

The Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight Schoolhouse



MOONLIGHT SCHOOLS

Established in Rowan County, Ky., in 1911, by Mrs. Cora W. Stewart, "to emancipate from illiteracy those enslaved in its bondage." Because the people had to labor by day it was decided to have the schools on moonlight nights so the moon could light the way. The schools were taught by volunteer teachers. Movement soon spread nationally and internationally.

FOREWORD

Morehead State University observed the Golden Anniversary of its establishment by the 1922 session of the General Assembly during the 1972-73 academic year. This brochure is part of the program to commemorate the opening in September 1923 of the Morehead State Normal School. Though the State Normal School was created on March 8, 1922, students were not admitted until September 23, 1923. Therefore, the beginning of the 1973 fall semester marks the entrance of the University into the second fifty years of its existence as a state assisted institution.

As part of the observation, the University will pay tribute to the work of Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, founder of Rowan County's famed "Moonlight Schools," through the restoration of a one-room school as a "moonlight schoolhouse."

Mrs. Stewart's pioneering fight against adult illiteracy brought national and international recognition to Mrs. Stewart and Rowan County. The University hosted Congressional hearings in 1962 which led to the passage of the Adult Basic Education Act, sponsored by Congressman Carl Perkins. Morehead State University has continued the work of Mrs. Stewart through research, demonstration, and teacher training in adult basic education with the establishment of the Appalachian Adult Education Center and the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. The University's recent efforts in the continuing fight against illiteracy have again brought national and international recognition.



Adron Doran
President

INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart was superintendent of Rowan County Schools from 1904 to 1912. During this period, Mrs. Stewart often served as a volunteer secretary to illiterate adults in the county. She concluded that instead of reading and writing letters for the illiterate, they should be taught to read and write.

In September, 1911, Cora Wilson Stewart established the Moonlight Schools. The Moonlight School was designed to eliminate illiteracy among the adult population and to afford an opportunity for those of limited education to increase their store of knowledge. Although the secondary goals changed from year to year, the primary goal was always the elimination of illiteracy in Kentucky.

AIMS FOR THE YEAR.

FIRST AIM:

To teach all of Kentucky's illiterates to read and write before 1920.

SECOND AIM:

To get at least 78% of all the children of the State in daily attendance at school. (Only 48% attended in 1917-18).

THIRD AIM.

To emphasize as a reconstruction measure the duty of working for better health, better homes, better farms, better roads, better schools and richer opportunities for happy and successful living.

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME

The adults were unable to attend day school, because of overcrowding and their own work responsibilities. To accommodate the adults, the schools were opened in the evenings. The new schools were started on moonlit nights to ensure the adults a safe journey over rough mountain roads. However, the adults were so eager and so earnest that after they started, they would come in the dark of the moon.

CALENDAR OF MOONLIGHT SCHOOLS

Each session continues 6 weeks, twenty-four evenings.

August 4, First Session Opens.
 September 1, Second Session Opens.
 September 11, First Session Closes.
 October 6, Third Session Opens.
 October 9, Second Session Closes.
 November 13, Third Session Closes.

Only one session is expected to be conducted by any one teacher.

THE FIRST CLASS

The teachers of Rowan County were asked by Mrs. Stewart to volunteer to teach adults at night. Not only did all of the teachers volunteer to teach at night after teaching children all day, they also volunteered to go from door to door to inform people of the purpose of the Moonlight School and to urge them to attend.

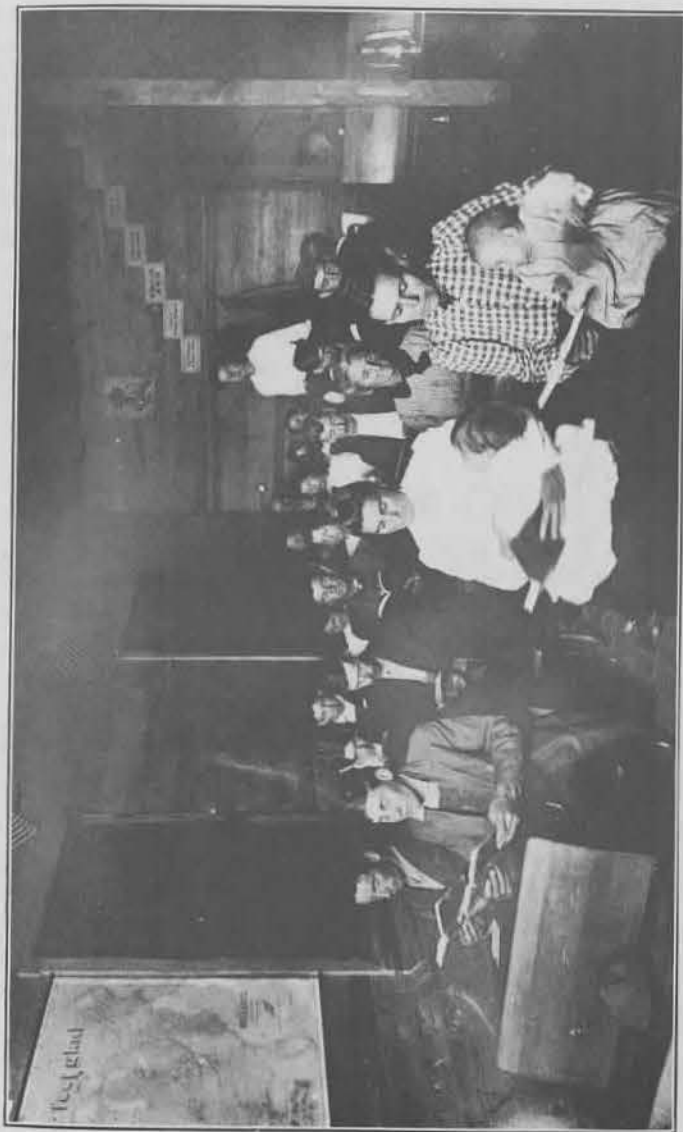
On Labor Day, September 4, 1911, the teachers visited every home in the county, inviting both educated and uneducated to attend. On September 5, the Moonlight Schools opened for their first session.

