

Ardmore Avenue School Is Discredit To Lower Merion

(Fifth Article of a Series)

As stated in a previous installment, the Engelhardt Report rates the Merion Square School as the poorest in the Lower Merion School district. The first unit was completed in 1888, the same year as the Bala School, which is rated second poorest.

Third from the bottom is the Ardmore Avenue School,

third oldest in the district. The main building was erected in 1901, after a fire had destroyed the original structure, and an annex was added 41 years ago.

We had an argument the other day with a good citizen who reasoned that too much emphasis was being placed on physical facilities. It's our teachers who count, was his argument.

"You talk about Merion Square School," he said. "All right, so it's not modern. But look at John Fetter, the principal. Why, the kids would rather go to his school even if it were a one-room log building."

We agreed that it is the teachers that count, first of all. "But since we have principals like John Fetter and good teachers, why not give them the equipment and tools to work with?" was the point of our argument.

'BEST WE CAN AFFORD'

Dr. N. L. Engelhardt is of the opinion that our teachers are doing a tremendous job under handicaps. "We are falling down on our chil-

dren by not giving them the best facilities we can afford," he says.

Lower Merion, according to a recent survey, is doing the least for its school children in relation to what it can afford of any school district in the Philadelphia area.

Ardmore Avenue School is a case in point. It is true that this is one of only two schools in the district which are not overcrowded. It is also true that a large sum of money will be spent this summer to make necessary improvements, including replacement of the 41-year-old boilers which could have blown up almost any time.

Yet, consider these findings gleaned from the Engelhardt Report:

The school occupies a site of only 4.4 acres, providing less than half an acre for play area. With the exception of several sand boxes, the space is entirely asphalt-covered.

The older unit is of non-fire-resistant construction. The value of a spiral toboggan fire escape from the third floor is questioned, and it is recommended that four sub-standard classrooms on this floor be abandoned altogether.

Stairs and floors in the old building are of wood, in poor condition, and the corridors are dismal.

No facilities are provided for home economics, and children are sent to Penn Wynne School for these classes.

Natural lighting in the main building is poor. Some of its rooms are too small, making it difficult to carry on a complete program.

Classrooms in the annex are considerably below the accepted standard in size.

The school office is one small room, used jointly by the principal and clerk, and also serves as a public waiting room.

Teachers eat lunch in the main vestibule of the building.

The only toilet rooms in the old section are located in the basement and are in poor condition.

These are but a few of the details cited. About the only feature that draws favorable comment is the medical room.

Several of the recommendations listed improvements provided for before the Engelhardt Report was submitted and are already being attended to.

However, it is difficult to see how the basic deficiencies can be dealt with without razing or reconstructing the building, or expanding the site or rebuilding on a new site.