legislature in 1861 he said: “* * * Of this magnificent grant, the gift of the nation to all the millions who are to inhabit the soil of Minnesota, you are the stewards in their behalf, and it devolves upon you to see that the sacred trusts involved are faithfully executed.” When some held that the administration of the school lands was too great a task for a central State authority to perform, and that it had better be left to each county to use the school lands within its boundaries as seemed best to that county, Gov. Ramsey’s idea again won the day and the result is the administration by State authority of
THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL AT TRAIL, POLK COUNTY

DISTRICT 69—POLK COUNTY
Two-Room Country School

DISTRICT 272—POLK COUNTY
Warm Lunches Served Here During Cold Season

N. A. THORSON
Superintendent
all school lands. That this was the wisest policy may be concluded from the fact that not one dollar of the public school fund has been lost through investment. A minimum price was placed upon school lands and the disposal of the same was to be at public auction.

Timber school lands proved very valuable and soon the sale on such lands was discontinued until the timber had been cut and sold. The Legislature of 1855 provided that, except when in danger of waste or injury, timber lands should not be sold. There remain, therefore, today school lands whose maturing timber accrues to the general fund.

The discovery of iron ore on some of the school lands added a new chapter to the story of the almost fabulous fund. No more ore lands were sold as before, but instead they were leased for twenty-five cents on each ton of iron ore mined. Mineral rights are now reserved for the State on all lands sold in the future. The funds obtained from the direct sale of school lands, timber sale, and ore revenue invested in good securities yields the money which together with the State one-mill tax is paid to school districts as apportionment on the basis of the number of pupils who have attended forty days or more in a school year. Here then is the material basis for our public school system. The following table is a vivid representation of growth of the school fund:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Apportionment per Pupil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>$0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>$2.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>$3.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>$4.60</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>$4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>$5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>$5.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not likely that this fund will ever be large enough to support the school system without the local district tax and State aid, but it will always guarantee free education to all.

EARLY HISTORY AND THE COMING OF THE SCHOOLS IN POLK COUNTY.

As has already been alluded to, Polk County was officially organized in 1873. The nation at large would soon celebrate the centennial anniversary of its birth. Minnesota had existed as a Territory since 1849 and as a State since 1858. The superintendent of public instruction had already issued his thirteenth annual report which would seem to indicate that the school system had progressed to a considerable degree. Things governmental were in the very beginning, however, in the vast region of northwestern Minnesota which then bore the name of Polk County, almost a veritable empire in extent, or at least several times larger than the present county. The U. S. census showed no returns for 1870 from Polk County. Immigration from neighboring States and Canada soon resulted in early settlements, mainly along the Red River and in the vicinity of Crookston and Fisher.

Despite the five years of hard times, the population had grown to nearly 1,000 in 1875. It was here that hopeful and courageous people were to work out a future. With the early settler came also the country school, to keep open the channels of literacy by teaching mainly reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic, the time-honored "3 R's." The rural school—there was no other—arose originally as essentially a local community affair. Apportionment and other financial aids from the State were almost nil, but the school district and the district school arose in response to community needs. While the organization of school districts took place under the provisions of State law, much local concern and control of the most detailed kind characterized school-building in the early days. Here was a form of "extended democracy." When a school had once been decided upon, it became the concern of the community in a marked degree. The construction of the furniture; the length of the school term, if it can be said to have had length; the choice of teacher and how much to pay her; the itinerary in the now obsolete "boarding-around" plan,—these and other details were the direct concern of parents. The extreme simplicity of the country school made it well adapted to pioneer days. State control existed, but manifested itself in a lesser degree than now.

THE EARLY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

Under proceedings in 1872 which were not legalized until the creation of the county the following year,
Richard J. Reis was appointed County Superintendent of Schools for Polk County. The real beginning of the schools, however, came in 1876, when District No. 1 was organized at Crookston. The same year, by action of the county board, Christopher Steenerson, who now resides at Climax, this county, was duly appointed Superintendent of Schools with a salary of fifty dollars the first year. He served in that capacity until the next election, when he was chosen by the people to serve two more years. In view of the unauthorized proceedings mentioned above before the county was duly formed, and in view of the fact that Mr. Steenerson was the first person that was either appointed or elected to the office under authorized proceedings, he too, has been termed the first County Superintendent of Schools in Polk County. He served until the close of the year 1879.

The following are the first educational reports sent to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction from Polk County. They are reproduced here, as we may gather from them the first intimate knowledge of the beginnings of the Polk County schools.

