

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES OF VILLAGE AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

EDITED BY

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New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1914

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Set up and electrotyped. Published September, 1913. Reprinted
March, 1914; July, 1914.

Norwood Press

J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

PREFACE

THERE is nothing more characteristic of our present tendencies toward a more complete social democracy than the growing demand on the part of local communities, everywhere, and of every sort, for a more fundamental knowledge of themselves and their own native resources, physical and moral. This growing demand is natural and healthy. It marks the end of social superstition, and the real beginning of that social self-dependence and self-sufficiency which are promised in the completer developments of the scientific view of the world.

Communities everywhere are making "surveys": we are taking account of what we have in the way of developed and undeveloped resources, both physical and moral, in order that we may know what we may count upon for community defense, community development, community pride, and that finer and wider community life which must come, if it comes at all, out of the still unknown resources of our communities.

This book is offered by men and women of experience as a tool for the better development of this essential social understanding in rural and village communities. It is not only a book to be *read* and *studied*, in the ordinary sense of that word: it is also and much more a tool of inquiry, by the use of which teachers, ministers,

and social leaders in all lines may be enabled to reach that more complete knowledge of their immediate communities without which social leadership becomes mere irresponsible authority.

Here set forth are the great main lines of community interest, activity, and resource. In most communities these activities "just go on," these resources lie latent, unrelated, undeveloped, and unknown. This book presents three aspects of each of these lines of interest. *First*, each subject is represented in a general way as an aspect of the life and resources of any community. This is intended to call the student's attention to the social wealth that may be found in any community in connection with our common interests and resources of life. *Second*, by means of insistent questions in connection with each subject, the student is directed to specific phases of that subject which should be looked for and very thoroughly studied in each local community. These questions are not exhaustive, but suggestive of the possible lines of investigation open to those who would know their own communities. *Third*, a brief bibliography of the subject is included, giving the serious student hints of materials by which his aroused interest may reach out into contact with knowledge and progress along the same lines in all parts of the world, until his community becomes the world.

It is hoped that this book will help the rural and village teacher, especially, to become more completely a part of the actual life and hope and purpose of the community. The natural social and moral resources of

our country and village communities are enormous, but they are being pathetically wasted by reason of the lack of insight into the real processes of education on the part of so many of our teachers.

We are indebted to all the past and much of the present for the materials of this book. It is a contribution to that growing "social conversation" by which we are talking out, and, to some extent, thinking out, the social problems of our times. Whoever finds help in it is indebted to society to add still further to that same "social conversation." This is a time when the help of every one is needed: for the understanding of his own community and its social problems, and for the sympathetic instruction of his neighbors and neighboring community toward the same end. The world grows one as fast as knowledge comes to break down old superstitions and prejudices. Communities will be everlastingly variant because their resources are variant; but communities will become more and more of one general soul as their self-knowledge becomes more complete.

JOSEPH K. HART.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON,
SEATTLE, February 16, 1913.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION—THE COMMUNITY AS EDUCATOR . By Joseph K. Hart, Assistant Professor of Education, University of Washington.	I
II. THE PHYSICAL RESOURCES OF THE COMMUNITY . By John Lee Coulter, Expert Special Agent for Agri- culture, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C.	II
III. THE HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE COMMUNITY . By Joseph K. Hart.	29
IV. THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNITY . By John Lee Coulter.	38
V. COMMUNITY HEALTH, HYGIENE, AND SANITATION . By Dr. Eugene Kelley, State Board of Health, Seattle, Washington.	66
VI. THE LOCAL HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY . . . By Reuben Gold Thwaites, LL.D., Superintendent of Wisconsin State Historical Society; Lecturer in History in the University of Wisconsin.	83
VII. THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY . . . By Joseph K. Hart.	92
VIII. THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUTDOOR BEAUTIFICATION IN A COMMUNITY By J. Horace McFarland, President of the American Civic Association, Harrisburg, Pa.	106
IX. ECONOMY AND BEAUTY IN THE HOMES OF THE COM- MUNITY By Anna R. Van Meter, Sometime Instructor in Do- mestic Science in the University of Illinois.	120

CHAPTER	PAGE
X. THE GENERAL SOCIAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY	131
By Joseph K. Hart.	
XI. RECREATION, PLAY, AND AMUSEMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY	143
By Myron T. Scudder, Lecturer in the Montessori House of Childhood, New York, formerly Principal New Paltz State Normal School.	
XII. MORAL AND SOCIAL DEFICIENCIES OF THE COMMUNITY	166
By Professor Walter G. Beach, Department of Sociology, University of Washington.	
XIII. THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY	176
By Rev. Christopher C. Thurber, Hinton, West Virginia.	
XIV. THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY	197
By Mary E. Downey, Organizer for State Library Commission, Columbus, Ohio.	
XV. THE COMMUNITY LIFE AS CURRICULUM OF THE SCHOOL	213
By Professor Harold W. Foght, Chief of Field Service in Rural Education, United States Bureau of Education.	
XVI. COMMUNITY ACTIVITY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION	244
By George W. Knorr, Special Field Agent, Bureau of Statistics, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.	

