

THE TENTH YEARBOOK

OF THE

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY
OF EDUCATION

PART I

THE CITY SCHOOL AS A COMMUNITY
CENTER

BY

H. C. LEIPZIGER, MRS. S. E. HYRE, R. D. WARDEN, C. W. CRAMPTON
E. W. STITT, E. J. WARD, MRS. E. C. GRICE
C. A. PERRY

EDITED BY THE SECRETARY

THIS YEARBOOK WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE MOBILE MEETING
OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY, WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 22 1911 7:30 P.M.

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PREFACE

This yearbook is planned to include accounts of actual experiments that have been tried in making the school a community center, so that other communities may learn of the possibilities and difficulties of putting into practice what has already been achieved in some of the most advanced communities. At the National Education Association meeting for 1902 (p. 373 of *Proceedings*) John Dewey discussed very ably the theoretical aspects of the problem as requested, but said:

I do not feel that the philosophical aspect of the matter is the urgent or important one. The pressing thing, the significant thing, is really to make the school a social center; that is, a matter of practice and not of theory. Just what to do in order to make the schoolhouse a center of full and adequate social service, to bring it completely into the current of social life—such are the matters I am sure which really deserve the attention of the public and occupy your own minds.

The contributors to this volume have described in a concrete way the extent and character of the work carried on under their direction, giving methods employed, results secured, concrete incidents, difficulties, criticisms, suggestions, and comparison with similar work in other communities.

The secretary desires to express his appreciation of the work of the specialists who have provided the material, and of the large assistance rendered by Mr. Clarence A. Perry, of the Russell Sage Foundation, in organizing the program for the yearbook.

Part II of the *Tenth Yearbook* supplements this volume with a similar discussion of "The Rural School as a Community Center."

I. ADULT EDUCATION AND THE NEW YORK PLAN OF PUBLIC LECTURES¹

HENRY M. LEIPZIGER
Supervisor of Lectures, New York City

AND

CLARENCE A. PERRY
Russell Sage Foundation, New York City

A visitor to one of the evening lecture centers sees first two flaring gas lamps illuminating a bulletin board and a pair of quick-yielding doors, then he passes into a lobby, or perhaps up a flight or two of clean stairs, animate with a procession of babbling people, and enters a sloping, amphitheater-like auditorium or else a level, desk-filled assembly-room where a man is busy with rubber-tubes, copper-tanks, and a machine on a tripod which contains two eyes, one over the other, that look straight at a square white surface stretched wall-like on the platform in front. Or perhaps, instead of this bleached expanse, he sees some tables laden with test-tubes, retorts, and wicked yellow bottles, and near by a young man crushing gritty stuff in a mortar; or maybe a background of charts shining with muscle, nerves, and viscera, setting off an amiable skeleton swinging idly from a mail, and a boy with bandaged leg and head lying supine on a table among "red-cross" lint and aseptic cotton. Or in the place of this hospital and laboratory paraphernalia he may confront an open piano with sheet-music anticipatively placed. But always he finds a hushed audience, devoid of children, awaiting the terse introduction of the speaker of the evening by the official-like personage in charge. These are some of the things witnessed between 7:30 and 8:15 on a winter's evening at the school lecture centers in New York. A moment after the latter hour the doors will be locked and the door-tender beyond the reach of entreaties.²

¹ This paper is composed of excerpts from Mr. Leipziger's official reports supplemented by excerpts from Mr. Perry's *Wider Use of the School Plant*. Mr. Leipziger was prevented at the last moment from preparing a special paper that he had planned for this yearbook, and Mr. Perry kindly provided this material. The footnotes indicate the sources of the excerpts.—EDITOR.

² Perry, *Wider Use of the School Plant*, 200.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

There are at present 118 school buildings in use as lecture centers, of which 40 have auditoriums of the newer style, 30 have so-called assembly halls not used for class purposes, 24 have assembly halls consisting of classrooms with sliding doors, and in 24 of the buildings the lectures are given on the playground floor; of these 24, 17 are in Manhattan and 6 in the Bronx.

The playground floors are chosen because so many people dislike climbing up so many steps to the top floor. But these playground floors should not be used at all, as the ceilings are low and the floors are flat, so that those in the rear cannot well see the illustrations thrown upon the screen, and there is constant rising and sitting on the camp chairs; besides which, the halls are difficult to heat and ventilate in winter, and altogether are exceedingly unsightly. They are not proper places for the meeting of citizens who come to learn.

In addition to the 118 public-school buildings that are in use, there are 46 halls, other than public-school buildings, and these halls are engaged because in the locality in which they are situated they afford better facilities than those offered by the school buildings of the vicinity. Some of these are church halls. (Rental is paid for seventeen of these halls, while twenty-nine are given rent free.¹)

CLASSIFICATION OF LECTURES

Lectures have been arranged in groups according to subjects, each group subdivided into smaller groups. In arranging the various programs, closely allied subjects from the several groups are selected in rotation, thus providing in each center a curriculum of lecture studies. In selecting subjects for the lectures, the expressed desire of the people, the known characteristics of the neighborhood, and the previously arranged programs are considered. The groups are:

First Group

LITERATURE, HISTORY, SOCIOLOGY, ART

I—Literature. II—History. III—Social Subjects. IV—Fine Arts.

