

## High School Agriculture

### Good Work That Is Being Done at the Manassas (Va.) Agricultural High School.

The Manassas Agricultural High School came about as the result of an act of the 1908 Legislature, which gave an appropriation of 2,000 to establish courses in agriculture, domestic science and manual training in one high school in each of the ten Congressional Districts. Manassas was chosen because it had a well-established classical high school to serve as a nurse-plant on which to graft the vocational scion. It was also chosen because the people of Manassas had made a vigorous, though unsuccessful, effort to secure a State Normal School. In other words, the agricultural school was placed here for reasons of educational or political expediency; not because the farmers asked for the school, or promised it their support. If the farmers were lukewarm, the townspeople were indifferent. They had wanted a normal, but failing to get that, they preferred a small appropriation to none. Accordingly they agreed to build a school building and purchase land. This was in part by subscription, but mostly by tax. Nearly \$20,000 was expended on a new building and twelve acres of very poor land, of which five acres are used for experimental plats and the remainder for lawns and playgrounds.

In order to teach the new subjects, two teachers were employed in addition to the three already in the high school. One of the original staff prepared herself to teach domestic science, and a graduate of Cornell University College of Agriculture was put at the head of the school to teach the agriculture.

The introduction of vocational subjects has had a remarkably good effect on the whole school. There were, at their introduction, about thirty pupils in high school; while now, four years later, there are seventy-five well-prepared and enthusiastic pupils. While it is still a comparatively small school, one must remember that this is a thinly settled part of the State, with bad roads, and country schools which seldom run more than seven months. It is interesting to observe that the success of the vocational subject has not been at the expense of a well rounded and balanced course of study. The students learn not only the elements of agriculture, domestic science and manual training, but they learn as much as in any other high school of language, history, literature and mathematics. It is an illuminating commentary to note that 90 per cent of those completing the eighth grade enter high school, and that practically all of our graduates enter college or go to normals.

The attitude of the patrons of the school at the time of the introduction of vocational subjects was, as I have indicated, not very enthusiastic. This did not take the form of hostility, but as apathy, with some inclination to ridicule the attempt. This was reflected by the pupils, few of whom cared to study the new subjects. The present attitude is entirely changed. Cordial sympathy, active support and willing co-operation have replaced the former indifference, while a sincere respect for scientific agriculture has replaced the cheap ridicule of "book farming." It is not easy to explain or define a change of public opinion. It cannot be weighed, measured or counted, yet in this case it is probably the greatest factor in the success of the school. An indication of this change may be found in the number of people who come to the school for expert advice on agricultural topics. During the first

year hardly a dozen people came regularly to the school for aid. The second year saw some improvement, and now after four years there is seldom a day when several people do not seek technical advice from the director of the school. Some of the topics most frequently presented are: Milk and cream testing; testing cows for tuberculosis; spraying, pruning and grafting trees; seeding; Alfalfa; mixing fertilizers; and preparing balanced rations for live stock. The reason for this may be found in the fact that real scientific agriculture invariably gives results. The pure-bred cow gives more milk, the balanced ration increases production and reduces the expense, the sprayed tree bears the perfect fruit, the limed and inoculated soil raises Alfalfa, and so on.

At its opening the school was handicapped by the lack of any organization among the farmers with which it might co-operate. To make this more acute, a large proportion of the farmers were new to the land and strangers to each other, separated by bad roads and belonging to a multitude of religious sects. Under these circumstances the formation of some sort of an agricultural organization became imperative.

In November of the first year a farmers' institute was called at which the late Dr. Seaman A. Knapp spoke with his usual inspiration. A month later a second was held, at which steps were taken to make a permanent organization. Speakers from the United States Department of Agriculture or the State Agricultural Department were secured and a series of institutes held, which have lasted four years and gone through thirty meetings. Realizing that it is neither pleasant nor profitable for men to be alone, the ladies were invited, and during the last year formed a woman's auxiliary to the farmers' institute. Men and women meet together in the morning and listen to a speaker of general interest, but in the afternoon each group meets by itself and discusses questions of a more technical nature. At noon a lunch is served by the domestic science class, after which a social hour follows, giving opportunity to renew old acquaintances and form new ones. In this way it has done more to promote the social side of the community than any other agency. Some 250 people are members of this organization and for the past year the average attendance has been well over 100. Besides the regular meetings, three corn shows, a poultry show, two four-day meetings and a field demonstration of spraying have been held.

There are many illustrations of better farming and larger crops as a direct result of the efforts of the school and institute. Mr. S., living a mile west of town, raised the best ten-acre field of grass in the county by strictly following directions given him. His farm was notably poor and had not raised a good crop of grass in the memory of living men. Mr. R. harvested twelve bushels of sweet cherries from a tree on which they had hitherto rotted before ripening, by spraying with self-cooked lime and sulphur. Mr. H. was induced to discard deep cultivation of corn, and despite the severe drought of 1911, he won the prize for the best ten ears of white corn. Mr. C. and others are successfully raising Alfalfa. His neighbor, Mr. B., changed his ration for cows, making it conform to the feeding standards, with the result that the cost was reduced and

the flow of milk increased. Fourteen dairy herds have cleared themselves of tuberculosis by the aid of the school, all of whom had for years resisted the efforts of the district board of health to compel a test.

I could name a hundred other specific instances; in fact, so common have better farm practices become that the remark was made by one of the best farmers, "Had the drought of 1911 come ten years ago it would have brought ruin to the country; but the practice of deep plowing, shallow cultivation and more humus has been so industriously taught by the school and farmers' institute that a fair crop was made without rain." This better farming has, of course, been reflected in the higher price of real estate. In the four years since the school was established the price of real estate has advanced at least 30 per cent and some farms have doubled in value. It is not easy to give specific instances of rise in real estate, because men who are making good on their farms do not sell.

We have no regular transportation of pupils from the rural schools, as the impassible winter roads and the objections of the people have proved to be as yet insurmountable obstacles. However, some twenty pupils do come in their own conveyances, and as many more board in the village.

The demonstration work of the United States Department of Agriculture has been organized in this county but a few weeks and its relations to the school are simply those of friendly co-operation. The director of the school has acted as secretary of the farmers' institute and has actually done all of the extension and demonstration work in the county.

A Boys' Corn Club has been in successful operation for three years. A Girls' Tomato Canning Club has forty members, while eighteen boys are raising competitive acres of corn. Some of this work will probably devolve upon the county demonstration agent, but thus far it has been done by the director of the school on his own initiative and solely for the purpose of making the school of the utmost value to the community and with the agricultural high school as the social and intellectual center of community life, develop an ideal rural life.—H. F. Button, in The Rural New-Yorker.

#### CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISES.

Dear Brethren:—I want to add my approval to the timely suggestions of Brother Green and President Alexander along the lines of Business Co-operation. We need a general revival and awakening along this line of union work. While we have quite a number of business co-operative enterprises already established, we should have many more. There should be at least one in each county, owned and operated by the Farmers' Union, warehouses for storing cotton have proven quite a help in handling this year's cotton crop. Several thousand dollars have been saved through our local warehouse arrangements. This has enabled our cotton farmers to keep their cotton from going upon a crowded market, thereby helping to hold up prices. Manufacturers and cotton buyers are paying higher prices for cotton stored in warehouses than when sold on the open market. Other union co-operative enterprises, such as stores, gineries, oil mills, factories, mills, etc., should be encouraged by the union, supported and patronized by its members.

Yours fraternally,  
J. R. RIVES.  
Sanford, Nov. 18, 1912.

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