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Means and Ends in Community Life

ARTHUR E. MORGAN.

The makers of the American Constitution, as anxious to escape from clerical as from political dictatorship, provided for the separation of church and state. As a result, in the course of American education there has tended to be a division of functions. The church has claimed peculiar authority to deal with the ends and aims of life, while public education has been concerned chiefly with the ways and means of life.

Scarcely half of Americans have any church connection. As the relative influence of the church grows steadily less, more attention is given to ways and means and less to over-all purposes and ends. The result tends to be a national attitude of living in the present for immediate satisfactions, without long-ime direction or loyalty.

(Mr. Morgan then discusses various unsuccessful attempts to meet the problem.)

Yet another approach to the problem would be for community education to concern itself directly with the end and purposes of living, as well as with the ways and means of living. Different religious sects vary fundamentally in their belief concerning matters of faith which cannot be tested by evidence. However, they tend to have certain underlying unity on matters of very great import which are subject to objective inquiry. Practical, critical inquiry into such matters leads generally to agreement on questions of great and far-reaching importance.

The following are examples of conclusions which, we believe, will be sustained by practical, objective inquiry, without recourse to controversial theological doctrines.

1. The purpose of human life cannot be fulfilled if each person or small group lives chiefly for itself. We must identify our individual lives with the life of mankind and act in the general interest, rather than for immediate personal or local interests.

2. Integrity in all human relations leads to mutul respect, understanding, confidence, harmony, and significant achievement.

3. Good will among men is more productive than ill will among men.

4. Society is made up of individuals and the aim of social life is that individuals shall lead vigorous, wholesome lives, with a sense of freedom and significance. Public policies may be measured by the extent to which they promote or retard such individual life.

5. The maintenance of individual health and sanity is essential to the most successful pursuit of both the ends and the means of life.

6. Self-mastery and discipline are necessary for a well-ordered life.

7. The most precious possession of mankind is its cultural inheritance, in the form of habits, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and appreciation. It is a primary human responsibility to constantly appraise these resources, preserving and encouraging the better elements and eliminating the harmful elements.

8. Critical, objective inquiry concerning the ends and means of life helps to destroy error and prejudice and to bring human attitudes and outlooks into conformity with reality, and therefore tends to social unity.

9. Men do not live by thought alone. Emotional commitment, consecration, and loyalty must support and promote the convictions and aspirations which are supported, or are not controverted, by critical inquiry. Vigorous development, education, and discipline of the emotional powers is a primary human responsibility.

10. Society must promote eugenic understanding, conviction, and action, to the end that the best of the human breed shall be encouraged to increase and the poorest shall tend to decrease.

11. The idea of inherently superior and inferior races of men is not generally sustained by objective, critical inquiry. Therefore we must revise traditional convictions and attitudes concerning race to make them conform to the realities.

12. Man's quest for light on the significance and value of his life is a progressive adventure. The end has not been reached, nor the whole of truth or value discovered. Man's chief duty is to pursue that quest with sincerity, humility,

openmindedness, and devotion. Whatever furthers that quest is good, whatever impedes it is evil.

These are among conclusions which, we believe, will be sustained by direct inquiry and experience, without reliance upon supernatural revelation. Non-churchmen and churchmen of all creeds should find common ground there. Institutions of religion have no proper monopoly of consideration of such ends and purposes. A tendency on the part of nearly everyone in America to grant such monopoly to institutions of religion, with which only half the population is even nominally associated, and which tend to emphasize their differences, has resulted in a degenerative secular tendency to live for immediate ways and means to the neglect of consideration of inclusive ends.

Community cannot live by bread alone, or by bread and recreation; but only if men have continuing, serious concern for the ends and purposes of life. Community can achieve stable vitality only as the whole people, in the regular course of their common life, come to give active and vigorous attention to ends and purposes as well as to means. Such attention by the whole people, by free critical inquiry, should be welcomed by institutional religion.

The chief difficulty is not simply to secure intellectual assent to such principles, but to gain for their support the effective interest and loyalty of men. Such commitment will be most wholesome if it results, not from some far-reaching, authoritative organization which will form nation-wide attitudes by indoctrination and propaganda, but if it grows out of widespread searching for the light, with discipline of living, by many small groups. Community life and fellowship groups may provide favorable environment. Free exchange of opinion and experience between such groups, and mutual encouragement, may bring widespread unity of outlook and purpose which will stand the test of critical inquiry.

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The foregoing article by Mr. Arthur E. Morgan of Yellow Springs, Ohio, is reprinted from his publication, "Community Service News," for May-June, 1946. It is an excellent analysis of an unsatisfactory situation in the American community, which cries for a remedy: an educational system which confines itself to dealing with the ways and means of life and a religious institution, which tends to monopolize the spiritual guidance of the community but fails to furnish it with the adequate aims, ideals, incentives and leadership. The gospel, properly interpreted, might conceivably embrace the entire life of the community so that no part of its spiritual and human manifestations were arbitrarily excluded or condemned.

