

THE WPA PACKHORSE LIBRARY PROGRAM AND THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF
LITERACY, 1883-1962

By

DONALD CAMERON BOYD, JR.

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2009

© 2009 Donald C. Boyd

To my Granddad, James Alfred Boyd

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervising committee for their commitment, support, and advice. I am deeply indebted to Sevan Terzian for his service as my supervisory chair. His assistance, guidance, patience, and many insights into the world of graduate study saved me from myself many times. I am happy to express my gratitude to the University of Florida College of Education, Department of Teaching and Learning, and to its' wonderful staff. I owe thanks for countless acts of help from my friend and colleague Andrew Grunzke, and to my colleagues at the University of Florida for allowing me to be part of an auspicious community of scholars.

I am grateful for the assistance of Shannon Wilson, Special Collections Archivist at Berea College. His expertise and encouragement was crucial to this project. I benefited from our informal conversations, and the supportive environment that produced immeasurable intellectual energy. I would also like to express my gratitude to the many public libraries, local history museums, and professional librarians in Eastern Kentucky who provided unselfish assistance and broad access to library records. I am most appreciative to the staff at Hindman Settlement School for providing access to records relative to the school's long history. I am also grateful to the library staff of the Kentucky State Archives for their able assistance and enthusiasm for my work.

I would also like to thank my wife, Sara Boyd, for the many years of support and sacrifice, and for her role in the development of my relationship with the American Library Association Library History Roundtable. Her faith in this project and its' writer cannot be sufficiently described here. I must also pause and give thanks for the leading actors in this narrative, the packhorse librarians. Their dedication to the mountain people of Kentucky was limitless, and their energy, grace, and respect served as a reminder of the greatness of the human heart. The

books they carried through the mountains inspired and unlocked the world for many mountain folk.

Finally, I must thank my father and granddad for sharing their lives with me in the mountains of Kentucky. The evenings we spent on the front porch reminiscing about the past and sharing our undying hope for the future is a constant reminder of what it means to be a Kentuckian. Their inspiration and legacy are imbedded in the following pages.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
LIST OF TABLES	9
ABSTRACT	10
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	12
Education and the Great Depression.....	12
The Packhorse Library Program.....	14
The Legacy of Outreach Services.....	17
Literacy in a Modern Appalachia	20
The Book Women as a Product of Appalachian History.....	24
Outreach Services and Higher Education	28
The Packhorse Librarian: Educating during the Depression	33
Conclusion	36
2 EARLY OUTREACH EDUCATION IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, 1885-1923	43
Appalachia in the Late Nineteenth Century.....	47
The Appalachian Stereotype.....	50
Missionary Outreach in Kentucky	53
Missionary Outreach Refined: The Hindman Settlement School.....	56
Early Library Outreach Programs.....	58
Education and Politics: A New Form of Outreach	60
The Crusade Fails	61
Berea College.....	64
The Frost Mission in Appalachia Kentucky	66
Professor Raine and the Traveling Professor Program.....	69
Berea College Extension Services.....	70
Conclusion	75
3 KENTUCKY LIBRARY SERVICES AND THE ORIGINS OF THE PACKHORSE LIBRARY PROGRAM, 1935-1936.....	78
Introduction.....	78
The Development of State Library Services in Kentucky	80
Literacy and School Conditions in Kentucky	87
Cultivating the Desire to Read.....	89
The Great Depression and the Role of Federal Programs in Kentucky.....	91
Federal Relief in the Mountains	93
FDR and the “Service Intellectual”	95

	The Works Progress Administration in Kentucky.....	97
	The Rosenwald County Library Demonstration.....	99
	The Packhorse Library: WPA Project #2345	102
	Conclusion.....	109
4	DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF THE PACKHORSE LIBRARIES, 1936-1938....	114
	Introduction.....	114
	Initial Startup.....	117
	The Ary Homeplace Library.....	119
	“A Vision in Our Inner Eye”: The Leslie Packhorse Library.....	121
	Harlan County and the Pine Mountain Community Group.....	127
	Evarts Community Church Service Center	130
	Splendid Cooperation: Finding Collections for the Packhorse Librarians	132
	The Monday Night Radio Hour.....	139
	A New Reading Canon.....	142
	Conclusion.....	147
5	POLITICS AND PROGRESS: DECLINE OF THE PACKHORSE LIBRARIES, 1940-1943	151
	Introduction.....	151
	The Politics of an Old New Deal.....	152
	New Deal Support Erodes	155
	Politics and the WPA.....	157
	Southern Opposition to the New Deal and Defection of the Farmer.....	161
	Roosevelt’s National Agriculture Policy.....	163
	Modernization in Eastern Kentucky	166
	Library Growth in Kentucky, 1935-1943.....	167
	School Consolidation in Eastern Kentucky.....	169
	Improvement in Roads and Infrastructure.....	172
	Conclusion.....	174
6	LIBRARIES AND LITERACY AFTER THE PACKHORSE LIBRARIES, 1943-1970...177	
	Introduction.....	177
	A Continuing Need for Libraries.....	179
	WPA Libraries in Kentucky	181
	The Kentucky Legacy: Bookmobiles	183
	Expansion of State Funding.....	184
	The Library Services Act.....	186
	Impact and Legacy of the Library Services Act.....	188
	The 1960 Extension of the Library Service Act.....	189
	Conclusion.....	191

7	CONCLUSION.....	194
	Introduction.....	194
	Altered Perceptions in a Time of Change.....	195
	The Informed Citizen and the Modern Industrial Economy.....	198
	Federal Involvement in Education: A Reassessment.....	202
	Packhorse Libraries and the Legacy of Uplift.....	206
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	212
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	230

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>page</u>
1-1	Economic and Literacy Profiles in Eastern Kentucky, 1930	89

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE WPA PACKHORSE LIBRARY PROGRAM AND THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF
LITERACY, 1883-1962

By

Donald C. Boyd

May 2009

Chair: Sevan Terzian

Major: Foundations of Education

This dissertation investigates the role of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Packhorse Library Program in the emergence of the written word in rural Eastern Kentucky during the years of the Great Depression. Specifically, this examination places packhorse libraries into the broader context of delivering and improving outreach library services as an attempt to improve literacy in rural communities. Significant economic shifts during the first decades of the twentieth-century resulted in social changes that altered the ways in which rural mountain families went about their daily lives. These changes were most obvious as subsistence farming was quickly replaced by a consumer economy and cash as a means of exchange. The need to participate in this new industrialized culture of wages and consumerism placed demands on mountain folk that eventually drove many workers into the coal mines, railroads, and textile factories. The demand for literacy increased among mountain folk as a means to escape a work system that was unprofitable and dangerous.

The Great Depression and the onset of industrialization altered the ways in which mountain folk perceived and valued literacy. By accounting for these changing perceptions and by examining the history of outreach services conducted prior to the Great Depression, a better understanding of why the packhorse librarians were readily accepted by a relatively closed and

isolated culture emerges. Additionally, this dissertation sheds historical light on the role of the federal government in literacy and schooling using resources provided by state and local governments and local school boards. Moreover, this investigation argues that the success of the Packhorse Library Program serves as a historical barometer measuring the significant economic and social changes occurring in Eastern Kentucky during the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus, the Packhorse Library Program can be seen as an important example of federal involvement in education and literacy, and served as a model for the future development of library extension services on a national level.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Education and the Great Depression

In parts of Eastern Kentucky prior to the Great Depression, the written word was scarce, and illiteracy rates were above state and national averages. The decline of public education and the lack of public libraries during the 1930s coincided with the intense hard economic times of the era. Historian Jeffrey Mirel suggested that economic difficulties for public schools followed a decade of positive growth in curriculum, testing, and Progressive ideological approaches to learning.¹ However, most of this growth was not experienced in the nineteen counties comprising the Appalachia region of Eastern Kentucky. This rural section of the state that includes Harlan, Knott, Floyd, and McCreary counties and the communities of Hazard, Harlan, and Hyden were some of the last in the United States to be exposed to a modern industrial economy. Additionally, the county school districts in Eastern Kentucky were arguably the worst in the nation in terms of funding, attendance, and illiteracy rates that often exceeded thirty percent. According to historian Harry Caudill, illiteracy was a plight found in many mountain families that had been handed down for several generations. The people residing in this region were among the nation's most impoverished workers and farmers, and were the recipients of intense missionary and government outreach programs during the five decades prior to the Depression.²

The Depression years presented the federal government with opportunities for unprecedented experimentation for the creation of direct literacy programs and the development

¹Jeffrey Mirel, "The Politics of Educational Retrenchment in Detroit, 1929-1935," *History of Education Quarterly* 24:3 (Autumn 1984), 323-58.

²Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 122-127.

of new ideas for federal involvement in education excluding public schools. These experiments, developed as temporary programs within the New Deal, ended when their parent agencies were disbanded in the early 1940s, yet they resulted in important consequences with respect to the evolution of new national goals for democratic education, equal access, and economic development.³

New Deal education and literacy programs developed in the early years of the Depression were heavily influenced by the vocational movement and the demands by business to provide practical education programs that addressed their need for a modern work force.⁴ Moreover, the federal government focused on higher education during the New Deal Era while refusing to involve government programs in the business of local public schools. As elucidated by Larry Smith, the focus on higher education during this period was a reflection of bureaucratic values at the federal level that deemed it necessary to develop colleges as “bastions of democracy.”⁵ Historian Paula Fass argued that President Franklin Roosevelt did not have any intention of supporting schools at the collegiate or local public school levels. Fass observed that any attempts by the federal government to be involved with schooling and literacy were limited to “practical and temporary” programs.⁶ This meant meeting the needs of a modern industrial society focused on daily work within a new system of wage labor. For the people of Appalachia, the new wage system meant a sudden and dramatic departure from centuries of subsistence farming. The New

³ Paula Fass, “Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal,” *American Journal of Education* 91:1 (November, 1982), 36-64. Also see Calvin W. Gower, “The Civilian Conservation Corps and American Education: Threat to Local Control?” *History of Education Quarterly* 7:1 (Spring 1967), 58-70.

⁴ Charles D. Biebel, “Private Foundations and Public Policy: The Case of Secondary Education During the Great Depression,” *History of Education Quarterly* 16:1 (Spring 1976), 3-33.

⁵ Larry R. Smith, “The New Deal and Higher Education in Florida, 1933-1939: Temporary Assistance and Tacit Promises.” Masters thesis (University of Florida, 2004), 7.

⁶ Fass, “Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal,” 36-64.

Deal response to the educational demands of a new economic system meant that the “impractical idealism” of the past would be replaced by training and literacy programs designed to prepare millions of people for working in a modern corporate economy.⁷

The Packhorse Library Program

In 1936, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) sponsored the Packhorse Library Program for the Appalachian region of Kentucky. By design, this extension program employed nearly one thousand local women who were otherwise unemployable. By accessing a geographic and culturally isolated region of the country, the Packhorse Librarians provided reading material to public schools and residents with no access to libraries. By 1941, the program served nearly one million people in forty-two Kentucky counties and maintained a collection of over 500,000 volumes.⁸ This dissertation examines the educational and cultural contexts of the Packhorse Library Program by posing three questions. First, how did the Packhorse Librarians contribute to the ongoing efforts of outreach services by higher education for improving literacy in Kentucky? Second, how does this chapter in Appalachian history contribute to the understanding of how social and economic change prior to and during the Great Depression altered the ways in which mountain folk perceived and valued literacy? Last, what accounts for the broad acceptance of the Packhorse Library Program in the isolated communities of Eastern Kentucky? This dissertation argues that the Packhorse Library Program is a historical barometer that measures significant shifts in the way literacy was perceived and valued in the mountain region of Kentucky during the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the development of a complex reading canon within the region provided positive and unifying forces

⁷ S. Alexander Rippa, “The Business Community and the Public Schools on the Eve of the Great Depression,” *History of Education Quarterly* 4:1 (March 1964), 33-43.

⁸ Ridgeway, Florence, *Developments in Library Service in Kentucky*, (Berea: Berea College Press, 1940) p.1. Located in Kentucky Department of Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky, Box 28, Folder: “Library History.”

that had been at work elsewhere in the United States during the Progressive Era that resulted in broader access to libraries and reading material. Thus, this study provides an understanding of how education and literacy developed in Eastern Kentucky against the backdrop of geographical isolation, poverty, and a new capitalistic wage system.

Significant economic and cultural shifts during the first decades of the twentieth-century resulted in social changes that altered the ways in which rural mountain families went about their daily lives. These changes were most obvious as subsistence farming was quickly replaced by a consumer economy and cash as a means of exchange. The need to participate in this new industrialized culture of wages and consumerism placed demands on mountain folk that eventually drove many workers into the coal mines, railroads, and textile factories. The demand for literacy increased among mountain folk as a means to escape a work system that was unprofitable and dangerous.⁹

James Watt Raine provides an analysis of conditions in the Kentucky mountains in his 1924 book *The Land of Saddle-Bags: A Study of the Mountain People of Appalachia*. As a traveling professor for Berea College, Raine noted the land, lifestyle, and conditions of mountain families. He traced the speech patterns and dialects of this region to their roots in Elizabethan English and illuminated the early culture of schooling and literacy in Eastern Kentucky. Observing the absence of decent facilities, lack of books, and poorly trained teachers, Raine argued that literacy levels decreased over time in the mountains by each successive generation since reading had little value in a subsistence society. Public school attendance rarely exceeded five months per year, and a lack of community support traditionally found in other parts of the

⁹ Irwin S. Kirsch and John T. Guthrie. "Adult Reading Practices for Work and Leisure," *Reading Research Quarterly* 24 (1973), 213-32; John T. Guthrie, Mary Siefert, and Irwin S. Kirsch, "Effects of Education, Occupation, and Setting on Reading Practices," *American Educational Research Journal* 23 (1986), 151-60.

country in the form of parent-teacher associations, women's clubs, and literary circles made education an even more difficult task. School libraries were virtually non-existent in the region, and most children had no access to books beyond the texts used in the classroom.¹⁰

The Packhorse Library Program was one of the few public programs in the early twentieth century designed to address illiteracy in Eastern Kentucky, and has been the topic of some recent scholarship. Jeanne Schmitzer has offered perhaps the most significant work on the subject. Although Schmitzer confines her analysis to gender issues in Appalachia and pays little attention to literacy issues and the historical processes that eventually resulted in literacy rate increases, she successfully defines the genesis of a WPA program for women and reveals who the packhorse librarians were.¹¹ In their young adult volume *Down Cut-Shin Creek*, Kathy Appelt and Schmitzer explore the daily lives of the packhorse women as they interacted with mountain families. Their book provides additional details of the popularity of the program and the types of reading material that were provided by the packhorse libraries. However, their book does not address the impact the program had on literacy in Eastern Kentucky nor does it attempt to speculate on what social and cultural changes were driving the success of the program.¹²

Research on the packhorse libraries has virtually ignored the relationship between WPA outreach programs in Kentucky and institutions of higher education. The historical role of missionary colleges in Eastern Kentucky is important to understanding the genesis and eventual

¹⁰ James Watt Raine. *The Land of the Saddle Bags*, (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions, 1924), 163-190.

¹¹ Schmitzer, Jeanne C. "Reaching out to the Mountains: The Packhorse Library of Eastern Kentucky." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 95, No.1(Winter 1997), 57-77. Also, see Schmitzer, "The Packhorse Library Project of Eastern Kentucky, 1936-1943." Masters Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1998. Her thesis is a focused study of women in Appalachia during the Great Depression.

¹² Appelt, Kathi. and Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer, *Down Cut Shin Creek: The Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 44.

success of the packhorse libraries. Berea College was responsible for a variety of educational outreach programs that provided a model for future efforts to uplift the mountain folk and improve literacy in the region. Shannon Wilson traces the role of Berea in educating young children in the region beginning in the late nineteenth century. The outreach programs offered by Berea in the early 1900s during the presidential tenure of W. G. Frost included traveling professors who trained school teachers. In addition, the book wagon service provided a model for future outreach reading programs including the packhorse library. Wilson provides a rare look into the administrative debates and legal challenges that faced Berea in the first decades of the twentieth century when missionary outreach programs were reaching an apex in Eastern Kentucky. However, Wilson's book does not address the cultural and economic climate of the region served by the college, nor does he attempt to explore why literacy increased after 1930.¹³

The Legacy of Outreach Services

This dissertation will further strengthen our understanding of the connection between the Packhorse Library Program and higher education by examining outreach services beyond those provided by Berea College. An analysis of earlier outreach programs including the Traveling Library Program, settlement schools, and cooperative development programs will provide new insights as to why the packhorse libraries experienced success in breaking down the cultural barriers to literacy.

The distrust of outside political, economic, and cultural forces by local residents is an important consideration in understanding literacy in Appalachia, and may help explain mountain folk participation in outreach services within Communication theory and the “uses and gratification” model. Uses and gratification research has its roots in the studies of media impact

¹³ Shannon H. Wilson. *Berea College, An Illustrated History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 84-87.

that began in the 1930s. Jack M. McLeod, Lee B. Becker, and others argued that readers were passive, helpless victims of propaganda during the Great Depression.¹⁴ In the 1940s, Paul Lazarsfeld and others detailed the mediating influences of personal contact between highly informed and less informed individuals.¹⁵ Bernard Berelson suggested in 1949 that reading had many functions in an industrial society, including its value as an enjoyable habitual activity.¹⁶ Thus, by mid-century communications researchers moved toward a view that reading habits and literacy were the products of a diverse set of functions and motives. Communication theory can be used to demonstrate the interactive nature of literacy found in the relationship that developed between the mountain folk of Eastern Kentucky and the packhorse librarians. McLeod and Becker suggest that there were essentially two types of interactions at play between librarians and their patrons. First, the interpretation of text (or any other media) is the product of the content of the text combined with the interests, prior experiences, abilities, values, and needs of the reader. Mountain folk were reading material that was directly related to their everyday lives and to their experiences in a newly industrialized community. Packhorse circulation records indicate that the reading demands of mountain folk included material on farming, homemaking, and child rearing. These reading preferences that were based on the realities of everyday living in Appalachia fell comfortably within the McLeod and Becker model.

¹⁴ Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, "The Uses and Gratifications Approach," in *Handbook of Political Communications*, ed. D. Nimmo and K. Sanders (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981), 67-99; Michael R. Real, "Media Theory: Contributions to an Understanding of American Mass Communications," *American Quarterly* 32 (Bibliography issue, 1980), 240-244; and James W. Carey and Albert Kreiling, "Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications: Notes Toward an Accommodation," in *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*, ed. Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974), 223-48.

¹⁵ Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), 120-28; Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (New York: Free Press, 1955), 27-39.

¹⁶ Bernard Berelson, "What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means," in *Communication Research, 1948-49*, ed. Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949), 111-28.

The second type of interaction is more social in nature. In gratification theory, a communication exists between the audience and the producers/providers of the text. Through the selection process, or a “feedback circuit,” readers are able to influence the types and genres of reading text offered by the producer/provider. Both types of interaction in the gratification theory invest the reader with more autonomy and influence when deciding why and what to read.¹⁷ This empowerment, as demonstrated by the reading patterns of Appalachian people, suggests a new and important argument that mountain folk were much more autonomous and influential in how and what they learned through reading. Moreover, these interactions suggest that mountain folk played an active role in determining the level of literacy they would attain through schooling and outreach reading programs. This approach rescues the mountaineers from the stereotypical role as a group of helpless victims swept away by the new industrial mechanisms of the twentieth century. Gratification theory complements and enhances the work of historians Lawrence Cremin and William Gilmore, who explain the process of literacy in rural America as an interaction with a more modern and industrialized society by accounting for the unique factors of isolation, resistance, and distrust among rural people in developing communities.¹⁸ Gilmore gives agency to the initiatives of rural people with respect to the development of a reading canon. His chapter on family libraries and book collections is particularly important in demonstrating the “mentality of reading.”

¹⁷ David L. Swanson, “Communication Research and the Uses and Gratification Model: A Critique,” *Communication Research* 6 (1979), 37-53. Also, see Philip Palmgreen, Lawrence A. Wenner, and Karl E. Rosengren, “Uses and Gratification Research: The Past Ten Years,” in *Media Gratifications Research*, ed. Rosengren, Wenner, and Palmgreen, 15-18, and James W. Carey and Albert Kreiling, “Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications,” in *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report on the Commission on Reading* (Washington D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1985), 9.

¹⁸ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 335-342; William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 20-27.

Literacy in a Modern Appalachia

This analysis of the Packhorse Library Program will consider the important research to date addressing the processes of literacy in rural settings. William J. Gilmore's *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life* and Richard D. Brown's *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* provide a broad understanding of how rural America participated in the mass culture of reading and writing. Gilmore aptly portrayed daily life in a rural society that underwent heavy commercialization and social change. His examination of Vermont's Upper Valley from 1780 to 1835 encompasses a set of relationships that provide comparative historical analysis with the Appalachian region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gilmore describes the geography and "rugged rural texture of existence" in the Upper Valley in a way that parallels the isolation and subsistence living of Kentucky mountain folk before the first half of the twentieth century. The Upper Valley was a coherent, representative social, geographical, and cultural sub-region within the American Northeast. During the first fifty years after Independence, the townships of the Upper Valley developed a new form of commerce and culture. For Gilmore, an important theme is the impact of commercialization on the agricultural character of daily living. Moreover, literacy and active participation by rural people in print culture became a "necessity of life" as part of increasing commercialization and the "interaction with a new environment of print communication."¹⁹ This model is particularly important for understanding the development of literacy in the Appalachian region during the first decades of the twentieth century. Commercialization and a new capitalistic labor structure as a result of intensive coal mining provided the impetus for improved literacy and increased interest in print communication in Eastern Kentucky from 1880

¹⁹ Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*, 51-70; Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 44-47.

to 1940. These conditions are an important backdrop for understanding the successes of the Packhorse Library Program.

Richard D. Brown's work explores the ways in which information moved through society and seeks to understand the social significance of the possession of knowledge during the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. While Brown acknowledges the significance of increases in newspaper readership, his argument focuses on the hierarchical nature of the dissemination of knowledge.²⁰ In the eighteenth century, geographic proximity was essential for the transfer of knowledge due to the spontaneity of information diffusion within elite circles. This local connection to provincial people and events furnished the opportunities for the transmission of information crucial to both social and economic causes. Adding to the localized nature of the transfer of knowledge was a lack of communication to regions beyond areas of concentrated populations. Brown observes that transportation and commercial development were the "critical connections" for the exchange of knowledge. Very little exchange had occurred beyond one-hundred miles of the Eastern coast by 1800. However, Americans were "broadly committed" to the idea that the diffusion of knowledge was important for the well-being of society: "Everyman and everywoman, farmers, mechanics, even republican mothers had to be informed cosmopolitans in order to fulfill their social responsibilities in the new society."²¹ Significant literacy rate increases in Appalachia occurred nearly a century later, yet the Gilmore and Brown models provide important groundwork for understanding how literacy evolved in rural communities that experienced rapid industrial growth. Nevertheless, scholars

²⁰ Richard D. Brown, "From Cohesion to Competition." in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. William L. Joyce, et al., (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1983) 5-15.

²¹ Brown, "From Cohesion to Competition," 34-37.

have yet to address specific and unique historical processes in Appalachia that include early missionary efforts and outreach services as a means of understanding the popularity and success of the packhorse librarians.

An important body of scholarship in education history examines significant changes in family and workforce structures amidst increased industrialization after 1865. Lawrence Cremin noted that households experienced demographic shifts in the late nineteenth century. Families became smaller, women entered the workforce in large numbers, and the “instruments of popular communication” made a decisive entry into American living rooms. Cremin observed that during this period of demographic shift, households and small communities remained embedded in networks of kin.²² Although the tight-knit extended family structure remained common in rural areas, the process of industrialization had significantly changed the ways families trained their young. In a study published in 1929, Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd investigated the ways in which families had been affected by the processes of industrialization. Using Muncie, Indiana as a case study based in part on the town’s demographics which suggested a quiet town where people “lived relatively close to the land,” Lynd and Lynd found that parents were increasingly sharing the traditional tasks of familial education with schools and “innumerable” outside sources including church, clubs, and other “formal programs.” Moreover, some parents felt that the standards and values being taught by outside sources that included radio, movies, and popular magazines were undermining the standards being taught within the household.²³

²² Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 529-530.

²³ Robert S. Lynd & Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1929), 7-8.

By 1930, families in the Appalachian region of the United States had experienced some of the changes suggested by Cremin and the Lynd & Lynd study. The development of attitudes of resistance and distrust of industrial progress by mountain folk is of particular importance.²⁴ Reading as promoted and delivered by the packhorse librarians continued to increase despite the doubts and misgivings of mountain folk. Why did residents in Appalachia and in Eastern Kentucky in particular continue to show an interest in reading during this period of distrust and animosity toward industrialization and the new system of capitalistic labor? Moreover, why did parents in this region allow their children to be exposed to reading material provided by the packhorse librarians, traditionally considered off limits and contradictory to their cultural values? An analysis of changes in the nature of work in Eastern Kentucky will provide an economic explanation to these questions. Industrialization in the form of coal mining, railroads, and textiles provided many new jobs away from the farm. The economic oppression and dangerous conditions of coal-mining pressured families into finding alternative livelihoods that would produce cash incomes to supplement small farming. Mountain families came to view literacy as a way to break the cycle of economic oppression, especially in the company mining towns. In 1922, Ellwood Cubberley observed that new demands had been placed on rural education. Cubberley argued that great changes occurred in agricultural methods and the increase in scientific knowledge was of “fundamental importance” to country people. The old limited education based on the fundamentals of knowledge no longer sufficed. The farmer, according to

²⁴ Allen W. Batteau, *The Invention of Appalachia* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990), 1-3. Batteau carefully constructs his argument that suggests the political and economic structures of America created the status system and subtly shaped the kinship system in Appalachia. He further argues that the very image that urban middle-classes held of the region underlay the forms of domination between those classes and the people of Appalachia. This stereotyping of the region eventually led to a collective image and a shared consciousness. Eventually, the self-definition of mountain folk fell into line with the national image.

Cubberley, “now wants high-school as well as elementary-school advantages for his children.” Cubberly’s work has been aptly criticized by education historians in the past. However, his study of rural education in 1922 demonstrates an attempt by professional educators at resolving significant problems in isolated communities relating to education and literacy in the years prior to the Great Depression. Specifically, Cubberly addressed in detail the changing economic landscape and the advent of modern farming that was forcing a new way of thinking about education in rural American during this time period.²⁵

The Book Women as a Product of Appalachian History

Appalachia first entered the American consciousness as a distinct region and people in the late nineteenth century. Descriptions of this area began to appear in popular periodicals such as *Lippincott’s Magazine*, *Harpers*, and *Atlantic Monthly*.²⁶ Writers such as Will Wallace Harney described the southern Appalachia Mountains as a “strange land and peculiar people.” Between 1870 and 1920, articles both fiction and nonfiction began to appear that illustrated ways of life in Appalachia as culturally and economically out of step with industrialization and urbanization.²⁷ The writings of Mary Noailles Murfree gave rise to the distinct local color genre that exploited and attempted to describe the strangeness of mountain life. Murfree’s most notable work, *In the Tennessee Mountains*, portrayed the mountain folk as a simple, backward, and dependent people with a unique moral character that would tolerate the misgivings and

²⁵ Ellwood Cubberley, *Rural Life and Education*, (Cambridge, Riverside Press, 1922), 95-96.

