

# Manual Training an Important Factor in Omaha Public School System



WOOD CARVING AT CASS SCHOOL.



WOOD WORKERS AT CASS SCHOOL.



CLAY MODELING AT CASS SCHOOL.

THREE years ago manual training was installed in the graded schools of Omaha. For several years previous the system had been in use at the high school, but aside from the kindergarten work nothing had been added to the curriculum of the grades below the high school in the way of training the minds and hands of children in other than the usual English branches. The present system is the working out of a plan of Superintendent Davidson's, who, before committing himself to the idea of manual training of any sort, spent eight years in investigation and experiment to discover a system which would combine those elements he deemed essential to the fullest development of the child's speaking of this preliminary work, the superintendent said:

"At the time manual training was first mentioned as an essential to the child's education, the idea seemed to be to let the child decide for himself what he would do with the tools. He was given tools and material, and if he wished to make a box or a miniature house he was permitted to undertake it, and his success or failure depended entirely upon how he devoted himself to his task and how deft he was with the tools. This system did nothing for the training of the child in the way of spurring him on to effort, and was soon abandoned in great part. Then came the idea that the children should make something useful; but they were still permitted to do as they pleased regarding the making. This system still produced 'potters,' a few years ago a Mr. Larson came to America from Sweden, and he adapted the 'Larson' system in use in that country to the conditions of this country. The result was that the system known as the 'Larson system' was produced, in which the efforts of the child are directed toward making things which are not only useful but ornamental, and the aesthetic part of the child's nature is developed."

These remarks refer especially to what is known as the "bench work" phase of manual training, but this is only one-quarter of the system in use in the grades in a large number of buildings in Omaha, for the superintendent does not hold that the mere hammering together of wood is all that is to be desired. While the Larson system took from the other systems something of the "free will" of the young mind toward the object it was to make, and placed duty to a certain extent in the place of free will, Superintendent Davidson desired another phase of work where that "free development" might have full swing. Long investigation showed him that manual dexterity and artistic feeling might be developed through clay modeling in a way not possible with any other material. This was then adopted as part of the manual training system. With this was adopted wood carving as tending to give the pupil training in patient and somewhat intricate labor. To this, for the girls, was added sewing, and the four parts of the manual-training system for the grades was perfected. At first some difficulty was experienced in securing proper instruments for the work. Tools could be purchased and work benches were manufactured for the purpose, but as far as known there was no bench made at which clay modelers could work with the least trouble in the way of changing classes in the schools. Mr. Davidson invented and caused to be made the benches now in use in Omaha. These benches are so constructed that incom-



SEWING-CLASS AT CASS SCHOOL.



WORK SHOP AT THE HIGH SCHOOL.

plete work may be stored and kept moist between classes, and the shelves upon which this work is placed are sufficient for all pupils, its work at one bench. They are also made so that the wood carving classes can store work and tools in drawers while other classes are using the benches. Three years ago the first class in clay modeling in the public schools of Omaha was organized at the Cass school. Clay was bought in Iowa and models were secured from various places. One teacher was employed and she began her work with children of the first class of the fifth grade. The children are required to make their clay images from models which they can only measure with their eye, except in extreme cases where rough measurements with the modelling tool is permitted. After six months' spent at clay modelling the children spend six months in wood carving. Here for the first time fresh-hand drawing is called to the aid of the young designer. After selecting his model he is

required to draw the design on paper. Corrections are made as necessary until the design is satisfactory to pupil and teacher, when it is transferred to the wood through the medium of carbon paper. Then begins the real work of the pupil with the wood. Especially designed tools are given him and he is required to carve away the wood surrounding the draft of the design, later smoothing down the low surfaces. These exercises in clay and wood are common to both boys and girls. The division of labor between the sexes comes with the first half of the work of the sixth grade, when the boys go to bench work and the girls to the sewing room. In the bench room are especially designed work benches, so arranged that each can be used by boys who are left-handed as well as those who are normal in the use of their hands. Each bench is supplied with those tools most generally required, while a tool chest contains tools not so frequently needed. Here, as well as in wood carving classes, the first work is with