But the gospel is not thusly interpreted and the greater areas of our community life is left to shift for itself, or has even become the object of persecution, due to an unrealistic, unimaginative, uncharitable and stifling attitude toward life.

If the churches continue to hamper the free expression of the human spirit along cultural, intellectual and social lines,—that is, curbing the natural folk-life of the people—or refuse to furnish intelligent and sympathetic leadership for its evolution toward beneficial and creative expression, then the churches must be made to relinquish this arrogated, arbitrary control outside the limits of their own fields.

H.J.K.

"Thirty Years With an Idea"

MRS. MARIETTA JOHNSON.

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE CHILDREN (Concluded)

At eight years of age they enter the "second-life" class. Learning to read, write, and spell is now added to the program of arts and crafts, wood-working, singing, folk dancing, and nature. Here stories of other lands and the making of maps are absorbing. Children should have experiences making maps or plans of rooms, building, etc., on the ground, then on paper, emphasizing the points of the compass, then lastly, picking the map up by the north end and hanging it on the wall that they may realize that a stream may flow DOWN north! And that the "top" of the map is not always "up" on the ground. I have seen sixth grade children trace "down" a river from the sea inland!

Instead of a reading lesson, there is a "library period" in which all the children who know how to read enjoy reading books of their own choosing, the teacher assisting those who need help. Very few children need much help in learning to read if it is postponed until eight or nine years of age, for many of them have already "picked it up." In some cases, where learning to read is postponed, the children have needed no instruction at all! But when help is needed the teacher should use the very best method, that the art may be acquired as quickly as possible.

They now begin the use of figures in their number work, learning the simpler mechanics and to read and write numbers. At this age children delight in the manipulation of figures, and in rapid work in combinations. Care is used to prevent the nervousness and self-consciousness that often develops in this work. Many slowly developing little people have suffered intensely in time tests. "I know how to do it, Mother, but I get so excited when the teacher holds her watch!" No doubt many an inferiority complex has been acquired by a child who is unable to get the answer in time! And no doubt many children have developed a tendency to "jump at answers" or misrepresent! No "tests" should ever be given! The thought of failure should be unknown! Children may be encouraged to work rapidly and accurately without the nerve-racking experience of "time tests."

Reasoning problems and those requiring analysis are postponed until at least twelve years of age, and even here we often find children still unable to follow through problems requiring the conscious reasoning involved in profit and loss.

The conversation in some other language than their own is continued if a teacher able to lead can be secured. Very few teachers have the understanding and ability to prevent the use of another language from becoming a "lesson." They have been trained in the use of devices to produce "results." It will bear repeating that language is a tool—a MEANS, not an end. It should never be STUDIED, LEARNED, and recited, but should rather be USED and incidentally acquired! Children of this age delight in talking and learning how to say things in French, if it is done informally and in connection with the common things in

which they are interested and if their attention is not demanded for too long at one time.

Naure study not only is continued in this group or the development of an attitude, but now is a source of real information. The group may make a "collection" of leaves, seeds, stones or even snakes! If this is wisely done all fear of snakes is utterly destroyed. To carry a large, twisting, squirming snake around one's neck, with its tongue lapping one's face, is an experience developing courage and self-control. One also acquires a marvelous **FEELING** toward such creatures which no amount of exhortation to kindness could ever secure. The feeling of ownership and affection needs no exhortation to develop the attitude of kindness and protection.

The facts of physical geography are studied first-hand in the gullies at the bay shore, in the woods, and acquaintance is made with the animals of the neighborhood, their activities and importance. Much attention is paid to the adaption of the plants and animals to their environment. The study of nature's methods of seed distribution is most stimulating and delightful.

All sorts of questions must be answered: Why did the water drop the sand here, and pebbles there? Let us pile up a barrier here to see if the water will drop its sand the next time it rains. The gullies already formed and in the forming furnish the finest stimulation to investigation, thought, and observation. How do you know the water was running swiftly here? Where are the tributaries to these rivers? Let us find a watershed or an island. Why are there drops of water on the wire when there are no drops on my hand? What makes the wind blow? Why does the smoke go up the chimney? Where does the tadpole's tail go and which legs come first? Of what use is a snake? Why does the tree grow pears? What may we find growing in the garden in December in this climate? Let us keep a record of things growing in the South each month. How do they compare with those in the North? These and countless other questions occupy the attention of the children during the nature period. A child from another school said, "I hate nature!" but was soon fascinated by the intimate, informal approach and exclaimed, "Oh, but I love to do this!" Some children are sure they do not have nature study in the school because it is not labeled and conducted as a lesson. It is a great pity that "courses of study" have developed the wrong attitude toward and the wrong conception of education. The aim is to awaken the spirit of inquiry and the desire to understand. Gardens constitute a most interesting part of the nature study. They plant vegetables and flowers, each child having a plot of his own.