²⁶ J. E. Weller, *Yesterday’s People*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969), 7-22.

²⁷ James Lane Allen, *The Bluegrass Region of Kentucky and Other Kentucky Articles*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892),12-65; Arthur W. Spaulding, *The Men of the Mountains: The Story of the Southern Mountaineer and His Kin in the Piedmont*, (Nashville: Southern Press, 1915), 40-41.

shortcomings of an isolated region.²⁸ Early social scientists such as Ellen Churchill Semple and George Vincent marched in step with the images provided by the local color movement by emphasizing the backwardness and economic blight of the region.²⁹

The assumptions that Appalachia was a homogeneous region sharing a unified culture and economic system have been supported by a long tradition of literary and historical writing. This tradition is traceable to earlier accounts including John C. Campbell's *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlanders*, and James Watt Raine's *The Land of the Saddle Bags*.³⁰ In these formative accounts, Appalachian folk are depicted in an isolated environment where modern technology and conveniences are infrequent. Moreover, the people who live in the region are described as backward, illiterate, and morally corrupt. For these writers, the Appalachian people were in a constant battle with the unforgiving mountains with competing forces of good and evil, and an uncaring economic system inflicted unrelenting oppression. Any depiction deviating from this image was infrequent if non-existent. These writers, in the main, were neither from the mountains, nor did they live in the region for long periods. Although these writings were apparently based on sudden impressions, the depictions were not entirely inaccurate. Appalachia was isolated, poor, and illiteracy was higher

²⁸ Mary Noailles Murfree [Charles Edward Craddock, pseudo.], *In the Tennessee Mountains*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884). This is a collection of eight fictional essays where Murfree describes what would become the prototypical portrayal of Appalachia and its people.

²⁹ E.C. Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains: A Study in Anthropology," reprinted in *Bulletin of the National Geographic Society*, 42 (August 1910), 561-94; G. Vincent, "A Retarded Frontier," *American Sociological Review*, 4 (1898), 1-20.

³⁰ John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921), 32-131; Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among the Mountaineers*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1913), 428-451; James Watt Raine, *The Land of the Saddle Bags*, 163-190.

than in other areas of Kentucky.³¹ The combination of environment, illiteracy, and stereotypes of Appalachian culture provided safe impetus for generations of writers who constructed a literary image in a way that fostered the ideas of dependency and the need for outreach.

William Goodell Frost, president of Berea College in Kentucky from 1892 until 1920, provided the defining momentum necessary for cementing the presumptive image of Appalachia. Early in his tenure, he coined the label “Appalachian American,” and proceeded to focus on the problems generated by geographical, social, and economic isolation. Frost described the mountain people as “our contemporary ancestors,” and “a surviving remnant of the solid, white, pioneer culture” that first settled the Eastern seaboard and contributed to the construction of “American institutional life.” He consistently portrayed the people of Appalachia as “morally upright” who therefore deserved to be “uplifted” by the philanthropy and education of institutions such as Berea. Frost believed that northern philanthropy would be required to make the outreach into the mountains a success. Although Frost avoided any attempt to degrade the mountaineer, his fundraising efforts in the north were made using the images provided by other popular accounts that emphasized the moral weaknesses brought on by such characteristics of mountain life as moonshining and feuding.³² This focus by literary writers and social scientists on the darker side of mountain culture, along with the efforts of Berea College to “sell” Appalachia as a region in need of uplifting, converged at the turn of the last century to create a pejorative image of Appalachia that thrived during the Depression years and after.

³¹ Andrew Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*, (Washington, D. C., The Preservation Press, 1984), 47-60; Ellwood Cubberley, *Rural Life and Education*, 22-27.

³² William Goodell Frost, “God’s Plan for the Southern Mountains,” *Biblical Review* 6 (July, 1921), 405-25; “Appalachian America,” *Women’s Home Companion*, September, 1896, pp.3-4, 21, and “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,” *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1899, pp.311-19. Also, Berea College Archives, The W.G Frost Papers, Series I-III. This collection contains 42 boxes of papers and correspondence covering the thirty-seven year tenure of W.G. Frost.

The tradition of writing and selling Appalachia as a backward isolated region was first set into historical perspective by Henry D. Shapiro. His 1978 work, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*, was a comprehensive description of how local color writers, advocates of settlement schools and home missions, leaders of the handicraft movement, and education leaders contributed to the construction of Appalachia as a “coherent region” inhabited by a homogeneous culture deemed backward, underdeveloped, and in need of “uplifting.” This regional depiction, according to Shapiro, was more often than not “benefiting the organizational goals of its primary architects.” By emphasizing the discourse that constructed the mythic Appalachia, and by carefully delineating the “reality” of mountain life, Shapiro argues that Appalachia was a heterogeneous region consisting of complex family and community relationships.³³

The Packhorse Library developed within the context of a manufactured stereotype of Appalachia as defined by Allen Batteau. Contrasting the Appalachian stereotype with the notion that mountain folk sought empowerment and control of their own economic destinies will add a new dimension to Batteau’s portrayal of Appalachia as a “passing fancy” of urban elites desiring to “uplift” the social conditions of the region. This contrast will clarify the relationship between a deliberate construct of a region, the response of those who felt compelled to help and preserve the mountaineer, the work of the packhorse librarians, and the realities of learning and literacy in Appalachia Kentucky. Understanding the relationship of these social and economic dynamics will further illuminate the complexities of Appalachian history and culture, and will assist in a broader understanding of the role that education has played during a period of significant social and economic change.

³³ Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, 133-138.

Outreach Services and Higher Education

This dissertation will also assess the role of higher education in establishing outreach literacy programs in Eastern Kentucky from 1890 to 1930. Specifically, it will examine the role of Berea College as a regional leader for outreach education. Batteau suggests that Berea was, and still remains, “the capital of Appalachia.” Berea’s longstanding reputation for serving a diverse community by reaching out to mountain families has contributed significantly to the public image of Appalachia as a region in need of unconventional approaches to education and literacy.³⁴ Many institutions throughout the region were created by the college or patterned after it including the settlement schools that were unique to the area.

Berea College was founded in 1855 by John G. Free, one of Kentucky’s most outspoken abolitionists. Free was convinced that slavery was a moral evil and the bylaws of Berea reflected his sentiments. The opening words would define the path of Berea College for the next century and a half: “To furnish the facilities for a thorough education to all persons of good moral character.” The mission of the college was intensely religious, but opposed to Sectarianism. Moreover, African-Americans were admitted with additional emphasis on their recruitment.³⁵

In 1892, W. G. Frost became Berea’s president. Having taught at Oberlin College, Frost had made several earlier visits into the Virginia mountains. On one visit, Frost recalled having dinner with “a woman who sold whiskey.” His early impressions of the mountain folk were mostly romantic and anecdotal. After accepting the position at Berea, Frost traveled further into the mountains and backcountry of Kentucky and “discovered” a population that, according to him, had much in common with early New Englanders. Frost expressed his relationship with the

³⁴ Batteau, p.81.

³⁵ Shannon H. Wilson, *Berea College: An Illustrated History*, 1-2

mountain folk as “not superiority, but fellowship.”³⁶ Berea faced harsh economic problems in the first years of his tenure. He traveled widely soliciting funding for the daily operation of the college arguing that since Kentucky had been a border state during the Civil War, it would be well suited for students from both Northern and Southern influences. He defined Berea’s mission as “effacing sectional lines.” However, Frost had a particular sight set on the mountain student. Through formal education, he envisioned a better Appalachia that would emerge as “a fountain of national vigor and patriotism.” Under proper guidance and through community outreach, the mountain folk would “overflow the South with a new element.”³⁷

Frost’s views of mountain culture were, at least from all outward appearances, is stark contrast to many outsiders. According to historian William A. Link, a major cultural divide had existed between paternalistic reformers and traditionalist mountaineers. Reformers including missionaries often objected to and criticized many of the cultural elements of mountain society. Women working in the fields, the use of force to control children, and the propensity for idleness were a few of the more shocking discoveries. Link also points to other parts of Appalachian culture that were repulsive to reformers including traditional folk medicine and the prevalence of superstition. Moreover, he observed that reformers in Appalachia shared a set of “guiding concepts” with social reformers across the post-1900 South that included a “combination of impulse to uplift and a certainty of the inadequacy of the uplifted.”³⁸ However, Frost overlooked

³⁶ Frost, *For the Mountains*, (New York: Fleming Revell, 1907), 84.

³⁷ W. G. Frost, “Berea College,” *Berea Quarterly* 1 (May, 1895), 22-23.

³⁸ William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 90-91. Link presents a detailed account of the restructuring and transformation of social and political institutions in the South. He brings into focus the conflict between traditional and modernizing governance that represented a trend toward a more powerful state. This conflict is understood as a clash between southern traditionalists and Progressive reformers over divergent notions of “community.”

the exotic notions of mountain culture, and focused on the possibilities for education and economic development.

Over time, Frost had become enamored with the Appalachian people. Besides coming from a rich early American heritage, the people of the mountains, as Frost observed, were “religious, truthful, hospitable, and much addicted to killing one another. They are leading a life of survivals, spinning cloth in the manner of centuries ago, and preserving many fine Shakespearean phrases and pronunciations; and they may be called our contemporary ancestors.”³⁹ Frost viewed Appalachia as a romantic and exotic place, “the mountainous backyards of nine states.” He believed that Appalachia was “symbolic of arrested development in the midst of progress.”⁴⁰ Frost immersed himself and Berea College in the tide of a missionary movement that had been cultivated by his contemporaries. More important was the reaction he received from northern philanthropists when sharing his vision. He managed to impress deeply a long list of potential supporters that included Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Eliot, Booker T. Washington, Woodrow Wilson, and Thomas Edison.⁴¹

Having defined the Berea College mission of outreach education for mountain folk, Frost set out on a lifetime effort to uplift them through education. To do this required that Berea College reach out into the mountains. Programs emerged that included mountain schools, a “book wagon,” traveling professors, and the settlement school. By 1913, Berea had established its own normal school, academy, vocational school, and a model school for elementary education. Frost’s wife, Eleanor, traveled extensively on horseback through the Appalachian region of Kentucky and focused her efforts on women’s issues. Sanitation, nutrition, and

³⁹ Frost, “Berea College,” 24.

⁴⁰ Wilson, p.81.

⁴¹ W. G. Frost Papers, Series II, Box 42, Correspondence, 1899. (Berea College Archives).

education of girls were of particular interest. She advocated the establishment of “model houses” around the town of Berea where young girls could learn the skills of mountain life and handicrafts.⁴²

By the time Frost retired in 1929, Berea had established itself as the central point for outreach into the mountains.⁴³ Mountain folk would not have been surprised in 1929 to see a traveling teacher, nurse, extension agent, book cabinet, or some other service rendered by the many agencies and programs initiated by Berea College. Workers alliance organizations, economic development councils, and farmer cooperatives had all found their beginnings at Berea. When the packhorse librarians began to circulate books throughout the mountains in 1936, the notion that help from the outside would be delivered to the front porch had been well established. In addition to the contributions made by Berea College and higher education, civic groups played a significant role in the development of schools and library programs in Kentucky. Historian William A. Link traces the emergence of civic groups that parallel the development of similar efforts in Kentucky beginning in the late 1880s. Although Link focused on the contribution of civic organizations to school reform, he delineated the “new definition of the proper feminine public role.”⁴⁴ This new public role was a key factor in the development of WPA work programs for women in Kentucky. By 1936, local women’s clubs, The Kentucky Education Association, Kentucky Parent-Teacher Association, and library support groups collaborated for the implementation of the Packhorse Library Program.

⁴² W. G. Frost Papers, Series III, Box 14, Presidential Reports. (Berea College Archives).

⁴³ W.G. Frost, “University Extension in Kentucky,” *Outlook* 60 (September 3), 73-79.

⁴⁴ William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 76-81.

The role of higher education in the development of outreach programs for rural people has been the subject of recent historical analysis. B. D. Mayberry investigated the Tuskegee Movable School and revealed an impressive effort at providing education and guidance to rural Blacks. Initiated by Booker T. Washington and directed by George Washington Carver, the Department of Agriculture at Tuskegee developed an outreach education program delivered by the “agriculture wagon.” Financed by Morris K. Jessup, a New York banker and philanthropist, the agriculture wagon served hundreds of rural Black farmers by assisting in the development of scientific methods for agricultural production. Mayberry describes the success of the program as “unparalleled” in reaching and serving the needs of rural Blacks in the South.⁴⁵ Cyril O. Houle traces the development of federal policies that supported outreach programs sponsored by land grant universities from 1900-1930. Noting the failure of crops including rice and cotton during the last decade of the nineteenth century, the federal government saw a need for a “complete change in the practices of cultivation,” and set out to establish a “national program of agricultural extension” by implementing the Smith-Lever Bill and the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act creating outreach programs through universities that served rural adult residents.⁴⁶ Harvey Kantor argued that outreach education programs that emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century were the result of the vocational school movement driven by a “broad spectrum” of political and economic reformers who saw vocational education as a means of economic reform.⁴⁷ This body of research reveals a broad support for rural education outreach

⁴⁵ B. D. Mayberry, “The Tuskegee Movable School: A Unique Contribution to National and International Agriculture and Rural Development,” *Agricultural History* 65:2 (Spring 1991), 85-104.

⁴⁶ Cyril O. Houle, “Federal Policies Concerning Adult Education,” *The School Review* 76:2 (June 1968), 166-189.

⁴⁷ Harvey Kantor, “Work, Education, and Vocational Reform: The Ideological Origins of Vocational Education, 1890-1920,” *American Journal of Education* 94:4 (August 1986), 401-426.

initiated by both public and private colleges, and supported by federal policy and legislation in the decades prior to the Packhorse Library Program.

The Packhorse Librarian: Educating during the Depression

Kentucky, like most states in the early twentieth century, experienced a significant increase in the number of students attending public schools. By 1930, sixty-four percent of Kentucky's school age students were enrolled at some point during the school year compared to 27 percent in 1920.⁴⁸ However, illiteracy still remained high especially in the southeastern Kentucky counties, ranging from fifteen to twenty-eight percent.⁴⁹ This dissertation will attempt to answer three historical questions that will broaden our understanding of why mountain folk desired the services provided by the Packhorse Library Program during the Great Depression. First, in what ways was public education in Appalachia impacted by the Depression? Did the federal government directly aid public schools in Appalachia? Moreover, how did federal work programs affect public school attendance in the region? The packhorse librarian was one of the few literacy programs initiated and funded by the federal government. However, librarians were hired initially as a means of putting rural women to work with literacy as a secondary concern. Funding for school books and libraries were virtually non-existent during the Depression Years, and the WPA managed to fill the void with the packhorse libraries. School consolidation was delayed in Appalachia during the Depression years, which made it difficult for many youth to access public education typically provided in an isolated one room school house.

⁴⁸ Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area*, 127.

⁴⁹ David P. Nord, "Working Class Readers: Family, Community, and Reading in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *Communication Research*, 13 (1986), 156-81; Sanford Winson, *Illiteracy in the United States from 1870 to 1920*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 22-37; Henry C. Link and Harry Hopf, *People and Books: A Study of Reading and Book-Buying Habits*, (New York: Book Industry Committee, 1946), 61.

In 1937, Helen R. Henderson conducted a quantitative analysis of rural schools in Eastern Kentucky. Her findings are important in understanding which children were attending public schools in the region during the Depression.⁵⁰ Using data culled from superintendent reports, Henderson was able to conclude that in 1931-32, forty-three percent of first graders either dropped out or failed. Henderson attributed the dropout rate to long distances these very young students had to travel, and she observed that drop out/failure rates increased in the winter months. In addition, her data indicate that teachers promoted students primarily on their ability to read, and the shortage of books at school and in the home created distinct disadvantages for younger students. In one county, the total school board expenditure for books in the 1931-32 school year was \$48.78. Perhaps more significant is the difference between data of the nineteen Appalachian counties compared with the entire state of Kentucky. High school enrollment in 1933 was 37.7 percent for the entire state, but only 10.2 percent for the nineteen Appalachian counties. Students 9-13 years old comprised 87 percent of school enrollment. Students under 9 years old comprised only five percent of mountain school enrollment, and students over 13 years old comprised only eight percent of enrollment. Thus, the vast majority of first grade students and high school students were not attending school. This was due to either inaccessibility or the need to work. Additionally, 74 percent of mountain students attended a school with one or two teachers, while only 34 percent were attending these small schools statewide. These data suggest

⁵⁰ Helen R. Henderson, *A Curriculum Study in a Mountain District*, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937), 18-19.

that there was a severe shortage of books in the schools, and a significant number of students were staying home with no access to books.⁵¹

Public school reform at the federal level failed to materialize during the Depression. Thus, schooling remained a local issue during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. Local school people saw the Depression as temporary and sought to address the problem by trimming budgets. Direct funding to the classroom for teachers salaries, books, and equipment was not provided by any federal program during the period 1929-1940.⁵² Some state monies were allocated to school districts, but much of this funding was to provide a limited amount of transportation, heating costs, and the construction of some larger schools in a few towns.⁵³ By and large, the rural one room school was the norm in the nineteen Appalachian counties of Kentucky and funding for these small schools was most often a local issue.

The physical conditions of public schools made them unattractive to even the most rugged mountaineer. Harry Caudill vividly describes the state of Appalachian schools: “A majority of the plateau’s schoolhouses dated from about 1910. Nearly all were located outside the county seats. They were so poorly built that it was impossible to keep them warm in winter. Their water was drawn from wells drilled shockingly close to stinking, fly-blown privies. Aside from a few WPA structures – most of which were in the county seats – few new schools had been added. The children still learned the three R’s in rickety, sagging structures whose floors and desks had been tortured by decades of wear.”⁵⁴ Without books, supplies, and adequate

⁵¹ Henderson, 27-31.

⁵² David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elizabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 27-41.

⁵³ American Association of School Administrators, *Schools in Small Communities*, (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1939), 33-37.

shelter, there were apparently few reasons to attend school in Appalachia during the Great Depression. Thus, the packhorse librarian offered an alternative to school for children unable to attend and parents desiring to keep their children out of the coal mines.

Conclusion

This dissertation illuminates the story of the Packhorse Library Program in an effort to improve our understanding of how literacy and reading became part of daily life in rural Kentucky during the Great Depression. Moreover, it will move beyond Jeanne Schmitzer's emphasis on the creation of work opportunities for women in Appalachia during the Great Depression by revealing the contributions made by the packhorse librarians as part of the ongoing efforts at improving outreach services originally established by local colleges to improve literacy in Eastern Kentucky. This dissertation will also contribute to our understanding of the role of education in rural Kentucky during a period of significant economic and social change brought on by the encroachment of a modern industrialized economy, and how mountain folk engaged in an active response to that change by empowering themselves through literacy. Additionally, this dissertation builds upon Allen Batteau's work by suggesting that literacy was a historically significant outcome of what he called the "phenomena of discovery" resulting in a "cognitive dissonance" and a homogeneous perception of Appalachia that took place among the American middle-class in the early nineteenth century. Finally, this work provides a better understanding of the role of federal New Deal programs in promoting literacy and reading in rural communities.

These perceptions had particular influence on the decision to establish packhorse libraries in rural Kentucky. Outsiders including federal bureaucrats, state library officials, and higher

⁵⁴ Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, p.240

education administrators provided a coordinated interest in providing reading material to children and adults in Eastern Kentucky. Letters and memoranda between organizers suggest a desire to uplift and improve the conditions of rural residents, and portray the region and its people as backward, isolated, and disadvantaged. Mountain folk and the notion of Appalachian otherness were often within the context of lacking in education. The hillbilly was seen as ill equipped to handle the challenges of coping with an industrialized economy requiring a host of literacy skills ranging from reading union and company newsletters to interacting with a host of government agencies addressing a broad range of issues including farm production, health care, and education. Thus, the Packhorse Library Program, while supporting the desires of mountain folk for reading and literacy, was an institution symptomatic of a broader understanding that Appalachia was a region untouched by the progressive and unifying forces at work elsewhere in the United States, yet ravaged by industrial growth and oppressive corporate tactics.

Examining these conditions also reveals what motivated Eastern Kentuckians to learn more about the world around them. Participation in union activities played a significant role in everyday life for many workers, especially coal miners. Union records reveal an organized campaign promoting reading and literacy as a means of empowering those who had been oppressed and oftentimes cheated by big coal. The desire to keep the next generation out of the coal mines provided additional motivation for literacy. Other motives including religion, communication with distant relatives and those serving in the military, and reading as entertainment added additional incentives to becoming literate.

This dissertation also expands the work of Lawrence A. Cremin, David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elizabeth Hansot, Shannon H. Wilson, and even Elwood Cubberly by contributing to the history of a region neglected by historians of American education. First, particular attention

will be given to the role of higher education as an agent of social reform and economic improvement in Eastern Kentucky. The significant contributions made by Berea College during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in establishing outreach programs for literacy lays important groundwork for understanding the success of the Packhorse Library Program. Second, the Packhorse Library Program provides new insight into the role of the federal government in education during the Great Depression. Tyack suggests that the federal government abstained from getting involved in school reform at the local level during this time. However, the WPA involvement in education in Eastern Kentucky illustrates an important federal contribution to providing mountain folk with opportunities to improve literacy, and expose an isolated region to the outside world.⁵⁵

This research is supported by primary sources mined from several archival collections. Berea College library is the depository for important records pertaining to outreach services and library reports. This collection also contains important documents and records of the Packhorse Library Program. The W. G. Frost papers in the Berea College Archives are of particular importance in tracing the development of literacy in Eastern Kentucky and the policies supporting the educational development of Eastern Kentucky residents. The National Archives houses WPA program records documenting the establishment and funding of the packhorse libraries. Series 69 is especially relevant. This series contains records relating to the recruiting

⁵⁵ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times*, 60-77; Wilson, *Berea College*, 57-118, Cubberly, *Rural Life and Education*, 6-28, Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience*, 273-321. Although these works reveal the managerial grip local school people had on public schools and their resistance to reform, there is no discussion addressing the unique problems of Appalachia. Wilson aptly addresses the role of Berea College in outreach services in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, but does so at the expense of any detailed study of the unique economic, social and geographic dynamics of the region. In his chapter "Child Saving and Social Service Agencies," Cremin traces the development of the Federal Bureau of Education through 1924 and provides brief mention of the National Youth Administration during the Great Depression. However, he completely ignores school conditions in Appalachia and provides little insight into the WPA beyond nursery programs and the Federal Arts Project.

of women in Eastern Kentucky for service in the program and other work programs for women. The Kentucky Department of Libraries Archive holds an impressive collection of state library reports and correspondence that illuminates the history of library services in Kentucky beginning in the mid-eighteenth century. Morehead State University Archives hold an important collection of photographs of the Packhorse Library Program. Additionally, regional newspapers, especially the *Louisville Courier Journal*, will assist in revealing the progress of program development at the state and local level.

Although there is a prolific amount of secondary literature on the history and development of Eastern Kentucky, there are some specific works that will illuminate the social conditions of the region. Harry Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberland*s documents the impact of coal mining in Eastern Kentucky. He traces the emergence of a new industrial monolith during the twentieth century that changed the nature of work and family life in the mountains. Henry D. Shapiro's *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains in the American Consciousness* focuses on the history of Appalachia as an emerging idea and national construct of a "homogeneous population." Shapiro's contribution will help illuminate the efforts of outside missionaries, philanthropists, and government agencies in the effort to "uplift" mountain folk. Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlander* is perhaps the most widely known work on the culture of the Southern Appalachians. Kephart's book, first published in 1913, was based on several lengthy excursions into the Appalachian Mountains. He eventually resigned his position at the Mercantile Library in St. Louis and embarked upon a solitary life in the mountains living among the people about whom he wrote. From his vantage point in Bryson City, North Carolina, Kephart wrote one of the defining works on mountain life. *Appalachia: A History* by John Alexander Williams is a well written general history of Appalachia. Chapter Four pays

particular attention to the period 1880-1940 when coal and railroads were establishing their dominance in the region. For a background on Appalachia during the Early Republic period, Malcolm J. Rohrbough's *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850* provides an important vein of scholarship that uses census data and records from court houses to draw parallels between changes in the mountain family and the development of towns and communities.

Chronological and topical organization of the chapters serves best in answering the primary research questions. Chapter 1 introduces the Packhorse program, briefly outlines the relevant research on the topic, and introduces the main argument. Chapter 2 examines earlier outreach programs in the region and the role of higher education in establishing precedents for outreach services in Eastern Kentucky. By examining the reading habits and the reading material accessible to mountain folk before and during the Great Depression, changes in how literacy was valued and perceived by rural Kentucky residents within the context of rapid social and economic change will be better understood. Chapter 3 focuses on the development and implementation of the packhorse program in 1936. The coordinated effort of women's organizations, state relief programs, WPA officials, and local school boards in the development stage of the packhorse libraries illuminates the cycle of literacy experienced in the mountain region during the Great Depression. Chapter Three also examines the role of the WPA in responding to the preexisting stereotypical perceptions of Appalachia held by the urban middle-class. Tracing how packhorse librarians developed personal relationships with their patrons, and subsequently met their requests for reading materials, will demonstrate how this WPA program continued the extension work of higher education institutions in the region. Moreover, mapping these relationships will answer the question as to why the program was so readily accepted

among mountain folk. Chapter 4 traces program growth through 1943 when federal funding for the packhorse libraries ended. Circulation and borrower data, book donation records, and WPA reports demonstrate that packhorse librarians overcame initial social barriers and resistance in an effort to deliver reading material to isolated mountain families. Moreover, this chapter answers the broader research question addressing why the program was accepted and made popular by rural residents. Thus, Chapter 4 goes beyond Schmitzer's analysis of job opportunities in Appalachian by presenting a set of interacting social forces that produced conditions favorable to the acceptance and success of a new federal program in rural Kentucky. Chapter 5 examines the decline and eventual end of packhorse libraries in the early 1940s. Federal funding decreased dramatically for work programs as the nation moved into World War II. The federal government lost sight of the plight of mountain folk who were all but ignored by the burgeoning war economy. Moreover, Chapter 5 assesses the impact of the Packhorse Library Program on library services and the availability of reading material in southeastern Kentucky during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Chapter 6 traces the end of the program in 1943 as part of the decline of WPA funding. This chapter also provides an analysis of how the Packhorse Library Program impacted later efforts to provide reading materials and library services to Eastern Kentucky. Additionally, this chapter assesses how the packhorse libraries set important precedents for future federal funding of public library programs on a national level. The concluding chapter reviews the main research questions and applies them to the work of Carl Kaestle, Cubberley, Cremin, Schmitzer, Batteau, Gilmore, and Brown and will evaluate the success of the Packhorse Library Program in terms of communication and gratification theories.