COUNTY SCHOOLS IN 1877.

"Of the fourteen organized school districts in this county, seven have had school during the past year.

District No. 1, Crookston, had four months of summer school. This district also voted bonds in the amount of $2,000 for the erection of a schoolhouse. One new schoolhouse has been built and one is in course of construction. The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod has a schoolhouse in District 4 and the North Dakota Conference one in District No. 6. Portions of this county are settled by Scandinavians, many of them coming direct from the old country, wholly unacquainted with the English language. These I have tried to assist in organizing districts and in conducting school meetings.

"A great obstacle to the progress of English education among the Scandinavians is the indifferent, and in many cases hostile, attitude toward our schools of many of the better educated among them, particularly among the clergy. These enemies of secular education have for some time been crowding the Scandinavian press with the most virulent and heedless attacks on the public schools of this country. But these enemies of the public schools are perhaps not very numerous and they have many able opponents among the more enlightened and liberal-minded Scandinavians, which probably accounts for the fact that the violent discussions of the former do not seem to have very serious effects upon the mass of the people.

"This county is increasing in population very rapidly, and we hope next year to be able to report similar progress in educational matters.—C. STEENERSON, County Superintendent."

COUNTY SCHOOLS IN 1878.

"There are in this county at present seventeen organized districts, eleven of which had school during the past year.

"Competent teachers have hitherto been very scarce, but the rapid influx of intelligent immigration has partially supplied the deficiency.

"There are only five schoolhouses in this county. One of the reasons for this neglect of erecting suitable school buildings, is the size of the districts. Many of them comprise a whole township, and in some cases districts are twelve miles in length, these having been organized by the first settlers who took the timbered claims along the streams. Some of the inhabitants of such districts are in favor of dividing the district; others think it wiser to build two or three schoolhouses in one district and others think that one good school is all they can afford, but they cannot agree on the location. Many of the residents of the county have settled on railroad lands which are not yet in the market, and the settlers feel unsafe to incur heavy expenses until they can obtain title to their lands.

"The Scandinavians, who constitute the majority of the population of the county, have also parochial schools, and I think nearly all their children attend these from four to eight weeks during the year. These schools are, however, not taught in the English language and but little instruction is given in secular branches. Crookston has nearly completed its new school building, pleasantly situated, and will cost when completed nearly $4,000.—C. STEENERSON, County Superintendent; P. O. Address, Frog Point, Dakota Territory.

The year 1876 saw the formation of not only the first district in the county, but also five other districts, as follows: Districts No. 2 and No. 3, embracing East Grand Forks and some of the surrounding country; District No. 4, in Bygland Township; District No. 5, in Hubbard Township, and District No. 6, in Vineyard Township.

Just as Miss Harriet E. Bishop, a teacher from the far-off East, came, under a commission from the Board of Popular Education, to teach the first school in Minnesota, in 1847, so came a young lady from Wisconsin..."
sion to teach the first school in this county. The first school at St. Paul was conducted in an unused blacksmith shop, fitted with the standard school equipment of that day, consisting mainly of bench seats, desks supported by pegs driven into the walls, and a home-made teacher's desk. The first school in Polk County was held in a shanty, built from coarse lumber and tar paper, near the edge of the timber at Crookston. The first teacher of this school soon gave up teaching and became Mrs. Luella May Thompson, as a result of her marriage to Mr. Hugh Thompson, one of the leading merchants in the county. She was succeeded in succession by Mrs. Kelsey D. Chase. Ellery C. Davis, E. M. Walsh, and Robert Houston constituted the first school board at Crookston and first in Polk County.

Schools soon sprang up in other parts of the county, and the first district created in the extreme eastern part of the present Polk County was District No. 8, northeast of Lengby, in the Township of Columbia. Miss Krankie Bearns (later Mrs. Bernt Anderson), Atty. A. Marin, and Mr. John P. Kirsch were among the earliest teachers in this district. In describing some of his early experiences as a teacher in the county, Mr. Kirsch writes as follows:

I believe I was teaching in Dist. No. 18 in 1887. This school was on what was then known as the "tote road" between Fostot and the Bagley Dam Lumber Company. I did not find it necessary to board around, as was the custom for teachers in those days, for the reason that I was taken in by Mr. E. H. Noel, who kept a stopping-place for teamsters and lumberjacks. For a school house we used a log shack on a bachelor's claim. One side of the room was so low that one found it necessary to stoop down while passing along that wall. We had every conceivable kind of a chair, bench and church pew for desks and seats. The country was quite wild and my first real experience with the woods was getting lost in them, between the homes of Director Lillo and Clerk Aspelie. Once, when I lost my watch, we unintentionally dismissed school at noon, and another time, the children were kept till nearly dark. We then took to marking the sun light on the wall until some one went to town to 'get the time' for the school. The children gave their names as "Anderson," "Larson," "John­son," etc., and we had them take family names as "Scabebo," "Aspelie," etc. The boys came to school on skis, usually carrying a rifle, and they often reported a deer hung up for the homeward trip. Most of the families were very poor. We kept a hair clipper in the school and the teacher especially received practical training in hair-trimming, which was con­sidered one of the school's distinctive services to the community. The children's clothing and footwear were as varied as the school furniture. One family had footwear made from a green and untanned brindle cow hide, hair out, which, when they entered the school, often was frozen and "clumped" like wooden shoes. As was common in those days, the bachelors were in the majority and several school meetings were held before a school building was voted, and this not until we had the bachelors befuddled in parliamentary practice. It did not take long however before all were satisfied with the prospects for a better school home.

THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

Polk County has had ten county superintendents of schools which follow in chronological order: Richard J. Reis, appointed in 1872, before the county was duly organized; Christopher Steenerson, 1877-79; V. D. Carruth, 1880-87; E. F. Elliot, 1887-89; Thomas Casey, 1889-1891; E. J. Greffthen, 1891-93; Andrew Lommen, 1893-95; O. McRill, 1895-97; L. I. Kassa, 1897-1901; Thomas Casey, 1901-9, and N. A. Thorson, 1909, present term expiring 1919. One of the special duties of the early superintendents was the examination of teachers and issuing certificates to teach. The result was that a very indefinite standard existed for the grading of teachers. Later the examining of teachers was taken over by the State.

The following, based upon excerpts from some of the special reports made by the county superintendents of schools to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, indicates certain developments:

1882—Superintendent Carruth. When Norman County was set off, nineteen school districts were also taken from the county. The following remarkable growth is noteworthy:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1879.............</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$ 7,000</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882.............</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>37,000</td>
<td>1,701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty new schoolhouses, at a cost of $18,000, were built in the year 1884. The greatest needs were school buildings and teaching facilities.

1888—Superintendent Elliot. Low wages and short school terms combine to keep out many good teachers. The Crookston School was commended for good teaching work. The professional study by teachers has grown and some efforts have been made to grade and systematize the school work. "The law on temperance-hygiene has produced some good results, but the use of intoxicants and cigarettes still exists," adds Super-
intendant Elliot. The county system of examining teachers is not satisfactory.

1894—Superintendent Lommen. Both a training school and an institute for teachers have been held in the county. The uniform text-book plan is in vogue, and the number of school libraries is increasing. A fine new school building has been erected at East Grand Forks.

1898—Superintendent Kassa. Thirteen new school districts and fourteen new schoolhouses are the product of one year. Little attention is given to ventilation in school building construction. There is a greater demand for efficient teachers.

1902—Superintendent Casey. The supply of teachers is insufficient. Agitation for school consolidation appears to be growing. “General prosperity” is said to exist.

1908—Superintendent Casey. The number of school districts has now reached 215. Nearly every school has free text-books. One hundred and nine districts have libraries. No schools have been closed in connection with transporting children, but some parents haul their children to neighboring towns to attend school. It is claimed that school consolidation is better on both economic and pedagogical grounds, and the objections to this form of school merger are overbalanced by the advantages. The yearly meetings of school officers have had a salutary effect upon the schools. Many schools have installed special systems of heating and ventilation. The depression always noted in the unventilated school disappears where these devices are used.

COUNTY SCHOOLS IN 1910.

The varying conditions, ranging from the very best to the very poorest schools in the county, present an almost true picture of the evolution of the rural school. An occasional brick-supported stove still remains, but up-to-date heating and ventilating systems are going in at a rapid rate. Fifteen schools added libraries. Antiquated text-books are being replaced by new ones. The progressive teacher is in growing demand. Inquiries relative to the establishing of consolidated schools are increasing in number. Four special parents’ and officers’ meetings for the consideration of consolidation were conducted. In view of the fact that the compulsory law defines the duties of parents and children with respect to school attendance, it would be only right that the State should guarantee a term of stated length, a course well-defined and suitable, a school building commodious and sanitary, a complete and useful equipment, and teachers that are professionally and academically trained. A special state aid for transportation is urged. Several school stables have been erected.