Stories must continue to be told to this group since the children are still in the process of learning to read. Often stories in geography, history, or literature are worked out in the shop or craft room in the form of projects. The teacher of the group cooperates with the teacher in the shop, so that the work in the manual training often becomes a continuation of the interest already developed in the school room. The "project," however, is not obliged to furnish the means of acquiring subject matter or skill, though these often do result. Projects may be undertaken for the pure joy of the experience. Parents are so wedded to the idea that education is identical with learning facts that teachers often feel obliged to point out that reading, writing, spelling, geography, or some other "subject matter" is being acquired in the project. One year the children illustrated the Amazon region. They made the animals, the vines, the forests, and had a wonderful time placing bread pans end to end for the river, and many people in town came to see it. One night it froze over and they all declared that it was the first time in the history of the river that this had happened. A Japanese project consumed many happy days. At last a "fete" was given at which everyone dressed as Japanese. Fans, screens, kites, and even jinrikishas to carry people to the little shrines on the hillside were made in the shop. No doubt the Japanese would smile at such imitations—but this study was good because the children not only enjoyed the activity and received some information, but best of all they acquired a friendly attitude, a kindly sympathetic feeling—that is, they were moved in the right direction, which constitutes a moral experience.

Much time is given to singing the old folk songs, and the children now delight in learning the folk dances. A great musician once said that the very best possible preparation for the appreciation of the great masters of music is to be **STEEPED** in folk song! The spirit of the folk and that of the **GREAT** master are identical! We believe the folk dance is better adapted to the school room than any other form in dancing. The folk dance is the fundamental, elemental, unself-conscious expression of the folk and belongs especially to the young and the old whose spirit is still young. It is simple: few if any steps to learn. It is objective and purposeful, it is highly social and very beautiful. It does not r equire a special costume, only a little space. Afternoon parties are often given, the program consisting of games and folk dancing, with parents invited and light refreshments served. We believe all evening functions for children younger than high school age should be discouraged. Social relations as well as school activities should be kept simple and unsophisticated.

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For Orientation

"Many an American community plans on the assumption that if it should once be economically well-to-do, all other problems would be automatically solved. In a letter from the mountains of Wales we read: 'In wandering around these queer valleys I am conscious that regular work and high wages have done little to lift the cultural life, and even less to deepen the religious life of the community.' Continued emphasis is needed of the fact that no one element of 'success' makes a good community. It is the development in good proportions of all vital elements of social life which should be the aim of community planning."

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"The Community idea is the one fundamental concept in the philosophy of rural civilization that ties theory to practice, that gives concreteness to organized effort, that binds personal ambition to large human welfare."—Kenyon L. Butterfield.

"No society ever grew strong by attempting to cover up or to smother differences of opinion. If we expect to build an American democracy attuned to the world thinking of the future, we must bravely face our areas of conflict and subject them to the slow but nevertheless exciting process of educational enlightenment. If we can succeed in performing this task with tolerance for opposing points of view, with balance and reason in the political and social action that follows educational consideration, we shall have advanced on the road to civilizing ourselves and, by our example, the rest of the world."—From Annual Report of the Directors, for 1944-45, American Association for Adult Education.

"Fair-mindedness is impossible without some reading and some honest discussion. The unexercised mind is never fair. It is partial in its information and partisan in its opinions. Fair-mindedness is not easily acquired. It is only securely won by spiritual sincerity."

Quoted from Community Service News.

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The Loom of Living

INDIAN ART.

DORA L. KOCH.

In speaking of art in our country we think primarily of art, in whatever form, evolved or developed by us as a part of our living as a people in the comparatively short span of years that we have existed as a nation.

There is, however, a native art which should not be forgotten. That is the art of the native Americans: the Indians. Our nation's manner of administering the affairs of the Indians has tended to suppress and degrade their cultural practices. Under restrictions, the old ceremonial dances and art forms faded, but did not disappear entirely, for the Red Man has tenaciously held on to his traditions. The beautifully beaded buckskin costumes worn by the braves today, when the tribe meets for a ceremonial dance, were worn by their forefathers, carefully preserved through the years and handed down from one generation to the next.