The packhorse libraries were funded by the WPA from 1936-1943 in an attempt to hire women who were otherwise unemployable. Their role as another outreach program had

unintended results. Their legacy, left in their records of correspondence, library reports, and WPA records, suggests that these women filled a significant gap in education by bringing the written word to the front porches of over one million Kentuckians. The demand for books far outstripped the ability of the packhorse libraries to supply enough reading material. Even more significant was the influence they eventually had on the development of modern library outreach services in the Appalachian region and across America as federal dollars became available for bookmobile programs in the 1950s. While these women may have been the product of a stereotypical construct of “Appalachia,” their story offers insight into the complexities of a region that continues to struggle for existence in a modern world.

CHAPTER 2 EARLY OUTREACH EDUCATION IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, 1885-1923

The Packhorse Library Program from 1936-1943 was part of a complex history of educational outreach services in Eastern Kentucky. The converging forces that resulted in the establishment of packhorse libraries were brought together by people and organizations that were the product of five decades of outreach efforts for increasing literacy and the availability of reading material. Most of the earlier outreach and missionary programs failed due to poor funding or a lack of interest among the Commonwealth's leadership. Nevertheless, the outreach programs beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century provided an important set of lessons for those who would challenge the social and physical environment of the mountains to bring literacy to isolated communities. The complexities of mountain culture and language, the violence of feuds and coal camp wars, and the ongoing struggle with racial issues in the aftermath of the Civil War represent only a partial list of obstacles that had to be overcome. These early efforts played a central role in revealing the value placed on literacy by mountain families.

An examination of the early developments in education outreach in Eastern Kentucky confirms much of the scholarship in this area. Shannon H. Wilson aptly argued that the contributions of small private colleges were essential for the improvement of education in the rural counties of Eastern Kentucky. Shannon places particular emphasis on the extension programs of Berea College from 1880 to 1930.¹ What motivated higher education administrators for initiating and expanding these programs were the obvious demand and increased participation by local residents. Packhorse Library administrators responded in much the same fashion during

¹ Shannon H. Wilson, *Berea College, An Illustrated History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 84-87. Shannon Wilson is college archivist and associate professor of library science at Berea College. Wilson chronicles many of Berea's programs for blacks that began at the inception of the institution and continues today with the Black Mountain Youth Leadership Program

the early years of the program when demand for books was outstripping supply. Additionally, this analysis confirms what many historians including Lawrence Cremin, David Tyack, and Gerald L. Gutek,² have suggested regarding the levels of illiteracy and the neglect of state and local governments to address the problem during the first decades of the twentieth century. In his examination of rural Appalachian schools in Virginia, William A. Link provides an overlay of data that indicate low attendance, abbreviated school years, and illiteracy rates from 48 to 82 percent by 1900. Moreover, Link illustrates the lack of state oversight, low teacher salaries, inadequate infrastructure, and extremely low per capita school expenditures contributing to the economic and social difficulties of mountain folk that extended into the Depression Era.³ The results of these deficiencies were made obvious when missionaries, professors, and health care workers extended their reach into the mountains and reported their findings in annual reports and written commentary. However, these earlier works generally ignore the important shifts in the reading canon that occurred during the later stages of outreach efforts. This shift cannot be fully understood without some discussion of early outreach programs that focused on the delivery of mostly religious reading material. Changes in reading appetites of rural people over time, and the relationship between social and economic forces and individuals have been ignored by many education scholars. Much of the historical analysis of rural education and literacy suggests industrialization as an agent for change in local perceptions toward the increasing need for education in a modern world.⁴ Thus, historians have tended to overlook the relationship between rural residents and those who provided them with reading material and opportunities for learning.

² Gerald L. Gutek, *American Education, 1945-2000* (Chicago: Waveland Press, 2000), 25-28.

³ William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 208-214.

⁴ William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 51-70; Carl F. Kaestle, "Studying the History of

Early twentieth century rural education reforms have been addressed by historians. This historical scholarship includes the work of John C. Scott. His examination of “nontraditional” education formats including the Chautauqua movement suggests that outreach services provided to rural residents during the first half of the twentieth century had important influences on American higher education. Scott traces the work of Chautauqua founder John H. Vincent in the development of the first national adult education program. The program pioneered rural education outreach with the establishment of extension programs, correspondence courses, and summer sessions, and was based on Vincent’s study of Benjamin Franklin’s “Junto.”⁵ Historian Frederick Rudolph illuminated the work of William Rainey Harper’s model for extension programs as a method of organizing the University of Chicago in 1892, and the “Wisconsin Idea” based on extension programs to rural residents developed by University of Wisconsin president Charles Van Hise during the 1890s. These programs served thousands of rural residents in the Midwest by providing agriculture development and basic literacy programs.⁶ John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy identified the “American university extension movement” that was the direct result of extension programs developed by colleges and universities in the northeast as early as 1888. This scholarship demonstrates a proliferation of outreach programs on a national scale, and initiated by higher education institutions at about the same time that

Literacy,” in *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading since 1880*, Carl F. Kaestle ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 26-29.

⁵ John C. Scott, “The Chautauqua Movement: Revolution in Popular Higher Education,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 70:4 (July-August 1999), 389-412.

⁶ Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Vintage, 1963), 288-309.

northern missionary organizations were expanding outreach programs into the South and Appalachia.⁷

Missionaries, educators, business leaders, and philanthropists made the initial attempts at “uplifting” the people of Appalachia during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Their aim was to preserve mountain culture while providing the education and modernization needed to survive in an industrialized nation. Uplifting was also a term used to confirm the stereotype constructed by these outside organizations to justify missionary and educational outreach. The typical “hillbilly” was viewed by many outreach program providers, including Berea College president William G. Frost and Lena Nofcier, as backward, illiterate, and economically oppressed. Perceptions of the hillbilly included images of fierce individuality, perseverance, and strong moral attributes. The image of the typical hillbilly became a useful tool for promoting missionary work, social programs, and educational outreach during the half-century before the Great Depression. However, these perceptions did not deter local residents from participating in or accepting outreach programs. Mountain folk were willing to overlook the labels and stereotypes while participating in programs designed to uplift their families and communities.⁸

The backdrop for their story is the isolated mountains and communities of America’s last frontier. Internal conflicts among church organizations and the changing political and social climate after the Civil War redefined the home missionary movement from a post-war effort designed to assist freed African-Americans to one that focused on the salvation of rural whites in Appalachia. This shift in focus resulted in five decades of intense missionary outreach that included the establishment of settlement schools, health programs, and reading initiatives for the

⁷ John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 122-127.

⁸ Mary Noallis Murfree, *In the Tennessee Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970), xv-xix.

purpose of increasing literacy in the region. These efforts eventually became part of the culture of Appalachia and laid important groundwork for the establishment of federal assistance programs that eventually included the packhorse libraries.

Appalachia in the Late Nineteenth Century

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) comprised of labor and industry representatives divides Appalachia into three distinct geographical regions. “Older Appalachia” is so named because it was the first area settled by whites. This area includes the Great Appalachia Valley running from Winchester, Virginia to northeastern Alabama. “Intermediate Appalachia” lies to the south and east of Older Appalachia and includes the mountains and valleys of North Carolina and Georgia. “Newer Appalachia” consists of the plateau country called the Cumberlands, or simply the Appalachian Plateau that includes Eastern Kentucky.⁹ Patterns of growth during the late nineteenth century suggest that the Appalachian Plateau was the last region to achieve population stability. The nineteen Appalachian counties in Eastern Kentucky doubled in population from 1880 to 1900 from 110,000 to 217,000. By 1930, these counties contained 392,000 people.¹⁰ Rapid growth placed new pressures on land, government institutions including public education, and created a new industrial economy that provided more than subsistence farming.

The Appalachian Plateau consisted of an interior expanse encompassing the peaks and ridges of the Allegheny Mountains and the rugged Cumberland Plateau. The coves, hollows, and tablelands of these regions were initially avoided by settlers, but were gradually occupied by their descendants from Eastern Virginia and, although in smaller numbers, from New England

⁹ John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 12-14.

¹⁰ David Whisnant, *Modernizing the Mountaineer* (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1980), 122-130.

and Europe. By the 1880s, this group of mountain folk had come to be known as “Highlanders,” and had established a “domestic economy” based on subsistence farming, stock raising, and harvesting of natural resources including lumber and coal.¹¹ Highlanders were typically isolated by the rugged landscape and lack of infrastructure and communications. However, they enjoyed some contact from the outside world in the form of peddlers, politicians, preachers, and other travelers.¹² Recent scholarship by historians Ron Lewis and Dwight Billings argued that Appalachia was not the product of extreme isolationism. Their research suggested that a rich intellectual ferment among scholars, educators, writers, and artists in the regions point to a calcification of culture influenced by ongoing contact with the outside world. However, their studies focused on Western North Carolina and West Virginia.¹³ These two sub-regions experienced industrial development much later than Eastern Kentucky. Railroads, coal mining, lumber, and textiles were established fifty years prior to their arrival in the mountains of Kentucky. The degree of isolation experienced by many Kentucky mountain families was more pronounced than in other Appalachian sub-regions.

There is evidence that families in Eastern Kentucky owned sufficient arable land for the production of food surpluses prior to 1880. Although this generation of mountain folk was not poor, diminished landholdings by subsequent generations point to the social origins of poverty

¹¹ Mary Beth Pudup, “Social Class and Economic Development in Southeast Kentucky, 1820-1880,” in *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era*, ed. Robert D. Mitchell (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 245-50.

¹² For a summary of the issue of isolation in the Cumberland Plateau, see Dwight Billings, Kathleen Blee, and Lewis Swanson, “Culture, Family, and Community in Preindustrial Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 13 (Winter, 1986), 154-55.

¹³ Ronald L. Lewis and Dwight B. Billings, “Appalachian Culture and Economic Development: A Retrospective on the Theory and Literature” *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, 3:1 (Spring 1997), 3-42

that had become pervasive by the early 1900s.¹⁴ For example, in 1880, 1,414 families in Clay County, Kentucky farmed nearly 240,000 acres of land. By 1910, 2,916 families farmed the same amount of land. Average farm size dropped from 170 acres to 86 acres during this period. By 1930, farm size in Clay County averaged only 24 acres. Farm subdivision reduced family food production and pressures on forest resources took an additional toll on worsening economic conditions. The economy weakened due to the limitations of subsistence farming, and successive generations were left with little economic shelter from the eventual effects of absentee land ownership and coal mining.¹⁵

Poverty and isolation in Eastern Kentucky was only part of the social landscape prior to 1930. Public schools as an institution had suffered from decades of neglect by local and state government. Eastern Kentucky University professor Harry M. Caudill described the Kentucky education system in stark terms:

In a state so indifferent to the mental development of its children it is not surprising that schooling of even the simple sort remained practically nonexistent in the mountains. In a few widely dispersed communities, mountaineers made some effort to teach the 3 R's to their children, and perhaps an occasional one-room school house was built. These, however, were too few to have any real effect on the ocean of illiteracy which was the plateau country. Almost without exception the people remained oblivious of the knowledge to be gleaned from the printed page and no more than a scant 5 or 10 percent of the adults possessed more than the bare ability to scrawl their names.¹⁶

By 1900 some progress had been made in raising literacy rates. By then, most of the present-day counties had been organized and state law required that a superintendent of schools be elected.

¹⁴ Dwight Billings and Kathleen Blee, "Causes and Consequences of Persistent Rural Poverty: A Longitudinal Case Study of an Appalachian Community," Final Report to the Ford Foundation and the Rural Economic Policy Program of the Aspen Institute, 1991.

¹⁵ Alan Banks, "Labor and the Development of Industrial Capitalism in Eastern Kentucky," PhD dissertation, McMaster University, 1979, 27-39. Clay County was the last eastern Kentucky county to be reached by railroads, thus providing the best study of the long-term development and eventual decline of subsistence farming.

¹⁶ Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1962), 54-55.

Many of the counties in Eastern Kentucky had no schools for the superintendent to oversee, but efforts to educate children and adults materialized at the turn of the last century by way of missionary outreach programs and settlement schools.¹⁷

The Appalachian Stereotype

Although educational and religious missionaries contributed to and exploited the emerging stereotype in Appalachia, the genesis of “hillbilly” was mostly the product of a group of impressionistic travel and local color writers. Will Wallace Harney made first reference to the word in his article “A strange Land and a Peculiar People” published in *Lippincott’s Magazine* in 1873.¹⁸ Mary Noailles Murfree, the granddaughter of the largest slave owner in Tennessee who often vacationed in the Smoky Mountains, published many short stories about the land and people of Appalachia. Her most notable work *In the Tennessee Mountains*, published in 1884 under the nom de plume of Charles Egbert Craddock, was one of the most read collections of short stories of its time. Requiring seventeen printings to satisfy demand, her book created the literary mountaineer. Her characters have remained as standard instruments throughout the twentieth century. Murfree’s book became the “first mission-study text for those who wished to understand conditions in the region.”¹⁹ Other important works include Kentucky writer John Fox’s *The Little Shepard of Kingdom Come* and *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. Fox wrote several volumes during the 1890s describing his own experience as a son of a Kentucky family and a

¹⁷ Robert D. Michael, *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 101-127. Also see Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kentucky Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 23-37.

¹⁸ Will Wallace Harney, “A Strange Land and Peculiar People,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* 12 (October 1873): 429-438.

¹⁹ Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978) 57-59.

Harvard graduate who returned to the mountains to reclaim his pioneer heritage.²⁰ Harney, Murfree, and Fox defined the Appalachian people for their reading audience by cataloging a set of behaviors and customs that set mountain folk apart from what was considered the American mainstream.

The literary inventory used to construct the archetypes and stereotypes of the hillbilly character began with speech patterns and cultural behavior emphasizing deviance and illiteracy with a propensity for brawling and feuding. The stereotype was set into opposing backdrops that included mountain scenery with contrasts of light and shade, valleys and mountains, wildness and tamedness, dilapidated cabins with warm fireplaces, and ornate quilts on crude beds. Typical characters came with their own contrasts. Young women and pipe smoking grannies, athletic men and black lung victims, and grinding poverty compared with the outside world were images that moved the plot along. A quaint but stalwart mountaineer faithful to God and family was often portrayed as ignorant and impoverished, prone to senseless feuding and depravity induced by genetic deficiency and geographical isolation. Additionally, the hillbilly was portrayed as illiterate and defiant with respect to “book larnin’.”²¹

During the early years of the twentieth century, writings of Appalachian “otherness” tended to emphasize definitions of the mountaineers’ needs rather than calculating the characteristics of a mountain culture that portrayed a peculiar people in a strange land. The conditions of schools and churches, roads, and an economy based on subsistence served as

²⁰ John Fox, Jr. “A Mountain Europa,” *Century* 42 (1892) 760-765, 846-858. Later writings include *The Kentuckians*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897); *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1901); and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908).

²¹ Julian Ralph, “Our Appalachian Americans.” *Harper’s Weekly* 107 (June 1903): 32-41. There are two particular articles that contrast the Appalachian character: Hartley Davis, “The Land of Feuds: A Region of the United States in Which Bloodshed is a Pastime and Cruel and Cowardly Murder Goes Unpunished—The Terrible Story of the Seven Great Kentucky Feuds.” *Munsey’s Magazine* 30 (November, 1903): 161-172, and Alice MacGowan, “The Homecoming of Byrd Forebush: A Love Story of Little Turkey Creek.” *Munsey’s Magazine* 30 (December 1903), 429-432.

indices of Appalachian otherness. These conditions were explained as the consequences of isolation from the rest of America. Discussions among scholars often turned from the problems of existence to the problems of mountain life and culture.²² Appalachian otherness was transformed in the first decades of the 1900s into a dilemma to be dealt with through social action. Appalachia appeared in new terms that questioned the habitability of the region, and the need to provide that which was missing from mountain life including the written word. The creation of community among mountaineers seemed worthy to missionaries and educators, and it was to this effort that systematic benevolence and social uplifting directed its attention.²³

Berea College President William G. Frost focused the college mission on uplifting the mountaineer in Eastern Kentucky. Frost wrote frequently during the early 1900s about his outreach education programs and popularized the idea among scholars that the people of Appalachia were a special population with unique needs. Frost often spoke of the need to improve living conditions in Southeastern Kentucky, and he frequently portrayed mountain folk in starkly positive and negative terms. The desperate conditions of mountain life, and the strong character and persistence of the hillbilly was Frost's method of spreading his doctrine of social theory while raising funds for outreach programs at Berea College²⁴ Thus, the opposing characteristics of the mountains served to foster the development of a system of philanthropy that would include the efforts of higher education, the home missionary endeavor, and federal programs during the Great Depression.

²² William Henry Haney, *The Mountain People of Kentucky: An Account of Present Conditions with the Attitude of the People Toward Improvement* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1906), 27-41.

²³ Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, 197-203

²⁴ William G. Frost, "University Extension in Kentucky," *Outlook* 60 (September 3, 1898) 73-79. Other important works by Frost explaining his views on social uplift include "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains." *Atlantic Monthly* 83 (March, 1899) 311-319; "The Southern Mountaineer: Our Kindred of the Boone and Lincoln Type." *American Review of Reviews* 21 (1900) 303-311; and *For the Mountains: An Autobiography*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1937) 137-155.

Missionary Outreach in Kentucky

During the mid-1880s and extending into the early nineteenth century, national congregational churches cultivated a significant interest in the people of the Appalachian region. Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists were among the denominations that became involved with the mountain people of Eastern Kentucky. The politics of denominational competition in the region was fueled by the assumption that Appalachia was “unchurched,” and national denominations had little or no representation there. The emergence of missionary efforts was tied to the belief among church leaders that the mountaineers were somehow cut-off from the main currents of American life, and their isolation had deprived them of those benefits that denominations could provide including schools and churches. Missionaries viewed the mountaineer as being illiterate and “behind the times” due to a lack of education and a long standing reliance on subsistence farming. These mostly northern church organizations were looking to expand their influence in the mountains, and they set goals to create opportunities for the mountaineers to “take their place alongside other Americans in the new national civilization.”²⁵

Early efforts by northern denominations to engage in social uplift in the mountains of Kentucky were a reaction to two developments in the South. First, resentment among Southerners toward northern churches had made missionary outreach in the South difficult, and northern churches discovered that mountain folk were more receptive. Second, a conflict within the Methodist church over local control of southern churches and missionary policy resulted in a split in missionary programs. Both the American Missionary Association (AMA) and the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS), the two primary missionary organizations of the

²⁵ Deborah McCauley, *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 127-141.

Methodist Church, claimed to represent the obligations and concerns of the church. In 1883, the annual meeting of the AMA addressed its weakening monopoly on missionary work in the South. Official statements of that conference boldly stated that the AMHS was attempting to circumvent the authority of the older organization.²⁶

This split in the Methodist Church missionary organizations had more to do with race than competitive missionary efforts. Since the end of the Civil War, the AMA had focused on missionary programs for southern Freedmen with particular emphasis on schools and literacy. By the 1880s, the AHMS had emerged as a strong competitor by redirecting the focus of missionary efforts to the “deep, unmistakable interests in those long-neglected whites of the South.”²⁷ However, white southerners’ resentment of church missionary efforts dampened the prospects of congregational activity in the South. The AHMS found more hospitable environs in Eastern Kentucky where mountain folk had rejected the institution of slavery and sympathized with the Methodist “anti-caste” position. The AMA continued to deliver missionary services almost exclusively to southern blacks. For the Methodist Church, the dilemma was complicated. As the parent organization of both missionary sects, the desire to avoid a potential split along racial lines without neglecting either program posed a significant organizational challenge.²⁸

The struggle between the two Methodist missionary programs for dominance within the church represented a vertical organizational conflict driven by a divergence between national and local policy. Methodist missionary programs were organized and funded within local church

²⁶ Harnett T. Kane, *Miracle in the Mountains*, (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 210-222.

²⁷ Ronald E. Butchart, “Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World: A Historiography of the African American Struggle for Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 28:3 (Fall 1988), 333-366.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

communities and often operated independently from the national organization. Moreover, local church members believed that missionary programs defined the obligations and philanthropic concerns of the church. By 1884, the AMA and AHMS missions were locked into a competitive drive that had well defined racial boundaries. The AMA maintained dominance in the southern field by serving black communities until 1887 when a compromise was reached. Both organizations finally agreed that missionary programs would focus on southern whites. Black membership in the church was viewed by many church leaders as a liability and the policy agreement was a welcome relief. However, the consensus over missionary focus was not unanimous. Washington Gladden, president of the AMA, argued that compromise was unthinkable if the church was to uphold Christian principles. Gladden suggested that serving all people of the southern region would be the best service for a “Power that is irresistible.” Through universal service, according to Gladden, “the barriers of caste will go down before it, and the color line will no longer stain the threshold of the Christian Church.” However, Gladden’s words fell on deaf ears, and the home missionary effort of the Methodist Church turned its attention to mountain families in Appalachia.²⁹

Missionary work in Eastern Kentucky continued to be tied to denominational bodies through the last decade of the nineteenth century. Essentially ameliorative, mission programs emphasized reading and literacy as the means for uplifting the mountaineer. Exposure to modern life was of particular importance to missionary programs and was viewed by church leaders as the best means by which mountaineers might become equipped for full participation in the modern cash economy. Elizabeth R. Hooker revealed many of the details of missionary activity during the period prior to 1900. In her book *Religion in the Highlands*, Hooker suggests that

²⁹ Butchart, “Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World,” 333-366.

missionaries gave particular attention to the educational needs of mountain families. Their efforts resulted in various programs that included reading circles, the operation of one-room schools, and eventually the establishment of seminaries, mountain colleges, and settlement schools. These early outreach programs sponsored primarily by denominational organizations provided a foundation for government programs during the Great Depression including the Packhorse Libraries.³⁰

Missionary Outreach Refined: The Hindman Settlement School

More than two hundred missionary and settlement schools were established in Appalachia between 1870 and 1920. Founded mostly by local missionaries, these rural education programs offered curricula that combined the new education ideas of Progressivism with settlement work.³¹ According to historian Sandra Barney, settlement schools attempted to prepare students for the “coming industrial order” by attaching scientific principles to the skills required for daily living in the mountains. Moreover, settlement schools were more often than not founded by women interested in the improvement of social conditions in Appalachia. Social reform goals were infused into the curricula, and outreach programs were established to maintain contact with local families and to provide an environment for what would be an intensive curriculum requirement for community service.³²

Hindman Settlement School was the first of its kind in America. Established in 1902 by Katherine Petit and May Stone, the school was located in Knott County, Kentucky. Petit and

³⁰ Elizabeth R. Hooker, *Religion in the Highlands: Native Churches and Missionary Enterprises in the Southern Appalachia Area*, (New York: Home Missions Council, 1933), 88-112.

³¹ J’May Bertrand, “The Appalachian Settlement Schools: The Rural Response to the Urban Concept.” (M.A. thesis, Bryn Mawr College, 1975), 27-31.

³² Sandra Barney, *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 119-122.

Stone initiated a set of broad goals designed to reform mountain education by offering work skills for living on the mountain farm and working in an industrial economy. Petit and Stone were from well known Kentucky families and grew up in the poverty stricken areas of the state. They met while working in the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (WCTU) and secured the sponsorship of that organization during the first thirteen years of operation. Recent scholarship in women's history in Kentucky suggests that Petit and Stone did not always see eye to eye on mission policies and the school curriculum, but both women were driven by their desire to bring educational reform and literacy into the rural areas of the state.³³

Hindman Settlement School overcame the obstacles of its remote location and two major fires that destroyed the campus twice in ten years to become Knott County's first high school in 1915. Community outreach programs at the settlement school initially included various health programs. The school was a leader in the eradication of the prevalent disease trachoma in Appalachia.³⁴ Other outreach programs included farm production and domestic skills. By the time the settlement school had severed its relationship with the WCTU in 1915, the academic program and settlement activities had achieved substantial influence in the local mountain communities. In 1913, Pettit left her post at Hindman to found Pine Mountain Settlement School. In her first correspondence at Pine Mountain, Pettit posed two questions that addressed the basic problem of her mission: "What value do you put upon the old civilization of the mountains, and do you think there is anything in [it] that should be preserved?" According to historian David E. Whisnant, answering these questions resulted in a sort of cultural shock for

³³ Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1967), 56-61. Also see William Terrell Cornett, "Untying Some Knots in Knott County: Two Educational Experiments in Eastern Kentucky." *Proceedings, Appalachia America* (Appalachian Studies Conference, 1980), 179-87.

³⁴ Norris K. Combs, "Memories of Hindman Settlement School." *Troublesome Creek Times*, (July 25, 1984), 4.

Pettit and her administrators. They discovered a cognitive dissonance between the “strong intellect and great force of character,” and their observations that most mountain folk “eat little more than bacon, coffee, and cornbread; go barefoot, drink moonshine, and sleep together in one room.” However, the settlement schools, according to Whisnant, failed to address the economic changes caused by railroads and coal mines, and they eventually answered Pettit’s questions by creating schools that modeled the conventional curriculums of public schools.³⁵ Regardless of their eventual conventional approach, Petit and Stone were the acknowledged leaders in mountain education reform. Both women went on to become cofounders of the Southern Mountain Workers Association along with Berea College President William G. Frost.³⁶

Early Library Outreach Programs

In June 1896, the Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs (FWC), which served as the umbrella organization for local women’s clubs around the state, established a set of extension library services as a response to the growing demand for education and literacy in Appalachia. This early attempt was limited to “Home Reading Circles” that encouraged rural women to establish in-home reading clubs. However, structural problems with the reading circle program prevented long term success. The organization and administration of the program was placed into the hands of homemakers who had little time for such activities. Other factors unique to the region worked against the success of reading circles. First, weather and road conditions during the winter months prevented the distribution of materials by the sponsoring libraries. In Eastern Kentucky, most roads were unpaved and in poor condition; few remained open in bad weather. Second, the work of mountain women during the warm months increased to a point where little

³⁵ David E. Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture In An American Region*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 33-44.

