

Talks About Our Winnetka Schools

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SPELLING

Do the children of today spell less well than the children of a generation ago? Do the children of Winnetka spell less well than those of other places? Just what is the Winnetka method of teaching spelling, anyway?

It is commonly thought among adults that spelling is one of the subjects which was taught more thoroughly in the good old days. This idea is due partly to the glamour that surrounds early memories. As far back as one can go in the history of education—back through the early Colonial days, back through the church schools of the middle ages, back to the days of the Roman Empire, back even to the days of Aristotle, one finds on record a continual lament that the good old days are gone, the children no longer learn as they used to learn, and that standards have fallen.

Better Spellers Today

In the case of spelling, the present lament is reinforced by the fact that spelling occupied a much more prominent place in the curriculum a generation ago. Spell-downs were social affairs for which all the best spellers prepared, but it was the best spellers who got ready for those spell-downs, while the poor spellers stood on the side-lines and cheered. And the words which these best spellers learned were the most difficult words they could find—utterly regardless of the probability of their use in life. There are strong reasons to believe that the average spelling ability of school children today is far beyond the average spelling ability of a generation ago.

As to whether the children in Winnetka spell better or less well than children in other places, we fortunately have statistical evidence. The three thousand words most commonly used in correspondence have been tried out on many thousands of children all over the United States until we know what the average spelling ability is for each grade for any of these words. Last May we tried out a number of these words on all the children in the Winnetka schools. Our seventh and eighth grades, having learned all their early spelling by the old method, did not do exceptionally well, falling somewhat below the standard for these grades. The fifth and sixth grades were practically at standard; that is, the average child in these grades spelled exactly as well as the average child of these grades throughout the country. In fourth grade, the Winnetka children made an average of 84% as against 75%, which was the standard for the country at large. Third grade did still better. When given a list of words on which third graders generally made 75%, the Winnetka third graders averaged 87.5%, four of the third grades actually averaging 95%.

Simple Sane Method

The Winnetka method of teaching spelling is simple and sane. Instead of teaching all the children all the words, children are first tested twice on all the words that children of their grade should know. Then each child studies words that he missed in either of these preliminary tests. Out of 500 words, the poorest speller will miss over 400, the best spellers may miss only half a dozen. Under the old method, good spellers and bad spellers alike would study all 500 words. Under the Winnetka method, the poor speller studies the 400 he missed, the good speller half a dozen. The time saved to the good spellers is very great indeed, and even the poorest spellers can concentrate on the words they do not know instead of wasting time on those that they do know.

A system of reviews is provided in the Winnetka plan so that every child has a weekly review test every week on each word that he missed originally until he can spell this word right in such a weekly review. He is then retested on all words he has ever missed, twice each year, until in four successive semester review tests he has spelled these words correctly. The method saves time, concentrates the children's attention where they most need it, and provides an unusually thorough system of reviews.

The words taught in the Winnetka schools have been selected as a result

of several elaborate statistical studies. They consist of the words most commonly used in adult correspondence and the words most commonly used in children's compositions, checked with the list of the commonest words in the English language. The words most commonly used in correspondence were found in Iowa by analyzing 3,723 business and personal letters containing a total of 361,184 running words. The words most commonly used in children's compositions were determined in Connecticut by analyzing 50,000 children's compositions containing more than half a million running words. The commonest words in the English language have been found by Professor Thorndike of Columbia University by making counts of all the words in books, periodicals, and many other places, covering all together forty-one sources and over four and one-half million running words.

Basing a spelling list on such thorough-going studies, results in the elimination of words like defalcation, hippopotamus, meritorious, gratuitous, and ascendancy, all of which are found in the old type of speller and substituting for them such words as poor, power, present, pretty, put, and reason, which are among the thousand commonest words in our language. A speller containing four thousand words should obviously contain the four thousand commonest words, instead of omitting some of these in favor of words very infrequently used. The difficult words named above do not even fall within the ten thousand commonest words.

The Winnetka method, then, concentrates children's attention on the words

they do not know, instead of wasting their effort on words they already know. The selection of words is based upon scientific investigation, instead of being based upon haphazard guess work. Isn't such a method bound to yield results superior to those of a generation ago?

N. T. Girls Athletic Club Elects Officers

Martha Thomas has been elected president of the Girl's Athletic association at New Trier High school. Betty Frazer was named vice-president, and Janet Gordon was appointed secretary-treasurer. Inauguration ceremonies are to be held in the near future, it is announced. The Girls' Athletic association directs the intramural contests in hockey, swimming, tennis and other athletics indulged in by the girls of the school.

SCANDINAVIANS HOLD DANCE

The Scandinavian Pleasure club announces one of its popular dances to be held at Community House this evening. The club is one of the oldest of Community House groups and has established an enviable reputation with its social activities.