Today travelers may still find beauty in handicrafts of many forms in Indian folk-art from coast to coast. This folk-art has a fascinating variety of articles which represent the culture of ninety-six tribes living on reservations in twenty-five of our states. They have preserved many of the ancient designs in these articles which are made with skills that have been developed for centuries; and rugs, baskets, jewelry, bags, moccasins and embroideries are so artistic that they are used in modern homes and wardrobes. In their crafts the Indians' natural bent is to use only subdued tones of color accentuated by touches of brilliant hue and to create simplicity of line and pattern. When, however, one finds articles that are quaint in form and design and loud in color one may be sure that they are made in that way for tourist trade because the Indians know that articles of this sort are in greatest demand. But they are less beautiful because of it. We were told by a young girl who had lived among the Indians all her life, her father being an Indian trader, that if one wanted to see or buy the things of REAL beauty one must know where THEY live, who make things for the love of doing it—to express their feelings, visions or ideas—to create. The things made for quick-sale tourist trade are less perfect, less harmonious in color and less fine in craftmanship.

Indians are all clever in their artistic work. They have a wonderfully accurate eye for form and color and a most delicate touch in handling their product in the making. (It has been said that every Indian child has inborn artistic talent—it is only for him to let it develop as he grows.) In the more primitive tribes of today, the Indians make their own dyes from vegetable and mineral matter and their colors are soft and permnent. The more civilized tribes, having ventured into the field of commercial dyes, find that they save time and are more convenient to use. Their art product however has suffered in fineness of color and is generally considered inferior to that colored by native dyes—the process of which is kept strictly a secret within the tribe.

The beadwork of the Indian tribes is world famous and has been developed to perfection in three or four generations. Many, many years before Europeans came to America and brought the white man's glass beads for barter, the Indians were using various articles which served as beads; such as seeds, nuts, beans, teeth, claws, shells, crab eyes, and other objects for decorations, using them in rather elaborate and intricate designs on belts, head bands, and other articles of apparel. They also made beads of clay, agate and crystal, using very crude tools for boring, chipping asd polishing.

Our eastern Indians called their oyster and clamshell beads Wampum. They were woven into bands and belts and used as currency, for decoration and for conveying messages. The various colors, designs and other details of the Wampum belts had distinctive meanings and were easily read by members of the tribes. Tribal events and treaties were invariably recorded in this way. For many years after the Colonists settled in America, Wampum was used as a standard currency by both Indians and whites. Old records of New England may be found which mention the price of various things in Wampum value, and a contract made in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1650, provides that "payment shall be made in sacks of corn or in equal value in Wampum of blue color." In thinking back to our childhood and the stories we heard and read about the Indians, we do not ordinarily think of them as carrying on art industries; but from earliest times Indian beadwork has been an industry. Today many of our Indians do an extensive business in beadwork in department stores, curio shops and in roadside "trading posts" where it catches the eye of the tourist.

Few of us realize that Indian beadwork varies so greatly in the method of making, in weave and design. Perhaps the reason for this is that each tribe uses whatever materials are at hand and works out its own patterns and color combinations. Some use sinews for thread and sew the beads on buckskin or cloth or weave them into bands and belts, using very simple looms. Eastern tribes are fondest of flower designs—the western tribes prefer the conventional geometric patterns or human and animal figures. Indian beadwork seems to have kept its tribal distinction better than any other Indian art, wherein patterns of one tribe sometimes are copied by another. A. Hyatt Verrill says in his book, The American Indian: "this

is partly due to the peculiar conservatism of many tribes who will use only certain colors and certain sizes and forms of beads. Partly it is due to the fact that much of the beadwork has a tribal, clan or other significance."

One art form, practiced by the Dakotas and the Sioux, which is not too well known but which is perhaps even more typically Indian than beadwork, is the work with quills. For this work they use the quills or spines of the common American porcupine. They are very flexible, highly polished and easily dyed. They may be threaded and sewed on a cloth foundation like beads or plaited and woven into baskets, belts and bands. They are used in decorating pouches, bags, moccasins, headdresses, even birchbark boxes, baskets and articles of clothing. Often these quill ornamentations are so fine that they resemble textile work, and it is said to show greater artistic feeling and workmanship than the finest beadwork. Though it is still used to a certain extent it is considered a lost art.

Somewhat similar to quillwork is straw-work. Aside from straw embroidery the work is much like basketry. Indian baskets are as widely known and as famous as the tribal beadwork. There are very few Indian tribes that are not considered experts in basketmaking although in style, decoration and quality their products vary greatly. As in other Indian arts, materials differ, not only with the tribes, but also as to the particular kind of basket made. Willow, birch and other flexible splints are used for the coarser utility baskets, while bark, roots, grasses, straw and other materials are used for the finer decorative articles. While nearly every type of weave known to us is used in the making, they can be, roughly speaking, divided into two classes: the coiled form, which is made by twisting or braiding the material into strands and lashing or sewing them together, one coil on top of the other; anl the woven type which is more commonly known.