³⁶ Mary Rogers, *The Pine Mountain Story, 1913-1918*. (Pine Mountain, Kentucky: Pine Mountain Settlement School, 1980), 23-27.

time was available for reading. Most mountain women were obligated to perform duties related to the planting and harvesting of crops including the preserving and canning of food.³⁷

One home reading circle in Wallaceton, Kentucky received attention in an annual library report. Operated by Inis Hutchinson, the wife of a coal miner, the club was noted as being the largest as of 1902. Mrs. Hutchinson had twenty-nine families on her membership list with a collection of 228 books. Other home reading clubs reported as many as 400 books on hand with most volumes having been donated by the FWC. Reading circles were established in at least nine other rural Kentucky communities by 1906. Most reading circles did not survive for more than two years because of difficulties in acquiring additional reading material and the limitations of traveling.³⁸

The FWC established a replacement program in 1905 known as Traveling Libraries. This program maintained a collection of about 5,000 volumes placed into 100 wooden cases that were subsequently deposited at various locations and rotated at regular intervals. In 1910, the Kentucky Library Commission (KLC) was created due to the efforts of the FWC and the Kentucky Library Association. The commission was composed of mostly librarians appointed by the governor to oversee state library funding and facilitate the sharing of library resources. The following year, the FWC transferred its traveling libraries to the commission.

Fanny C. Rawson was appointed Secretary and Director of the Library Commission. Her 1911 report identified forty-one libraries in thirty-seven counties, seventeen college libraries, and 182 traveling libraries located in eighty-two of Kentucky's 120 counties. Aided by Carnegie Foundation funds, several libraries were put under construction in 1910 in Kentucky's larger

³⁷ Untitled Document dated 1926, Berea College Archives, Berea, Kentucky: Box 28, Folder: "Extension Library Reports, 1915-1922."

³⁸ Report of the Director of Library Extension titled *Extension Library, 1920*, Berea College Archives, Berea, Kentucky: Box 28, Folder: "Extension Library Reports, 1915-1922."

cities and the traveling library nearly doubled. However, only one library was located in the nineteen counties of Southeastern Kentucky. In 1911, with a population exceeding 1.2 million, the Eastern Kentucky region relied on a public library collection of a mere 8,000 volumes located in scattered wooden crates.³⁹

Education and Politics: A New Form of Outreach

In 1906, John Grant Crabbe was elected superintendent of public instruction for Kentucky. Born and educated in Ohio, he had taught in a normal school in Michigan, and then served as city superintendent of schools in Ashland, Kentucky for eighteen years. Early in his first term, the new superintendent attempted to change his office from a clerical position to a “clearing-house for educational ideas.” Crabbe called for a more centralized school system under the control of professionals. In 1908, the Kentucky General Assembly passed a comprehensive set of education laws that contained many of Crabbe’s proposals.⁴⁰ The emphasis of the 1908 legislative package was in the area of elementary and secondary schools, and included the School District Law requiring the county to be the key taxing authority. State funding for schools increased nearly three-fold to nearly 1 million dollars.⁴¹ The Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs (KFWC) provided much of the lobby effort. The KFWC had also played an active role in lobbying for a statewide library system a decade earlier, and provided an army of local volunteers to operate public libraries located mostly in Lexington and Louisville.⁴²

³⁹ Florence Ridgeway, *Developments in Library Service in Kentucky*, (Berea: Berea College Press, 1940), p.1, located in KDLA, Frankfort, Kentucky, Box 28, Folder: “Library History.”

⁴⁰ Kentucky Superintendent of Public Instruction Report, 1907-1908, (Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Education), 12-20.

⁴¹ Keith C. Barton, *The Gates Shut Quickly: Education and Reform in Kentucky, 1903-1908*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 122-27. See also Anna Youngman, “The Revenue System of Kentucky: A Study in State Finance.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 32 (1917), 202.

⁴² Nancy K. Forderhase, “The Clear Call of Thoroughbred Women: The Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs and the Crusade for Educational Reform, 1903-1909.” *Register* 83 (1985), 29.

The flurry of reform laws passed by the state legislature in 1918 caused concern among Kentucky education reformers that the populace would see reform as having been completed. Crabbe began a series of meetings in local communities across the state to keep education reform on the state's political agenda. Known as the "The Whirlwind Campaigns," the meetings were intended, in Crabbe's words, as a "continuous cyclone bombardment against illiteracy and ignorance." The first round of meetings was held in November and December of 1908. Thirty speakers gave more than three hundred speeches and an estimated 60,000 people attended. Thousands more read about them in local newspapers. Crabbe reported that "the meetings were held in school houses, court houses, opera houses, and country stores. Each one addressed three audiences a day and they were whirled from place to place in every sort of conveyance – train, wagon, and automobile, and in the mountains they went on horseback."⁴³ The outpouring of interest in public school reform was unprecedented, and the interest in education by rural folk made educators hopeful that reform would take hold in the mountains. What had begun as a series of town meeting across the state reaching out into the isolated regions of Eastern Kentucky sparked one of largest grass roots movements for education and literacy programs in the state's history. Crabbe's "soldiers of literacy" discovered a public interest in education that was previously unknown by state officials. Crabbe had managed to convince the state's politicians and Kentucky's most influential women's organization that education was a salient issue among rural mountain people.

The Crusade Fails

Beginning in 1911, Kentucky counties had been required, under the 1908 legislation, to establish county school districts with at least one high school. Many counties, including Knott

⁴³ Kentucky Superintendent of Instruction Report, 1907-1908, p.24-27.

County, had not complied with the state mandate. Moreover, the taxation system required under the new state laws was virtually non-existent. The high rates of non-compliance among counties, the lack of funding, adequate school buildings, and a shortage of trained teachers prevented the establishment of a modern state school system based on progressive scientific principles.⁴⁴ Any successes in public education were realized only through the efforts of a few who saw formal education as a path leading away from poverty. One of those few was Cora Wilson Stewart. A former teacher and school superintendent from Rowan County, Stewart was elected as the first woman president of the Kentucky Education Association (KEA) in 1911. Like state superintendent Crabbe, Stewart conducted a crusade before the Kentucky Legislature for school reform and literacy programs.⁴⁵

In 1911, with funding from donations and the KEA, Stewart organized an outreach program in Eastern Kentucky to fight illiteracy. Her “moonlight schools” provided a broad curriculum focusing on life skills and literacy for children in rural communities. Moonlight classes were usually conducted in one-room schools, country stores, churches, and private homes. The program experienced an outpouring of interests among mostly teenagers and adults in mountain communities. From that beginning, Stewart lobbied the governor and legislature for public funding to maintain the program. In 1914, as a response to Stewart’s request, the state passed a bill that established the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission. Stewart received 5,000 dollars and a promise of continued funding for six more years. The KFWC joined with other civic and business organizations providing additional financial support and volunteer teachers. Stewart wrote textbooks specifically designed to meet the needs of beginning readers in the

⁴⁴ Elizabeth B. Newhall, “Schools.” *Child Welfare in Kentucky* 6 (1919), 79.

⁴⁵ Willie E. Nelms, Jr., “Cora Wilson Stewart and the Crusade Against Illiteracy in Kentucky,” *Register* 74 (1976), 12-15.

mountains. Her program received national attention in newspapers and at education conferences during the next decade. Stewart was eventually considered the leading authority on illiteracy in the country, and she frequently conducted national speaking tours. Stewart reported that in the first three years of operation 130,000 Kentuckians were enrolled in the Moonlight Schools which accounted for half of all illiterate adults in Eastern Kentucky.⁴⁶

This seemingly successful outreach program came to an abrupt end in 1920. Stewart was known for her plain speaking and lack of political tact, and she made several political enemies during the seven years of state funding. She often showed up unannounced at legislators' offices and chastised the governor on issues of education funding. In 1920, the governor and legislature refused to renew funding for the program and dismantled the Illiteracy Commission. State superintendent Crabbe agreed with the measure since he had also been the recipient of Stewart's attacks. The success of the Moonlight Schools was also called into question by many politicians including Crabbe.⁴⁷ However, Stewart's success went beyond any measurable increases in literacy. During the seven years of the Moonlight Schools, Stewart had managed to bring together two powerful women's organizations in Kentucky. The cooperation between the KEA and the KFWC would not end with the Moonlight Schools. Sixteen years after their program was ended by the Kentucky political machine, the two organizations would again cooperate in the establishment of the Packhorse Library Program.

There are two apparent truths about education in Kentucky during the decade prior to the Great Depression. First, the state government failed at enforcing the reform mandates envisioned by Superintendent Crabbe. Political interest in rural education was nothing more

⁴⁶ Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 127-133.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 136-137.

than a brief distraction for most Kentucky lawmakers. Eastern Kentucky was no better off in terms of education funding or access. This had a significant impact on needed progress in establishing school libraries and providing more of the printed word in Eastern Kentucky. Second, the appetite for learning among the mountain folk had been discovered through the work of the KFWC and the KEA. The desire of mountain folk to improve literacy for their families and communities was revealed by the popular responses of the Whirlwind Tours and the Moonlight School Program. That appetite would not be satisfied on a large scale until 1936.

Berea College

While Kentucky's public schools struggled to provide improved services in rural areas, higher education emerged as an active voice in the rural outreach movement. Addressing the American Missionary Association in 1893, Berea College president Charles Fairchild responded to the Methodists' abandonment of their commitment to Freedmen's aid work. Fairchild also pointed out the need for increasing work among the "mountain whites" of the South and suggested that mountain missions would satisfy the demands of church leaders who wished to compete actively with other Congregationalists in the southern field without compromising their "anti-caste" philosophy or abandoning southern blacks. The very history of Berea College and the surrounding community, according to Fairchild, was witness to the possibility of maintaining a commitment to racial equality while engaging in missionary and educational work among southern whites. His belief that church leaders would continue with a dual focus on African Americans and southern whites became apparent when he suggested that "there will arise in your minds no suspicion of waning interest in the colored people or sympathy with caste on the part of those who have heretofore been closely connected with this mountain work at Berea College." For Fairchild, mountain missionary work was a balanced service attempting to improve the lives of everyone in the region. This was an idea that, as Berea's president, he took seriously and to

which he was intensely committed: “It is our unanimous conviction that work undertaken for these mountain people will assist in unfurling upon a higher masthead the broad motto borne on the seal of Berea College for twenty-five years past: ‘God hath made of one blood all nations of men.’”⁴⁸

The founding of Berea College in 1859 was the result of a convergence of several reform efforts. First, college founder Charles Grandison Finney was a northern lawyer who experienced “an intense conversion” while studying Mosaic Law. He followed New School Presbyterianism, and his preaching and revival meetings featured “converts falling to their knees in tearful surrender, public prayers by women, and an anxious bench in front of the assembly for those under conviction of sin.”⁴⁹ Berea’s other founder, John G. Fee, was a graduate of Lane Seminary. His experience at Lane left a lasting impression on the institution’s manual labor program and abolitionist policies. Moreover, Lane was one of the first schools in America to admit African Americans.⁵⁰ Second, the American Missionary Association had an important role in the founding of Berea. The AMA was committed to the abolitionist cause from its inception in 1846. During the last half of the nineteenth century, more than ninety percent of AMA missionaries were graduates of Oberlin College. Many of Berea’s first teachers were graduates of Oberlin as well as all but three of Berea’s presidents.⁵¹ Last, the key financial support of Cassius Clay, a wealthy Madison County farmer, politician, and anti-slavery advocate provided the initial funding for the college. Clay, a graduate of Yale College, converted to the

⁴⁸Charles G. Fairchild, “Address of Professor C.G. Fairchild.” *American Missionary*, 36 (December 1883), 391-393.

⁴⁹ Dale Brown, *Berea College: Spiritual and Intellectual Roots* (Berea: Berea College Press, 1982), 22-27.

⁵⁰ John G. Fee, *Autobiography of John G. Fee* (Chicago, National Christian Association, 1891), 77-90. For insight into Fee’s views on slavery see his earlier work: *Sinfulness of Slaveholding* (New York: John A. Gray, 1851)

⁵¹ J.H. Fairchild, *Oberlin: The Colony and the College, 1833-1883* (Oberlin, Ohio: E.J. Goodrich, 1883), 119-133.

abolitionist cause after hearing a speech by William Lloyd Garrison. Clay had freed his own slaves prior to the Civil War and sponsored an anti-slavery newspaper. In 1853, Clay invited Fee to hold a camp meeting in an area of bottomland near the present day campus. The result of the camp meeting was the formation of a “free and non-denominational church.” Clay provided the seed money for the church, a house and a one-room school that would blossom into Berea College.⁵²

The congregational and missionary aspect of Berea’s founding sparked the beginning of a long tradition of reaching out to the mountain people. However, the college’s mission in the late nineteenth century, according to historian Henry D. Shapiro, “was not to the mountaineers of Appalachia, but rather to the cause of racial co-education, and that Berea was virtually unique among American colleges in maintaining equal enrollment of blacks and whites.”⁵³ Economic difficulties in the 1890’s required the college to expand its education programs. Declining enrollment mandated that the college invoke the traditions of missionary work to attract students and to connect with mountain people who desired education but could not leave the confines of their communities. The architect of this new direction was William Goodell Frost, President of Berea College from 1892 until 1920.⁵⁴

The Frost Mission in Appalachia Kentucky

Frost repeatedly referred to the mountains as “Appalachia America” because he felt that the region deserved its own natural and cultural identification, and by calling the mountain folk “our contemporary ancestors,” he suggested that Appalachia was composed of a homogenous people. Frost’s contribution to the establishment of Appalachian regionalism, and the

⁵² John A. R. Rogers, *Birth of Berea College: A Story of Providence* (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates, 1902), 23-29.

⁵³ Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, p.122-123.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth S. Peck, *Berea’s First Century, 1855-1955*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1955), 82-94.

development of regionalism more generally, was seminal. In a way conventional for his time, Frost attempted to achieve explanation through naming. Although there were to be unintended repercussions for his actions, his work as Berea's president resulted in the invention of Appalachia as a distinct geographical and cultural region.⁵⁵

In December, 1895, Frost was invited to speak at the annual meeting of the Cincinnati Teachers Club. Announcing as if he had discovered a new world, Frost asked: "we are familiar with North America and South America, but have you ever heard of Appalachian America?" For Frost, Appalachia was composed of eight states with Eastern Kentucky as the geographical and cultural epicenter: "A body of land as large as all New England where a hardy race descended from our pioneer ancestors continued to live in the virtual conditions of pioneer days." Frost noted the lack of transportation and that the region had been isolated from the outside world for so long that it had emerged as a unique and unfamiliar land. For all intents and purposes, according to Frost, it was a separate world altogether and deserved a name of its own.⁵⁶

In a report to the faculty of Berea, Frost outlined his strategy to meet Berea's needs. By the mid 1890s, those needs were primarily financial, and Frost proposed three courses of action. First, recruiting students from the North would provide a segment of the student body with less racial antipathy than southern students. Second, a new emphasis on the recruitment of white students from the mountains of Eastern Kentucky was initiated. Mountain students had been

⁵⁵ Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, p.119.

⁵⁶ William G. Frost, "The Last Log School-House: Address Before the Cincinnati Teacher's Club, 13 December, 1895." *Berea Quarterly* 1 (May, 1896): 3-11. The following year, on 30 November 1896, Frost made similar remarks in an address entitled "Appalachian America" at a meeting at Trinity Church in Boston. Theodore Roosevelt also spoke that evening. Roosevelt argued that "the need of education in every part of the country" was evident in the recent political campaign. He went on to say that "Berea College reaches the largest section of our white native Americans to be seen in our country. If we fail to help them we may rest assured that our failure will be visited upon our own heads." See *Boston Evening Journal*, 1 December, 1896, p.1. Soon after the two spoke, a frequent exchange of letters ensued outlining their vision for education and literacy in Appalachia. See Berea College Archives, William G. Frost Papers, Box 45, Folder "Correspondence, 1897."

pursued less aggressively in the last years of President Fairchild's tenure, and Frost placed a renewed emphasis on reaching out to mountain communities. Third, and perhaps most important to Frost, was the development of "an enthusiasm and missionary zeal among the students" for the principle of racial equality. The first two strategies resolved Berea's immediate enrollment issues. However, the third strategy, according to Frost, addressed long term effects on race and equality that would be beneficial to the South and to the college.⁵⁷ By stressing learning and the love of labor, Berea students of all races could experience working and living together. Black and white students were housed in the same dormitories during the Frost years, and faculty were often required to visit the desegregated quarters to quiet the merriment of students who were getting along and enjoying college life. The design of the efforts made Berea the center of learning and education in Southeastern Kentucky with the specific goal of raising community awareness about the benefits of education and literacy.⁵⁸

By 1900, Frost had refined his vision of Berea and moved the curriculum from an emphasis on traditional college courses to one that focused on vocational and industrial education for both blacks and whites. Referring to the college as a "social settlement," and an "extension bureau of civilization," Frost set out to extend further into the mountains with outreach programs. To demonstrate Berea's commitment of maintaining Appalachia as a distinct region, Frost established the tradition of mountain crafts, which he saw as proof of the noble rather than the degenerate origins of Appalachian culture. Frost sent representatives of the college into the mountains to learn the basic skills for everyday living and to discover the crafts

⁵⁷ William G. Frost, *Synopsis of the President's Report Presented to the Trustees and Faculty, June 28, 1894*. (Berea: Berea College, 1894), 1-23.

⁵⁸ Wilson, *Berea College: An Illustrated History*, 12-14.

that could be replicated in what would eventually become the “Fireside Industries” framework for industrial education at Berea.

Professor Raine and the Traveling Professor Program

In addition to the craft program, Berea initiated a traveling professor program that provided education opportunities for public school teachers located in isolated areas of Eastern Kentucky.

Among the professors who packed their saddlebags and traveled into the mountains was Professor James Watt Raine, Head of the Department of English at Berea. His study of the Appalachian people was one of the earliest of its kind and added new insight into the lives of mountain folk, their living conditions, and the problems surrounding education and literacy.

In the summer of 1920, Raine observed a quarter of a century of service to Berea by venturing into the mountains to get a first-hand look at the people and the land of Eastern Kentucky. The motivation for these extensive travels was his distrust in the composite picture of Appalachia painted by magazine writers:

I would not say that magazine writers have a malicious intent to deceive. They are doubtless reasonably honest, but they are also temperamentally selective, and write with prolific swiftness. Men that habitually carry their pencils, and are so eagerly sensitive to fresh impressions, are naturally startled when they see the unusual conditions in which some of us live, and hear the peculiar names our places bear. Who could write a commonplace paragraph about a news item from Beefhide, Mad Dog, Barefoot, Jamboree, Hogskin Creek, Burning Springs (a well of natural gas, discovered in the early days), Contrary, Poor Fork, Viper, Traveler’s Rest, Hell fur Sartain, Troublesome, Kingdom Come, Disputana, Fish Trap, Squabble Creek, Quicksand, Cutskin, Feisty, or Hazard? These naturally overstimulate the fertile imaginations of literary men, and the colors of their sketches are instinctively heightened; or perhaps by mere natural selection, what is gray and dull and average fades out and the residue of color strikes fiery off indeed.⁵⁹

Raine noted the diversity of the mountain people in his study. He offered a glorifying description of German immigrants, Scots-Irish, English, Africans, French, and Native Americans

⁵⁹ James Watt Raine, *The Land of the Saddle-bags: A Study of the Mountain People of Appalachia*. (New York: Council for Women for Home Missions, 1924), 1-2.

as “adventurers for freedom.” Raine gave credit to settlers in Appalachia for actively participating in the American Revolution, especially at the Battle of Cowpens. The size of families, labor, gender roles, children’s work, and perhaps most important, the conditions surrounding education and literacy were noted in his work.

Raine suggested that a “startling proportion” of men and women could not read and write. However, the early settlers had been well schooled. Prior to statehood, Frontiersmen sent petitions to the governor of Virginia (Kentucky was a county of Virginia prior to statehood) for the establishment of ferries, courts, roads, and land titles. Many of the petitioners lived “in an extrem of the said County in the hills and mountains detached from almost every community or opportunity of information.”⁶⁰

Berea College Extension Services

In 1916, Kentucky’s first book wagon service for Appalachia was initiated by Berea College. The program foreshadowed the popularity of the Packhorse Library Program twenty years later. Although the president of the college had voiced support for the program, no funding was available to provide the necessary staffing. Euphemia K. Corwin had been serving as head librarian at Berea since 1903, and had supported the idea of a book wagon library for several years. After acquiring unfunded approval from the Board of Trustees in the spring of 1916, Corwin traveled to New Jersey where she had lived prior to her tenure at Berea. After several weeks of fund-raising, Corwin was able to meet with a representative of the Carnegie Corporation.⁶¹ At that meeting, Corwin requested a \$25,000 endowment for a comprehensive

⁶⁰ Ibid, 27-34.

⁶¹ Euphemia K. Brown, “Carnegie Endowment for Extension Work, 1915: Reasons for Asking Mr. Carnegie for \$25,000 Endowment,” Berea College Archives, Box 28, Folder: “Extension Library Reports, 1915-1922.” Brown conducted research for her endowment proposal and presented a strong argument for the book-wagon program. She indicated that requests for books from the community had increased enormously as the result of the traveling libraries, and much of that increase had come from school teachers in the area wanting supplementary materials.

library outreach program for the Appalachian region. Several days after the meeting, Corwin received a letter from Carnegie's personal secretary James Bertram who denied her request. "The sum is small, and the idea appeals," wrote Bertram, "but we are not giving now to colleges nor to college work."⁶²

Corwin returned to Berea with \$312.00 in donations from colleagues. She also returned with a long-time friend, Elam Brown. Brown was the father of a Berea student and had experience working with horses and maintaining wagons. Together, the two proceeded to design a program for the delivery of library books. The wagon was supplied by a Staten Island librarian, Clare H. Brown, who also managed to raise funds for the book collection. One donor required that twelve large-print Bibles be purchased for the program and that "no house along the routes of the book-wagon should be without a Bible."⁶³ The wagon was driven from Staten Island to Berea College and arrived in late November, 1916. Brown customized the wagon by adding low front wheels to better handle the rough mountain terrain and by constructing side-cabinets with shelves and sliding doors. He added heavy suspension springs to accommodate the weight of books and the rough unpaved roads.

Three student assistants were selected to drive the wagon and were instructed in the care of horses and basic library skills. The training also emphasized the need to engage the public in a friendly and cordial manner. Corwin was aware that people along the routes could be apprehensive about an extension program. The local reputation of Berea College was controversial at best due to a history of progressive policies that included the admission of black

This also appears to have been a strategy that focused the program on public schools and the community. Although her strategy failed initially, this shifting of focus proved to be the eventual means for acquiring Carnegie funds.

⁶² Florence H. Ridgeway, "Kentucky's First Book Wagon." *The Berea Alumnus Newsletter*, (Berea, KY, Alumni Association of Berea College, Dec. 1958), 7-8.

⁶³ Florence H. Ridgeway, "Kentucky's First Book Wagon," p.9.

students. Earlier outreach programs had targeted the more remote and distant communities. Thus, local involvement in the college's programs had been somewhat overlooked in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Although Berea had been barred from accepting black students by Kentucky's Day Law in 1904, the school had circumvented the law by opening a separate campus and providing it with significant funding and a large section of the college library. The Day Law was passed on the heels of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, and stipulated that black and white students could not attend classes on the same campus anywhere in the state. As a response to the Day Law, the Berea Board of Trustees voted to pay for the continuing education of some blacks in out of state schools that included an articulation agreement with the Tuskegee Institute.⁶⁴ For the book wagon to be a success, these local tensions had to be addressed. The instructions to the drivers were plain:

The work cannot be hurried. A stop long enough for a friendly greeting or chat must need be made. Sometimes a mother wants to ask what we think will help her 'puny' child, or the man of the house must tell his opinion of the last book we loaned him. They are friendly hearted, and we must be no less so if our mission is to be rightly filled. Most of the people whose homes we visit are poor. There are very few homes that could be called comfortable, speaking from the simplest standard....nearly all of them are hungry, very hungry, for something good to read....At nearly every home there is a flock of dear little children who will look upon the book-wagon as a near relative of Santa Claus.⁶⁵

During the winter of 1916, eleven trips were made on the two established routes. Seventy-five families and six schools were provided library services from the book wagon, and nearly 1,100 books were kept in circulation that first winter.⁶⁶ The following year, the service was

⁶⁴ Shannon H. Wilson, *Berea College: An Illustrated History*, 84-88.

⁶⁵ *Extract from Berea College Library Report, 1917-18*, Berea College Archives, Box 28, Folder: "Reports, 1916-1921."

⁶⁶ *Extract from Berea College Library report, 1916-17*, Berea College Archives, Box 28, Folder: "Reports, 1916-1921."

extended to three routes and circulation increased by 25 percent. Berea College was forced to suspend book wagon services in the winter of 1918 due to the deadly influenza epidemic. However, the temporary suspension of services resulted in a positive outcome. Having been deprived of the monthly visits by the book wagon, mountain folk flocked to the roadside in the winter of 1919. Although the number of routes remained at three, the service extended to 150 families, eight schools, and a circulation of 2,400 volumes. Part of this increase was due to the inclusion of periodicals to the book wagon collection that included titles such as *National Geographic*, *Christian Herald*, and *American Motherhood*.⁶⁷

The winter of 1920 brought a new level of book wagon services to the region, and the issue of funding resurfaced. The book wagon now covered more ground than ever. Overnight trips were common, and services were offered year-round. A normal school was added to one route, and homes had now become the depositories for multiple families. The “mission of beauty” was initiated whereby the book wagon would deliver framed pictures to be hung on barren walls. Book wagon librarians reported that patrons borrowing pictures added “new curtains” and “works of crayon” to their walls, and expressed a sense that homes had become “noticeably brighter.” In addition to loaning framed pictures, the book wagon added “lantern slides” to its collection by which patrons could view hand painted story slides or photographs. Book wagon librarians noted that extra time was now being taken to “strike hands” and “make a good-bye visit in each home.” Collections were expanded to include several hundred “children, religious, and agricultural papers.” By 1921, circulation had increased to 4,775 volumes representing a 400 percent increase since the inception of the program four years earlier.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Report of the Assistant Librarian, 1919*, Berea College Archives, Box 28, Folder: “Reports, 1916-1921,” p.8

⁶⁸ Berea College Libraries, *Enlarged Program for Berea College Extension Library*, Berea College Archives, Box 28, Folder: “Extension Library History.”

Berea College President William J. Hutchins, seeing the success of the book wagon, authorized a budget for the program in 1922. Prior to this, Berea librarians funded the program using their own money and a few donations. However, demand had increased to new levels, and the program underwent some major alterations. The house-to-house plan was discontinued in favor of central distribution points. Falling back on the traditions of the traveling library, homes, stores, and schools were made into repositories.⁶⁹ The home reading-circles were revived with some serving as many as forty families. This new approach to book circulation allowed the book wagon to focus on serving public schools. The number of rural schools visited by the book-wagon increased to seventeen, but circulation records were unattainable for 1922 because of a lack of control over book distribution under the new system.

