

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-
Lincoln Extension

Extension

1929

EC5553 The Country Home -- An Appreciation

Mrs. Carlton B. Noyes

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>

Noyes, Mrs. Carlton B., "EC5553 The Country Home -- An Appreciation" (1929). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 2819.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/2819>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

out of print

Nebraska
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Extension
Circular
5553

1929

THE COUNTRY HOME - AN APPRECIATION

Mrs. Carlton B. Noyes

There is no word in our language so hard to define as Home. Many definitions have been offered, all colored by the individual point of view. Thus the humorist says, "Home is the place where the modern youth pauses to change his clothes to go somewhere else." The little child says, "Home is where Mother is." The tired husband and father thinking with longing for the comforts of his fireside calls it a place of peace and rest. The mother may offer her definition in negative terms, recalling with glee the story of the mother who on taking her children for an afternoon stroll was accosted by a stranger with the words. "Excuse me, madam, but are these all yours, or is this a picnic?" And quick as a flash came the spirited answer, "Sir, they are all mine, and it's no picnic!" Perhaps the best definition ever offered is the old one - "Home is the sculptor's workshop wherein is carved the destiny of man."

Physical Beauty

But, whatever difficulty we may have in defining the word, none of us fails to recognize a home of beauty when we see it. We know too that home has two natures, the physical and the spiritual, and both must be developed to make perfection. This spiritual nature is an intimate thing, unseen by the casual observer excepting as it may show itself in the outward appearance. The stranger sees only the tidy lawn, the well-kept buildings, the sweep of the fields beyond, and from them he forms his convictions as to the innate beauty of the home. And because of this it behooves us to present a gracious appearance to the world. But the true homemaker has a deeper and dearer reason for guarding the physical beauty of her home. As a mother broods over her beloved child, making its body clean and sweet, carefully guarding its food and sleep that it may grow ruddy cheeked and strong limbed, and delighting to dress it becomingly and with care, so the true homemaker tenderly cares for her home, not to meet the approval of the passing stranger, but because of the love she bears it.

The physical beauty of a home is not dependent upon wealth. Choice of color has more to do with the beauty of a room than has richness of rugs and hangings. One of the most attractive flower gardens I know is planted entirely with native roots requiring only the transplanting. But as all beauty implies cleanliness, we fence our lawns against fowl and beast, keep back to its place the litter of the barnyard, and sow seed in profusion until the green and bloom of our dooryard matches the rich sweep of the fields beyond. And so we take the first step toward making the farm home what it should be by right - the most beautiful in the world.

Beauty in Nature

An instinctive love of nature is implanted in every human breast. No one lives in the congested districts of a city from choice. The tenements are built for the man of small income. As soon as his earnings will permit, he finds a home

farther from the city's center where he may have a tiny lawn of his own and plant a few feet of grass and flowers. As his income increases he moves again to find a larger space until at the outskirts of the city we find the estates of the wealthy men, whose well kept grounds are carefully planted to imitate nature at her best.

The elements of this beauty which is so prized, nature spreads with a prodigal hand about every country home. Above it she arches the blue of her sky dotted with clouds of fleecy white. About it she spreads her fields of grain or of grassy meadow- green or gold in the summer and brown in winter, but never without lines of beauty; in the dooryard she flings her rich blooms wherever we wish and if we will but keep our woodpiles and our outbuildings where they will not mar her plans, she sees that every window frames a picture such as no artist can paint. So bountiful are her gifts that if we supplement them by our own efforts, the exterior of our farm homes will always present an appearance of beauty.

Spiritual Aspects

And yet when all this is done and the physical beauty of our homes perfected, we realize that we have not built the ideal home. There is many an orphan asylum carefully tended and beautified that can only by courtesy be called a home; and there are doubtless many present today who recall with tenderness the rude settler's cabin or sod house of their youth, and realize that despite the lack of physical beauty which their hard working parents had little time to create, there was in that rude dwelling something indefinable which made it beautiful and which swells the heart whenever the vision of that little home arises.

This is what we mean when we speak of the spiritual side of the home. It is something intangible yet very real, an invisible atmosphere which all must breathe. Child life develops or is dwarfed by it according to its purity and sunshine. It is as much within our power to create as is the physical beauty of the home, but by no means so easy. It is formed by the personalities of the inmates of the home, and changed only as they develop or control their natures. For our lives are what we make them, and depend upon our characters and not the place in which we live. If we wish to develop the best there is in us, we will do it whether we live on a farm or behind a brick wall. There is no such thing as narrowness unless we deliberately create it. The radio, the auto and the telephone have eliminated farm isolation, while if we but will it, the best literature of the world may be brought daily to our doors.