To the Indian baskets are very important. They are used as sieves and for carrying heavy burdens; some are so finely made that they hold water and some are smeared with pitch and used as liquid containers. Others are used as forms or molds for pottery. The basket is coated with clay, but in the process of firing it is burned away leaving the pottery to stand alone as it were. Utility baskets are entirely plain in makeup but the Indians' artistic urge is not to be curbed, and when they begin making a basket of finer type the imagination has a free range, and the results in beauty are a pleasure to behold. The designs used are not merely designs—but more often pictured legends, myths, and stories of deeds and events important to the history of the tribe. Often several kinds of materials are used in baskets; bits of colored yanr and cotton strings, seeds and shells are used as decorations. The most beautiful in design and the most exquisitely made are the baskets of the California tribes. Bits of bright colored feathers are woven into strands forming the wonderfully artistic designs. Some baskets are so interwoven with tiny downy feathers that the basket material itself is completely invisible and appears to be made entirely of feathers. As previously mentioned baskets are important to the Indians themselves, and since the white man took over his country they are important as an article of trade, a source of income, many depending on them as their sole means of livelihood. Thousands of Indian baskets are sold all over the country, in resorts, curio shops and department stores.

Next to Indian basketry, their pottery is perhaps the best known and most desired of their products. Though important to the tribes, we desire it for decorative purposes only. Vessels made for their own use are water-tight, but whatever is made for sale is not. Being made only for ornamental use they are fired just long enough to set the dyes. As is the case with other Indian products, the pottery varies in beauty, design, quality and durability. Some tribes never learned to make other than the roughest kind of earthenware, while others are highly proficient in making ceramics, gracefully and delicately formed. The Indians have never known the potter's wheel, so all their products are made by hand, moulding the clay with their fingers and using stone, sticks and spatula as supplementary tools. They use a variety of colored clays or add mineral pigment for making different shades. The Acoma tribe makes pottery from a white clay found high in the mountains, and there they go on foot, often a hazardous trip—carrying it down to their little huts where they mold and paint it. It is then fired in a small oven built for that purpose. The Hopi Indians are descendants of a prehistoric people and are considered the best skilled in the art. They use the same designs, many of them symbolic, as were used by their ancestors. The Laguni and Zuni Pueblo tribes are also known for their pottery wares. The Delaware, which is an eastern tribe is expert in making coiled pottery. They roll the clay in their hands, making it into a rope and then coil it in layers into the desired shape, then smooth it down to make an even surface. Decorating the clay product is an art in itself and allows for a grand sweep of the imagination in bringing out the desired symbols. The Thunderbird is a much used design, as is the stylized parrot which is characteristic of the Acoma pottery.

Many of our tribes are producers of textiles but only a few have become really proficient at weaving cotton, wool and other fibres. They are the tribes of the Southwest, especially the Pueblo and the Navajo tribes. The Navajos are a nomadic people and move throughout the vast expanses of Northern Arizona and New Mexico. They build their log and mud hogans as shelter against the winter cold, but when warm weather comes they abandon them for teir cayuse-drawn covered wagons, traveling leisurely, at home wherever the shades of night overtake them. They are a colorful people, at least in dress, and one may assume that the beauty of the things they make is an expression of the beauty that lives within, for not only are they known as the most friendly tribe—but seeing them for the first time one KNOWS it by the kindly expressions etched in their features. Their dress is colorful, but not loud. They use rich fabrics, mostly velvets; but the colors however bright are in beautiful harmony. Over a solid color velvet blouse the women wear beautiful shawls woven in wide colorful bands on a solid background — and the gorgeous necklaces, bracelets, belts and rings made of hammered silver and torquoise are worn by men and women alike and often represent the family fortune. These articles of jewelry are made by them, a skill which they learned from the Mexicans. It is done with few and simple tools. The designs vary—there are no two alike, and by that we know they must have vivid imaginations to be able to express their songs and joys in their hearts in the designs they make. Because of this distinctive individuality in de-

sign their jewelry is much desired by tourists who are willing to spend small fortunes acquiring a few pieces of it. Both men and women are proficient in the art. The aforementioned young girl with the store of Indian knowledge confided to us that the women really were the more expert silversmiths but that they were content to let their men have that honor.

The Navajos have been a shepherd people since 1600 when they acquired sheep from the Spaniards and adapted Spanish implements to improve the Pueblo craft of weaving. The Navajo rugs and blankets are famed the world over for their striking beauty and design and despite all efforts to imitate them by means of machinery, we have never been able to do it successfully. Being a shepherd people they of course raise their own wool. The women and children do all the work pertaining to the care of the flock, weaving and dying the yarn. In the winter the weaving is done in the hogan. The loom, which is of the simplest form, a framework of poles and hanging crossbars to which the warp is attached, stands against the wall, the mother sitting on a rug on the floor when she begins her weaving and later, as she works upward, on whatever she can find that raises her to the desired height for working with her pattern on the loom. Patterns are for the most part geometric designs in red, black and grey on a solid white ground. On the floor may also be found a growing daughter carding the wool and perhaps an older sister with a distaff spinning the carded wool into yarn.