The book wagon was discontinued in 1923 due to the arrival of the automobile. The Social Sciences Department at Berea managed to secure a Red Cross Vehicle for outreach services into the public schools. In a move to consolidate college resources, the vehicle was also used to deliver library books.⁷⁰ The distribution of books by automobile was limited to a few outlying schools and delivery to individual homes was discontinued. Thus, the day of the book wagon had come to a swift end, and mountain folk in Appalachia were left without access to library services. The end of reading circles and the book wagon left little beyond the old traveling library cabinets. Berea College achieved its goal of focusing library extension services toward public schools, but by ending the door-to-door services provided by the book wagon, the college ended a valuable relationship that it had cultivated with the community.

⁶⁹ Berea College Libraries, *Extracts from the Report of the Assistant Librarian, 1921-22*, Berea College Archives, Box 28, Folder: "Extension Library History.

⁷⁰ Ridgeway, Florence H., "Kentucky's first book wagon." P.9

Conclusion

Beginning in the late 1800s, the section of Appalachia consisting of nineteen counties of Southeastern Kentucky experienced significant contact by missionary and education programs. Most outreach programs conducted by congregational church organizations from 1890 until 1930 were designed to uplift the mountaineer spiritually and provide a level of literacy that would facilitate the teaching and learning aspects of missionary work. Missionary activity in Southeastern Kentucky was the product of a shifting focus among congregational churches that redefined their mission from one of rescuing freed blacks from southern economic oppression to one of preserving white mountain culture. The missionaries had encountered the same public school conditions that Berea English professor James Watt Raine wrote about in 1924 when he observed the lack of resources, trained teachers and facilities. Moreover, missionary programs promoted literacy as the best tool for achieving the goals of their programs.⁷¹

Berea College, resisting the shift in missionary focus, continued to admit African-Americans and initiated a series of educational outreach programs that focused on reading and literacy for mountain folk. Among these programs was reading circles, the Book Wagon Program, and traveling professors. Early outreach literacy programs including those sponsored by Berea College served individual residents, one-room school teachers, and settlement schools by reaching the most isolated regions of southeastern Kentucky as early as 1916. This dynamic approach to community outreach familiarized communities with outside contact, and introduced a variety of opportunities for mountain folk to read. Moreover, outreach programs informed community and school leaders of the potential for improved schools and library services, and assisted in cultivating an interest in the development of public school systems among residents and higher education leaders in Eastern Kentucky. Missionary and literacy outreach programs

⁷¹ James Watt Raine, *Land of the Saddle Bags*. (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions, 1924), 92-94.

were the precursors of settlement schools including Hindman and Pine Mountain. By 1910, settlement schools offered various outreach programs designed to improve literacy and living conditions in southeastern Kentucky by offering a curriculum focusing on vocational and domestic skills. By 1936, the success of these programs had caught the attention of a federal bureaucracy interested in improving work opportunities in a depression economy. This interest would eventually be an important catalyst for the creation of the Packhorse Library Program in 1936.

The history of the missionary efforts in Eastern Kentucky during the late 1800s and early 1900s, and contributions made by Berea College's library outreach programs that provided rural families access to reading material, were important precursors to the creation of the Packhorse Library Program in 1936. Moreover, these early efforts cultivated a lasting interest among state legislators and library officials in making books available to mountain folk. That interest provided the necessary political impetus for the inclusion of outreach library programs in the 1936 library reform law. Thus, further groundwork was laid in the development of a modern education system tailored to the needs of a geographically isolated and impoverished region. Additionally, these early outreach programs provided important groundwork for building the critical relationships between librarians and their patrons. While these programs were limited in both size and geographical area, they provided important insight for packhorse library administrators when making decisions concerning collections and predicting the reading appetite of mountain folk. Outreach programs predating the Packhorse Library Program revealed to state officials and education administrators the high levels of illiteracy in mountain communities and the severe shortage of reading material in the region. Demand for reading material was evident in the early missionary outreach programs, and the growth of circulation of books and magazines

during the Berea Bookwagon Program suggested a significant demand for books covering a broad range of topics. These early revelations also informed library administrators of the significant lack of reading material in the mountain region. By 1936, library administrators were supporting education reform, library restructuring at the state level, and large scale outreach programs.

CHAPTER 3
KENTUCKY LIBRARY SERVICES AND THE ORIGINS OF THE PACKHORSE LIBRARY
PROGRAM, 1935-1936

Introduction

The development of the Packhorse Library Program in Kentucky was initially a federal response to the economic needs of women in the rural areas of the state. However, examining the program's beginning reveals a deep concern by state officials over the absence of library services in Eastern Kentucky. Moreover, the reports of local, state, and federal administrators reveal broad community support for increasing the availability of reading material. As this chapter demonstrates, there was a significant level of cooperation between the various levels of government and community organizations in addition to the participation of many individuals across the state that contributed to a well coordinated effort to bring books and other reading material to the mountain folk of Kentucky. This cooperation was a key dynamic in the development of the Packhorse Library Program in terms of building long term relationships between patrons and librarians. These relationships were essential for the distribution of reading material in Eastern Kentucky during the Great Depression years, and an examination of these relationships confirms the communication theory processes that suggest library patrons played an active role in determining the reading canon of the Appalachia region. The individual partnerships between patron and librarian were important precursors to the success of the Packhorse Library Program, and for the proliferation of reading material within the Appalachian region of Kentucky.

In their correspondence and reports, local and state officials repeatedly expressed their confidence that the people of rural Kentucky would welcome the opportunity to have access to a variety of reading material. The absence of trained librarians, book collections, and funding for buildings did not deter the optimism of the individuals and organizations responsible for the

expedited establishment of the Packhorse Library Program. That optimism was, in large part, due to the past successes of earlier outreach programs including the Traveling Library Program and the Berea College Book Wagon. Motivated by past outreach experiences, local school boards, parent teacher organizations, women's clubs, library patrons, and local businesses contributed to a coordinated effort to expand reading opportunities in the Eastern Kentucky Mountains.

The creation of the WPA Packhorse Library Program in the fall of 1936 was part of a broader interest among New Deal bureaucrats in making education and literacy part of the national economic recovery process. Although some historians have argued the Franklin Roosevelt Administration refrained from involving the federal government in the business of local school boards, others have noted that New Deal program managers were concerned about the condition of public schools and declines in student enrollment. Although he acknowledged the mission of creating jobs, Lawrence Cremin argues that New Deal programs exposed Americans to an unprecedented level of the arts and the printed word. Cremin goes even further by suggesting that New Deal program managers including Harry Hopkins were diligent in insuring "uncensored opportunity" with respect to reading and the arts.¹ David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot argued that New Dealers performed an "enormous variety of services" to local communities in what they described as an "alternative style of education."² Other historians including Gary Larson and William F. McDonald believed that the American "culture explosion" after World War II had been cultivated in New Deal programs including the

¹Lawrence A. Cremin. *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 456-464.

²David Tyack, Robert Lowe and Elisabeth Hansot. *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 124-132.

WPA library projects.³ Thus, during the Great Depression the federal government evolved as a reluctant patron of the arts, libraries, and museums producing a federal culture policy that had inevitable effects on learning and literacy.

The Development of State Library Services in Kentucky

In 1935, Professor T. Moton of the Tuskegee Institute observed that the living conditions in Appalachia “are a reflection of the amount of idealism of a very practical and immediate sort which we have been able to establish.”⁴ Faculty and administrators at Tuskegee were well aware of education and living conditions in Eastern Kentucky. As principal administrator of Tuskegee, Booker T. Washington had established a close relationship with Berea College president William Frost. Washington and Frost often spoke of the idealism that inspired the education mission of both institutions. However, the hopes and aspirations of men like these were conspicuously absent within Kentucky’s library service prior to the Great Depression.⁵ What little evidence of library service that could be found prior to the depression in the rural areas of Kentucky was the result of contributions made by a few private local colleges. The Packhorse Library Program was the first major state sponsored effort to provide access to circulating collections in Eastern Kentucky including public schools.

Prior to 1936, the Kentucky state government ignored the mountain region when it came to providing library services to local communities and schools. However, there is a rich library history for Kentucky extending back to the late eighteenth century that involves both state and

³ Gary Larson, *The Reluctant Patron: The United States Government and the Arts, 1943-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 44-50; William F. McDonald. *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 244-265. Although both historians focus on the arts, there is ample analysis addressing the role of the federal government in promoting educational programs at the local level.

⁴ B. L. Hummel, “New Opportunities for Mountain Communities,” *Mountain Life and Work*” (July, 1935), 21-23.

⁵ The correspondence between Frost and Washington can be found in the William G. Frost Papers, Series II, Box 5 (Folder 8), and Series XIII, Box 40 (Folder “Correspondence, 1915”), Berea College Archives (Berea, Kentucky).

local governments. The first publicly funded library in Kentucky was established in 1796 as part of the founding of the state's first college, Transylvania Seminary. Although the collection relied upon private donations, the state provided land and funding for building construction and staff. Initial management of the Transylvania Library was under the auspices of the Lexington Library Company which consisted mostly of local philanthropists and women volunteers.⁶ In 1820, the General Assembly established a "state library" for the "records and archives of the state."⁷ This was the only state funded library until after 1900, and was under control of the Kentucky Secretary of State until taken over by the Kentucky Library Commission in 1930.⁸

In 1881, the Carnegie Library Program was established, and Covington became the first city in Kentucky to receive a Carnegie grant for the construction of a library building. Carnegie libraries soon made their appearance in Lexington, Louisville, and Frankfort. The nineteen counties in Eastern Kentucky did not receive any Carnegie grant money between 1881 and 1930, nor did any college or university located in the Kentucky mountain region. In her 1915 application for Carnegie funding for the Berea College Library, Euphemia Corwin included numerous supporting letters from local school officials, teachers, and residents making specific requests for books and reading material. Her grant application contained no supporting documents from state or local government agencies suggesting interest for a library that would serve the entire mountain region by way of outreach services. The Carnegie Foundation was primarily interested in building construction, and as a matter of policy it refused to be involved

⁶ Florence Ridgeway, *Developments in Library Service in Kentucky*, (Berea: Berea College Press, 1940), 1-3.

⁷ C. S. Morehead and Mason Brown, *Digest of the Statute Laws of Kentucky* (Frankfort Kentucky: Albert Hodges, 1834)

⁸ Ridgeway, *Developments in Library Service in Kentucky*, 2.

with library operations or support the acquisition of collections and outreach services to rural communities.⁹

From 1892 until 1910, Kentucky libraries, mostly in the larger cities, were affiliated with the Kentucky Library Association (KLA) which fell under the authority of the newly formed American Library Association founded by historian and librarian Justin Winsor. With the advent of the Carnegie building program and the consistent lobbying of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs, the State Assembly established the Kentucky Library Commission in 1910 under the direction of Fanny Rawson. Although a state agency, Library Commission administrators often served multiple roles as KLA, Kentucky PTA, or Women's Club officials. In addition to the Director of Libraries, the commission consisted of five members appointed for four-year terms by the governor. Moreover, the 1910 law stipulated that at least one member must be a woman "who shall be appointed by the governor from a list of not less than three names to be presented by the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs."¹⁰ This proved to be an important organizational dynamic that created the necessary lines of communication, funding, and personal relationships among the individuals responsible for the creation and implementation of the Packhorse Library Program. The law, progressive in nature, assured the role of state women's organizations and female library professionals in planning and implementing new library programs, and established the role of women in the development of future library outreach programs.

In addition to the creation of a library commission, the 1910 law specifically mandated commission members to implement and supervise "traveling libraries" and any other library

⁹ Euphemia Corwin, "Carnegie Endowment for Extension Work," Berea College Archives, Library Reports Series 2, Box 12: Folder "Extension Library Reports, 1915-1922."

¹⁰ William Edward Baldwin, *Kentucky Statutes Annotated: 1936 Revision* (Cleveland: Banks-Baldwin Company, 1936), 1252-1254.

extension programs in the future. The 1910 Library Law also contained a provision establishing the “Kentucky Progress Commission.” The purpose of the Progress Commission was to “promote the development of the Commonwealth, by making general studies of its natural resources, facilities, and advantages for agriculture, commercial and industrial development, and for the attraction of tourists to the Commonwealth.”¹¹ The Progress Commission had no direct relationship to the State Library Commission. However, the inclusion of the Progress Commission in a major library reform law suggests that there was significant support among lawmakers for the idea that progress in Kentucky was directly related to the availability of books in all communities. With extension services specifically mentioned in the reform law, state legislatures were sending a strong message that reading material must be made available to rural communities in the Eastern section of the state. It would take another quarter of a century for any significant results to be realized. However, this early legislation was an important historical precursor for programs that gave access to reading materials to mountain folk. This early legislation mandated that libraries establish working relationships with mountain communities by providing professional library services under the guidance of ethical guidelines.

The failure of the State Assembly to fund the state library system adequately contributed significantly to its sluggish start, especially in rural communities. In 1910, the salary for the Library Commission Director was about fifty dollars a week. This was a comfortable wage for that time period when most college librarians worked for half as much. The entire state budget for the Kentucky library system in 1910 was set at six thousand dollars, or about two and a half times the annual salary of the commission director.¹² The library reform law encouraged the

¹¹ Baldwin, *Kentucky Statutes Annotated*, 2489.

¹² Baldwin, *Kentucky Statutes Annotated*, 1255-1256.

commission to rely on donations of money and books from private sources. However, any efforts by the commission to engage in fundraising and donation drives placed it in direct competition with the fundraising efforts of local libraries. The conflicts with local libraries over donations of money and books discouraged the commission from seeking private support. Thus, the commission's efforts were relegated to maintaining open channels of communication between libraries so that resources could be shared and duplicate copies within the collections could be better distributed across the state. This approach resulted in no significant additions to the book collection among local libraries, nor did it contribute to the establishment of new libraries in rural areas.¹³ The library reform of 1910 failed in its mission to expand and govern library resources in Kentucky. However, the effort was an important precursor for future library reforms and laid the cornerstone for professional library services under American Library Association (ALA) guidelines that eventually facilitated a new freedom of making reading choices by Eastern Kentucky library patrons.

By 1920, most of the early attempts at providing reading material to rural Kentucky residents had ended due to lack of funding. In 1921, the Kentucky Department of Libraries relinquished the traveling library program to Berea College. Many northern missionary organizations including the Methodist Church closed their education and outreach programs, and retreated from the Appalachia region due to local resistance and their exclusion from coal company communities. Missionary organizations experienced success in bringing education and religious reading material to the mountain region of Eastern Kentucky in the decades prior to the Great Depression. However, local resistance to the establishment of new churches tied to national church organizations prevented missionaries from achieving their most important goal.

¹³ Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, *Public Library Service*, Publication No. 65 (1959), 8-14.

Local independent churches were traditional places of worship in the mountains. These small churches were emblematic of the independent minded mountaineer attempting to resist the oppression of both big business and big churches. Likewise, coal mining companies resisted the establishment of missionary enterprises in coal towns due to a long standing distrust of churches that took advantage of the distrust between workers and coal companies.¹⁴

Funding for public libraries in Kentucky decreased during the 1920s, and the Kentucky Legislature passed no reforms that mandated public libraries in rural counties. Per capita spending on library services statewide dropped from twenty cents per person to twelve cents per person from 1920 to 1930. Moreover, no public libraries were constructed with public money from 1920 through 1935. During this time, Carnegie funding for new library construction all but disappeared.¹⁵ Thus, by 1930 there were no public libraries in the nineteen Appalachian counties. By 1935, the only library service available to Eastern Kentucky residents was the traveling library cases provided by Berea College. In January 1936, Kentucky library officials lobbied for the first significant reform at the state level since 1910. The library reforms of 1936 mandated public library services in all Kentucky counties including library extension programs.

During the 1936 spring session, six months prior to the implementation of the Packhorse Library Program, the Kentucky State Assembly enacted the Government Reorganization Act. A major component of this legislation was the complete restructuring of the state library system.

All functions of the KLC along with the State Law Library and the Library of the

Commonwealth were transferred to the newly created Department of Library and Archives.

Under the new reform law, Governor A. B. “Happy” Chandler appointed a State Librarian to a

¹⁴ John Alexander Williams, *A History of Appalachia*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 199-202.

¹⁵ Kentucky Department of Libraries, “Library Report, 1935,” Series Library History, Box 2, Folder 1935, (Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives).

department level position. This act was part of a larger campaign for better education in Kentucky initiated by the governor a year earlier. Chandler successfully initiated the state's first free textbook program in 1935, and played a key role in the creation of the Kentucky Teacher Retirement Program. Moreover, Chandler pushed rural electrification forward using education and reading as his primary argument for electric lighting in rural homes. Establishing a department for library services was part of a broader plan by the governor to improve education and literacy in Kentucky.¹⁶ The 1936 legislation required the librarian to "have had technical training in the field of library science and shall have had at least four years library experience in an administrative capacity." More significantly, the law required The Department of Library and Archives to have a library extension division. The extension division was to be headed by the Assistant State Librarian with similar credentials.¹⁷

The 1936 reform did not stipulate any specific extension programs to be implemented leaving them to the discretion of the State Librarian and her assistant. This section of the new law was essential in providing the authority to the State Librarian to work with federal authorities, community organizations, and identifying communities in need of library services. The vague language of the new legislation provided department officials the ability to establish outreach services without State Assembly authorization if state money was not required. The first State Librarian, Lena Nofcier, was appointed by Governor Chandler in June. Nofcier had extensive experience working with the Department of Library and Archives, and had been a

¹⁶ George T. Blakey, *Hard Times and New Deal in Kentucky*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 127-29.

¹⁷ Commonwealth of Kentucky, *Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky: 1936*, (Frankfort, Kentucky: State Law Library, 1936), 427-431.

prominent member of Kentucky Women's Clubs and the State PTA. Within four weeks of taking office, Nofcier was planning for the implementation of the Packhorse Library Program.¹⁸

Literacy and School Conditions in Kentucky

Education historians have frequently argued that increases in educational attainment and the proliferation of print media were the primary causes for the expansion of literacy in the rural areas of the United States.¹⁹ William J. Gilmore provided an important foundation for this argument with his analysis of rural life in Vermont's Upper Valley region during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Gilmore broadened our understanding of how the commercialization of rural society and the proliferation of newspapers created the ingredients for "a new mass culture of reading and writing."²⁰ Richard D. Brown reveals the dynamic, heterogeneous, and even cosmopolitan elements of the rural experience by arguing that farmers in rural New England during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries recognized that they must seek out news and knowledge when possible due to long periods of isolation on the farm. Brown suggests that rural farmers never deliberately isolated themselves from the world beyond their homes and were normally eager to learn more about life beyond their own community.²¹ Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens aptly argued that increases in literacy in the late nineteenth century correlated with general factors including economic development, nation

¹⁸ Kentucky Library Association Bulletin, July 1936, Kentucky State Archives Series 6, box 41, Folder "KLA Bulletins, 1936" (Frankfort, Kentucky), 1-2.

¹⁹ Carl F. Kaestle, "Studying the History of Literacy," in *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading since 1780*, Carl F. Kaestle ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 26-29.

²⁰ William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 2-3.

²¹ Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 133-35.

building, and the increase of print media that fostered an “ideology of literacy” over time.²² Carl Kaestle expanded these arguments by suggesting that literacy and its causal factors have a reciprocal relationship that is ongoing: “increases in literacy lead to changes in the work force, education, and social relations that breed further changes in literacy.”²³ Early twentieth-century Appalachia evolved into a modern version of Kaestle’s model. The dynamic and circular nature of literacy, industrialization, and availability of print media cultivated and sustained a popular interest in reading among mountain folk.

Although rural Kentucky counties experienced significant increases in population during the decade prior to the Great Depression, economic and job growth declined while illiteracy rates failed to decrease. The population growth rate in Eastern Kentucky from 1920 to 1930 was the highest in the state. The population increased about 8 percent for the entire state during the 1920s. However, Eastern counties saw growth rates of nearly thirty percent. Much of this increase was due to the sudden influx of coal mines and textile production plants that lasted through 1927. While these counties experienced unprecedented population growth during the 1920s, illiteracy remained high (Table 1.1). All of the nineteen rural counties in the region reported illiteracy rates over 15 percent. Some counties including McCreary, Clay, and Martin reported illiteracy rates at or near 20 percent. Moreover, there is a clear relationship between the percent of workers employed in industry and illiteracy rates. Counties with higher numbers of workers in industry reported higher illiteracy rates. This data confirms the concerns of labor unions regarding the need for fewer work hours specifically for providing more time for reading and improving literacy. The United Mine Workers Union reported in 1935 that fewer adult men

²² Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States: A Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 50-52.

²³ Kaestle, *Literacy in the United States*, 4-6.

were finding jobs in the coal mines than in recent decades. From 1927 to 1935, the number of mining jobs declined by 40 percent, yet jobs in construction, government, and business increased by 20 percent over the same period mostly due to government work programs.²⁴ These new opportunities required a literate workforce and state legislators, educators, and proponents of a well funded library system were voicing their concerns that illiteracy could have a negative impact on the recovery of the state's economy.

Table 1-1 Economic and literacy profiles in Eastern Kentucky, 1930²⁵

County	Population	% Farming	% Industry	Annual Income	% Adult Literacy
Bell	32,290	82	27	742	85.4
Breathitt	16,640	84	24	676	83.3
Clay	22,247	81	29	778	82.7
Floyd	27,577	84	26	732	78.7
Harlan	13,148	78	31	649	82.2
Knott	27,550	82	24	745	81.4
Knox	34,792	80	26	698	82.3
Laurel	21,468	81	24	714	83.1
Lee	18,721	83	18	570	84.8
Leslie	12,877	82	21	613	77.7
Letcher	8,992	87	15	808	80.4
Magoffin	13,280	81	24	712	78.0
Martin	21,764	79	29	653	81.5
Owsley	18,132	85	17	573	84.6
Perry	9,833	88	15	698	79.3
Pike	21,775	86	17	544	83.8
Whitley	9,573	82	22	674	80.1
Wolfe	14,230	80	26	709	84.9
McCreary	11,300	78	31	622	84.3

Cultivating the Desire to Read

Although school attendance was low, and illiteracy rates were among the highest in the nation, the mountaineer families of Eastern Kentucky believed literacy the best means for escaping the dangers and oppression of working in coal. From 1907 until the late 1930s, the

²⁴ Becker, *Inventing Tradition*, 137-141.

²⁵ United States Bureau of Census. *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 256-261; United States Bureau of Census, *Census of Manufacturing, 1930* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 184-192; Works Progress Administration, *Kentucky County Profiles* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938), 13-27.

death rate of coal miners grew rapidly. With mine deaths exceeding 8 per 1,000 miners per year and the increase in black lung disease to 60 per 1,000 miners by 1930, Appalachian families began to question the benefits of a life in coal mining. Families began to increase in size in the first decades of the twentieth-century. Plentiful children provided short term benefits to mining families attempting to farm in addition to working for the coal companies. The United Mine Workers reported in 1927 that “every available spot of ground seems to have received attention from the plow.”²⁶ One farmer with ten children reported that “the only way we could feed everyone on my pay was to raise a garden.” Eventually, the children in large mountain families required jobs in addition to farming. By 1930, traditional methods of making a living in a subsistence farm economy were coming under pressure. The advance of railroads and the opening of hundreds of coal mines and factories offered a new system of work in the mountains.²⁷ Agricultural labor had been the exclusive way of life for virtually all males in Eastern Kentucky. Farm work changed with the seasons and offered an intermittent cash flow. Because hard currency was a rare commodity on subsistence farms, most of it went for seed, fertilizer, and supplies for canning and preserving.²⁸

Mountain folk were eager for the cash incomes produced by new kinds of work. The need to raise cash by working in the coal mines was in part due to pressures placed on young people who had been relegated to farming the less productive slopes and hollows. These grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the original settlers could not exist on the meager farms that had been

²⁶ Thompson, James H., *Significant Trends in the Coal Industry, 1900-1957*, (Morgantown: Bureau of Business Statistics, 1958), 6.

²⁷ Paul Salstrom, *Appalachia's Path to Dependency: Rethinking a Region's Economic History, 1730-1940*, (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 79-84.

²⁸ Jane S. Becker, *Inventing Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 27-31.

barely sufficient for one family. The pressure to break out of subsistence farming due to the growth in the size of families coincided with the industrialization of the region.²⁹ The outward flow of wealth coupled with the harsh treatment of workers eventually led to the rise of labor unions and local activists who worked hard at disseminating information concerning the plight of the worker and the struggle to protect local ways of living. Eventually, the combination of a rising demand for consumer goods and industrial jobs, the emergence of labor unions, and the necessity of reading as part of participating in a cash economy spurred the demand for printed material.³⁰ Mail order catalogues, company and union newsletters, and the growing popularity of newspapers and magazines added to the growing list of required reading for coal miners and those wishing to find alternative lifestyles.

Mountain folk had developed an interest in the outside world that equaled that of those who had been interested in Appalachia as a romantic isolated region set apart from mainstream American culture. These well timed developments were catalysts for the new communication between mountaineer and the outside world. Moreover, this interest suggests an important shift in the way mountain folk perceived and valued literacy. Reading evolved as an important tool for discovering new ideas and places beyond the mountains, and empowered workers to confront the challenges of participating in an industrialized wage system.

The Great Depression and the Role of Federal Programs in Kentucky

Economic precursors to the Great Depression were evident in Eastern Kentucky by 1927. Coal orders had declined substantially. Seasonal orders from northern steel companies had slowed significantly and long winters kept the Great Lakes frozen which slowed the

²⁹ George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of a New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 22-27.

³⁰ Beverly Smith, "The Change in the Mountains." *Saturday Evening Post* 23 (December, 1964) 60-62. Also see David Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981) 134-139.

transportation of coal into the northeast. Coal companies had been carrying high debt loads during the decade prior to the stock market crash, and as coal orders and prices decreased, coal mines cut back on employment.³¹ Most banks in Eastern Kentucky were owned by coal companies and lacked the cash reserves required to survive economic hard times. Banks owned by coal operators closed in rapid succession beginning in the fall of 1927, as coal companies failed and unemployment increased. Local stores also closed their doors, and legal actions by wholesalers against the merchants multiplied in courts. As Harry Caudill suggested, the financial disaster had “swept away the jerry-built economic structure of the whole plateau.”³² In the best of times, the coal miner and his family had been little more than a serf in his master’s mine. Coal miners typically spent three quarters of their pay in the company store and were required to deposit a portion of their pay into the coal company banks. Recreation was limited to the company-owned movie theater. If he could afford an automobile, the gas and tires were purchased at the company-owned service station. If he went to church on Sunday, he did so in the company-owned church. Moreover, his children were educated in the company-owned school. By the time federal assistance had made its way to the mountains in the early 1930s, most of these company “benefits” had long disappeared.³³

The depression decade was a period of extreme economic hardship for most mountain families. The per capita income of coal miners fell from \$851 in 1923 to \$588 in 1929. In that year, a federal relief agent reported that “cold, hunger, and disease” had devastated mountain communities “to an extent almost without parallel in any group in this country.” Deaths due to

³¹ Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 165-170.

