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The VAN HORNESVILLE Central School

Among the many attempts at community building undertaken by public and private agencies in the last twenty years none has proved itself more substantial or more significant than that centered about the Van Hornesville, New York, Central School. The achievement is the logical result of the co-operation of practically a whole wide-spread agricultural community under the wise leadership of one of the best educators in the country - Owen D. Young.

Ten years ago the little country school house to which Mr. Young, himself, had attended and which every child in the community was still attending burned down. What should be done about it? Mr. Young was devoted to Van Hornesville, was already doing much to re-establish the almost abandoned village, to re-build the run-down agriculture on which it and the country about lived. He saw now an opportunity to attack the problems at the foundation. Here was a chance to give to the youngsters coming on a more solid and useful training than had been possible in the little one room schoolhouse. He would build them a school, he told them,

if they would work with him, do their share. He had the money to put in but was a wise enough man to know that money and buildings, however fine, are a small percentage ~~in the up-building of~~ any community enterprise.

The village decided to go along and from the start at every step in the undertaking Van Hornesville men and women gave their time and their judgment. There is not a stone in the school buildings, and beautiful they are, but what was chosen and laid by local masons intent on doing the best job they knew how to do. This school plant with its home for teachers, its community health department, its equipment for pleasure and for work, for young and old, have all come about with the same type of co-operation that went into the laying of its walls. ~~Its~~ Board of Directors of the school made up of local tradesmen take their work with a seriousness and intelligence which the directorates of many a great industrial or educational institution might well study and imitate.

The school was started for a town of a hundred and fifty ^{people} but when the children in the outlying districts saw what the children of Van Hornesville were receiving they demanded it. When they and their parents demanded it Mr. Young consented to enlarge the plant. The educational

system of the state with which the school of course must work approved ~~the~~ centralization.

But those the new school served ^{ed} did not stop with the children. The children brought home tales of what they were learning and enjoying that aroused their parents to say, "We never had such advantages. Is it too late?" Mr. Young and the Board of Directors and the teachers knew that it was not, and there was soon incorporated into the life of the Van Hornesville school a practical system of adult education which scores of hard working farmers, ^{of} both American and alien birth, were soon following.

Certain features of the system followed in the school have had in this ten years a pronounced effect on the life of the community. First, on its health, since the health of the pupils was a first consideration. The health work in the school spread to the community. Once they had to go fifteen miles for a doctor, now the community supports one.

Most practical and significant are the contributions of the school to the leading industry - farming, including stock raising, the dairy, the poultry yard. The ^{agricultural} practices and methods of the entire county have been re-made, revitalized, by what has been taught in the school to both young and old.

Here then you have a community in which children and parents ^{are} ~~have come~~ ^{very} to work together under a wise and generous leadership. In this undertaking the heartiness of their participation comes from the fact that they consider it their school. They know that no thing is undertaken unless they are consulted. That mere fact of being consulted has been an enormous force in winning their support.

Van Hornesville school is what we may call an Honest-to-God community enterprise. Owen D. Young, its leader, has given magnificently of his money, but more magnificent and more important still has been the contribution he has made to the great art of community co-operation.

There is no question the enterprise will continue to grow so long as the present determination of all concerned ^{to} do their part lives. Pride in the beauty and completeness of the plant plays no little part in the community's devotion to the school. It is their school and nobody has a better one, and they are going to take care of it, keep it alive. So long as this spirit of pride, the desire to take everybody in, to have the things they are learning made practical in their lives, in their homes, in their industries - so long as these live the Van Hornesville Central School will remain

what it is today, one if not the most substantial and significant contributions made to community re-building and education that the times have afforded.