Red is the only color used in dying—black, grey and white are natural colors. When making brighter rugs for trade and for the finer shawls and blankets, commercial dyes are used. During the summer the weaving is done out of doors, perhaps under a tree, and while the mother weaves the older children watch the flocks, feeling it both a duty and a joy to do that and also to care for the smaller brothers and sisters. While very small, children show ambition to create designs expressing the life they see about them. They all seem to have artistic talent and growing up in an artistic atmosphere they have a good chance of developing it favorably. There is a delightful book called: Spin A Silver Dollar, which will be appreciated by any one at all interested in this subject of Indian art. It is the story of an Indian lad and the development of his artistic talent. The author says of the Navajos: "They are like the desert in which they live: quiet, calm, deep, natural—and American."

The Chimayan tribe came from Mexico in 1600, bringing their art—weaving and individual designs to this country. The looms of the Chimayan weavers resemble our own four-harness looms, though they are somewhat more roughly hewn. This seems to indicate that their contact with the Spaniards has been very definite and of some duration. After 200 years they follow both design and method of weaving their beautiful blankets very accurately. Their colors are more vivid and their yarns finer than in other woven Indian products. The colorful blankets are made into many useful articles—ladies coats, purses, throws and scarves, which are much sought after by tourists and which bring the weavers a good income.

Let us hope that the desire for money, which seldom stays long in an Indian's pocket, does not lure too many of the real artists among them away from the desire to make beautiful things, to express a dream, a vision or a story—and that OUR desire for the true art products—made for its own sake—may become more defined, so that THEY need not make inferior art because it is what we would rather buy.

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In the Wake of Prairie Schooners

(Concluded)

When '49ers meet in heaven the talk eventually turns to Weber Canyon. It may not have been the toughest stretch of road on the long trek across the wilderness, but it boasted a cussedness entirely its own and brought to such a state of artfulness as to border on the ingenious.

Having negotiated the hair pin turns and precipitous grades of even the modern high-way over this awful 35 mile stretch through the Wasatch mountains, driving east from Salt Lake City, we stopped at old Fort Bridger, well into the high plateau of western Wyoming. Chatting with the museum curator, we expressed our amazement that the emigrants should have ventured to bring their wagon trains through that terrible giant's obstacle course: the Echo and Weber canyons. Viewing the situation objectively, the curator delivered himself of the double-angled opinion, that had we had the fortitude of the pioneers, we might still have tried it; on the other hand, had the pioneers known what we knew, they might not. We left it at that; and, strolling about among the tumble-down sheds and buildings where every square foot is history, we watched in our imagination the Donner wagons roll out toward the southwest and their rendezvous with fate; while the less reckless turned north to circumvent the mountains and the scorching Salt Desert beyond.

A few more days on the high plateau where the going was not too bad, the water plentiful, and grass abundant along the Bear river tributaries, brought the Donners up against the mountain wall raised for a barrier against what is beyond, and which men had best not look upon.

These are not the widely spaced mountain ranges which thus far had stood aside to give the wagons room to move several columns abreast. This is solid rock, cleft at intervals by narrow canyons, so deep and with walls so perpendicular that only at midday do the sun's rays search out the shadowy depths along the floor.

The sun browned faces of the men blanch before this barrier; but George Donner has courage—as so many men have had—courage beyond his wisdom. If Hastings had gone through, he can go through! And so the mountains swallow the 80 wagons, the stock, the people. Within a few hours the train is out of sight, crawling like ants along the rocky floor of Echo Canyon; in places so narrow that the wheels are gashed by the jutting rocks on either side, and the only road is the bed of the stream, foaming among the boulders. Time and again the passage is barred by rock piles so great, that every wagon must be taken apart and carried across, piece by piece, together with its contents. The oxen flounder helplessly among the sharp stones and

tangled vegetation. It is heave and pull and lift for animals and humans until every muscle is aquiver with bruise and fatigue.

From Echo Canyon into Weber Canyon. From bad to worse! The stand of aspen here is so dense that no wagon can go through. This can't be the trail! The party is trapped in the bowels of the mountain. They have no choice now but to cut their way through to the west. For two weeks the mountains ring with the strokes of the double bitted axes. One weary mile a day. At last they are through; but then comes the fearful descent into the valley. A drop of three thousand feet in ten miles. A giant's stairway where the wagons repeatedly must be emptied and hoisted down with ropes.