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Forest Preserve Buys More Skokie Property

One hundred and sixty acres of Skokie land lying west of Winnetka, were purchased by the Forest Preserve commissioners this week, it was reported, for the sum of \$94,000.

The property in question includes 80 acres south of North avenue and bounded on the east by Hibbard road, purchased from Clara F. Bass, for \$47,000. The 80 acres adjoining the Bass property on the west were bought from Isadore Bross for \$47,000.

Mrs. Margaret May who has been visiting in California for the past four months, has returned to Winnetka to pass the winter with her daughter and son-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. Edwin T. Schildberg, 642 Ash street.

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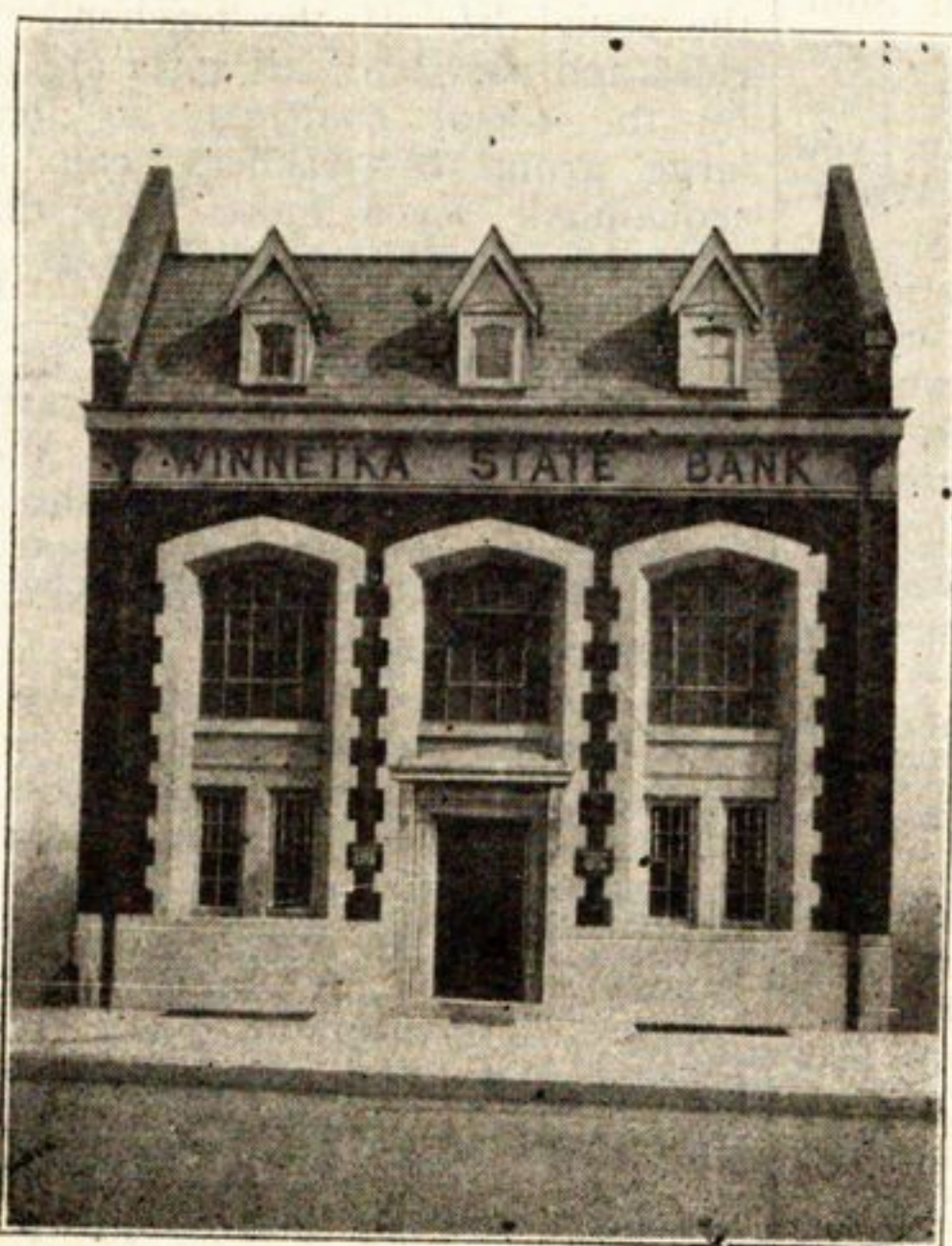
"THE PRIDE OF PALOMAR"

By PETER B. KYNE

ALSO THE HALLROOM BOYS IN "SIX A. M."

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23

A BETTER WINNETKA



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Saturday evening

No need to worry 'bout a turkey this Thanksgiving. The chefs of The Orrington hotel at Evanston are planning a dinner for you that will save "Mother" all the usual work. Umm!