³²Ibid, 168.

³³ Cratis D. Williams, “Heritage of Appalachia,” In Southern Appalachian Regional Conference, *The Future of Appalachia*, (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1975), 128-32.

hunger and malnutrition, especially among children, exploded in the coal districts. Harlan County reported that fifty-six children had died from intestinal disease in 1929. The following year, ninety-one died. Most mountain children were not attending school after 1929. Fear of disease and the need to conserve food made school attendance rare in most Eastern Kentucky communities.³⁴

Federal Relief in the Mountains

The flurry of federal relief programs created by the New Deal eased some of the distress on mountain families and their communities. The National Industrial Recovery Act restored the average earnings of coal miners to \$925 per year in 1935, but unemployment in the coal districts remained at about forty percent. Crop subsidies established by the Agricultural Adjustment Act, price supports, and electricity provided by TVA gave some economic relief to families living in the economically devastated areas of Eastern Kentucky. Ironically, New Deal programs eventually complicated economic conditions in the mountains. Social welfare legislation shifted the region's economic dependency from the local independent farm to the federal government. Farm loans, which had been the main source of capital for small mountain farms, had all but disappeared during the Depression years. Although farm subsidies assisted some farmers, most went without the credit required to put annual crops in the ground.³⁵

Land acquisition by the TVA and Forest Service placed additional pressures on landowners and their children. Thousands of families in Appalachia were displaced from their lands when federal agencies consolidated land and implemented new building and park projects. Resettlement of people living on marginal agricultural land into government sponsored

³⁴ Olive D. Campbell, "Adjustments to Rural Industrial Change with Special Reference to Mountain Areas," *National Education Association of the United States: Proceedings* 67 (1929), 484-88.

³⁵ Wilmer E. Kenworthy, "First Aid to Soft Coal: Then a Major Operation," *Mountain Life and Work* 9 (April 1933), 1.

communities created additional tensions between government agencies and mountain folk. By 1938, eighty percent of land in some Eastern Kentucky counties was owned by the federal government. Thus, resentment towards federal officials and programs increased as did resistance. Few farmers sold their land willingly at the prices offered by federal agencies. Money paid to farmers for land and relocation expenses rarely replaces the original homestead, and the quality of the new land was usually substandard. Some farmers reacted to what they perceived as unfair treatment by intentionally setting “wild fires” or destroying their own homes in protest. Moreover, lawsuits over land rights and the lack of due process increased.³⁶ One mountain farmer voiced his feelings in a letter written in 1938:

One day we were the happiest people on earth. But like the Indian we are slowly but surely being driven from the homes that we have learned to love, and down to the man we are not a friend of the Government for the simple reason that every move they have made has increased our poverty... Now what are we going to do, move on and try to fit in where we do not belong or undertake to face the situation and gradually starve to death? In the little mountain churches where we once sat and listened to the preaching of the gospel with nothing to disturb us we now hear the roar of machinery on the Sabbath day. After all, I have come to believe that the real old mountaineer is a thing of the past and what will finally take our place, God only knows.³⁷

The mountain folk were caught-up in a storm of modernization that often left their communities economically destroyed and a shell of what they were before. Relocation of entire communities resulted in the closings of schools, churches, businesses, and the departure of individuals who provided essential services to the community. Moreover, the federal government was seen by many as a destructive tool of unwanted change. The Revenuer Wars against moonshine operations added to the atmosphere of distrust. By 1936, the odds were plainly against any local acceptance of a federally sponsored reading program in the mountains.

³⁶ Wayne T. Gray, “Mountain Dilemmas: A Study of Mountain Attitudes,” *Mountain Life and Work* 12 (April 1936), 1-3.

³⁷ William and Wilma Wirt to Peggy Westerfield, 19 September, 1938, Peggy Westerfield Papers, Folder No. 1430, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

FDR and the “Service Intellectual”

While rural communities in Eastern Kentucky struggled against the tide of federal intrusion into their social and economic lives, New Dealers were designing a road map to recovery that included significant cooperation from private business and higher education. During the Great Depression, American higher education gave rise to what historian Richard S. Kirkendall called the service intellectual. This was a group of academics and educators called upon by FDR to serve in positions of prominence and power, and to serve in various levels of New Deal programs.³⁸ To opponents of Roosevelt policies, these men and women were sadly lacking in “practical experience,” and seemed to be pushing economic reforms in radical directions. However, academics had developed a point of view useful to resolving the problems of the average American faced with the challenges of the depression. According to Richard Hofstadter, service intellectuals interpreted their role during the 1930s in terms of active public service to their society. Thus, America witnessed the emergence of a cadre of professionals willing to assist all levels of government, and actively participate in improving the lives of common Americans caught in the desperate economic trap of the Great Depression.³⁹

Prior to the New Deal, the idea of the service intellectual had appeared in various corners of higher education including the pragmatic writings of John Dewey and several University of Wisconsin professors. Dewey argued that the primary goal of this group of academics involved the removal of distrust between society and academia. This barrier was seen by Dewey as a leftover from Old World class societies. Challenging the assumptions that intellectual ability is reserved for a small elite group, Dewey argued that the ivory tower is an “improper abode for

³⁸ Richard S. Kirkendall, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Service Intellectual,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49:3 (December, 1962), 456-471. Also see Loren Baritz, *The Servants of Power: A History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry* (Middleton: Connecticut Press, 1960), 112-120.

³⁹ Richard Hofstadter, “A Note on Intellect and Power,” *American Scholar* 30:3 (Autumn 1961), 594-98.

intellectuals,” and by using their abilities for the reform of society they could engage in both intellectual and social progress. Dewey believed that establishing this new relationship would bring academia “into relation with issues of stupendous meaning.”⁴⁰ During the period when Dewey was adopting the service intellectual as part of his approach to transforming the way Americans think about education, he simultaneously called for a new perspective on American pluralism. Lawrence Cremin argued that Dewey supported education leaders including Horace Kallen who sharply attacked the melting-pot definition of Americanism and called for embracing the many cultural traditions found in a society of immigrants.⁴¹ Thus, academics and school leaders were simultaneously promoting the active involvement between intellectuals and society to resolve social issues, and the need to preserve and provide social uplift for the many cultural groups that represented modern America.

Roosevelt relied on a multitude of groups and individuals for shaping the policies of the New Deal. His efforts at striking a balance between the “theoretical knowledge” of intellectuals and the more practical approach of business and finance leaders placed government in closer touch with the needs and interests of common people and small communities. Although it was the President who remained in charge of national recovery, intellectuals had a significant influence on New Deal policies including the WPA programs promoting literacy and supporting local public schools.⁴² The impetus for this approach to solving social and economic problems was found in programs such as the packhorse librarians, and by invoking the talents of people

⁴⁰ Joseph Ratner, *Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey's Philosophy* (New York: Modern Library, 1939), 4-62.

⁴¹ Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 238.

⁴² Gertrude A. Slichter, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Farm Problem, 1929-1932,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 18:3 (September 1956), 238-258. Slichter traces Roosevelt's use of farm leaders and economists in developing farm policies.

like Berea College President William Frost and Lena Nofcier. However, that impetus extended beyond the end of the New Deal. In terms of outreach service in Kentucky, and the desire of intellectual leaders to provide a direction toward uplifting disadvantaged communities, the momentum of Dewey's vision and the active involvement of intellectuals at the state and local level survived, and one result was Kentucky's modern library system.

The Works Progress Administration in Kentucky

As the effects of the Great Depression encrusted the coal districts and mountain communities of Eastern Kentucky, the federal government began to respond with myriad work programs designed to ease the discomforts of economic illness. By the start of the Packhorse Library Program, 47 percent of mountain families were on relief. The growing dependence on relief programs increasingly characterized mountain life. In addition to the U.S. Forest Service, the TVA, and the National Park Service, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) assisted in casting a pervasive bureaucratic shadow over the region.⁴³

George Goodman, a prominent businessman and Kentucky Colonel, was appointed as the State Director of WPA programs in early 1933. Goodman initiated a litany of work projects in Kentucky including road construction, park projects, and the construction of schools. Many of the early WPA programs were established to rebuild communities displaced by federal land acquisition. Programs aimed at educating children and adults were not initially a high priority for the WPA in Kentucky or elsewhere.⁴⁴ However, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt became a strong advocate of such programs after venturing into the West Virginia mountains in 1933 to visit a furniture factory where unemployed miners had been employed. Mrs. Roosevelt had earlier

⁴³ Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 240-41.

⁴⁴ Lewis Cecil Gray, "Economic Conditions and Tendencies in the Southern Appalachians As Indicated by the Cooperative Survey." *Mountain Life and Work* 9 (July 1933), 7-12.

purchased a chair manufactured in the factory and became intensely interested in the plight of the former coal miners who had been relegated to working in the factory for wages. After several subsequent visits to West Virginia, Mrs. Roosevelt worked with the WPA National Director, Roy Stryker, in implementing several cultural programs including the hiring of photographers to canvass the Appalachian Mountains gathering photographic images of living conditions. Additionally, Mrs. Roosevelt employed Charles Seeger, a noted musicologist and husband of the famous composer Ruth Crawford, to collect the music and folklore of the mountains using a small army of workers with tape recorders and instructions to preserve and document mountain culture.⁴⁵ Her efforts brought little economic relief to the people of West Virginia during the early years of the Depression. However, her work demonstrated a growing awareness by some in the federal government of the plight of people in Appalachia.

Through her work in the field and the publicity that it generated, the First Lady had convinced the administration and the WPA that specific programs designed to put women to work, especially rural women, were of critical importance. Early in 1936, the WPA required each state to appoint a state coordinator for women's programs. The President himself became interested in the plight of mountain folk and used the stereotyped imagery of Appalachia people to justify the expansion of federal programs into their cultural and economic life. Roosevelt used this imagery in declaring that new federal programs would start "in the headwaters, in a shack on the side of a mountain where there is a white man of about a fine stock as we have in this country, who, with his family of children, is completely uneducated, never had a chance, never sees twenty-five or fifty dollars in cash in a year, but just keep body and soul together."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowney, *TVA and the Dispossessed* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 127-39.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 41

WPA programs that went beyond simply putting farmers and miners to work by supporting local culture, jobs for women, and cultivating an atmosphere of opportunity ostensibly tried to improve living conditions in communities that were experiencing an exodus to the big city. Moreover, the very existence of mass migration out of the mountains was a strong indicator that the people of the region were looking for opportunities even if it meant leaving their homes and communities that had defined their lives for generations. Mountain folk were not willing to sit idly and allow the devastating economic conditions of the Great Depression to destroy their livelihoods. Leaving home was, in many cases, a means to save the homestead.⁴⁷ Appalachian farmers and their families were used to finding their own solutions to economic hard times. The Great Depression was no exception. Education and literacy programs were nothing new to the people of Eastern Kentucky. For the farmers who chose to stay on the family homestead, local acceptance of federal programs remained in question due to preexisting tensions and a long history of distrust. However, the state's new generation of library administrators was willing to experiment with a new outreach reading program.

The Rosenwald County Library Demonstration

During the 1930s, a process of self-examination was evident among southern public and school libraries. Professional librarians expanded their role beyond administrators and collection caretakers by investigating broader regions of the library field including building management and renovation, patron demographics, and public finance. Results of their efforts appeared at regional American Library Association (ALA) conferences, and gained additional momentum resulting from generous grants from national educational foundations including the Julius Rosenwald Fund, General Education Board, and the Carnegie Corporation. The Rosenwald Fund

⁴⁷ Homer L Morris, *The Plight of the Bituminous Coal Miner* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 41-45.

had a long history of supporting rural education especially in predominantly Black communities. The organization had close ties to Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee institute at about the time Berea College was sending Black students from Appalachia to attend Tuskegee as a means of escaping forced segregation under Kentucky's Day Law.⁴⁸ The Rosenwald County Library Demonstration was one of several efforts to examine potential effects of library growth in rural areas. This study, conducted from 1933 to 1937, involved eleven counties in the South including McCreary County in Eastern Kentucky, one of the most poverty stricken counties in the nation. Each county in the study was provided with complete library services for a five year period. Other counties in the study were located in rural areas of Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Texas. Local governments were required to match the Rosenwald grants, and McCreary County applied and received its portion of the grant by including monies spent on the Packhorse Library Program as matching funds. Moreover, the packhorse library was included in the list of services offered as part of the overall comprehensive county public library plan. Rosenwald funds were reduced each year of the program until the fifth year, when all funds were withdrawn. Participating counties were required to maintain library services at the same level each year accounting for about fifty cents per capita annually for the entire county population. While this was a funding level half of that recommended by the ALA, it represented a four hundred percent per capita increase for the McCreary County public library.⁴⁹

Results of the experiment were significant, and resulted in a broad expansion of library services. First, libraries in the participating counties made a universal attempt to reach out to the entire population including blacks, children, and public schools. Records maintained by the

⁴⁸ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 159.

⁴⁹ Robert B. Downs, "The South Looks at its Libraries," *Social Forces* 1:1 (October 1936), 123-127.

McCreary County Library suggest that library services, including the packhorse library, were mostly used by students and housewives. Juvenile patrons outnumbered adults, and females exceeded males at a three to two ratio. Fiction books accounted for two-thirds of the circulation during the five year study, and there was virtually no difference between books borrowed by whites and blacks.⁵⁰ The study notes the distinctly inferior collections available to blacks in terms of both size and quality. However, increased funding in the eleven counties correlated with improvements in access for minority patrons. Extension services including book trucks, mail service, and the packhorse library were credited with providing essential outreach programs allowing the study to claim that the entire rural population had access to libraries.

Additionally, outreach services were credited in the Rosenwald study with achieving the objective of improving cooperation between school and public libraries.⁵¹ Contracts between schools and public libraries were required as part of the grant program, and provided schools with access to reference books and specific supplemental reading materials supporting all areas of the curriculum. The study revealed the new levels of cooperation “very substantially increased the number of books available to students.” One significant direct result of the experiment was a coordinated effort among southern librarians within the study to develop programs guiding local libraries in the South toward improving services. According to program reports, cooperation between public and school libraries raised the awareness of librarians to the need for library programs in rural areas.⁵² Moreover, a greater emphasis on student reading and increased cooperation between public school, county, and academic libraries materialized.

Training for the professional development of librarians, and an emphasis on teacher-librarian

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Tommie Dora Barker, *Libraries of the South: A Report on Developments, 1930-1935*, 135-138.

⁵² Robert B. Downs, “The South Looks at its Libraries,” 123-127.

relationships was a particular emphasis of the grant program. By 1937, southern librarians were expressing their desire to establish close cooperation with all agencies involved with education and reading including state PTA organizations, youth organizations, churches, library commissions, and institutions of higher learning. Library administrators placed a particular emphasis on outreach services in rural areas in an attempt to make reading material available to all patrons. Many of these developments had been included in the overall mission of Kentucky academic, public and school libraries for several decades prior to the Rosenwald study, and that mission carried over into the years following the New Deal.

The Packhorse Library: WPA Project #2345

In 1936, James W. Cammack, Secretary of the Kentucky Reorganization Commission offered his rationale concerning the importance of library service in Kentucky: “Since the library is a definite and specific educational agency which furnishes means whereby people can educate themselves, this institution is a definite necessity of government.”⁵³ That same year, the Kentucky Library Association (KLA) reported that there were sixty-one of 120 counties in the state with no public library. The report revealed that expenditures for library services were ten cents per capita while the average for the nation was more than three times that amount. Immediately following the legislative reforms of 1936, the KLA voted to launch a “citizen’s library movement.”⁵⁴ A committee chaired by Lexington Library Director Robert B. Downs was appointed to oversee the movement and to report to the KLA on the status of library services. In the early summer, Downs issued a report based on a comprehensive survey of state library services conducted by the University of Kentucky library staff. The report noted the 1930 census

⁵³ “The Beginning of the Kentucky State Library and Archive System.” (1936). Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky. Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 12.

⁵⁴ “Library Extension Division Report, 1939.” *Kentucky Library Association Bulletin* (October 1939), 1.

suggesting a population of just over 2.5 million with 1.8 million Kentuckians having no access to public libraries.⁵⁵

During the early summer of 1936, while Kentucky officials were assessing library services in the state, the WPA was establishing a variety of programs in other parts of the country designed to put women to work and to bring “arts to the millions.” The WPA hired thousands of teachers, writers, actors, artists, and librarians in a variety of cultural and educational programs. WPA library outreach and assistance programs had been established in 45 other states by 1936 and employed approximately 14,500 workers. Louisiana created a library outreach program in 1935 that delivered books by boat to families living in the backwater and bayou areas. However, this program was limited in scope and served less than 1,000 families. North Carolina established bookmobile services in areas accessible by roads in 1933, and participated in a WPA bookbinding program serving public libraries and school districts. Other bookmobile services partially funded by the WPA were established in South Carolina, Mississippi, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, and Washington. These state programs were initially funded in whole or in part by the WPA, and in many cases, continued to be funded by state money beyond the life of New Deal Programs. However, packhorse libraries in Kentucky emphasized rural outreach and included home delivery. Michigan, Iowa and Washington participated in outreach programs, but limited the service to “sub-centers” comprising local schools, churches, and businesses. Personal contact between librarians and patrons were limited in these centers where patrons had to find their way to book collections. Records suggest a significant difference in circulation between the two types of programs. For example, in Kent County, Michigan, the WPA Library Extension Service utilized 22 sub-centers, and circulated 2,700 books per month in 1936. In that same

⁵⁵ Robert B. Downs, *Resources of Southern Libraries*. (New York, American Library Association, 1938), 22-24.

year, Kentucky's Whitley County Packhorse Library served 5,200 patrons per month. Other New Deal literacy programs included the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) library assistance programs for libraries displaced by dam projects that provided funding for the construction of new schools, books, and teacher salaries at TVA construction sites and in resettlement areas.⁵⁶

Another unique characteristic of Kentucky's library outreach effort was the close cooperation between local, state, and federal officials, and non-profit organizations. In early July 1936, Lena Nofcier, serving multiple roles as State Librarian, Chair of the State Library Service Commission, and on the board of the state Parent Teachers Association (PTA), proposed to the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers Conference her idea of a "Packhorse Library Program" for the state of Kentucky. Nofcier had served as a librarian and chaired a local PTA group prior to joining the Kentucky Department of Libraries. Her support of the 1936 library reform laws and using the PTA as a tool for local library support was well known. Packhorse libraries would, according to Nofcier, meet the "outreach requirements" established in the 1936 library reform legislation, and would satisfy WPA requirements for developing specific programs for the hiring of unemployed women within the state. Within days of her proposal at the state conference, eighty-three local PTA organizations in forty-five counties offered financial support for the program.⁵⁷

Nofcier presented her proposal to the WPA for funding of "Packhorse Libraries" in the first week of July. Her proposal noted donations from local PTAs amounting to 7,120 books and 1,040 pounds of magazines and "other reading material." Nofcier also noted that over one

⁵⁶ Michael S. Blayney, "Libraries for the Millions: Adult Public Library Services and the New Deal," *Journal of Library History* 12 (1977): 235. Also, for national data on WPA library programs see E. S. Woodward, "WPA Library Projects," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, (1938), 518-520.

⁵⁷ Lena B. Nofcier, "Proposal: Packhorse Library Project," .". Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky. Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 12.

hundred dollars had been raised through local “penny drives.” These small fundraising efforts at the local level did not result in large amounts of money for books, but with each donation of one or two pennies, Nofcier was able to demonstrate broad community support for packhorse libraries.⁵⁸

The application to the WPA contained a specific plan for implementation of the Packhorse Library Program. Although she did not specify which counties would participate or the number of packhorse libraries to be opened, Nofcier initially set the first week in November as the startup date which corresponded with the observance of “Kentucky Education Week.” The following week, the ALA’s National Book Week, was Nofcier’s alternative startup date. Nofcier’s optimism was evident in her suggestion that “every PTA member will participate.” Local PTA chapters would appoint local library service chairs to coordinate book drives and fundraising efforts. Nofcier detailed the types of reading material that would be circulated by the packhorse libraries. Appropriate book topics included art, science, discovery, travel, poetry, biographies, religion, invention, short stories, cook books, history, children’s books, picture books, readers, gardening, and “other books which would make interesting reading.” Appropriate magazines included *American Boy*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall’s*, *National Geographic*, *Parent’s Magazine*, *National Parent Teacher*, missionary magazines, Sunday School quarterlies, and “papers and other magazines giving information and stories.”⁵⁹ Nofcier discouraged any distribution of political material or publications from mining companies.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Nofcier, “Proposal: Packhorse Library Program,” 2.

Nofcier's program proposal gave a glorifying account of the people in Eastern Kentucky. She wanted to showcase the best qualities of mountain folk that had evolved over the last half-century in literature and media: "The intelligence of the Kentucky mountaineer is keen. All that has ever been said about him to the contrary notwithstanding, he is honest, truthful, and God-fearing, but bred to peculiar beliefs which are the bases [basis] of one of the most fascinating chapters in American folklore." Nofcier described the Packhorse Library Program as "unique and intriguing," much like the mountaineers themselves. Moreover, Nofcier recognized the cooperation of local, state, and federal agencies along with the many individuals and community organizations supporting the Packhorse Library idea.⁶⁰

The design of the program was simple. Nofcier proposed that each county participating would establish a "center library" and provide the initial collection of books. The proposal suggested initial collections would consist of 200 to 500 books provided by school boards, court clerks, and private donations. The number of librarians would depend on the number of routes with each librarian traveling eight to ten miles per day. There was no mention of pay in the proposal and the cost of pack animals was not considered.

Although Nofcier had planned to start the program in the late fall of 1936, the WPA gave approval of the program proposal within three weeks of submission. George Goodman wired the proposal to Ellen S. Woodward, WPA Assistant Administrator of the Division of Women's and Professional projects, and her approval was tentative based on some clarification from Goodman.⁶¹ In her initial reply to Goodman, Woodward had specific questions concerning training, pay, and program development. The level of training for program employees had been a

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Excerpt From Conference of Women's & Professional Projects, 1937" Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky. Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 8.

topic of discussion between Woodward and other WPA officials.⁶² She noted that there was a consensus among WPA officials that packhorse librarians should have the same level of educational attainment as professional librarians. Goodman argued against Woodward's suggestion, and his response to her was a reminder of the importance of keeping the program design at the local level:

I rather believe that we are doing pioneer library work and are meeting a need which organized library associations have missed. For this particular piece of work, I believe our technique and plan of organization is more workable than that which might be suggested by a person or organization not familiar with local problems, with the idiosyncrasies of the mountain people, or with the types of relief clients whom we must train to do the work.⁶³

Goodman further suggested that the program would be strengthened if local school boards financed the rent and electricity expenses of each center library. He also proposed that pay be set at the "intermediate" grade of twenty-eight dollars per month with each librarian being responsible for providing her own pack animal. There was no discussion of hiring only local women or women from the Eastern counties. However, the decision as to who would be hired as packhorse librarians would be left to the local WPA coordinators with no specific restrictions or requirements based on experience or education.⁶⁴ He also mentioned that some librarians may use their own motor vehicles where roads would permit. Nofcier agreed to Goodman's set of suggestions and after receiving the revised proposal, Woodward signed off on all of the provisions in the first week of August without further discussion.⁶⁵

⁶² Ellen S. Woodward. "The Lasting Values of WPA," (date unknown) Works Progress Administration Papers, Record Group 69, Series 737, Box 8. National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁶³ George H. Goodman to Ellen S. Woodward, July 26, 1936. Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky. Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 8.

⁶⁴ "WPA Traveling Libraries" (date unknown) Works Progress Administration Papers, Record Group 69, Series 743, Box 1. National Archives, Washington D.C.

⁶⁵ Goodman to Harry L. Hopkins, WPA Administrator, August 10th 1936. Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky. Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 8.

Soon after receiving word of the program's approval from Washington, Nofcier notified the state's public libraries, PTA organizations, school boards, and the Kentucky Department of Libraries that funding for the program would be available. Goodman immediately notified local WPA officials working at the county level. Within days of hearing from Washington that the design of the program and funding for packhorse librarians had been acquired, local WPA workers in Leslie County began organizing the first packhorse library. Using a stack of old books, magazines, and religious pamphlets, one enthusiastic librarian who owned a "white mule of dubious age and a pair of saddle bags" began riding into the remote recesses of Leslie County. The first route established for the Packhorse Library Program was "more of a wandering through the mountains than a decided path."⁶⁶

Demand for reading material in the initial stage of operation was evident. The Leslie County collection was in total circulation in the first week of operation. Calls for additional books and reading material were made to Nofcier's office and the first book drive was initiated by the Department of Libraries and the State PTA. In early September, Nofcier reported to her department that the situation in Leslie County was "entirely out of hand through lack of books." That same month, Rose Farmer, one of the original packhorse librarians in Leslie County, reported the reaction of her patrons. Mrs. R. Stuart, an older woman living alone on Farmer's Route, suggested that a visit from the packhorse librarian was "as good as if a visit from relatives." She asked for a recipe for rice pudding and Farmer promised to bring it on her next visit. That same week, Farmer reported forty-five requests for reading material from her patrons

⁶⁶ Untitled. Document 10940-B dated August 13 1940. Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky. Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 12.

in addition to the books that she circulated.⁶⁷ Grace Lucas, a packhorse librarian in Beattyville, noted that during the first few weeks of the program, more than two hundred requests were made by her patrons for material that she could not provide. This included various requests for specific cures and treatments for health problems and several requests for magazines.⁶⁸ By the end of October books were running short and requests for material were seemingly overwhelming. Nofcier's characterization of conditions at the Leslie County Packhorse Library was a mere foreshadowing of the emergence of a major state WPA program.⁶⁹

Conclusion

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, attempts were made to reform the state library system in Kentucky. By 1936, the Kentucky Legislature passed a series of laws designed to provide rural residents better access to libraries. These reforms stipulated that outreach library services would play an integral role in attaining the goals of the State Department of Libraries.