Twenty precious days have been lost. And still 500 miles before them. Five hundred miles of what? A short respite first in the valley of which Brigham Young, leading his Mormon migration the following year, dramatically exclaimed, "This is the place!" (But this year, 1846, no shady "Mormon Trees" or tidy log houses welcomed the weary travelers, such as greeted later caravans of gold-seeking gentiles.) Then on westward over the shimmering salt flats, the waterless wastes where the oxen drop in their tracks or, thirst-crazed, stampede in frantic search of water. The trail is strewn with furniture and implements thrown from the wagons to lighten the heavy load for the exhausted and depleted teams. Nobody rides the wagons now. Men, women and children plodding through the hot, sliding sand. Mothers carrying babies in their arms.

Fifty hours Jim Reed rides without sleep to fetch water for his wife and children, only to find his oxen and stock gone upon his return. During the night they stampeded into the desert never to be seen again. The wagon wheels are stilled; the sand already drifting about them as the forlorn party sets out on foot.

There are springs where mountains rise out of the burning sea of salt and sand; but they are too far apart. Daily oxen and horses falter and die. More wagons are abandoned. The heat, the dust, the thirst make the days a nightmare. Time ceases to be. There is only the sand, the sun and the rasping cry for water. The days become weeks, the dragging steps interminable miles. A heart-breaking detour around the Ruby mountain range; then finally north to the Humboldt River to pick up the old California trail coming down from Fort Hall.

The wagons they waved good-bye to at Fort Bridger passed here weeks ago. The summer is fleeting. Time is running out. The Sierra mountains are not yet in sight and they must be crossed before the snow begins to fall. With an unspoken fear in their hearts they push on westward along the Humboldt.

This is Indian country. The Utes are cunning and merciless. Where river crossings are made, lead wagons separated from the rest are attacked and destroyed before help can reach them. At night deadly arrows whine out of the dark shadows and work havoc among the stock. For later caravans which kept to the Fort Hall road, this stretch was one of the most dreaded. The weary bands were in no condition to fight a running battle with the flitting savages.

The Humboldt river never reaches the sea; it loses itself in the desert as it becomes the marshy, ill-smelling Humboldt Sink. Animals are trapped in the mire around the pools of brackish water as the thirst-crazed stock break away from their guards. Wagons sink in the treacherous sloughs and must be abandoned. The desert heat is terrific, and an appalling number of travelers through the migration years withstood the rigors and dangers of the long trail only to leave their bones to bleach around this festering hole where the desert killed a river.

Westward the Donners strike out for the shores of this sea of fire, the Sierra foot hills. Bodies and spirits are numb with suffering and fatigue. Death would be a welcome relief; but it would heighten the suffering of the survivors, and they can bear no more; so cling, cling desperately, to the last flickering flame!

At last, Truckee river, with sweet cool water, born of pure Sierra snow. The oxen, their eyes dull and blood-shot rush into the water without even being unyoked from the wagons; nobody has the strength to stop them now. Men and women sink to their knees on the bank and weep with exhaustion and joy. The terrible desert is behind them. They have borne suffering beyond human endurance; each is alive only because someone needs him.

The High Sierras are visible now; the summits raking the sky and already white with the first snows of the year. At Truckee Lake, later to bear the name of Donner, in memoriam, the wagons halt before the seemingly insurmountable granite barrier. But there are passes, back-breaking, impossible passes; no worse, perhaps, than Weber canyon; but Weber canyon sealed their doom. Two weeks are all they need now to reach the outposts of California. White men and safety!

A leaden sky hides the towering summits. It is only October, but there is snow in the air. The assault is made at dawn; but before midday the world is full of stinging, blinding snow. Every sign of the trail has disappeared. The oxen flounder in the deepening drifts and finally sink to their knees, unable to move the clumsy wagons another foot. The party returns to the lake to await a break in the weather; but there is no break. The storm rages for days. The drifts are mountainous. There is no hope now; this snow will never melt before another summer rolls around. Shelters are hurriedly made; of logs for those who still have the strength to fell the trees; others use boughs, wagon covers, anything to keep out the sifting snow.

Food is an immediate and constant problem. The animals are dying rapidly of cold and starvation. Many carcasses are irretrievably lost under the drifts. After a month the camp of 92 men, women and children are facing certain death from starvation and exposure. For all practical purposes they are alone in a frozen universe. There is no hope of reaching human habitations and help in any direction.

Toward Christmas, when boiled ox hides is the only food available, one last desperate attempt to find help must be made. If they are to die anyway, then best to give their lives for families and friends; — so reason ten men and five women. But what chance have they? Emaciated, on foot, they must conquer the terrible Sierras in the dead of winter. Or did they harbor a despairing hope that the cruel universe would relent during the holy season and let them live? They called it The Forlorn Hope Expedition.

Throw your veil, Saga, over the things that happened.

We who are warm and well fed have no right to look upon such suffering.