Second Group

GENERAL AND APPLIED SCIENCE

I—Astronomy. II—Physics. III—Chemistry. IV—Geology. V—Biology. VI—Physiology and Hygiene. VII—Industries.

¹ Leipziger, *Annual Report of the Supervisor of Lectures, 1909-10* (New York).

Third Group

DESCRIPTIVE GEOGRAPHY

I—North America. II—United States. III—British North America. IV—Central America and the West Indies. V—South America. VI—Europe. VII—Asia. VIII—Africa. IX—Hawaii, the Philippines, Australasia.

Special Group

LECTURES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

I—Lectures in Italian. II—Lectures in Yiddish. III—Lectures in German.

It has been possible to adapt the first and second groups to the special purpose of encouraging definite study along special lines in co-operation with college or university, and this method is being extended to all of the groups. Lectures in all subjects have been planned for the broad purpose of popularizing general knowledge. In the science group many lectures of a practical nature have been introduced, bearing on domestic science and industry. Lectures on physiology, anatomy, and hygiene have been arranged with the end in view of furthering in every manner possible the work of the Department of Health.¹

COURSES OF LECTURE-STUDIES WITH EXAMINATIONS

To encourage earnest study along definite lines the following courses of lectures by well-known educators were held and many persons have regularly attended these courses and have taken the examinations.

The development of fiction.—A course of twenty-eight lectures was given by Dr. Charles F. Horne, of the College of the City of New York, during the past season and examinations were given to a large number, many of whom passed creditably.

American history.—A course of twenty-eight lectures was given by Dr. William B. Guthrie, of the College of the City of New York, and examinations were held.

Economics.—A course of twenty-eight lectures was given by Professor Walter E. Clark, of the College of the City of New York, and for attendance and proficiency in examination at this course certificates were awarded.

Electricity and magnetism.—A course of twenty-eight lectures was given by Mr. W. Wallace Ker, of the Hebrew Technical Institute.

First aid to the injured.—Many courses having a direct practical

¹ Leipziger, *op. cit.*

bearing on human life have been given, chief of which are the courses of five lectures on "First Aid to the Injured" offered with the co-operation of the Society for First Aid to the Injured. This year the course was repeated in 26 centers by 12 physician-lecturers to audiences aggregating 17,616 persons and averaging 135. For attendance and proficiency in examination at these courses 780 certificates were awarded.

Examination questions used in connection with the courses in literature, history, economics, and first aid to the injured may be found in another part of this report.

Besides the courses followed by examinations, there were offered in 1909-10 one hundred courses of lectures covering a wide range of subjects, in many of which printed syllabi were prepared and distributed to the audience. It was the invariable practice of the lecturers after each lecture to hold a conference with the audience, at which questions were asked and answered, and helpful suggestions were given for reading and special study.¹

MISCELLANEOUS LECTURE TOPICS

Here is a list of titles chosen from the program of 1908-9: "Municipal Cleaning and Its Relation to Public Health"; "Housing in Europe"; "Goethe: Man the Mirror of the World"; "Walt Whitman and the Hope of Democracy"; "Mohammedanism and the Crusades"; "Uncle Sam's Own Story of the Declaration of Independence"; "The City Beautiful, or the Planning and Embellishment of Cities"; "How shall a Girl Earn a Living?"; "The Man That is Down and Out"; "The Songs and Basketry of the North American Indians"; "Applications of Electric Signals"; "The Life Story of the Honey Bee"; "The Treatment of Shock, Bleeding, Burns, Exposure to Cold and Frostbite"; "Life in a Coal Breaker"; "Real Cowboy Life in the Far West"; "Street Life in Paris"; and "A Trip to Central Africa." Altogether there were 1,575 different topics, covering the whole field of human interests, upon which the audiences were instructed and entertained.²

STATISTICS FOR THE SEASON 1909-10

During this period lectures were delivered in 166 lecture centers, distributed over all the boroughs of the city of New York. A staff of

¹ Leipziger, *op. cit.*

² Perry, *Wider Use of the School Plant*, 201-2.

708 lecturers spoke on 1,654 different topics before 5,196 audiences. The total attendance was 959,982, an average of 185 per lecture.

The increase in the number of courses of lectures during the past year was marked, and the interest of the auditors who attended courses of lectures proved that the desire for instruction on the part of a large number of the attendants is greater than the desire for entertainment. Several of these courses consisted of 28 lectures and were accompanied by quizzes, collateral reading, and examinations.

Some of the centers have become identified with definite types of lectures. For the last seven years lectures on science have been given each Saturday night at St. Bartholomew's. In other centers systematic courses in literature or history are given, extending over a period of years, so that those who attend regularly—as many do—receive the benefit of what may be considered a complete course of instruction in some one subject.

In centers where lectures are held twice weekly, the lectures on one night are of a more serious nature and on the other evening of a more popular character, so that all the intellectual desires of the neighborhood are appealed to; one purpose of the opening of the lecture course is to make the schoolhouse not only a place of instruction, but a place of recreation as well, and a community house in the largest sense.

