

# New Things in Omaha Public Schools

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, IS the day fixed for the opening of the Omaha Public Schools, when several new instructors will begin their duties, and a number of new features will be added to the course of study. Superintendent Graff is looking forward to an unusually active year in the schools.

**S**UNBURNED and tousle-headed the youngsters of other days watched the summer fade and with a great sadness in their hearts heard the melancholy tolling of the bell on the first day of school. Behind them lay a thousand joys, for they had been knights of the willow fishing pole and many a mullein stalk had fallen before them in battle. The future stretched away as numberless days of grinding, heart-rending labors, under the watchful eye of a stern man who believed in the books and looked upon the rod as a holy instrument, and could see little use for fun or play.

So have 20,000 boys and girls in Omaha, in other days, looked forward to the beginning of school and trembled, but when the public schools are opened, September 8, there will be no terror in the occasion for the little tots, nor irksome grind for "the higher ups." The men who are held responsible for education, often planning wisely during vacations when others play, have sought to invest books and blackboards and desks with the spirit to which the young ever pay homage. "These are the things you will do when you go out into real life," they say. "We are making school practical. You are going to school to learn wonderful things, but at the same time you are doing what your father and mother are doing."

And here are the reasons why the old terror has vanished: Boys and girls may spend much of their time at school in laboratory work; a large class in sewing will be started; manual training has been made a part of the work in several additional schools; and at the Omaha High school the agricultural work will be extended to include odd experiments with soils; the German language will be taught in the grades, and there is at this time a peculiar attraction in this guttural speech for the war-like young males.

Nearly a score of teachers have come back from the heart of war-scarred Europe and they will have tales to tell and in the after-work hours there will be interested audiences, for no Indian battle story ever swayed the young more than the story of this awful war on the continent and in the air over Europe. And skillfully told the tale will point a mighty peace moral.

There is, therefore, some romance in the opening of schools this year, but there is more than romance, for many vital changes have been and a few interesting experiments will be tried. Principal C. E. Reed of the high school has arranged for a class of physiography, under the supervision of a Michigan university man, Lee W. Harrington. The agricultural students will be given a free rein in experimental work, assisted by Miss Caroline Stringer, head of the natural science department.

Principal Reed has arranged to give high school students an opportunity to choose their own teachers. This they will do when they enroll. Several teachers, owing to the large classes, will teach the same subjects, and if a student has preference he may select his favorite teacher.

The chief innovation at the high school, however, is a sewing class, to which either girls or boys may aspire. Hearing early of the intention to start this class as something separate from the domestic science work, 130 girls have applied for admission. Only about 120 can be accommodated, and the principal and the supervisor believe girls should be given preference over boys, which will practically eliminate boys from the first year's work. Principal Reed, however, intends to enlarge the class as opportunity offers. Rooms have now been fitted up for it, sewing machines installed and thread and needle laid ready to hand.

It is Principal Reed's opinion that this work may be increased ultimately to include fancy sewing and dressmaking and the art of millinery. The classes will be enlarged from year to year and the length of the course may, after this year, be increased from one to two years. Miss Verda Williams, graduate of the University of Chicago, has been secured to supervise this work. Superin-



Omaha Central High School

tendent E. U. Graff of the public schools recommended Miss Williams to the school board after an investigation which took him to several eastern cities, where he interviewed applicants for this and other positions. This year sophomores, juniors and seniors will be admitted to the sewing class, but after the first year admission will be restricted to sophomores or sophomores and juniors.

An important improvement has been made at the custodian's shop at Twenty-first and Nicholas streets, in the nature of a large kiln wherein will be hardened the articles made by the clay modelers of the manual training department of the grades.

The manual training work has been extended to include Sherman and Train schools, which were remodeled during the summer to make room for this department. Only five of the thirty-six schools of the city are now without a manual training department—Dupont, Central, Lincoln, Druid Hill and Webster. Best equipment possible is used in the manual training rooms, material is furnished to the children at little cost and each carpenter or clay modeler may retain the product of his handicraft.

Herr Ferdinand Stedinger, supervisor of German, begins his first real work of teaching this language in the Omaha schools, for the course has reached out into the grades and on petition of parents of pupils will be taught in Bancroft, Castelar, Lake, Long, Edward Rosewater, Franklin, Train, Webster and Vinton. Under a state law passed by a recent legislature the Board of Education must teach any of the modern European languages petitioned for by a certain number of the patrons of a school. A few petitions have been received for Bohemian, and this language may be taught in one school, although thus far no arrangement has been made to teach it.

Prof. Stedinger has been "campaigning" among the 700 teachers of the staff as well as among the pupils and has aroused a great deal of interest in his undertaking to successfully teach German in the grades. He has announced his intention to teach the language "so she can be spoke," believing it is a mistake to impart only a reading knowledge of German, as is frequently done in schools. He is a German by birth and has had much successful experience as a German teacher.

Supervisor J. A. Savage of writing, comes from Grand Island, having been elected by the school board to succeed O. H. Peed, who went east. Mr. Savage, besides being an expert with the pen, has had experience as a supervisor. Also, he has an idea. He believes more stress should be laid on teaching the very young to write. First graders, he believes, could be taught the use of the pen so well that much of the difficulty of teaching the upper grade students how to write properly would be eliminated.

