

# CHILDREN ASSIST IN CHOOSING BEST BOOKS

## Local School Leaders Evolve Scientific Plan for Selection of Reading Material

Editor's Note: The accompanying article is the first of a brief series relative to the Scientifically Graded Book List for Children worked out by Superintendent of School Washburne and his research assistants. The Winnetka Graded Book List is a scientific study of children's tastes in reading, including a list of 700 books which boys and girls have read and enjoyed, annotated with the children's own comments, and based on the opinions of 36,750 children in 34 cities and towns. It is to be published in December by the American Library association.

By MABEL VOGEL

(Research assistant, Winnetka public schools.)

Graded book lists in the past have been based upon guess-work or upon the observation of teachers and librarians, who know in a general way which books are suitable for children of different schools grade and ages. Until this year however no scientific investigation has been carried out on a large scale to determine what books are being read and enjoyed by children of various ages and degrees of reading ability.

At the request of the Winnetka public schools a grant was made by the Carnegie corporation of New York through the American Library association to carry on such a study. The study was conducted in the research department of the Winnetka public schools under the supervision of Carleton Washburne, superintendent of schools. The results are being published as a book entitled "The Winnetka Graded Book List" (American Library association, Chicago).

Teachers in the Winnetka Public Schools and experts in the field of research have assisted in the statistical part of the study. The American Library association has kept closely in touch with the work and experts in the library field have assisted materially in the evaluating of the library quality

of the books listed and in the correcting of comments used in annotating the book list.

### 36,750 Children Assist

In order to prepare a scientifically graded list we secured the cooperation of 36,750 children in 34 different cities. All types of schools were represented—private schools, public schools, normal and university training schools and public libraries. A wide range of nationalities was represented. These 34 cities ranged in location all the way from Quincy, Mass. to Santa Fe, New Mexico, giving a fair representation of all section of the country.

To these 36,750 children ballots were

sent.

The ballot was found by statistical checks to be fairly reliable for determining children's interest in books which they read.

On each ballot the teacher wrote the child's score as shown by the Stanford Silent Reading test. Before deciding upon this particular test, reading experts at Columbia university, University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, and Leland Stanford university were consulted. Each expert independently recommended this particular test as the best available one. Each child who cooperated in the filling out of the ballots

was given one of these reading tests.

The test consisted of 29 paragraphs. The child has to read these and fill in blanks where words are omitted. Here are a few sample paragraphs which show the general structure of the test:

1. Fanny has a little red hen. Every day the hen goes to her nest and lays an egg for Fanny to eat. Then she makes a funny noise to tell Fanny to come and get the .....

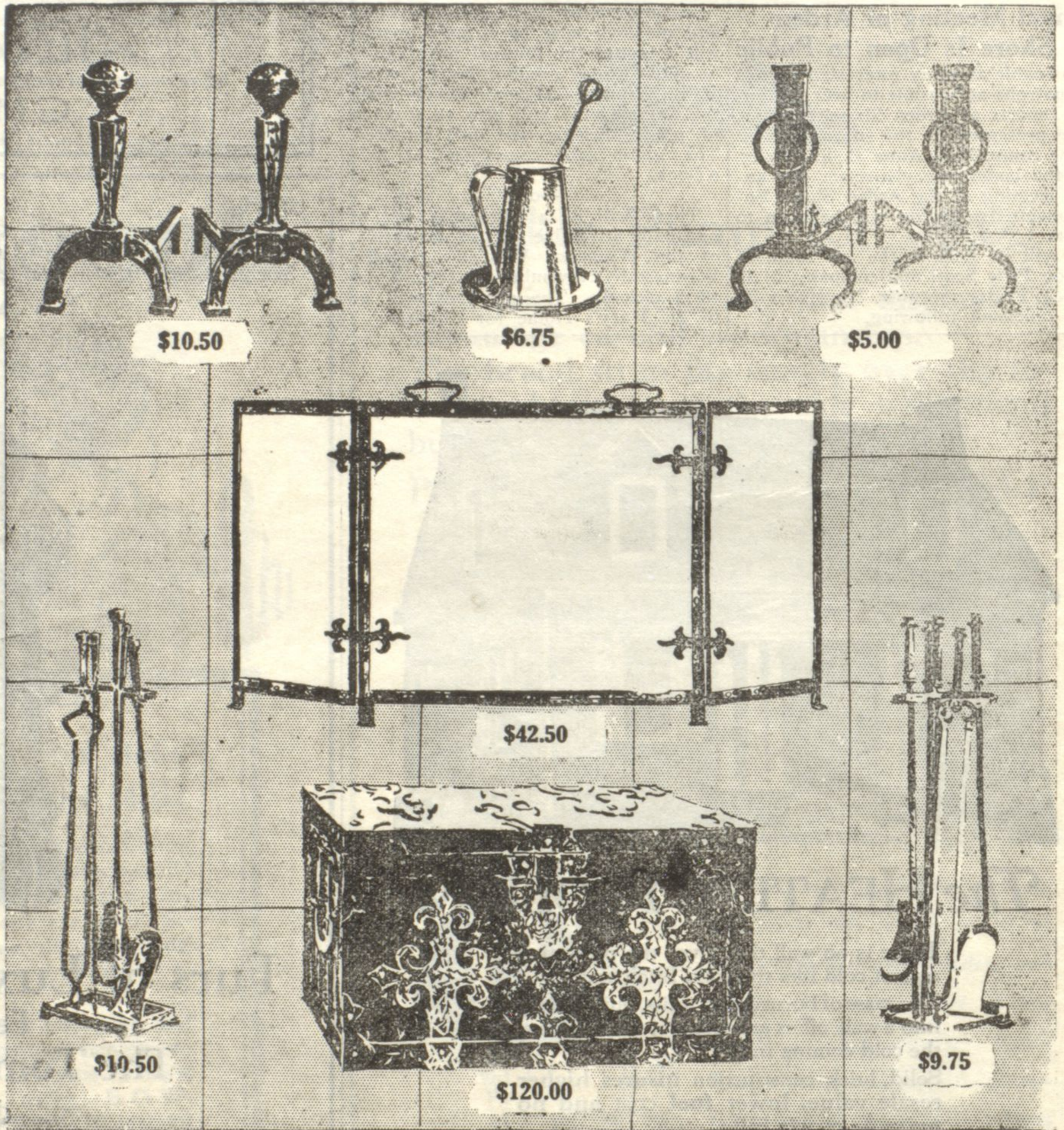
8. Birds' eggs are almost as different from each other as are the birds themselves. The robin lays four or five blue eggs. The dove lays two white eggs. The sparrow lays six or eight

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