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES OF VILLAGE AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE COMMUNITY AS EDUCATOR

"The (school) is too much with us: late and soon,
(Cramming, forgetting) we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered new like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. — Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn:
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

In the older days of the primitive community when life was centered in the immediate activities and interests of a comparatively small group, practically all the education of the younger generation went on unconsciously in the midst of, and by means of, the social life and industries of the community itself. Here was the

physical world in which they made their home; here the resources by which they sustained themselves; the industries that supported them, that bound them together, that determined the level of their living, and the bent of their thinking; the forms of government and social organization which unconsciously molded the young; the religious life that helped to enforce the controls that society needed for its preservation; the traditions, the legends and the history that brought the past to the support of the authorities of the present; the amusements, the games and the general social life that marked the times of leisure from work and from war: all these elements and others were involved in the common life of the community group, and day by day, even moment by moment, they wrought their silent and effective spell over the development and destiny of the children and the whole community.

There was no school in the formal sense of the word; and because there was none, all education was practical, thorough, and moral: practical because wrought out of the very life of the community; thorough because the tests were those of life itself, and none could call himself educated until the active world had passed upon his qualifications; and moral because, both in purpose and in content, it was the community's own life and purpose wrought into the life and purpose of the maturing child; such education was complete only when the child was thoroughly equipped with the desire and skill to continue the traditions and the interests of the community.

We have lost so much of this: no, it is not lost, it is merely lost to sight. "The (school) is *too much* with *us*." The school was a social invention, growing up (as all inventions do) for the purpose of helping the community, as it became more complex, to do some things which it could no longer do in the old, unconscious ways. But, like any institution, the school quickly learned how to claim everything in its field, until to-day, the average person never thinks of Education as being anything beyond those things which the schools give, or convey, or bestow.

That is to say, we think very little to-day of the predominant part which the common life of the community played in the education of boys and girls in the primitive world; we think very little of the fundamental part which the common forces and elements of the community still play, in spite of all our schools, in the actual education of our boys and girls. We are blind to the deepest facts of our educational situation. We give our schools credit for educational results in which the schools have had no part, and by so doing we are not only blind to the actual facts of education, but we stand in the way of that larger growth and development of the schools that is so necessary if our modern education is ever to find again that truly practical character, that social thoroughness and that real morality which were the striking characteristics of the education of the older, simpler world.

And the forces and elements for this community

education are all with us. Not that alone; for in spite of our ignoring and our ignorance of these facts, our boys and girls are being educated constantly by the communities in which they live. But, if we could get our eyes open, we could make these community elements and forces mean infinitely more than they now mean in the real education of our children. For example, in the wooded sections of the Mississippi Valley there is a wonderfully rich and varied bird life. But the average schoolboy learns to know half a dozen common birds by name: the rest are "sparrows," etc.; yet here are hundreds of birds that come and go with the seasons! And this is a simple illustration.

In this book the effort is being made to help the teachers in rural and village schools, and social leaders of all sorts in local communities, to become conscious of the great worlds of interest and possibility that in some degree even now are helping to mold the lives and purposes of the children; but which, rightly understood and appreciated, can be molded in turn until their molding of the childlife shall be to the ends of practical understanding, through development, and complete moralization of the growing child.

What are these community elements and interests? The physical resources of the community condition all the life and action of the child as well as of the community. The older human beings of the community inevitably determine the social world within which the child

shall grow up to social maturity and responsibility. The economic relationships and industrial life of the community will largely determine the way he will think and talk, the range of his opportunities and the bent of his common interests. The health of the community, its intelligent care for health, its interests, or lack of interest, in hygiene and sanitation will determine largely the efficiency and energy of the growing child. He will feed upon the traditions, the folk tales, the heroic stories, the desires, the prejudices, the hatreds, the feuds, and the inherent friendships of the community: its people shall be his people, and its gods his gods. The community government will tend to control and manipulate his chances of life; it will make a fine and noble life possible, or it will tend to produce conditions that will kill off all the chances of complete living. The out-of-doors will nurture him and feed his imagination, or it will remain a sordid and low thing, to be manipulated for the sake of profit. The very home itself will reflect the inner life of the individual, just as he reflects the inner life of the community: the home will be a place of beauty and life and culture, or it will be in some other degree removed from the level of the den of the wild beast. The general social life of the community will inspire him and draw him out and fill him with social aspirations and the finer social sympathies, or it will tend in some degree to destroy all these in him. With wholesome recreation and play and with social amusements he will recover his strength spent in the work of the day and the