One hundred and fifty adults were expected; twelve hundred enrolled! This was almost one-third of the population of the county. The following year, sixteen hundred adults enrolled in the Moonlight Schools.

KENTUCKY EDUCATORS' PLEDGE OF SUPPORT.

We pledge our hearty co-operation and support to the work of the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission in its final campaign against illiteracy in this school year of 1919-20. We call upon the entire citizenship of Kentucky to enlist in the common task of ridding our beloved State of this deplorable condition. We shall use every possible resource and effort to attain the realization as far as may be possible of the slogan, "No Illiteracy in Kentucky in 1920."

—Resolution passed by the Kentucky Educational Association in its annual meeting at Louisville, June 23-26, 1919.



They came carrying babes in arms.

MOONLIGHT SCHOOL PROGRAM

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|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Devotional, | 7:00 P. M., | 15 minutes |
| Reading, | 7:15 P. M., | 25 minutes |
| Writing, | 7:40 P. M., | 25 minutes |
| Arithmetic, | 8:05 P. M., | 25 minutes |
| Drill, | 8:30 P. M., | 15 minutes |
| Drill, | 8:45 P. M., | 15 minutes |

COURSE OF STUDY

The course of study for the Moonlight Schools included vocal music, reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and four drills.

Vocal Music—Each pupil was taught to sing the patriotic songs and a few hymns from memory and to be able to sing them with the community.

Reading—Beginners were expected to finish *Country Life Reader, First Book*, during the first term of six weeks. Newspapers and bulletins were introduced by the teacher as supplementary reading material.

Spelling—The oral spelling followed the reading lesson and occupied five to ten minutes of the reading period. Most of the spelling was to be written; however, oral spelling was permitted as practice for spelling matches.



The spelling match.

Writing—The beginner's class had to write all of the script copies and letters in *Country Life Reader, First Book*, and to write legible letters in correct form, address envelopes, write checks and write paragraphs from dictation. Special attention was given to making the signature legible.

The work in writing was done with pencil during the first half of the term with pen and ink used during the last half of the term.

Arithmetic—In arithmetic the beginners were first taught to read and write figures to ten. Teachers were then encouraged to use problems drawn from the daily tasks of the students to stimulate interest. Adding the daily wages of the members of the class, or the wages of one member for a specific number of days was not only more interesting than adding abstract figures but showed the relationship of arithmetic to this daily task.

Drills—Only four drills were presented during a term. The drill course was a selective one based on the community's needs. These four drills were selected from the following: agriculture, home economics, horticulture, civics, health and sanitation, geography, English, and good roads.



Arithmetic was a popular study.

MATERIALS

There were no texts in print for adult illiterates in 1911, so a little weekly newspaper, *The Rowan County School Messenger*, was published as a reading text. The weekly paper was edited by Mrs. Stewart and furnished free of charge for the special benefit of the adult students.

The little newspaper dealt largely with local school and community affairs and had a fourfold purpose:

1. To enable adults to learn to read without the humiliation of reading from a child's primer with its lessons on kittens, dolls, and toys.
2. To give them a sense of dignity which comes from being a newspaper reader.
3. To stimulate their curiosity through news of their neighbors' movements and community occurrences.
4. To arouse the adult through news of educational and civic improvement in other districts to make like progress in their own.

Within five years the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission was publishing books for use in the Moonlight Schools by adults.

Moonlight School Motto

The riches of the Commonwealth
 Are free, strong minds and hearts of health
 And more to her than gold or grain
 Are cunning hand and cultured brain.