Two teacher-training departments, one at Crookston and the other at McIntosh, working in the interest of the rural schools, are turning out teachers somewhat professionally trained. These activities prove a boon to the country school. Educational literature receives more attention. The use of a course of study is becoming more general. The number of State-aided schools has increased one hundred per cent, and these schools are the most prosperous in the county. School officers’ meetings, with practical programs, continue to attract large numbers. Many teachers are voluntarily preparing themselves to teach agriculture. Industrial contests have been started and promise to foster activities of special interest to the home and the school. Many schools offer systematic work in agriculture and sewing. Such subjects tend to ward off a dislike for agricultural pursuits. Two hundred and one schools have free libraries. In 1910 there were 778 trees planted on school grounds. The Crookston School of Agriculture and the special departments in the high schools offer excellent opportunities for our people along the lines of industrial education.

SOURCES OF SCHOOL SUPPORT.

The common schools in Polk County, as elsewhere in the State, have derived their support from (a) apportionment, (b) special State aid voted by the Legislature out of the general tax fund of the State, (c) certain small fines, and (d) the local district tax.
APPORTIONMENT.

This support has been paid to districts where school has been in session five months during the year, on the basis of the number of pupils who have attended forty days or more in any year. Under the new law of 1915, apportionment will be paid to districts where school is in session at least six months during the year, in proportion to the number of pupils that attended school at least forty days during the preceding year. In recent years apportionment has been paid out of a fund consisting of the interest on the permanent school fund and the State one-mill tax. Under the new law, the only source of apportionment will be the permanent school fund, and will be known as the endowment fund. The state one-mill tax for schools will be known as the current school fund. This fund is intended to assist districts in which a fifteen-mill levy will not produce $500 for such school, in session seven months. It will also be used to make up deficits in State aid and for tuition for non-resident pupils in industrial departments of high, graded, and consolidated schools.

Out of the 8,653 pupils enrolled in all the schools of Polk County in 1914, 7,720 were counted for apportionment at the rate of $5.80 per pupil.

STATE AID.

A child residing in the poorest section of Minnesota is as valuable to the State as the child whose home is on "Millionaire Street" in our large cities. The State tries to equalize educational opportunities for all the children by a system of State aid, which it takes out of the general taxes of the State and pays to school districts. This question has often been asked: "Of what good is State aid? We take it out of one pocket and put it in another." But this is not so. Over half of all the State aid money is paid by the three large cities, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth, and the counties in which they are situated. The other portion, less than half of the State aid, is therefore paid by over eighty counties. The amount on each county is small, and on each district only a trifle, of a few cents.

State aid to the schools in Polk County has grown to considerable proportions of late. The five high schools, which in 1908 received altogether $6,895, received $18,070 in 1915, distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regular Aid</th>
<th>Industrial Aid</th>
<th>Associated Training Aid</th>
<th>Dept. Aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crookston</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Grand Forks</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertile</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosston</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The graded schools at Fisher, Erskine, Carman, and Eldred received each $600 State aid in 1915.

During the period stated above for high schools, the State aid to one and two-teacher schools in the county increased from $3,110, given to 29 schools, to $13,380, with 127 schools participating.

The consolidated schools in the county received State aid as follows in 1915 in addition to the regular aid: Eldred, $1,200; Trail, $600.

Each of the schools received building aid equal to one-fourth of the cost of the building, not to exceed $1,500. The new law allows a building aid up to $2,000 on the same basis.

PRESENT POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS—THE HIGH SCHOOLS.

The high school is a part of our common school system; it is under no separate control or tax levy, and is maintained by public tax and governed by a Board of Education, through its administrative officer, the City Superintendent.

The first high school in Polk County was organized under Superintendent S. A. Farnsworth, who was succeeded by Supt. John Moore. The latter served for fifteen years. Others who headed the Crookston schools previous to the present incumbent were Superintendents Hitchcock, Sellek, McIntire, and Hess.