Lectures in the Italian, Yiddish, and German languages, having for their purpose the preparation of immigrants for citizenship, have been successfully continued, and lectures on "First Aid to the Injured" and "The Prevention of Tuberculosis" have been made special features.¹

THE SPEAKERS

Lecturers from every walk in life are employed in this work. Besides a large company of professors and instructors representing fourteen colleges and universities, there are experts in city-planning, housing, and playgrounds, authorities on explosives, street-cleaning, and municipal water-supply, art students who have traveled in Italy and Greece, educators loaded with fresh spoils from the British Museum, distinguished scientists, eminent jurists, influential politicians, public-spirited physicians, and prominent citizens of all classes.²

¹ Leipziger, *op. cit.*

² Perry, *op. cit.* 201.

LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS AND OPERATORS

During 1909-10, 134 local superintendents and 56 stereopticon operators have had charge of the work in the various lecture centers. In selecting the local superintendents, care has been taken to find men who understand the spirit of the lectures, and who are fitted by experience and personality to study the intellectual and social conditions of the community, and to shape their work accordingly. Teachers in the public schools have been found especially well fitted for the duties of local superintendents. The stereopticon operators, men of long experience, have done efficient service at the lectures and have taken good care of the delicate apparatus intrusted to their charge.

LOCAL COMMITTEES

In many lecture centers a local committee co-operates with the local superintendent and the office in calling the attention of the neighborhood to the lectures and in making suggestions that will supply the neighborhood need; this committee stands ready at any time to be called upon to work in connection with this department.

THE LECTURES AND THE LIBRARIES

There has always been a close relation between the public lectures and the various branches of the public libraries. With the completion of many new library buildings it has become possible to establish new lecture centers in the libraries and to transfer old centers to these buildings. On the evenings of the lectures the libraries have been kept open for one-half hour after the conclusion of the lectures, during which time the patrons have been permitted to withdraw books for supplementary reading. In some instances exhibits, illustrating the lectures, have been prepared and placed on view in library reading-rooms.

It has been customary to print on the various bulletins announcing the lectures the location of the most convenient branch of the public library, where books on the subjects of the lectures are especially set apart for supplementary reading. This has resulted in a very large increase in the circulation of the books on the subjects of the lectures. During 1909-10, 86 libraries co-operated in this manner with the public lectures.

The following are a few excerpts from the many suggestive reports

received from the librarians regarding the success of the public lectures during the year just concluded:

"My observation of the influence of the lectures upon reading is that 'the books brought before the public circulate much more frequently.'"

"There was a noticeable increase in the demand for books on music while the lectures on that subject were being given. There is also an increased demand for books on the French Revolution, lectures on which are now being given."

"The circulation of books on music and travel has increased considerably. A number of such books which have never circulated before have gone out several times since they have been placed on separate shelves."

"The lectures on history stimulated the circulation of books on that subject."

"My observation of the influence of the lecture upon the reading of the library is 'A demand for non-fiction books of all classes during courses of lectures.'"

"There has been an increased demand for books on 'First Aid to the Injured,' physiology, hygiene, etc., and also on the books to be read in connection with the literature courses."

"There has been a lively demand this season for books on Economics as a direct result of the lectures given at the Wadleigh High School. We have been very much helped this year through the good book lists which were suggested in the syllabus."

"The class books recommended on the printed circular by the Board of Education were in constant demand and many books of travel circulated in connection with the lectures."¹

LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE

Many hundreds of letters of appreciation have been received from all classes of people.

The following extracts are quoted from letters by those people who have attended:

"We live two miles from the place of lecture and only the severest storm keeps us away, and it would be impossible to say which we like best."

"I am the wife of a minister; both my husband and myself observe with much pleasure the ever-increasing interest taken in the weekly lectures. In a place like this, remote from places of amusement, the lectures are a great boon."

¹ Leipziger, *op. cit.*

"I wish to state that First Aid lectures are very good and helpful, as my work lays around ship-yards and docks, where men are injured every day, and a little knowledge of First Aid often saves a man's life."

A woman seventy years of age writes:

"I have attended two lectures a week for the last nine years."

"It [Course on "Economics"] has given me the knowledge necessary to read the daily papers understandingly. I like the thirty-hour courses because I am working for a degree and can count the credits thus received."

"These lectures have kept me off the streets at nights, and have taught me something which would cost me a lot of money if I had to pay for them."¹

COST OF LECTURES

At the present time the average cost of each of the Board of Education lectures to the New York taxpayers is only \$26.05. This amount includes not only the lecturer's fee but the expense connected with the use of stereopticons, the scientific material used, printing, and administration. When the cost is computed on the basis of attendance, it amounts to only twelve cents per lecture for each person. A uniform fee of ten dollars is paid for each lecture, and, in spite of the nominal character of this fee, some of the most distinguished speakers in the country have appeared upon its platform.²

¹ Leipziger, *op. cit.*

² Perry, *op. cit.*, 207.