

## MORE PUBLIC INTEREST IN STRATFORD HIGH SCHOOL WOULD HELP MUCH

Not so many years ago, Stratford had a party of conservatives who strenuously objected to all things modern. Whether they were too artistic, after the manner of the old families of the South, or whether it was simply a jar in their way of loving, I have not been able to determine. Be that as it may, once upon a time, many of the older settlers objected by vote and propaganda to the coming of street cars to the city of Stratford; to the city water works; to the sewage system; to all those frivolous modern inventions called "improvements" by a shiftless new generation.

Of course the conservatives lost out on the deal. Progress has a way of riding over aristocracy. But there is some of that spirit still in evidence. Stratford has a high school so inadequate to the needs of the pupils that it is a standing rebuke, and yet nothing is done toward a new building. There are at present 1,200 children going to school half time in Stratford because there isn't room for them all. But that's all right! It gives the morning pupils a chance to go to Poli's in the afternoon and the afternoon pupils a chance to help mother do up the work in the morning.

However, there have been a few new buildings put up in Stratford during the past two or three years. These, with one exception, which all Stratford will recognize are modern as to architecture and accouterment. There is the buff and tan tones and the unilateral lighting over the left shoulder of the children; the fire-proof structure and the roomy closet for the teacher's things, with a mirror [sic] inside the door of each one.

In 1911 there were thirty rooms in the four buildings of the town; and, thirty teachers. Now there are sixty-nine rooms, ten buildings and 85 teachers. The appropriation has increased since 1911 from \$31,000 to \$103,000, but the increase, while of course it helps greatly, is not sufficient for the needs of the community.

Half of the pupils in Stratford's schools are children of foreign born parents. These children are not segregated, but are mixed in according to the neighborhood in which they live. The foreigners, consisting chiefly of Italians, Slavs, and Hungarians, are, says Mr. C. C. Thompson, superintendent of

Stratford public schools as bright as are the Americans. They keep up very well indeed during the lower grades, but when the children reach the higher grades and need home pressure and encouragement to keep on, the foreigners fall behind. When they reach the mature age of about twelve years the mothers and fathers can't for the life of them see why they should not stop school and go to work.

The American children go on to the higher grades and the high school fairly well, Mr. Thompson says, when you consider the fact that the high school offers nothing whatever in the way of practical courses. It is only a preparatory school for college. But then there are not many places as well satisfied with themselves as is Stratford on the question of school.

Up the [sic] very recently, there has been nothing done in the way of Americanization. Recently, Mr. Thompson shocked the community by announcing that the future of the city depends on its present handling of the foreign element. To get even with him, possibly, they gave him charge of the Americanization work of Stratford. He thought that he had a committee, but he discovered the other day that he is the whole thing.

They started a night school, parts of which are in a flourishing condition. Whitney school worked at a disadvantage having no lights, and has only a week or so ago started the night school. But at Franklin school there is a class of 25 non-English speaking people, and at Honeyspot school there are 75 adult foreigners and one class of young people who have finished only the first three grades in school and wish to continue their education.

Stratford needs more interest in the school by the people at large. Mr. Thompson says that he has a good board. But what can a board do when nobody empowers them with the means? Until the people themselves awake to the fact that children are cheated out of a great deal of the time due them, and that the foreigners – the grating [sic] crowd of foreigners – are being sadly neglected – Stratford will probably continue to pursue its leisurely course, saying, "What is to be will be," and "This sort of thing has always been good enough. What's the matter with it now?"