During the Great Depression, the WPA established policies that required the creation of women's work programs. While Washington bureaucrats responded to the initial proposal for the Packhorse Library Program as a means of employing women, Kentucky library administrators saw it as a means of promoting the improvement of library services in a remote area of the state with high illiteracy rates. Although initial goals of the program differed among federal and state administrators, the cooperation eventually demonstrated by the immediate approval and startup of this unique library outreach service was unprecedented, and represented a

⁶⁷ State Librarian Historical Sketches, 1923-1946, Box 1, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Ky.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Lena B. Nofcier, "Just What is a Packhorse Library," Document 12158, Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky. Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 12.

long term commitment by local, state, and federal government entities for increasing literacy in rural Kentucky.

The initiation of the packhorse libraries in 1936 was a high water mark for those promoting outreach services in Eastern Kentucky. Berea College and other higher education institutions supported the idea of bringing books to the front porch of mountaineers by supporting book drives and donating materials for packhorse library collections. Moreover, the packhorse libraries hired local women who, in some cases, were the products of the recently established settlement schools. Virtually all packhorse librarians were lifelong residents of the county they served, and most were members of low income families living on subsistence farming and coal mining. Mountain folk were receptive to the overtures made by local women visiting their homes and introducing new reading material. School teachers and parents of the typical one-room mountain school were also receptive to local women visiting students and offering a broader range of reading material that went beyond the small collection of textbooks and readers.

The history of library services in Kentucky and the establishment of the Packhorse library Program was a response to what William Gilmore calls “a new mass culture of reading and writing.” Generations of isolation in rural areas of Eastern Kentucky were not without the cosmopolitan experiences of a modern wage system including the rise and development of a grass-roots labor movement. The isolation of mountain residents was not a deliberate process, and the eagerness of mountain folk to increase their access to printed material was what Richard D. Brown argued as a normal desire to learn more about the outside world. The success of early library programs and the subsequent library reforms initiated by the Kentucky legislators was an acknowledgement of the eagerness among mountain folk to achieve some level of literacy.

Moreover, this eagerness was part of a broader set of correlating factors that included economic development and industrialization, nation building, and modern consumerism that fostered what Soltow and Stevens called “an ideology of literacy.”⁷⁰ This body of scholarship confirms an important element to the literacy process in Appalachia: rural mountain residents were no different than other rural people with respect to their eagerness to learn and interact with the providers of reading material. Their willingness to participate in rural outreach programs, whether at the state or federal level, was driven by their desire to become more aware of the world beyond their isolated communities, and their desire to advance themselves and their families in a new industrialized economy.

In addition to demonstrating the effectiveness of state and federal cooperation and revealing positive perceptions of the importance of literacy among rural residents, the initial stage of the Packhorse Library Program revealed a broad taste for reading material among mountain folk. The demand for reading was an essential element in the communication process that occurred between patron and librarian. Communication theorists have argued that information received by patrons are filtered and choices are made with respect to what reading material is acceptable. This is in stark contrast to propagandists who argue that patrons are passive and rely on whatever material is provided without consideration to other forces or influences.⁷¹ The early success of the Packhorse Library is a confirmation of communication

⁷⁰ William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*, 2-3; Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power*, 133-35; Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States*, 50-52.

⁷¹ Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, “The Uses and Gratifications Approach,” in *Handbook of Political Communications*, ed. D. Nimmo and K. Sanders (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981), 67-99; Michael R. Real, “Media Theory: Contributions to an Understanding of American Mass Communications,” *American Quarterly* 32 (Bibliography issue, 1980), 240-244; and James W. Carey and Albert Kreiling, “Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications: Notes Toward an Accommodation,” in *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*, ed. Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974), 223-48; Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People’s Choice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), 120-28; Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (New York: Free Press, 1955), 27-39; Bernard Berelson, “What ‘Missing

theory, since mountain folk were making requests and demands for a broad collection of reading material that satisfied their needs for information on daily living, politics, and entertainment. Moreover, the initial success of the Packhorse Library Program assists in answering the question of how mountain folk perceived literacy as an important part of daily life in the mountains. Packhorse libraries were established in rapid succession throughout the region with patrons demanding books and reading material at unprecedented levels. Moreover, the shift in the economic composition of the nineteen Eastern Kentucky counties whereby subsistence farming was replaced by mining, textile, and railroad jobs during the 1920s played a key role in cultivating the positive perceptions that literacy was part of economic progress. However, the real measure of demand for reading in Kentucky's Appalachia region would come in the years following 1936. The Packhorse Library Program would be unable to keep up with circulation and collection needs without a national effort for fundraising and book donations. Within weeks after the start of the program, packhorse library administrators were voicing concern that services would have to be expanded well beyond its original scope. After 1936, the aim of WPA Packhorse Library Program shifted from putting women to work to focusing on providing reading material to the people of Eastern Kentucky in order to satisfy their desire to read. Additionally, packhorse library services satisfied the outreach requirements stipulated in the 1936 library reforms passed by the Kentucky Legislature by providing outreach library services to one third of the state.

Building on the successes of missionary outreach programs, extension programs developed by Berea College, and community programs offered by local settlement schools, the Packhorse Library Program emerged as the most successful attempt at reaching out into the

the Newspaper' Means," in *Communication Research, 1948-49*, ed. Paul F. Lazarfeld and Frank N. Stanton (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949), 111-28.

mountains of Eastern Kentucky to promote reading and literacy. This new program sponsored by the federal government would provide reading material based on patron demand. The success of packhorse libraries was insured by taking advantage of state and local support and a preexisting desire for literacy fostered by modernization within mountain communities.

CHAPTER 4
DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF THE PACKHORSE LIBRARIES, 1936-1938

Introduction

By 1936, the periodic experiences of missionaries and settlement workers in Eastern Kentucky were given new meaning by the rise of what historian Henry D. Shapiro called the “country life movement.”¹ The notion that mountain folk were part of an emerging modern community provided a sense of opportunity to those facilitating literacy through education services in the region. The proliferation and success of settlement schools, the creation of school districts in the most isolated of Kentucky’s counties, and the wide acceptance of Christian missionary organizations were only part of an effort to counter what some social scientists of the period described as “absence of community” in Eastern Kentucky.² The implementation and subsequent popularity of the packhorse libraries revealed the willingness of local mountain families to participate in the process of constructing a sense of community, and to demand an eclectic reading agenda as part of community development through literacy. Thus, mountain folk were willing to prepare and empower themselves to successfully participate in a modern industrial economy.³ Moreover, the willingness to participate in a federal literacy outreach program suggests a significant shift occurred in local perceptions regarding the importance of literacy for adults and children in the region.

Tracing the growth of the Packhorse Library Program during the years of the Great Depression sheds more historical light on the contributions made by federal agencies in the effort

¹ Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978),14.

² *Ibid.*, 22-23.

³ Robert D. Lynd & Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1929), 41-68. The authors aptly argue that by the early 1930s, mountain folk in Appalachia were often pursuing more than one method of acquiring reading material addressing industrial work. This material included union newsletters.

to provide literacy outreach services to the isolated regions of Eastern Kentucky. The rapid expansion of growth of the packhorse libraries will answer further the question of how mountain folk reacted to the social and economic changes in Appalachia during the first decades of the twentieth century in terms of changing perceptions and values of education and literacy. Additionally, the years of service provided by packhorse librarians and their interaction with the residents of mountain communities confirms the various elements of communication theory as they relate to the distribution of printed material. The interactions between patrons and packhorse librarians suggest a process of compromise that involved both the reading appetites and subsequent empowerment of residents regarding the choice of reading material, and the willingness of the packhorse librarians to provide requested reading material when available. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet suggested that this process of empowerment is a precursory element in communication theory in terms of successful interaction and compromise between patron and librarian. Thus, both were active and empowered participants in the selection of reading material.⁴ Their research in communication theory is further supported by the work of Michael A. Real and Elihu Katz from the late 1940s. Real and Katz argued that printed and electronic media are consumed as a matter of active choice.⁵ Thus, patrons are not simply passive participants in a one-way propaganda feed. This chapter will demonstrate how the Packhorse Library Program exemplified the successful empowerment of mountain folk in terms of the development of a reading canon. Moreover, the consistent increase in demand for reading material, the increase in the number of library patrons,

⁴ Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), 22-27.

⁵ Michael R. Real, "Media Theory: Contributions to an understanding of American Mass Communications," *American Quarterly* 32 (Bibliography issue, 1980), 240-244; Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (New York: Free Press, 1955), 44-52.

and the increasingly broad spectrum of reading topics suggests changing perspectives regarding the importance of literacy as a means of empowerment during a period of rapid social and economic change.

Federal Government involvement in education during the Great Depression has come under intense criticism by historians. Contemporary writings including Thomas Minehan's *Boy and Girl Tramps of America* painted a dismal picture of federal support of public schools during the 1930s.⁶ Much of the historical analyses of federal youth programs portrayed the federal government as ignoring the educational needs of youth at a time when federal intervention was critically needed. David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elizabeth Hansot argued that federal programs for youth were primarily for the creation of jobs with little emphasis on literacy and education.⁷ Yet, other historians have presented a more favorable perspective with respect to federal programs for youth during the New Deal. Lawrence A. Cremin sheds a favorable light on the role of Harry Hopkins and the New Deal commitment to "broader social justice." Cremin argued that many programs provided opportunities for educating youth, and were developed with "considerable individuality." He noted the particular work of WPA library programs that provided more than 2,500 libraries nationwide. This national library program eventually provided over twenty public libraries to Kentucky. Cremin also observed that several hundred community arts centers and museum programs included classes for young adults.⁸ In 1973, historian William F. McDonald gave similar credit to New Deal efforts toward community

⁶ Thomas Minehan, *Boy and Girl Tramps of America* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), 67-83.

⁷ David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elizabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 126-129.

⁸ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 457-464.

education programs especially in the area of the arts.⁹ Paula Fass elucidated the unprecedented role of the federal government in the creation of “direct educational programs” that were part New Deal relief efforts. Federal initiatives represented a radical departure from traditional views among government bureaucrats about the role of the federal government in local education programs. Fass argued these efforts had “important consequences for establishing new goals for an effective democratic education” that eventually provided equal opportunity for disadvantaged groups along with a permanent sense of federal responsibility for education.¹⁰ These scholars identified the commitment of federal New Deal programs that fostered nontraditional approaches to literacy and vocational training in a way consistent with Franklin Roosevelt’s desire not to interfere with local school board autonomy. An analysis of the Packhorse Library Program confirms this latter view that the federal government was involved in local literacy and education efforts to the extent that local communities would allow, and this involvement had a direct positive impact on literacy in rural Kentucky.

Initial Startup

In August 1936, B. W. Whitaker, President of the Kentucky Parent-Teacher Association, was notified by the WPA office of Women’s and Professional Projects that packhorse libraries had been opened in six Eastern Kentucky counties. Describing them as “pauper” counties, Whitaker listed Harlan, Clay, Whitley, Jackson, Owsley, and Lee counties as having participated in the initial startup.¹¹ However, the State Library Report of 1936 suggests that Leslie County

⁹ William McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 175-183.

¹⁰ Paula Fass, “Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal,” *American Journal of Education* 91:1 (November, 1982), 36-64.

¹¹ Lena Nofcier to B. W. Whitaker, 1 August 1936. Folder “1936 Correspondence,” Box 10, Record Group SAA63, Berea College Archives, Berea Kentucky.

was the first to initiate the program followed by Harlan County.¹² The confusion in reporting was likely due to the isolation and limited communication between local school boards and state officials in the Eastern section of the state.

The Packhorse Library Program spread throughout the region in a matter of days and weeks. The speed at which counties joined the program was due in large part to the support provided by local school districts. County school boards provided financial assistance for each county packhorse library in accordance with WPA program guidelines. This support included facilities for a center library, electricity, heating, and books. Of the six initial packhorse libraries, five received immediate financial support from their respective school districts.¹³ In the small mining town of Hazard, the school district rented a two story building in the downtown business district and provided electricity, heat, and a collection of books that accumulated in the basement of the courthouse for several years. The Hyden Packhorse Library in Leslie County was provided a building in the center of town, and evolved in the county's first public library. Funding from the school districts usually amounted to less than two hundred dollars annually to cover rent and utility expenses. Wood and coal donated by patrons, businesses, and librarians were the usual sources for heating center libraries during the winter months. Custodial services, water, and office supplies were often donated by the community and volunteers.¹⁴

School boards frequently passed funding requests with the expectation that packhorse libraries would provide books to the more isolated schools. In early August 1936, The Hazard

¹² Kentucky Department of Libraries, "1936 Library Report." Folder 11, Series "Library History," Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives, Frankfort Ky, p.4.

¹³ Whitaker to Nofcier, 4 October 1936. Folder "1936 Correspondence," Box 10, Record Group SAA63, Berea College Archives, Berea Kentucky.

¹⁴ Ethyl Perryman to Whitaker, 10 November 1936, Folder "1936 Correspondence," "Box 10, Record Group SA63, Berea College Archives, Berea Kentucky. Ethyl Perryman was the District Supervisor of the WPA Women's and Professional Projects for the State of Kentucky. This letter is describing a monthly report Perryman had forwarded to both the Louisville and Washington WPA offices.

School District provided initial funding of one-hundred dollars to establish a packhorse library that “provides books to the children in one-room schools.” During the same month, the Leslie County School Board passed similar funding for a packhorse library with the stipulation that all children in the county receive “services while attending school.”¹⁵ The packhorse center libraries, serving as a base of operations in each county, also served as local public libraries. Residents were invited to visit the center libraries and encouraged to take books home. As the program developed and gained in local popularity, residents often volunteered to work in the center libraries repairing books and assisting the packhorse librarians with their patron requests. Volunteers also participated in storytelling programs for children visiting center libraries. Although records on the number of volunteers were not kept, the volunteer work force contributed significantly to the center libraries assisting when donations increased, and helping with the increasingly difficult job of organizing and cataloging collections. Volunteerism at the center libraries indicated that residents in mountain communities placed a great deal of value on the success of local libraries. Moreover, volunteer participation pointed to a desire to steer this federal program toward meeting local needs by helping to provide reading material previously unavailable and oftentimes unacceptable to isolated mountain communities.¹⁶

The Ary Homeplace Library

Most of the rural counties in Eastern Kentucky were required to start their packhorse library with little or no assets other than the people willing to participate. However, there was one important exception to this condition. In 1931, Mrs. E. O. Robinson, a retired teacher from Cincinnati, established a “homeplace community center” providing activities and programs to

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kentucky Department of Libraries, “Annual Report of Library Services, 1937-1938.” Series “Library History,” box 2, Folder “Library Reports.” Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

children in Ary, Kentucky. During the second year of operation, Lula Hale, center director, loaded a few books into her car and delivered them to some of the outlying one-room schools. At the schools, she spread a blanket on the classroom floor and arranged the books so that the children could choose one to borrow. The initial trip was so successful that Hale decided to deliver books on a weekly basis throughout the school year. By the end of 1932, the “Homeplace Traveling Library” was firmly established, and had grown from an initial collection of 600 books to more than fifteen-thousand in 1936.¹⁷

In October of 1936, the Homeplace Traveling Library became part of the WPA Packhorse Library Program. WPA librarians, paid by the Packhorse Library Program, drove a specially built book truck with shelves opening to the outside. In 1937, the book truck served two Kentucky counties visiting thirty rural schools and twenty-four communities each week. The book truck collection soon expanded to include games and music books. By 1938, the Ary library was serving “nearly every home in the communities it reaches.” The Ary library reported in 1937 that county school superintendents and teachers were “very cooperative and unanimous in their approval of the traveling library.” The report further stated that as new roads opened up, more schools were added to the weekly schedule. A second truck was added during the summer of 1937, and new requests for services in other counties were refused due to a “lack of time and books.” The librarians reported that students attending schools without library services were “conspicuously behind” those students having access to a variety of books. In referring to the isolated one-room schools without library services, one librarian wrote that “children in these schools rarely select books above the third grade level, while children in the schools that have had our services for the longest are now reading books of their own grade level or above.” Her

¹⁷ Marion Holcomb Slean, “Book Larnin.” *Mountain Life and Work* (October, 1937), 6-8.

report went on to suggest that “the boys and girls learn to take care of these books as if they are something very precious. The children pride themselves on having their books back on time. Not only their pride, but their keen desire to get another book on book day prompts them. Some schools go the entire year with not a book late or lost.”¹⁸

The Homeplace Library revealed two important conditions among mountain families. First, there was obvious enthusiasm and cooperation between program officials and local school boards. Second, cooperation reached down to the lower echelons including the program librarians responsible for delivering reading material to local schools and school teachers which facilitated the personal relationships that quickly developed between school children and librarians. This dynamic set of relationships developed rapidly over a just a few weeks and emerged as a consistent characteristic of packhorse libraries in other Eastern Kentucky communities. Moreover, the reported enthusiasm for the books delivered by Homeplace librarians suggests that children placed great value on books and the ability to read them.

“A Vision in Our Inner Eye”: The Leslie Packhorse Library

Aside from the pre-existing efforts of the Homeplace Library, Leslie and Harlan Counties were the first to establish a Packhorse Library Program. The two counties were among the most remote in Eastern Kentucky, and were home to some of the poorest families in the nation. Moreover, the population was dispersed over a wide area, yet farms were unusually small due to the limited availability of arable bottom land and generations of farm division. Neither county had established a high school by 1930 except for the Pine Mountain Settlement School located near Harlan. Initially, the Leslie County packhorse library hired a single carrier to distribute

¹⁸ Lula Hale, “Monthly Report for October 1937.” Folder “Homeplace Community Center, 1937.” Box 14, Series “Library History.” Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

books along 80-100 mile routes. Within weeks the program expanded to at least five carriers.¹⁹ Gladys Lainhart was one of the first hired at the Leslie library. She was in her early twenties at the time and was a local resident whose family had been settled in the area for many generations. She was small in stature and somewhat frail in overall appearance. Always wearing bibbed overalls and work shoes, Lainhart had both the appearance and demeanor that mountain folk could identify and easily trust. This common look became the eventual trademark of the packhorse librarians and was instrumental in establishing close relationships with local residents.²⁰ Packhorse librarians were hired by the center librarian or local school board. Typically, these women were under thirty years old and were local residents. Very few were “outlanders” brought in from distant places. Although local, they were initially unknown to their patrons. The counties had an abundance of isolated families that rarely left the vicinity of their homes. However, knowledge of local dialect, their manner of dress, and their similar economic status allowed packhorse librarians to access the most remote locations without much resistance from local residents. Packhorse librarians were paid twenty-eight dollars per month. This money usually went for the support of the farm on which they lived.²¹

Written reports and journals were kept by many of the packhorse librarians. Much of this writing occurred while spending time at the center library. However, packhorse librarians would stop along their route and spend time recording their activities. Many of the difficulties related to making initial contact with potential patrons appears to have been of utmost concern among

¹⁹ Nathan Asch to James L Branson. Memorandum dated January 4, 1937. In series Library History, Box 4, Folder “1937 Correspondence.” Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

²⁰ Olivia Berryman, “Report of Services Rendered.” Dated December 1, 1936. In series Library History, Box 3, Folder “1936 Correspondence.” Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

²¹ Jeanne C. Schmitzer. “The Packhorse Library Project of Eastern Kentucky: 1936-1943.” Dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, December 1998. 12-19.

the librarians. The distrust among many local residents of government had been long standing, and local contempt for the federal government ran deep for most people in the mountains. Leslie and Harlan Counties had witnessed the violence stemming from the Revenuer Wars. At its peak in the early 1930s, more than fifteen people per week were killed in Eastern Kentucky by federal agents. This violence was, in part, due to a change in policy and tactics by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allowing agents to shoot first and ask questions later. By the mid-1930s, distrust and anger toward the federal government had reached an apex, and the packhorse librarians began their work amidst this backdrop of violence. L. W. Roberts, one of the first five packhorse librarians in Leslie County, gave a detailed account of one early encounter with a mountain family:

About half a mile from the top of this hill stands a miserable house which had once been abandoned and used as a sheep shelter. Here live a young couple, who have been married only two or three years. The wife has taught in mountain schools----and the man----- perhaps his most energetic efforts have been possum hunting. The wife has magically produced an effect of brightness and comfort inside of a structure that could hardly be called a house, but her thin face and sad eyes bespeak tragedy to us, and we can not but wonder whether she had sufficient food. Her hunger for the books is almost pitiable, and her husband is also eager for them. He is especially interested in dog stories; perhaps, because he owned seven canine. The first day he drew the "Call of the Wild," and "Rab and His Friends," with a look of pleased anticipation. In fact, we allowed these two people more than their share of books. Their condition made it appeal to us, and, yet, we wondered as we drove on, whether it was quite the right thing to allow the man to have so many books, because we could not but see a vision in our inner eye of a neglected wood pile and a man tilted back against the wall absorbed in a dog-tale.²²

The passage provided by Roberts is revealing on several levels. First, the librarian refers to "we" as if there were more than one librarian present. This well may have been the case early in the Packhorse Program since both librarian and patron were likely to be uneasy about unannounced visits. Second, it is apparent that both patron and librarian were affected by the

²² E. Fullerton, "Just What is a Packhorse Library?" In series 711-A, Box 7, Folder 4. Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky), 5-6.

visit. The librarians had taken notice of the desperate economic conditions, and their compassion was demonstrated by the bestowment of additional books. The environs in which this family lived had an obvious impact on the visiting librarians. Their awareness of the impact of abject poverty, and the well defined gender roles assigned to members of mountain families played an important role in the assumptions made regarding the demand for reading. The account of this particular visit suggests that there was a high degree of satisfaction by both the librarians and the young couple. The visit was obviously successful and provided a strong and friendly foundation for a long relationship between patron and librarian.

In addition to home visits, Packhorse librarians included rural schools in their routes during the early stages of the program. Mrs. Powell, a packhorse librarian in Leslie County, visited Hart's School late in 1936 just weeks after the program had started. Her account is brief but revealing:

When we arrived at the school, there could not have been happier excitement. The thirty children present clamor for books as the feathered nestlings do for food. Their demands were so large that we could not meet them all, and left in charge of the teacher nineteen volumes, which we knew her acquaintance with the homes would enable her to distribute wisely.²³

Powell's journal entry suggests that packhorse librarians were continuing to travel in at least pairs a year into the program. Moreover, this passage reveals a significant shortage of books in the fall of 1936. Rationing of books appears to have been frequent as patrons demanded greater quantities and variety of reading material, and the carrying capacity of the packhorse librarians was limited to what they could get into their saddle bags.

The growth of the Packhorse Library Program was not entirely due to the enthusiasm of the patrons. During the first few months of the program, packhorse librarians worked intently to

²³ Beryyman, "Just What is a Packhorse Library?" 7.

expand their contact with isolated mountain families. In October, Leslie County reported that several additional trips had been made on established routes including Scaffold Cane Pike and Wallaceton Pike.²⁴ Librarians were reporting that those residents living in extremely isolated areas of the county were traveling to meet the packhorse librarians on their routes. One librarian reported that “each time people living farther from the road, way back in the coves in some instances, have been waiting at some of the houses on my route.”²⁵ Since telephone service was generally not available to mountain folk, the news of the Packhorse Program was traveling by word of mouth. Some librarians began to carry horns and whistles to call people out of the coves and mountains to central locations on their routes. Some centrally located homes were used as stops for the librarians to meet patrons from the surrounding area.²⁶

Initiatives taken by packhorse librarians to serve additional patrons suggests a strong desire to succeed in bringing reading material to isolated mountain families. Packhorse librarians were aware of the growing demand for reading in the mountains, and they sought various ways to meet that demand. Their willingness to interact with the mountain folk during the early stages of the program suggests that there was a belief among both patron and librarian that rural communities were shifting towards literacy as a way of acting on their hopes for self improvement. Moreover, by allowing the packhorse librarians to define the scope and purpose of the program, the federal government was better assured of success in a geographical region where distrust and resistance to federal intrusion had been prevalent. For those working at the local level, the program was more about reading and literacy, and less about creating jobs for

²⁴ “Carrier Report” Author unknown. Dated October 30 1936. In Series 711-A, Box 7, Folder “Packhorse Libraries.” Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

²⁵ Berryman, 3.

²⁶ Berryman, 8.

women that might help improve economic conditions. This was an important attitude that fostered an interest among librarians and patrons to nurture and expand the program over time.

Librarians made frequent reference to the possibility of expanding library extension services even with the threat of severe shortages of books. “The next road to be taken will be Wallaceton Pike,” one librarian suggested. “There will be more illiteracy, and abject poverty on this road than on the others.”²⁷ The Leslie County monthly report in November 1936 suggested more expansion: “The extension of our work to another route this month is a plan fulfilled....Last month two routes were added; Scaffold Cane and Big Hill. The Wallaceton Route adds two schools and about forty-five families to our lists.”²⁸ The patron list was an apparent barometer for growth and success of the program in the beginning. Increasing the number of patrons was the apparent goal. There was little mention of collections or circulation numbers in the monthly reports. However, library administrators gave detailed attention to how many families and schools were being served by providing an accounting of book circulation and the number of families contacted on the various routes. Additionally, attention was focused on a mission that went beyond the circulation of books. For example, an early report suggested that “in rural library work it is predominantly needful that the librarian should seek to make her work a dynamic toward constructive processes in the family and community life.”²⁹ This new and expanded role of the librarian would eventually be the driving force in the development of a relationship that not only guaranteed the success of a WPA program, but also sowed fertile seeds for the development of individual relationships between librarian and patron that would foster reading, literacy, and a new reading canon for mountain folk.

²⁷ Berryman, 11.

²⁸ Berryman, 14

²⁹ Margaret Trotter, “Appalachia Speaking,” *Mountain Life and Work* 13:3 (October 1937), 3.

Understanding the relationship that developed between packhorse librarians and their patrons in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky is essential in establishing the historical context of literacy in a community that experienced dramatic and rapid economic change during the first half of the twentieth century. The records of the packhorse librarians demonstrate that the communication theory, developed by Professor Wilbur Schramm in 1949, can be used to explain literacy outcomes when free association between librarians and patrons occur.³⁰ Choices made by the packhorse librarians as to which books to carry, and the decisions by patrons about which books to read developed into an effective two way communication that involved compromise by both sides, yet empowered mountain folk to make choices regarding their individual reading habits. Moreover, this process promoted the development of individual expectations concerning the eventual benefits of reading and literacy. Additionally, this communicative relationship between reader and provider assisted in the development of a lasting trust that ensured the packhorse librarians of a successful program over the long term.

Harlan County and the Pine Mountain Community Group

Another significant reason for the success of the Packhorse Library Program in Eastern Kentucky was the willingness of the WPA to allow the libraries to be flexible when it came to organization and methods of delivering services. Other WPA programs including day care, construction projects, school construction, and support of the arts were all based on local design and needs. In keeping with this policy, outreach library services in Kentucky were adapted to the needs and available resources of the local communities involved. The decision to allow the county packhorse libraries to develop according to the character of individual communities

³⁰ Timothy Richard Glander. "Education and the Mass Media: The Origins of Mass Communications Research in the United States, 1939-1955," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1990, 31-47.

fostered local participation of volunteers, librarians, school boards, teachers, and residents who may otherwise have viewed the packhorse librarians as another attempt to erode local traditions and values.