the pencil. After the design to be reproduced is settled upon the pupil is given pencil, paper and ruler and drafts the design of his article. Particular attention is paid to these designs, the object being to make them so plain that any boy can work from the design of any other. After the work of the design is approved by the teacher the boy goes to the lumber pile and selects such lumber as he needs. From this time on every movement is decided by the notes and lines on the drafting paper. The completed article is finally sandpapered and covered with a coating of shellac, and ready to be placed in the exhibit of the school or taken home by the pupil. The work in the sewing room is along similar lines, although more attention is paid to sewing in itself than to designing and drafting. After six months at the bench or in the sewing room the boys and girls go back to clay modelling, and six months later to the wood carving benches. Then follows six months more of bench

work and sewing, and then six months of clay modelling, the grade instruction ending with wood carving, which occupies the last half of the eighth grade work. The time devoted to this work is 100 minutes a week to each child, there being two recitations of fifty minutes each. While the manual training system in use at the high school does not articulate upon that of the lower grades at this time, they are coming closer into contact as the years pass, and in the course of time it is to be expected that the system will be made uniform. The Larson system is in use in the lower grades, while the Woodward system is that used in the high school. This system was installed before the work in the grades, and meets all requirements at this time, being the system in use in all of the high schools of the Mississippi valley. Here, in addition to work of a more advanced character, but somewhat similar to that in the grades, the turning lathe and scroll saw are added to the tools, and some of the articles made under the direction of

the director of the school are rightly considered excellent examples of manual training school work. At this time, under eight teachers, approximately 5,000 pupils are taking manual training in the grades, and with three teachers and one head of department, about 250 children are taking instruction in this work in the high school. The first manual training department in the grades was opened at Cass school three years ago. A year later a room at Pacific was equipped for the work. Last year rooms were opened at Comenius and Mason schools, and at the beginning of this year a room was opened at Lake school for regular work, while half-time work was inaugurated at Walnut Hill, Saunders, Columbian, Windsor, Leavenworth and Monmouth Park buildings. It is the intention of the board to extend the system to other ward schools as rapidly as possible, although the work will be slow in some wards on account of the crowded conditions of some of the buildings. In the work of the department it has been found that natural talent goes farther than experience in producing good work. This is especially so in clay modeling, where pupils in the eighth grade are surpassed by many in the fifth grade in accuracy of design and certainty of execution. In some of the exercises pupils are required to design from memory, and in these exercises the younger pupils seem to excel. At Cass school, the cosmopolitan school of the city, there is something of a rivalry between races. In the classes are Japanese, Chinese, negroes and Syrians, as well as pupils from almost every country of Europe. The teacher points out a model of a lion's head, the work of a Japanese boy of 14, as a sample of what is to be desired from pupils of this age and experience in the school. In wood carving one of the clearest cut designs is that produced by a Chinese boy of about the same age, while in free-hand drawing a negro boy receives commendation, and the work of a Syrian at the bench is one of the best samples shown by the teacher. The work of the pupils is encouraged by a mild form of rivalry, the best samples, all bearing the name of the makers, being kept on display, but the display as at present shown is of the average work. Arrangements are made whereby pupils, upon payment of cost of material, which is in- considerable, may take their work home and many of the homes in wards where the handiwork is in vogue display with pride the handiwork of a son or daughter.

## Omaha Y. W. C. A. Building and Service It Will Provide for Members

WHEN the cornerstones of the new Young Women's Christian Association building at Seventeenth and St. Mary's avenue settled to place last Sunday afternoon, to hundreds in the large crowd that witnessed the ceremony it was the first tangible evidence of the proposed structure. But not so with the business women of Omaha. To them, hundreds of them at least, the "building" has been a reality for more than a year, and every detail of its arrangement has been fixed and as familiar as though they had enjoyed it in reality as frequently as in imagination. "When we get into the building" has long been a familiar phrase among the little army of women who "work down town" in Omaha, and who, frequently to the number of 500 or 1,000, daily cheerfully make the best of the crowded quarters of the association in the Paxton block.

That Omaha needs a building adequately equipped for the work for women is no longer questioned by thinking citizens, neither is it often necessary to explain what this work for women consists. In the course of two campaigns in which the Young Women's Christian association has raised among the citizens of Omaha something over \$100,000 for its lot and building, its work has come to be understood and recognized as the factor it is for the moral betterment of the community.

