

Shopwork In The Public Schools

By Charles A. Kinney, Director of Shopwork In The
Winnetka Public Schools,

Editor's Note: Following is the second of a series of articles dealing with the activities of the Winnetka Schools. Parents who wish to understand fully the purposes and methods of the schools will find these articles well worth reading.

"I'll be so glad when John reaches the sixth grade so he can take lessons in carpentry. He's just wild to build things", exclaimed the mother of a fifth grade boy a few weeks ago. Even more recently a mother, quite prominent in the work of the Parent-Teacher association, declared emphatically that in her opinion handwork was quite as important as brain work for growing boys.

In a community less enlightened on educational matters expressions of views similar to the foregoing would probably challenge little question, but typifying as they do the more or less prevalent misconception of the purpose of manual training in the grammar grades it seems almost necessary to make clear some of the things we are not attempting to accomplish in the school shops before we can proceed to the positive aims.

Foster Co-operation

We are taking it for granted that the purpose of the Winnetka Talk in publishing a series of articles on the Winnetka schools is to bring about a clearer understanding between the teachers and the parents. Certainly the best results can be secured only when there is a close co-operation and harmony of purpose between the two, a co-operation and harmony possible only when the parents have an intelligent appreciation of what the teachers are seeking to accomplish in the classroom.

Let us start at the beginning that while we have classes in woodwork and in printing yet we do not teach carpentry and cabinet making, nor do we teach the printer's craft. Whether or not it would be advisable to place some of our shopwork on a vocational basis is outside our present discussion for the sufficient reason that the time allotted to manual training is far too short. Why, the entire shop time for the sixth, seventh and eighth grades added together would amount to less than 25 working days of eight hours each. We admit that educators have made remarkable advances in condensing and shortening the educational processes, but so far as the writer has been able to learn no one has devised

a method for training a boy in carpentry, cabinet making, the printer's or any other craft in 25 days or its equivalent.

Our sixth grade boys receive but one hour of shopwork per week. They should have not less than three. Five would be better. If any parent doubts the wisdom of this suggestion let a vote be taken among the sixth grade boys. Or better still let the parents visit a sixth grade shop class and witness the delight and enthusiasm with which the boys enter into their work.

Custom Hinders Work

Our seventh and eighth grade boys have two hours per week in the shops. Even five hours would not be sufficient to bring Winnetka up to the standard of many communities of the

same rank. But the demand must come from a public fully alive to the value of shop-work. And before we reach that state of mind we must revise some of our old conceptions of manual training and reject many others. It is amazing with what tenacity there persists that old idea that the hand is trained in one department of the school and the brain in another, in spite of its absolute repudiation by

all educational psychologists. Since the economic have become the pre-dominant factors in life the idea of hand work as distinct from brain

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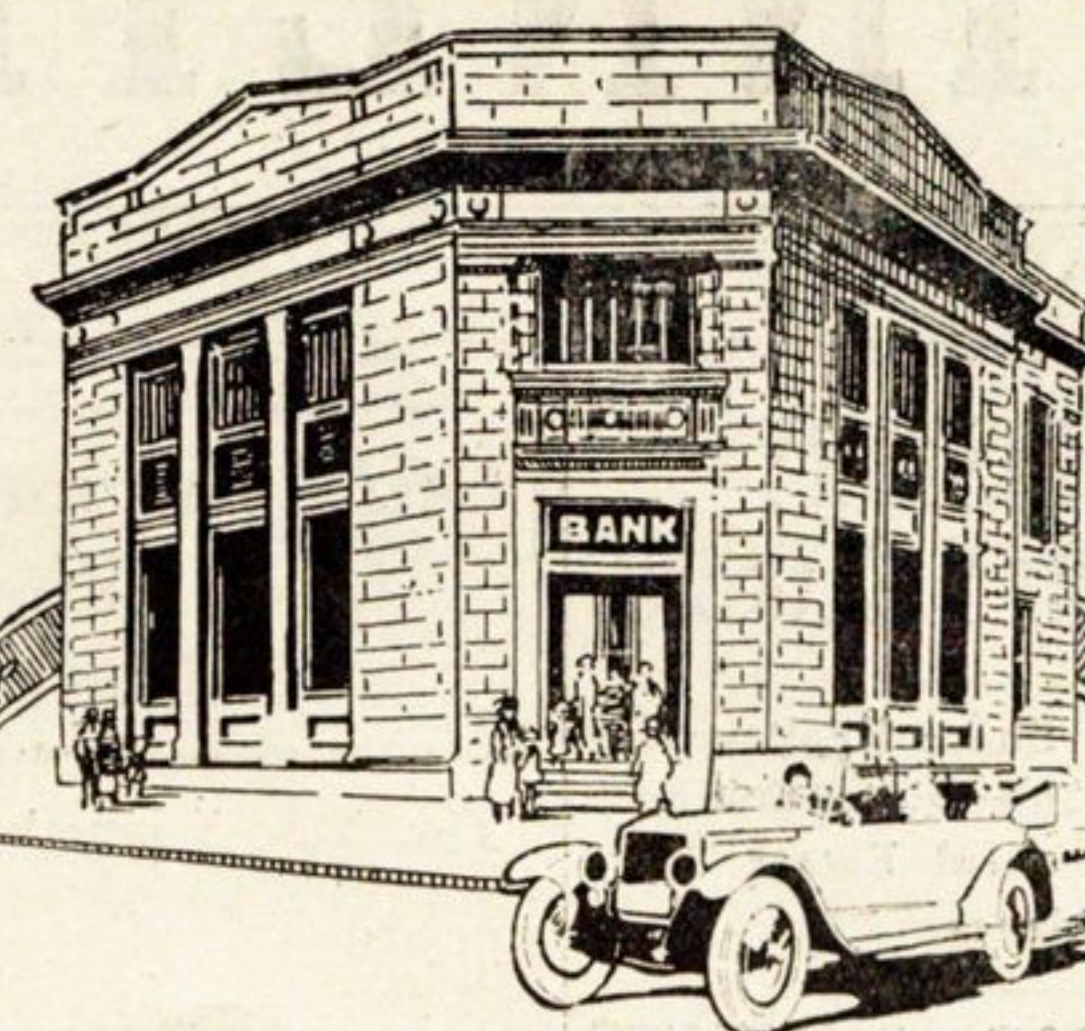
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