week, or through all his childhood by playful exercise prepare himself for the serious doings of his maturer years. By the social idealism of the religious life of the community he will be able to link his life with the ideal purposes of the race; or if these be wanting he will find a life on the more mean levels of existence. And in the provisions which the community shall have made or shall make by which the streams of knowledge from all the golden hills of the past and present shall flow into the community will his intellectual life be enriched or destroyed.

And blessed is that community in which there are leaders who are wise enough to have realized that their own community is, historically, a part of the story of man in all the ages, and geographically a part of the home of man; and that in its life and interests and activities may be found something akin to everything the race has wrought at any time, in any place; that therefore its own activities and industries, and interests, and social necessities may quite as well be the central facts and factors in the schooling of its children as the activities and industries and interests of a world far removed in time and space. All about the children, and the adults, too, surge and flow these forces and elements of the community life. Into the midst of them the children are born and grow to their maturity. How little the schools seem when we set them over against this surging, insistent life of the community!

And yet, how much the schools might become if we could but see them in terms of their original significance,

and in their proper relationship to the life of the community. Once there were no schools, because they were not needed: the common life of the market place, and the religious ceremonial filled the child's days with active employment, his mind with social intelligence and purpose, and his heart with reverence and sympathetic fear. But as people came closer together, and life became more complex and involved, the education of the child became more technical and complicated; a profession of teachers arose, and the school became an educational instrument of the community. But the old elements and forces were still existent. The school did not, — it could not, — do away with them. It was developed to supplement in definite ways forces already in existence. It was not to supplant those forces, nor ignore them. And, because it was the last of the social institutions, developed to meet a social need, it would have been the part of wisdom for the school to be modest, and to learn to adapt itself to the changing conditions in the life of the community, striving ever to do those things which were not being done by some other element of the community's life.

All about us are the contributions which are being made to education by those more primitive elements of the community which are far more fundamental to its welfare than is the school. These contributions are largely unintentional, incidental, accidental, — all the more effective just because of these facts. What is the school to do? Shall it, also, insist upon

its purely institutional, *i.e.*, its traditional, status, and upon being just as unintentional, incidental, and accidental as the other elements of our social life? That ill becomes its protestations of intellectual leadership. Should not the school and the teacher look deeply into the life of the community, surveying with thoughtful care all the resources, activities, interests, and elements that, within the community and its organic relationships, are making educational impression upon the growing children? Should they not determine wherein the common life and activity of the community are already sufficiently educative, and should they not be wise enough to let such phases of life alone, giving to the immediate life of the people such share in the education of the children as that immediate life can do best? And should they not find wherein the educative direction of the children is being imperfectly, or badly, done, and should they not, at those places, bravely set to work, so supplementing, where help is needed, the power of the community that created the school?

There follow hereupon thirteen chapters dealing with these primitive elements in the education of the child and the community. Then follow two chapters dealing with the sort of school that is needed to-day, to meet the changed needs of our times. We have been educating our children away from their homes, their communities, and from work, toward false ideals of culture, cosmopolitanism, and leisure. The only true culture is the culture that comes through work and the

love of work. The only true cosmopolitanism is that which grows out of, and is rooted deep within, some present community: the "man without a country" is the very antithesis of a true cosmopolitan. And the only leisure that is not vulgar is the leisure that is worthily won, and that is socially above criticism.

The Community is the true educational institution. Within the community there is work that educates and provides for life; within the community are the roots of the cosmopolitanism that marks the truly educated man; within the community there is room for a noble and dignified culture and leisure for all. Let us become aware of our community resources, physical, social, moral. Let us recognize the part they play and will always play in the actual education of our boys and girls. Let us consciously extend their powers within legitimate bounds until our modern education within the community shall be, as completely as possible, natural, immediate, and free. Let us organize our socially supplementary institution,—the school,—until it shall adequately reënforce the work of education where it is weak and supply it where it is wanting. So, and only so, will the child become really educated, the community find education genuine, practical, thorough, and vitally moral, and the school become in our times what it was originally intended to be,—the social instrument for doing those things of an educational nature which are not already being done more effectively by the primitive and unconscious influences of the community's common life.

J. K. H.

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