If our dinner table conversation deals with the faults of our neighbors; if we listen to jazz when a turn of the dial will bring to us the best music of the world; if the latest modern novel with its lightly veiled indecency lies upon our table while the immortal classics are ignored, it is a matter of our own choice. But we need not be surprised if our children's taste in music and books is low, and their morals tainted. It is not what we deliberately teach that forms the character of our children, as much as what they absorb by daily association. We have it in our power to raise or lower their standards in all things by our daily living.

7690a

Advantages of Farm Life

I have spoken of the American farm home as being by inherent right the most beautiful of the world, but this question of spiritual atmosphere, being one of character rather than of place, is not a problem of the country home alone.

There is one phase of the matter however, in which the farm has distinctly the advantage - and that is the fact that by its very nature farm life binds the family together as no other life can. The father knows his children intimately because he is with them at all times, not merely at the hurried breakfast and the weary hours after the work of the day. The children, too, learn to love their home because they help to create it; little tasks, suited to their growing strength, teach them habits of industry and the value of team work. There is no more beautiful thing in the world than a home where all in harmony work together for a common cause, with a mutual interest binding all in close bonds.

Appreciation of Country Homes

But when all has been said, I wonder sometimes if we all appreciate our country homes as we should. This question was impressed upon my mind when, a short time ago I visited a friend in a city apartment and marked the pride with which she showed me her rooms. There was a tiny living room with its furniture carefully placed to allow room for the family; a kitchen which was only a narrow passage between stove and sink with no room for her toddling child; a dining room with built-in benches at the ends of a stationary table and above it, concealed in an innocent looking cupboard, a bed which was to be let down at night over the table, "thus giving us another room", my hostess explained. Her woman's touch had made of those rooms a home but when I reached the street after my call, I instinctively drew a long breath as if stifled. I thought of the country homes I had known - the light airy bedrooms with the blossom scented breezes blowing gently thru the windows; the cheery living rooms about which the family life centered; the cool kitchens where there was always room for the children to play while the mother performed her morning tasks. And suddenly I knew that unity of life is a safeguard, and that family ties are strongest where there is room for companionship.

But that which most interested me was the pride which my friend displayed. Never once did she admit that she was at all crowded, or that the rent would be sufficient to support a small family. She was displaying her home, the dearest spot on earth to her woman's heart, and her pride was justifiable. She never considered that that very pride had an economic value; yet the real estate agent could well afford to foster that feeling in all his tenants for it did more toward keeping up values than did all his advertising.

Is there any reason that the same logic should not be applied to the farm? We hear a great deal of pessimistic discussion of farm life today; is it possible that emphasizing the brighter side would help the situation? There is a great deal in mental attitude, if you want people to admire what you have, appreciate it yourself. We hear much today about salesmanship - schools teach it and young men are being trained in the art which consists chiefly in the ability to show to others one's own mental viewpoint, and so get the desired results. The

7690m

foundation principle is to believe a thing thoroly yourself, then by your very enthusiasm teach others to appreciate it.

In certain quarters there has always been a peculiar prejudice against farm life. This is often displayed in unpleasing ways. I have lived on a farm over thirty years without seeing a farmer habitually chewing a straw or sprinkling his conversation with crude and undesirable expletives - yet Uncle Josh still appears on the stage and cartoon pages without a single protest from those most interested. It is doubtful if any other honorable profession could be so maligned. Yet our playwrights and cartoonists are kindly souls who seek only to please their public and not to lacerate feelings. The trouble is that we have never displayed sufficient pride to resent the ancient joke.

If the farm women took the same pride in their homes as did the apartment dweller, if they never allowed a slighting remark about country life to pass unchallenged, if they at all times sought to see and to show to others the beauty and freedom of farm life, striving to develop its possibilities and to hide its defects - the effect upon both social and economic farm questions of today would be far reaching. It is even possible that as a result of this concerted action, the politician might be forced to find another question for their political football.

In view of all these things, let us resolve to love and cherish our homes as never before, to develop them both physically and spiritually and to show to others our appreciation, until all recognize what we already know, that the farm home may be made, above all others, the true Home Beautiful.

7690m