Two thousand of the students who will enter school will enter for the first time. Some, who have been properly tutored, will get into the first grade, but the majority will begin in the kindergarten department. It is estimated that the in-



E. U. Graff  
Supt. Omaha Schools —  
Member Ex. Comm. N. S. T. A.

tial attendance will not exceed 15,000 or 16,000, as it is usual for many pupils to delay enrolling for a few days.

A few faces for many years familiar to the patrons of some of the schools will be missed this year. Miss Caroline Scherer, who for more than twenty years taught at Farnam school, has retired, as has also Miss Ellen Davis, for a score of years teacher in the second grade at Webster school. These teachers have been pensioned by the school district under the "long service pension act." Miss Mary Sullivan has left the English department of the Omaha High school to accept a position in the Pittsburgh schools, where W. M. Davidson, former superintendent of Omaha, is in charge as superintendent.

Two teachers fell into the traps of Cupid and will be seen no more in the school rooms: Miss Laura Williams of Edward Rosewater and Miss Pearl Roberts of Pacific school. Miss Mabel Mould, former teacher at Howard Kennedy, has gone to the western part of the state, where she has taken up a homestead. She intends to improve her claim and make her home there.

Few other changes have occurred in the teaching staff; a few shift of grade teachers, by request chiefly, but the same principals in charge of the



Miss Verda Williams  
Supervisor of Sewing



J. A. Savage  
Supervisor of Writing



Prof. Ferdinand Stedinger  
Supervisor of German

schools; the two new supervisors and additional teachers at the Omaha High School of Commerce. Superintendent Graff has just completed the assignment list, after working for a week at the task of putting the right teacher in the right place.

The school year has been shortened by two weeks and the tendency is to have as few vacations as possible each semester, and these to be added to the end of the year.

Few if any improvements will be made as far as buildings are concerned in the school district next year, but the Board of Education is planning to submit to the people a bond issue of \$1,500,000 to build a technical high school and a new high school of commerce and to repair grade school buildings, enlarging them where necessary.

Last year the schools were thrown open to neighborhood meetings and this proved so popular that the school board is arranging to build auditoriums in all schools not now provided with them. The schools constructed within the last two years have large auditoriums, which are used for special meetings, school programs and holiday occasions.

During the summer the secretary of the board, W. T. Bourke, and the board members have worked assiduously to put schools and school supplies in order for the opening day. Thousands of books have been "doctored" by the repairers, the stationery has been purchased and probable needs



C. E. Reed  
Principal Omaha High School

of the several schools have been attended to by Mr. Bourke, the superintendent of buildings, or the janitors, as the jobs fell.

The school board is considering the purchase of additional grounds for some of the schools—grounds which could be used for play or building purposes. Practically all of the schools now have playgrounds about them, or within a short distance from them. These playgrounds may be improved after awhile as the city has improved its public playgrounds, by the installation of swings, gliders, slides, teeter-totters and other devices.

Right now must be met the problem of organizing the 15,000 or 16,000 children who enroll into schools, grades and classes. This will be left largely to the principals, although the superintendent's office will be appealed to from time to time as questions arise between parents and teachers over school boundaries. In instances pupils are permitted to attend a school other than that in the district in which they live, but such permits are granted only when advantages to pupils follow as a matter of course.

## The War and Women

By LAURA RINGSTON.

**T**HE great international war now raging over all Europe means a great deal to the women of that continent. While the dispatches and newspapers and the bulletin boards in these stirring times are given over to the doings of the men, the soldiers and the sailors, one should not forget the wives and mothers of the war-torn countries.

When upwards of 17,000,000 men are under arms, millions of them actually in the field, the world does not stop. It must go on. It is up to the women to see that it does go, and that is what the women of Europe are doing today. The uniformed soldier is not the only hero and martyr of the world's wars. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

The Russian women are doing all the work, while their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers are fighting against Germany and Austria. The peasant men and women have no idea what the

war is about, and they are not much interested. The czar said, "Come and fight for me." That was enough for the men. They joined the army. It was enough, too, for the women. They put their hands to the plow, grasped the saw and the hammer and went to work. In France, too, the women already are feeling the burdens of war. At the outset the government asked the women of the nation to go into the fields and harvest the grain that was ready. They responded with a will. But the women who went to the farm work went from machines and looms, where has been made the fine French lingerie and lace much sought after by women the world over. Indirectly, then, the war will be felt by the women of the United States, for there is likely to be very little women's wear imported from France for many months.

In Austria-Hungary, too, the women are carrying on the every-day work of the land, while the men are doing the fighting. They are harvesting the grain, making the flour for the bread that

must be baked by them to feed the soldiers. They are caring for the cattle that must be slaughtered and cut up by them to go with the bread that is to feed the thousands in the field. They are running the machines that make the clothes that are to be worn by the troops.

The same conditions prevail in Germany. There every man under 45 years of age has been called to the colors, and that leaves practically all of the ordinary business of life to the women.

In England the war produced an unlooked-for result as far as the women were concerned. For years the militant suffragettes of that country had harassed the government and the public, clamoring for votes for women. They burned houses, derailed trains, set off bombs, destroyed priceless art treasures, dynamited churches, assaulted cabinet ministers and played havoc generally. On the declaration of war King George pardoned every suffragette in prison, and in return they pledged cessation of militancy until the war is over.