Ten men broke under the ordeal. The rest were rescued by friendly Indains who wept openly at the sight of their condition. Word went through to Sutter's Fort and a relief expedition hurriedly organized. With super-human endurance they carried provisions on their backs over the eighty miles of trackless mountains, virtually carrying back with them as many survivors as were able to make the trip. Twice more the trip was made; then, only the dead were left on the shores of Donner Lake. There were 43. George Donner was among them.

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Fairhope Organic Has New Principal

Edgar E. Ritter will be the new principal at Organic. He and his wife and children will arrive some time this summer to take over the post vacated by the death of Mr. Alexander last November.

The following article gives something of his ideas about Organic Education:

A blue sweatered boy with a book under his arm raised a solicitous thumb as I was about to pass him on the highway one afternoon last week. As he jumped into the seat beside me, I recognized his book as an Algebra 1.

"Why do you study that?" I asked.

"That's a silly question," he obsedved with typical teen-age candor.

I repeated the silly question a little sternly.

"They made us study this junk to pass," he said, tapping the book. Then he went on and on in a sudden turgid flow of indignation. "And is that old Mr. Briggs mean about it! Algebra, Algebra, Algebra—that's all he thinks matters. I just stayed to ask this English teacher a couple questions after class, see? And by the time I ran up two flights of stairs I was late to algebra and this Mr. Briggs bawls me out and puts me on detention. Wouldn't even let me tell him WHY I was late."

In this one breathless phillippic, he hit upon both of my major grievances with traditional education: 1.) superimposed purposes; 2.) a partitive treatment of knowledge that often costs teachers their perspective and students their integrity. The organic philosophy of education bears the freedom that can cast out both of these tyrannies.

An organic school is called to the high purpose of proving in ever new ways that the individual's Inner Purpose is the live seed, and that the school is a place for its nurture and early growth.

Its results help silence the chant: "You dare not take away the exams and marking systems." Tragically enough, the conventionally conditioned student WOULD be in trouble if these superimposed purposes were magically withdrawn from his otherwise traditional school. Pondering the next day's assignment, he would be plagued with doubt as to when—if not to pass an exam—he'll find it handy to recite from memory, "Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres . . ." School-imposed purposes have often stunted the development of the student's Inner Purpose.

I think of the individual's Inner Purpose as his inherent quest for a satisfying, rhythmic give and take between himself and his society. Dynamic and unique in every person, it can be comprehended only by progressing observation of creative bents and sensitivities. Substituting artificial purposes for it would be easier; but, in the organic school, it is the pearl of great price.

Gordon Melvin, in The New Culture, analogized the conventional accretional learning to the way in which a snowball grows as it rolls on damp snow. But ORGANIC growth results from the organism's nourishing itself from within. Providing the right environment for the growth of the student's Inner Purpose likewise demands the teacher's perspiration and inspiration—but it's a more heartening challenge than snowball pushing.

To attribute our culture's preoccupation with postponed illusory rewards to the counterparts of these rewards in the conventional school might be to overstate the case, but there is a relationship. The student who has been striving for artificial school rewards rather than for satisfactions intrinsic in health growth faces a difficult reorientation on graduation. Last spring I heard a high school valedictorian delivering her oration. Turning to her classmates she referred to her school as "this last ribbon of certainty on which we stand . . ." Pretty poetry but tragic philosophy!

I believe the graduate of an organic school should, on graduating, experience little bewilderment. The motive power doesn't change on Commencement Day. Propelled by his independent Inner Purpose, his interests are driven in a steadily widening spiral of experiences.

Mr. Briggs would have been amazed at learning that his short temper at 10 a. m. was the source of a boy's gray mood at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Long ago he forgot that boys' and girls feelings are not fretted into 45-minute periods. Year after year of specialization on x's and cube roots finally brought him around to the view that no boy had better get in the way of an x or a cube root.

The organic philosophy's dedication to an integrated curriculum is the alternative to the tyranny of subject-matter specialists. An application of this philosophy was developed in the Kenneth L. Patton article: "A Curriculum for the School of Tomorrow", Vanguard American, January, 1946. Weekly seminars of the students and teachers of the five interrelated courses seem a very practical safeguard against the curriculum's splitting into traditionally independent subjects that go their ancient ways.

In these extraordinary fluid days, our need for leaders who can think dynamically is acute. It is possible that we may have but one more chance to conquer nationalism, prejudice, and poverty—to create the conditions of peace.

The attack upon these rapidly moving issues will not be led by careful scholars of the static fact. It can best be led by those who are trained to see the world whole, to understand its ideologies in motion, and to act.

The School of Organic Education—with its reverent nurture of the student's dynamic Inner Purpose and with its guidance into organically whole learning experiences—is singularly relevant to the needs of our times. I keenly anticipate the privilege of working and learning with its staff and students.—Edgar E. Ritter, from INTEGRATION.