There are now five high schools in Polk County located in the larger towns and superintended as follows: Crookston, Superintendent G. Sanberg; East Grand Forks, Superintendent F. E. Lurton; Fertile, Superintendent E. M. Hauge; Fosston, Superintendent...
ent, L. G. Mustain; McIntosh, Superintendent E. E. Hanson. The combined value of their schoolhouses and sites is over a half million dollars. All of them maintain departments of domestic science and manual training. Crookston and East Grand Forks have special departments in school music (under separate supervisors), art, commercial subjects, and normal training, in addition to those named. McIntosh, also, maintains a normal training department. East Grand Forks, Fosston, and McIntosh also have strong departments in agriculture. The activities in this subject extend also to associated rural schools at McIntosh and East Grand Forks, affiliated for instruction in industrial subjects.

In connection with the normal training departments at McIntosh and Crookston, a special rural practice school at each place is arranged for, where the prospective teachers, through actual school room practice, may gain valuable experience before they are licensed to teach. These are real rural schools, in charge of the regular teachers, and are located about five miles from the central school. Students in training for teaching are required to spend a stated time in the practice school.

A definite plan for vocational guidance has been inaugurated at Crookston recently.

Departmental work for the upper grades below the high school is established in the larger places. Under this arrangement pupils are taught by several teachers in any one term. Each instruction teaches a lesser number of subjects, but more grades. The Junior High School involves this plan.

The generous State aid to high schools is a trust fund given them to maintain certain departments and courses which shall be open to any person of school age in the state. Tuition in the high school is free.

**Graded Schools.**

The smaller villages of the county have a problem of their own. Here we find pupils ready for nearly all grades, from the primary up through the high school. The number of teachers and the housing facilities are naturally somewhat limited. The definite control by the State Board, as to certain definite standards—such as the quality of the teachers and their certification, the material equipment of the school, the course of study, adequate provision for light and heating, books, etc., has been the result of the State's great concern for the schools in such places.

Our graded schools—which, together with sites, are valued at nearly $45,000—are located at Carman, Fisher, Erskine, and Eldred. Classes covering subjects belonging to the first two years of high school usually are offered in most of these places. At Erskine, five teachers are employed, while the other schools each have four. The Eldred School is of the consolidated type and offers courses in domestic science, manual training and agriculture. Here the people have realized and crystallized into a living reality the theory that pure academic knowledge alone does not spell achievement, as of old. Eldred has a school auditorium where the people of the community frequently come together.

**The Country School.**

A school system must be all-containing. To accomplish this we have retained very largely the historic one-room school in the open country. Its numbers have continued to increase as new lands have become occupied. In the 216 districts, outside of those maintaining high and graded schools, there are now three schools having three teachers each; nine two-teacher schools and 220 one-room one-teacher schools. The three-teacher schools in the county are at Beltrami, Mentor and Trail. The last named is of the consolidation type and offers industrial courses.

Two-room schools are found at Angus, Climax, Dugdale, District No. 69, Euclid, Gully, Lengby, Nielsville, and Winger. At the last named place, evening classes for adults are organized under the supervision of the day school teachers.

Schools with two or three teachers are classified as semi-graded schools. Some of them offer work in the ninth and even the tenth grade. Recitation periods
are naturally crowded and these schools are very limited in caring for school needs of the oldest pupils. Most of our semi-graded schools offer good nuclei for consolidation.

About 60 per cent of the children enrolled in the public schools of the county attend schools having only one teacher. The average attendance in days by each pupil, which is nearly 95, is 57 days less than the average for pupils enrolled in the high and graded schools, despite the fact that the average has been advancing steadily. Two hundred and seven of these districts have free text books; 66 districts have more than 10 pupils enrolled, but less than 20, while in 15 districts less than ten are enrolled. Among the common schools, eighteen have had some form of transportation for pupils.

We have over 125 State aided rural schools which are really standardized schools that have met certain requirements in equipment, school buildings, school term, library, heating and ventilation, school grounds, and outbuildings. These schools must employ teachers with special training or actual experience for at least seven months during the year. Such schools will hereafter be known as Class B schools. Class A schools must maintain school for at least eight months.

A plan of giving school credit for work at home is practiced in some districts. This ties the school up closer to the parents, who are glad to have their children consider the chores and smaller jobs about the home as something worthy of recognition which appeals to the children's pride in performing.

**CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS.**

At the present time Polk County has two consolidated schools, one at Eldred organized in 1912 and one at Trail organized in 1914. Both these schools have modern buildings, equipped with fan ventilating systems, indoor flush toilets, and pressure water fountains. In addition to these modern appliances the school at Eldred has an electric lighting system. Both schools offer courses with regular and systematic instruction in agriculture, manual training and domestic arts. The Eldred school is a graded school with four teachers. The Trail school is a semi-graded school with three teachers.