KENTUCKY ILLITERACY COMMISSION

In December, 1913, Cora W. Stewart wrote a letter to James B. McCreary, Governor of Kentucky, on the establishment of an Illiteracy Commission. Mrs. Stewart requested that the "Commission" be formed by legislative act to study the condition of adult illiterates in our state, to give men and women their freedom from this bondage and to place our State in a better light before the world.

The commission was also viewed by Mrs. Stewart as a means of promoting voluntary effort on the part of teachers engaged in the Moonlight School movement and to provide guidance and inspiration for teachers.

By return mail Governor McCreary endorsed the idea of an Illiteracy Commission. In 1914 both branches of the General Assembly voted unanimously in favor of the bill providing for the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission.

The Commission received its first appropriation of \$10,000 in 1916 which was increased to \$75,000 in 1918.

Illiteracy Commissions were appointed in each county of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

KENTUCKY ILLITERACY COMMISSION

Chairman—Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, Superintendent
Rowan County Schools

Hon. V. O. Gilbert, State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

H. H. Cherry, President
Western Kentucky State Normal School

Miss Ella Lewis, Superintendent
Grayson County Schools

NATIONAL SPREAD

The moonlight school movement spread rapidly from state to state. In 1913, moonlight schools were organized in the State of Tennessee, South Carolina and Washington. The second state illiteracy commission was established in 1915 in Alabama.

Although the moonlight school movement spread rapidly from Rowan County to other states, not all schools for illiterates used the name of moonlight schools. Some, after successfully launching the movement under this name, adopted names suited to their peculiar conditions, such as "The Lay-By Schools" of South Carolina, "The Adult Schools" of Alabama, "The Community Schools" of North Carolina and the "Schools for Grown-Ups" of Georgia.

SLOGANS AND ACTIONS BY OTHER STATES

Alabama—"Illiteracy in Alabama—Let's Remove it." 1914

North Carolina—Seven thousand teachers volunteered to teach in moonlight schools. 1915

Minnesota—Organized their teachers in 1914 and conducted moonlight schools for illiterates, mainly those of foreign birth.

Oklahoma—Initiated moonlight schools in 1914 through the influence of the Literacy League organized at the State Normal School at Edmond.

New Mexico—"Illiteracy in New Mexico Must Go." 1915

Georgia—Illiteracy Commission created in 1919.

South Carolina—"Let South Carolina Secede from Illiteracy." 1914

Mississippi—Created an Illiteracy Commission in 1916—"Illiteracy in Mississippi—Blot it Out."

Arkansas—Illiteracy Commission created 1917—"Let's Sweep Illiteracy Out of Arkansas."

North Dakota—"No Illiteracy in 1924."

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-THIRD CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

ADULT ILLITERACY IN THE
UNITED STATES

STATEMENT OF

MRS. CORA WILSON STEWART

MARCH 3, 1914

(MORNING AND EVENING)

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Cora W. Stewart was soon recognized in the United States as the leader in the fight against illiteracy. In 1914 she was invited to Washington to testify before the Education Committee in the House of Representatives in support of HR 2494, The Illiteracy Bill. At the time of Mrs. Stewart's testimony, the illiteracy bill, which requested an appropriation of \$10,000 to study the condition of illiteracy in the U.S., had been "permanently delayed" in the House.

In 1919, Mrs. Stewart was appointed chairman of the Illiteracy Commission of the National Education Association, and she held regional conferences throughout the country. In 1923 she became chairman of the World Illiteracy Commission, and presided over conferences in Edinburgh, Geneva, Toronto, San Francisco, and Denver. In 1926 she was made Director of the National Illiteracy Crusade with headquarters in Washington, D.C. In 1929, President Hoover delegated the Secretary of the Interior to appoint a National Illiteracy Commission with Mrs. Stewart as executive head.

Cora Wilson Stewart was one of the most interesting and dynamic speakers in America. She lectured in every state in the Union and addressed many of the state legislatures as well as committees in Congress. She was the recipient of several national and international prizes and awards in recognition of her great work. In 1925, she received the *Pictorial Review* award for the greatest humanitarian service rendered by an American woman. She received the Ella Flagg Young medal for distinguished service to education, and the Clara Barton medal for humanitarian service. In 1941, she was given an award by the General Federation of Women's Clubs at their Golden Jubilee Convention for pioneer work in combating illiteracy in the nation.



The Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight School

The "Little Brushy School" building was donated to Morehead State University by Mr. William Dailey, Morehead, Kentucky, and moved to Morehead State University campus and restored with the artifacts of early American education.

Establishment of the Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight School symbolizes the University's intent to serve the educational needs of the region as the institution begins its second fifty years of existence.

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MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY
(The Appalachian Adult Education Center)

Awarded



THE MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI PRIZE
(Honorable Mention)
in
UNESCO International Literacy Competition