

fore, will economize time and make for greater efficiency; it will also raise the standard of writing in the high school.

Handwriting in our public schools will not improve until every teacher has thoroughly mastered the mechanics and pedagogy of writing. "A teacher can not teach that which she does not know." After recognizing its real value, then she must be willing to give it a little consideration on her daily program.

FLOSSIE L. FRAZIER

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HELPS FOR THE TEACHING OF  
VIRGINIA HISTORY

SIXTH INSTALLMENT

VITALIZING AND VISUALIZING VIRGINIA  
HISTORY

For several years past the teachers of history and geography in different parts of Virginia have been achieving fine results by utilizing local materials and resources in various projects, literary and dramatic. It is the purpose of this article to call attention to what has been done and to suggest further projects and possibilities of this sort.

Nearly every neighborhood in Virginia is rich in geographical and historical resources. Often this fact is unsuspected, and it will frequently be disputed when first asserted. "Oh yes," the good citizen will say, "I know that Charlottesville or Winchester or Richmond or Williamsburg might get up a historical pageant—those places are full of history; but nothing of consequence ever happened here. We can't do it."

But he is usually mistaken. It may be that what did occur in his community was not important enough to be conspicuous. It was so inconspicuous, in all probability, that it has never been written down as history; but, for all that, it may be interesting and perhaps significant, too. The very fact that it has never been written or published is a good reason for recording it now. And if it will serve as a means of vitalizing history or geography for the children of the community, that will give the task ample justification.

The thing to do is to set out upon a voyage of discovery. It may lead to remarkable revelations and to lasting inspirations before it is ended.

It was recently reported in an educational conference that some very stimulating results of this sort had been achieved in a neighborhood supposed to be uninteresting and by certain persons never before distinguished. One dear old lady, whose long life had been spent in quiet obscurity, proved to be a benefactor. For she, it turned out, was able, out of the abundant stores of her good memory, to give the children of the school just such information of days long past as they needed for their local projects. She became at once a figure of unsuspected distinction in her community, and thereby the whole district was given an uplift in civic pride and ambition.

The first step is to find out what happened in the community in Indian days, or Revolutionary times, or in the long period of stage-coaching, or when the drovers and wagoners camped out, or during the Civil War, or when the town or village was laid out, or when the school house was built. Somebody will know enough to give a start; then the trail widens and deepens until many facts of interest are ascertained and recorded. Old diaries, old newspapers, old furniture, old letters, all tell their story. Court records and church records are often available. The cultivation of habits of accuracy and careful reasoning should be insisted upon from beginning to end, and this is worth the effort expended.

When a mass of materials has been collected, let it be organized and shaped into some usable forms. Several essays may be written. A little drama, now and then, may be constructed. And once in a while a more or less elaborate pageant may be worked out. A pageant is a drama, rather large in setting, in which a good many persons take part. It does not demand much speaking but depends mainly for effect upon size, color, and movement. Costumes, banners, floats, and the like are desirable. Horses are a great feature in a pageant.

If geography is combined with history the task is bigger but often easier and more interesting. For one thing, the introduction of geography helps to fix and clarify the his-



torical studies. For another thing, it gives an opportunity to draw maps at first-hand. This of itself is a fine and profitable exercise. A good essay, dealing with local incidents and illustrated with first-hand maps and photographs, might prove to be a most valuable document in years to come.

If the project undertaken proves a success, especially if it produces a number of worthwhile essays, with maps and pictures, the community spirit might rise to the occasion and have the collection published in a neat little volume. Nothing finer could be done to stimulate the children of the community and give them a vital interest in their school and in their neighborhood.

And it is all so easy, if enough people think so. Anyone who has even a slight acquaintance with the Old Dominion could name offhand a hundred places where it would be almost too easy. Big Stone Gap, with its wonderful geography and its traditions enhanced by John Fox; Staunton, rich in history and strategic in location; Leesburg, quaint, beautiful, and alive with romance and legend; The Hollow, in Patrick County; the Quarters, at Carysbrook; Powell's Fort, in Shenandoah County; The Peak, in Rockingham County; Germanna, in Orange County; The Crater, in Dinwiddie; Mountain Lake, in Giles; Falmouth, in Stafford; Tangier Island, in Chesapeake Bay; Austinville, in Wythe: these are just a few of the places in Virginia where teacher and pupils might begin local studies with assurance of rich findings.

Such work, of course, must usually begin with the teachers and the pupils of the local schools.

Those persons who are interested in such projects may be referred to several of the short chapters in Wayland's *How to Teach American History*: Chapter XIII, *Dramatics as a Method of Teaching History*; Chapter XIV, *The Visual Appeal in the Teaching of History*; Chapter XXIII, *Source Books and Source Materials*; and Chapter XXIV, *On Voyages of Discovery*.

In conclusion, let us summarize some of the values that may be realized by the sort of work indicated. First, it affords good training in searching for materials and in recording them when found, provided of course that habits of care and accuracy are always

cultivated. In the second place, it will afford interesting surprises and will reveal unsuspected treasures, thus stimulating a wholesome interest in school work. Third, it will demonstrate, in many instances the vital relation that exists between history and geography. Fourth, it will provide concrete and first-hand topics for essays and maps, the writing and the drawing of which may develop into excellent exercises. Finally, not to be exhaustive, it will excite a sense of pride in the home community, thus enhancing most helpfully the civic virtues of young and old.

Incidentally, it may give the live teacher a chance to make her mark.

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#### THE IDEAL TEACHER

Answering the question, "What is an ideal teacher?" President Livingston C. Lord, of the East Illinois State Normal School, gave the following definition at the N. E. A. convention at Atlantic City:

"First, correctness and precision in the use of the mother tongue; second, gentle manners; third, the habit of reflection; fourth, power of growth; fifth, power to do. Let William James add 'the ability to suspend belief in the midst of emotionally conflicting ideas.'

"The educated man does not boil at a low temperature nor blow up at a spark. He creates or at least does not destroy. He strives for clearness and does not mistake muddiness for profundity.

"He does not bore his classes. He does not think that because the scalawag and dunce greatly excite his interest these are of more value than the others. He knows that he cannot organize a curriculum around present day issues—Bolshevism and the League of Nations."

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"The school person does not yet admit the value of shops in the school. He still sees mostly the formulas dictated by the high schools and colleges in the form of 'requirements.' To be 'educated' or not is to pass or not pass the tests of the school people." —Edward Yeomans. in *The Atlantic Monthly*.