The advent of these schools marks a new epoch in rural education in Polk County. In addition to furnishing better teaching facilities and an opportunity for country children to pursue advanced studies and industrial subjects while living at home, these schools are reaching out to the community at large, and as a result we find literary societies, choral clubs, lecture courses and other notable community enterprises springing up.

The consolidated school at Trail was the first one in the state to be organized by unanimous vote. The school at Eldred was organized under bitter opposition, and not until more than one legal battle had been fought did some of the opposition subside. In both these schools, transportation under state control is supplied by the district. It has been safe and regular.

People in general concede the advantages of the consolidated school over the old plan. That consolidation is coming soon in different parts of the county, can be gathered from the fact that at least four communities are now considering the formation of consolidated districts, which will make full high school courses possible, with six or more teachers. Several other consolidation projects are under consideration.

The success of consolidation where tried has laid its claim to the attention of our people, and each new year finds a larger number giving serious thought to this all-important school problem—the most important which the countryside has yet to solve in the secular education of the children.

**SUPERVISION.**

By means of a system of monthly reports to the county superintendent, which recently inaugurated in this county the work of the schools, is more closely supervised. This has resulted in a more thorough and systematic preparation of the work by many of the teachers. The condition of the attendance each month is watched. The keeping-up of records is constantly
before the teacher. The material needs of the school reported in duplicate to the clerk, can now receive the speedier action of the board. The scope of work covered in each subject and class and the monthly standings of pupils go into the records of the county superintendent. This system, while it requires additional time for checking up on the reports, and the making of the same once a month, has proved to be fruitful of many good results. Time used in systematizing school work is not in vain.

VISITATION.

The common schools are inspected by the county superintendent and his assistant. While the time spent at any one school is not great, yet the occasional “dropping in” by an official visitor has a salutary effect. Four hundred and twenty-five school visits were made in the county last year. Close supervision like that in a city school system is not possible under the present plan. More and closer supervision is the crying need of the country school today.

TEACHERS’ CLubs.

In the fall of 1915 a plan of teachers’ study clubs was launched in the county, with the result that twenty clubs of small groups of teachers have met at various times. Some of the clubs, at their present rate of holding meetings, will register about ten meetings by the close of the school year. The number of members in these clubs varies, ranging from three or four to ten. Reading circle books with a plan for giving credit, and other topics of special interest to teachers, are discussed. These clubs are proving popular and helpful.

WARM LUNCHES IN SCHOOLS.

The practice of catering to the physical welfare of the children by serving warm dishes to them during the noon hour is not confined to the high schools — alone, where the practice is quite general, but is to be found in many of the country schools that are fitted up with special equipment for this purpose. The teacher usually appoints from among the larger pupils those who are to look after the serving of the lunch each day. A general pantry supply is often kept at the school to supplement the cestables brought from the homes for cooking. Several plans for furnishing the materials are in vogue. The parents generally favor this innovation. The rural schools associated with McIntosh and East Grand Forks, or most of them, have good lunch outfits.

BOYS’ AND GIRLS’ CLubs.

A practical form of club work, closely affiliated with the school, includes such projects as corn-growing, bread-making, and pig-raising. Through the special efforts of the high school agriculturists and the county agent, instructions from the State Agricultural School, the office of the county superintendent, and a number of enterprising private citizens the club work in Polk County has become well established. No less than ten boys’ corn clubs existed in 1915. A number of bread clubs sent representatives to a county bread-making contest held at Crookston in July, and they competed for the right to represent Polk County at the State Fair. The pig clubs at East Grand Forks and Fosston figured prominently in the State pig-contest last year.

CROOKSTON SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE.

This branch of the State University, located at Crookston, while naturally established to serve the State at large, is, by virtue of location, an educational asset of special benefit to us. Many of the graduates of this school are carrying on extensive and up-to-date farming in this county. Summer training courses for teachers, with special inducements for the pursuit of industrial subjects, are maintained.

In connection with the regular school year, a special course for rural teachers is offered. One of the aims of this course is to fit young persons for work in consolidated schools.
We have lived through forty years of school-building in Polk County. The past has seen many school laws and administrative regulations come and go. The last word in education has not yet been spoken, and forty years more will find our schools and educational systems far in advance of what we have attained. Education which is a business of universal concern must continue to engage our people even more in the future, to the end that the paramount issues shall be wisely solved and the purposes of schools better understood.