But just what this new \$100,000 building is to include is not quite clear to many, even among those who have contributed generously to the fund. Beginning with the basement, which is so high it has the appearance of being the first floor, is the gymnasium, a model for the purposes of women. It is 65x80



WATCHING THE STONE AS IT WAS LOWERED INTO PLACE.

feet and twenty feet high, with a gallery all around, and occupying part of the first floor. The lockers and baths are all in the basement and are most complete. Besides the several showers and tubs, there will be the pool which, while not as large as the women might have wished, will be sufficient for all their purposes. This pool will occupy the bow on the north part of the building and will be one of the beauty spots. A public lavatory, a model laundry, store rooms, a vault, a tax service por-

tion, which extends the height of the entire building, the back stairway and freight elevator, which may be used for passengers if necessary, and the heating plant will also be in this basement.

On the first floor the main entrance on the Seventeenth street side opens into a beautiful corridor nineteen by fifty feet, and off of this open the general offices with two small private offices for secretarial use, the general secretary's office, a waiting room where men may call and

wait for their wives and sisters and perhaps others; and the living room with its big bow window on the St. Mary's avenue side and that is to be furnished in old mission and made one of the home spots of the city. In the service portion is a lavatory and the gallery of the gymnasium occupies the larger portion of this floor. Off from the gallery is the office of the physical director, with the examination room and a private stairway leading down to the gymnasium.

On the second floor is the same corridor foyer, fifteen feet long and twelve feet wide. Opening off of this is the library, a beautiful room on the north side, fifty feet long with a balcony out over the bay window, and the ideal north light for reading. Here will be arranged a circulating library occupying one-half of the room and in the other half a reference library with all the magazines and papers necessary to a well regulated library. On this floor also is the business office, where everything pertaining to the management of the building and lunch room will be carried on and the board room and club room with its own serving room and dumb waiter extending from the basement to the fifth floor. The main entrance to the auditorium, which will occupy part of two stories, also opens into the corridor of this floor. The auditorium will seat 500 persons and is so arranged that it may also be entered by a stairway from the St. Mary's avenue side quite independent of the rest of the building, so enabling the association to use it for purposes of revenue. On the landing part way between the first and second floor is the office of the extension secretary.

On the third floor is the large assembly room, which will seat 300 persons and will be used for the large classes and for some of the lectures and musicals. On this floor also are a check room, two class rooms and the balcony of the auditorium, besides the covenant room, a place set apart exclusively for prayer and religious work and study.

The entire fourth floor is devoted to the school of domestic science. The large main room will be used for the cooking school where mistress and maid may receive instruction. Rooms for dressmaking and millinery classes, with proper fitting rooms, and also a model bedroom for the teaching of chamber work will also be on this floor, as well as instruction rooms for everything pertaining to a school of domestic science, including the supplementary work to the model laundry in the base-

ment. The rooms for the maids employed in the building, together with their lockers and lavatory, will also be located on this floor, and last, but by no means least, the rest room—that retreat for the tired business women. It is so arranged as to insure perfect quiet and will be equipped with many couches and soft lights.

The fifth floor will be given entirely to the cafeteria, a lunch room, kitchen and serving rooms. Luncheon will be served on the same plan as in the present quar-

ters but in addition to this there will be a dining room where patrons may be served by paying a little more for the service. Summed up, the building may be considered as an administration building, a restaurant, a lunch room, a night and a day school for educational purposes, a Bible school, domestic science training school and physical training school. It will afford wholesome social life for hundreds of women who would otherwise be condemned to loneliness or seek the questionable entertainment afforded by the cheap places of amusement and it will supply an influence that must give moral tone to the young womanhood of Omaha. But the question is frequently asked why the building is to include no dormitories, and many whose subscriptions have been solicited because the enterprise makes no provision for housing women.

Several very good reasons exist why the Omaha Young Women's Christian association should not combine the dormitory plan with its other work. First, the association has not enough money to carry the building up to the proportions necessary for dormitories and it cannot go in debt for any part of its building. It is suggested that some other part of the work might be eliminated, then, to make room for the dormitories, but those in touch with the association's work know that not a single one of its present branches can be given up without loss to a greater number of women than could possibly profit by the installation of dormitories. By abolishing the lunch rooms and the school of domestic science the two upper stories, the

(Continued on Page Five.)



From Left to Right—Bishop Williams, Mrs. Harford, Mrs. Byers, Mrs. Tilden, Mrs. Bowman, BISHOP WILLIAMS CONSECrating THE STONE.



PART OF THE THRONG THAT WATCHED THE CEREMONY.