Perhaps the best example of adapting library services to local circumstances was the development and implementation of the Harlan County Packhorse Library as part of a broader set of local outreach programs known as the Pine Mountain Community Group (PMCG). This organization was developed in 1926 as a means of serving families with various needs. A set of local programs had been established in the late 1920s for the handicapped and sick. Malnutrition was prevalent in the mountain region, and was the cause of most illnesses in children. The programs engaged in four types of outreach: home visits, school visits, infirmary services, and the Packhorse Library.³¹

In 1941, there were sixteen workers in the PMCG including one supervisor. Workers rotated their days in the field and days spent at the infirmary or center library. A weekly ‘general conference’ was held to discuss problems, pool ideas, and review cases. Most of the services provided by the PMCG centered on health care, although workers were encouraged to go beyond the current agenda of services and help with anything that “falls into hand.” Activities included after-school tutoring in the local schools, first aid for injuries, prenatal care, and even helping handicapped with cooking and housekeeping. Records suggest that the program was serving five one-room schools in Harlan County. Beyond tutoring, workers offered teachers assistance with their classes that included everything from grading papers to extracurricular activities.

Delivering books as packhorse librarians was more of an integrated activity among this broader set of outreach services and does not appear to have been the primary focus of their visits both at

³¹ Marshall E. Vaughn, “Resident Forces in the Southern Mountains,” *Mountain Live and Work* 12:7 (July, 1936), 17-23.

schools and homes, although there were specific routes on certain days reserved for the packhorse library. The center library was renamed the “Community Classroom Library,” and served a variety of unique functions. First, the library opened on Sundays to provide Bible-reading lessons. One man who attended the Sunday class requested in a note for “one of our carpenters to come to a home and build a medicine cabinet,” and take his pay in poplar lumber. In accepting the task, a program worker replied, “We shall find good use for the poplar some place where there is none available.”³²

The packhorse library in Harlan County was part of an attempt to integrate public assistance programs. Reading material for educating farmers and young people on agricultural skills and new methods for planting were often encouraged by the packhorse librarians. These were the same workers who ran a small “demonstration farm” near Harlan. Local farmers who specialized in certain types of farming would offer their expertise to those wanting to learn. Reading material distributed along the packhorse library routes supported this program and helped to encourage attendance at the agricultural demonstrations. The Community Classroom Library hosted other programs during the week including ballad singing, guitar classes, folk plays, eating and food demonstrations, and “just plain visiting.” Other events included local PTA meetings, a molasses “stir off,” and one wedding of a staff member. Further demonstrating the flexibility of local outreach programs, the packhorse library hosted a series of lectures and demonstrations in “home economics.” One lecture in early 1941 was attended by 134 girls: “Forty –five are in a little high school just established near us; the other 89 are scattered along a twenty-five mile stretch of Troublesome Creek.”³³

³² Vaughn, “Resident Forces in the Southern Mountains,” 17-23.

³³ Marion Holcomb Slean, “Book Larnin” *Mountain Life and Work* 13:3 (October 1937), 6-7.

Evarts Community Church Service Center

Soon after the WPA had initiated the Packhorse Library Program in 1936, private groups and organizations became involved with either supporting or copying the services provided by the packhorse librarians. Forty–five years prior to the start of the Packhorse Library Program, the Extension Board of the Congregational Church in Harlan County established the Evarts Service Center to provide outreach services to local residents. Initially, this “free church” operated an academy for elementary and secondary school children. At the time, the academy was the only school operating in Harlan County other than a few isolated one-room schools. In 1916, Harlan was required by state law to establish a county school district and the academy subsequently closed.

For the next twenty years, the Community Service Center struggled to reestablish itself in a community with intense denominational loyalties and other restricted forms of expression including oppressive policies within coal company townships.³⁴ However, in 1936, the church decided to implement several community outreach programs including a packhorse library. The church constructed a large building that served as a recreation hall with an auditorium, classrooms, and a kitchen. A “circulating library” was located in a parlor area that would grow to over 4,000 volumes by 1941. Several programs had been initiated by 1939 that included daily schedules of folk games, parties, seasonal athletics, crafts, hiking, camping, music, and theater. The library supported most of these activities by providing reading material that ranged from sheet music, scripts, and volumes on nature study. In addition to local circulation, the library

³⁴ Paul Salstrom, *Appalachia's Path to Dependency: Rethinking the Region's Economic History*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 132-143. Salstrom argues that conditions in coal mining towns went beyond economic oppression when coal companies often rigorously enforced strict regulations on speech and access to information regarding the outside world, especially union activities. Also, see James Moffet, *Storm in the Mountains: A Case Study of Censorship, Conflict, and Consciousness* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 27-39.

offered books and magazines delivered to homes by a packhorse librarian. There were three separate routes as part of the library extension program that totaled 28 miles. The library extension program quickly evolved into a more diverse set of outreach services. Librarians eventually provided assistance to families through counseling for health, marriage, vocations, housekeeping, family budgets, and citizenship. One report suggested that “much time is given to letter writing about pensions, insurance, compensation for work, and labor issues.....Scores of needy persons receive food and clothing and constructive advice.”³⁵

The development of the Evarts Service Center was much the same as the Ary Homeplace Library although there is no evidence that suggests the church was receiving any federal funds for its operation. Most of the program funding was provided by the church with some specific donations from the community. The only full time staff members were the church minister and his wife, and there is no record of the number of volunteers who participated. However, it appears that the packhorse librarian at the Evarts Service Center was a position filled by more than one volunteer and served about 3,000 residents.³⁶

By examining the activities and programs of the Evarts Center, a pattern emerges that indicates a variety of approaches to the packhorse library concept. Although funding was mostly from the WPA, a few packhorse library programs were private. Moreover, the structure, size, and scope of services for each county were decided at the local level. Staff and volunteers were local residents well known within their communities. All of these factors combined to produce a program well adapted to local needs and demands, and placed the federal government into an inconspicuous role. This flexibility was a deciding factor in allowing the packhorse libraries to

³⁵ W.A. Worthington, “A Church School in Readjustment,” *Mountain Life and Work* 12:3 (October 1936), 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

grow in popularity and develop a high level of trust among mountain folk. This factor, perhaps more than any, accounts for their eventual success and popularity.

Splendid Cooperation: Finding Collections for the Packhorse Librarians

The Packhorse Library Program relied on other types of operational flexibility beyond that provided by the distant management of the federal government. Part of that flexibility was the decision to allow local control and management of WPA work programs. As Director of the Kentucky Department of Libraries, Lena Nofcier served as the manager of packhorse libraries. Her background included more than twenty years of library service as a volunteer and librarian at the Kentucky State Library in Frankfort. She also served as president of the Kentucky Parent Teacher Association during the years prior to initiating the packhorse libraries. As director of the state library system, Nofcier promoted children's reading programs, school libraries, and the library reform legislation of 1936. Her correspondence with local public libraries suggested that reading material for adult library patrons should reflect the needs of daily living.³⁷ While consistently discouraging textbooks and foreign language titles, Nofcier promoted recreational reading and useful topics including modern farming, travel, and homemaking. She often alerted local librarians of the need to be mindful of local beliefs and customs regarding "controversial religious literature" that might be in conflict with the doctrines of local independent churches. Her management of state library collections suggested she was serving as a cultural gate keeper by filtering the types of reading material available to patrons, especially those living in the rural sections of the state. Nofcier expressed consistent concern that literature stepping beyond the

³⁷ Nofcier to Helen Stearns dated August 17, 1935. In series "Kentucky Libraries History" Box 3, folder "Correspondence 1935, Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

boundaries of community standards could hurt the state system in terms of philanthropic support, volunteerism, and the politics of state funding.³⁸

Nofcier was preoccupied at times with the challenges of raising money for libraries including the packhorse program. On 9 December 1936, she opened an account in her name at the State National Bank in Frankfort, Kentucky. Nofcier established the account in order to manage money donated for the purchase of new books for the packhorse libraries. Her first deposit for \$41.36 was the result of a statewide collection among local PTA chapters. Money collected was not enough for the acquisition of entire collections, and was spent mostly on children's books that were in high demand. The next collection among PTA chapters in January 1937 resulted in a deposit of \$83.86. However, donations were not enough to support program needs. Thus, meeting the demand for books required an intensive effort for large numbers of book donations.³⁹

The first books used by packhorse librarians came from local sources. Abandoned books in school libraries and local donations comprised most of the initial collections. However, the need to acquire large quantities of books became immediately apparent as packhorse libraries opened and began operation. The initial demand for books was overwhelming and beyond the abilities of the local libraries to meet.⁴⁰ Thus, state officials went to work early in 1937 to provide the local programs with books and magazines. Little time was spent on deciding the

³⁸ Nofcier to Martha Shaw dated October 22, 1935. In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 3, folder "Correspondence 1935, Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

³⁹ Lena Nofcier, "Bank Ledger." In Series Library History, Box 4, folder "Packhorse Libraries." Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁴⁰ Edward Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries." *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, 32:10 (October 1, 1938), 703-08.

kinds of reading material to collect. Most of the libraries were happy to get any book regardless of its condition.⁴¹

Understanding the intense and sudden demand for books, Nofcier initiated several statewide book collection projects in the spring of 1937. Her first attempt at book donations was through the local PTA chapters. Using this preexisting network of parents, teachers, and school administrators, Nofcier requested local chapters to collect books from their communities for use in the packhorse program.⁴² The response was initially very good, but not enough to meet the demand of 100,000 new library patrons. This initial effort resulted in 853 books and nearly 5,000 magazines. Seventy-nine PTA chapters from forty-four communities participated in the book drive. The Lexington and Louisville chapters measured their donation in pounds due to large quantities of books received. Adding to the nearly six thousand items collected, there were over one-half ton of additional donations from the larger chapters. Nofcier reported that the cost of conducting the drive was \$9.89, and represented mostly transportation expenses. An additional 1,000 books was donated by the Dutch Reformed Church in Bourbon County. The next book drive was conducted in May 1937. Sixty-nine PTA chapters participated with 13,429 pieces of reading material donated. This would be the last book drive where exact numbers of collected material would be counted. Future donations and book drives were measured in pounds only with general estimates of numbers of books providing the only accounting of acquisitions at the state level.⁴³

⁴¹ "Looking Back: 50 year Ago: WPA Libraries in Kentucky." *Kentucky Libraries*, 53 (Spring 1985), 28-29. There are also dozens of letter written by Lena Nofcier making reference to the need for more books. See "Library History" series (Kentucky State library Archives).

⁴² Nofcier to PTA Chapters. Memorandum dated February 22, 1937. In Series "Kentucky Library History" Box 7, folder "Correspondence 1937," Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁴³Ibid.

Money for the purchase of new books had been difficult to find. Nofcier had been managing all of the new book purchases for the packhorse libraries, and managing the program had become increasingly difficult in terms of finances. In April 1939, Nofcier had a check returned on her account that she had written to the Wilcox & Follett Company for the purchase of several books.⁴⁴ Nofcier wrote the company back on May 4 and advised their accounting department to “return the check for collection” since there was now money in the account. Evidently, the incident created somewhat of a stir at the Kentucky Department of Libraries. Nofcier had apparently kept any knowledge of the packhorse library bank account from state officials. In her letter to Wilcox & Follett she commented that “Your letter of April 29 was addressed to the Division of Accounts and Control, instead of me personally....please address your communications in the future to me.”⁴⁵ Nofcier continued to use the private bank account after the Wilcox & Follett incident, and money collected on behalf of the packhorse libraries were handled exclusively by Nofcier until the end of the program.

In an effort to increase money for books, Nofcier observed the 1939 National Book Week by implementing a statewide “Penny Fund Drive.” School children were asked to save or donate pennies for a special book fund benefiting the packhorse libraries. Nofcier requested that PTA chapters appoint a local “Chairman of Library Service,” and implement the penny fund at the local level. The first penny drive resulted in several hundred dollars being raised for the purchase of new books.⁴⁶ However, the size and scope of fund raising became more than what

⁴⁴ S. C. Watkins to Lena Nofcier, Letter on behalf of the Wilcox & Follet Book Company. Dated April 29, 1939. In series “Kentucky Library History” Box 4, folder “Correspondence 1939,” Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁴⁵ Nofcier to Watkins. Letter in Reply dated April 4, 1939. In series “Kentucky Libraries History” Box 4, folder “Correspondence 1939,” Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁴⁶ Nofcier to the Junior Literary Guild dated September 7, 1939. In series “Kentucky Libraries History” Box 4, folder “Correspondence 1939,” Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

Nofcier could easily handle. Written accounts of lost books, misplaced invoices, and lost donations of cash became more frequent. Individual donations were coming in on a daily basis and ranged from a few pennies to a few dollars. Most donations were from one to five dollars. The sheer number of these donations created time consuming work for Nofcier since she was taking time to answer each contributor with a personal letter. Moreover, the time required for purchasing books, processing invoices, and shipping items out to the individual libraries had begun to take up most of Nofcier's time. Paperwork mistakes became frequent as invoices became misplaced and bookkeeping increased. In addition to managing new book acquisitions and purchases, fundraising, and book drives, more requests were coming into her office for the creation of new packhorse libraries in other counties.⁴⁷

By the end of 1939, the management of collections for the packhorse libraries had grown beyond the expectation of state officials and the local libraries. However, donations were not keeping up with demand. Nofcier reported in January 1940 that collections for the thirty-two packhorse libraries exceeded one-half million books. With an average of about 11,000 volumes per library, shortages of reading material remained. By 1940, the packhorse libraries were serving about 350,000 residents in Eastern Kentucky.⁴⁸

The local PTA chapters had been helpful in assisting Nofcier's effort to acquire books. However, it was necessary to reach out beyond that network to bring in more donations. In December 1938, Nofcier asked Ethyl Perryman, one of the four district supervisors of the WPA Women's and Professional Projects, to assist in supporting the packhorse libraries. Perryman

⁴⁷ "Annual Report of Library Services, 1938-39." Kentucky Department of Libraries. In series "Kentucky Libraries History" Box 7, folder "Library Reports 1939," Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁴⁸ "Annual Report of Library Services, 1939-40." Kentucky Department of Libraries. In series "Kentucky Libraries History" Box 7, folder "Library Reports 1940," Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

had been successful in earlier efforts at gaining the support of the local PTA chapters.⁴⁹ As 1938 was coming to a close, a new sense of urgency was emerging with respect to acquiring additional reading material. In addition to the thirty-two packhorse libraries in operation, twenty-six requests for new libraries were pending. Weekly circulation of reading material including books and magazines had reached 160,000, and the packhorse librarians were riding over five thousand miles per month through the mountains.⁵⁰

Pressure was mounting for local packhorse libraries to supply more books to the mountain folk. Maggie Mae Smith, supervisor of the Whitley Packhorse Library, wrote a letter to the *Louisville Courier Journal* in April 1938 describing the shortage of books: “Bring me a book to read,’ is the cry of every child....not a certain book, but any kind of book. The child has read none of them. Any book, regardless of condition, will be greatly appreciated by this library.” The Whitley library was serving over three thousand children “scattered through the backwoods.” Smith complained that her library “cannot fill one-tenth of the requests.” She publicly pleaded for more reading material: “If you have any discarded books, regardless how bad they are worn, we will greatly appreciate them.”⁵¹ The demand for books had reached a boiling point by the summer of 1938, and packhorse library administrators needed a new approach to meeting that demand.

With a new sense of urgency, and with the assistance of Perryman, Nofcier initiated fundraising drives through local newspapers, women’s clubs, and eventually a national radio book drive. Hundreds of correspondence from Nofcier suggests a tiring effort on her part at

⁴⁹ Nofcier to Ethyl Perryman. Letter dated December 12, 1938. In Series “Kentucky Libraries History” Box 4, folder “Correspondence 1938,” Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁵⁰ Kentucky Department of Libraries, “Annual Report of Library Services, 1937-38.” In series Kentucky Libraries History, ” Box 7, Folder “Library Reports, 1938.” Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky),4.

⁵¹Maggie Mae Smith, Letter to the Editor. *Louisville Courier Journal* (April 11, 1938), 6.

maintaining the necessary collections to support the explosive growth of the program. Just prior to the Christmas holidays in 1938, Nofcier completed a state tour where she pitched the program to PTA chapters, schools, YMCAs and private citizens. Thousands of book donations poured into the packhorse libraries in early 1939. Many donations were “cast-offs” that had been discarded from schools and libraries, or leftovers from rummage sales. Many books were in unusable condition and worthless. However, the packhorse librarians accepted this material and often cannibalized them into scrapbooks to be circulated. Weekly meetings at the center libraries were held for clipping stories, articles, and recipes from worn books and magazines. Training in book mending was also part of maintaining books often damaged that resulted from the many miles they traveled through the mountains.⁵²

The fundraising and book drives initiated by Nofcier were not just about large numbers of books. Quality of content was an obvious concern when asking her sources for support. Nofcier had a particular interest in providing reading material practical to daily living in the mountains, or recreational. Her attitude about mountain folk and literacy was based on the somewhat accurate perception that reading material would have to be relevant before it could be accepted into mountain culture. Old chemistry texts, foreign language books, and arithmetic texts were considered inappropriate. Nofcier also disallowed magazines including *True Story*, *Love Story*, or mystery/detective magazines. She encouraged books on religion, art, invention, cooking, and gardening. Short stories in American literature were also encouraged. Her list of preferred magazines included *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Parents Magazine*, *Reader's Digest*, and *National Geographic*. Nofcier encouraged a broad range of children's literature and

⁵² G. W. Townsend. “Book Women Carry Culture to Eastern Kentucky Hills.” *Kentucky* (Winter 1939), 38.

directed packhorse libraries to promote the reading of children's books by adults learning to read.⁵³

The Monday Night Radio Hour

A significant component to Nofcier's book drive after 1938 was her use of radio as a means of communicating to the outside world the need for books to supply the packhorse librarians. During the first two years of the program, several public service announcements had been submitted to radio stations throughout Kentucky. One of those stations was located in Renfro Valley, Kentucky. The station was equipped with one of the most powerful transmitters in the nation. John Lair was the owner and station manager at Renfro Valley, and an early pioneer in radio credited with the development of the first "country" radio program in the nation. In 1940, he established the Renfro Valley roadside attraction where travelers could stop for a meal, camp, and see live performances of emerging talent in the new genre of country and bluegrass music. The live music program at Renfro Valley featured local artists including the Carter family. Lair was in need of other programming to fill air time during the week. Lair hosted *The Monday Night Radio Hour* broadcast live from an old one-room school house to provide programming on the night when the live stage was dark. He had purchased the log school and had it relocated to his attraction claiming that it was the school that he, his father, and grandfather attended during the previous 100 years.⁵⁴ From that small room, Lair provided his audience with folk music from local artists and music from other countries, and he made frequent attempts to bring the outside world into the living rooms of mountain folk by presenting

⁵³ Lena Nofcier, "Packhorse Library Project." Report to Mrs. J. Adams (WPA) dated October 17, 1939 (margin note). In Series "Kentucky Libraries History" Box 7, folder "Correspondence 1939, Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁵⁴ Today, the school still stands at Renfro Valley and remains a feature of the modern-day attraction.

commentary on news, sports, and cultural trends in other parts of the country.⁵⁵

Early in 1941, Lair was asked by Ethyl Perryman to assist in advertising the packhorse library book drive. The request fit squarely within his purpose of uplifting the mountain folk and exposing them to new ideas. Broadening their interaction with the modern world and the new consumer economy was something he viewed as good business. He agreed without hesitation to help the packhorse librarians with their cause. Lair seemingly understood the relationship between commercial radio and a literate public. A literate audience would participate more in the mainstream economy and provide a broader base for advertisers.⁵⁶

On February 10 1941, Lair began his radio campaign to bring books into the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Initially, his request to the listening audience was for “only books that you or your parents have actually used in the schoolhouse.”⁵⁷ Noting that he had already received donations consisting of “old blueback spellers an’ most of the McGuffey Readers,” Lair specifically requested “geographies” and “rithmaticks.” By the end of the following month, Lair was requesting books of all types to distribute throughout the mountains. He described to his radio audience the packhorse librarians and their purpose:

You know, we have here in Renfro Valley what’s known as the Packhorse Library. We gether up all the books we kin git hold of an’ load ‘em on packhorses an’ git back in the mountains to folks who have no other chance of gittin’ hold of a book er anything to read. It’s really a worth-while project an’ I know it’s a big help to the mountain boys an’ girls, cause most of what little education I got hold of in my younger days came from readin’ the

⁵⁵ Pete Stamper, *It all Happened in Renfro Valley* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 211-221.

⁵⁶ Ethyl Perryman to John Lair, Letter dated February 22, 1941. In Series BCA, Box 54, folder “Renfro Valley Papers.” Berea College Archives (Berea, Kentucky).

⁵⁷ John Lair, *Monday Night Radio Hour*, Program Script found in Berea College Archives, Series: Monday Night Radio Hour, Box 41, Folder 8 (February 17, 1941).

old magazines an' books an' sich that Miss Cleo Brown, the post mistress up at Mt. Vernon used to save fer me.⁵⁸

Lair's weekly broadcast was heard from as far away as Texas, Iowa, and Oklahoma. At one point, Lair had arrangements to send copies of his live music program to countries in South America using a Hispanic announcer. However, there is no record of any books having been sent to Renfro Valley from overseas. The response to Lair's call for reading material was overwhelming. Although the exact number of books and magazines sent from around the country is not available, the letters accompanying many of the shipments suggested books numbering in the tens of thousands. Andrew Schreiner of Dayton, Ohio sent a typical shipment of books on March 31. In his letter to Lair he stated that he had purchased wooden "tobacco crates" to ship several hundred pounds of books and "fifty pounds of *National Geographic* magazines." Schreiner even went to the extent of holding a local book sale in Dayton to raise money to cover the cost of shipping. School teachers from the northeast also participated in sending large amounts of books.⁵⁹ A retired teacher from New York, J. W. Wright, sent a small library of school books that included volumes on natural science, economics, arithmetic, rhetoric, and classroom management.⁶⁰ Mrs. M. Scott of South Vienna, Ohio sent 300 books and wrote that "my first school was in a little log school house and I wish I could be with you in person."⁶¹

⁵⁸John Lair, *Monday Night Radio Hour*, Program Script, in series: Monday Night Radio Hour, Box 41, Folder 8, Berea College Archives (Berea, Kentucky).

⁵⁹ Andrew Schreiner to John Lair. Letter dated March 31, 1941. In series: Monday Night Radio Hour, Box 41, Folder "Letters". Berea College Archives (Berea, Kentucky). These folders contain about two hundred letters from listeners from all areas of the country east of the Rocky Mountains. An examination of this collection suggests thousands of books were sent to Renfro Valley. It is assumed that not all shipments were sent with a letter attached. The sheer numbers of books that each donor sent is impressive considering the cost of shipping and the value of the books.

⁶⁰ J.W. Wright to John Lair. Letter dated March 2, 1941. In series: "Monday Night Radio Hour," Box 41, Folder "Letters.," Berea College Archives (Berea, Kentucky).

⁶¹ Mrs. M. Scott to John Lair. Letter dated April 7, 1941. In series: "Monday Night Radio Hour," Box 41, Folder "Letters.," Berea College Archives (Berea, Kentucky).

Although many books donated through Lair's book drive at Renfro Valley were not the sort that Nofcier hoped for, the sheer numbers of books collected was welcomed by the library supervisors. By the end of the radio drive in early summer 1940, the packhorse libraries received thousands of additional books for their collections. Lair's effort may have represented the single largest book drive during the eight years of packhorse library operations. Moreover, this particular book drive was a plain indication that reading had new meaning and importance for the mountain folk of Eastern Kentucky.

A New Reading Canon

While Lair and the Kentucky PTA were collecting thousands of donated books and magazines, the patrons of the packhorse libraries were broadening their reading appetites as a response to new reading opportunities and exposure to a broad selection of reading material provided in large part by the Packhorse Library Program. Prior to 1930, the reading canon of mountain families had been restricted to religious reading material supplied by old family bibles and pamphlets brought in by missionaries.⁶² This tradition would be permanently changed by their contact with the packhorse librarians. Moreover, the shift in reading appetites was sudden, and correlated with the late arrival of industrialization and a wage system that replaced subsistence living in the mountains.⁶³ By 1920, coal mining, textile factories and railroads replaced much of the subsistence farming as the primary economic source in Appalachia. These economic developments occurred much later in Eastern Kentucky than the rest of Appalachia

⁶² Paul Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 32-37. Also see Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 62-64.

⁶³ Jack E. Weller, *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 102-112. For a contemporary discussion on the effects of industrialization in Appalachia see David E. Lilienthal, "The Central Problem of the South: Increased Income," *Mountain Life and Work* 12:4 (January, 1937), 4-7.

and suggest a rapid transition to a wage economy. Although real economic growth was nominal in Eastern Kentucky even prior to the Great Depression, mountain folk were willing to participate in wage earning in order to bring much needed cash to subsistence farms.

Early reports from the packhorse librarians indicated that their initial impressions of mountain folk were very positive. One report suggested that “the intelligence of the Kentucky mountaineer is very keen.”⁶⁴ Another librarian reported, “All that has ever been said about him to the contrary notwithstanding, he is honest, truthful, and God-fearing, but bred to peculiar beliefs.”⁶⁵ Librarians also reported that initial requests centered on religious material. Many requests for Bibles were made in the early weeks of the program. Since women were generally the first to accept books from the packhorse librarians, their requests centered on homemaking books, canning manuals, and magazines.⁶⁶

Requests from men followed soon after. Within weeks, the demand for books on farming and agriculture was beyond capacity. Men were also requesting reading for entertainment that often included children’s literature. Popular titles were *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Child’s Garden of Verses*, books by Charles Dickens, and William Shakespeare. Frequent requests for textbooks were made by adults indicating an interest in increasing literacy for their children and themselves. Math and science texts were popular despite Nofcier’s discouragement along with American literature and grammar books. By 1938, packhorse libraries were receiving requests for most major magazine publications.⁶⁷ One librarian reported that a mountain family, not

⁶⁴Kentucky Department of Libraries, “Annual Report of Library Services, 1938-39.” Series *Library History*, Box 2, Folder “Library Reports.” (Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives), 7.

⁶⁵ “Looking Back: 50 Years Ago: WPA Libraries in Kentucky.” *Kentucky Libraries*, 53 (Spring 1985), 28-29.

⁶⁶ Nofcier to Ethyl Perryman. Letter dated April 7, 1939. In Series “Kentucky Library History” Box 7, folder “Correspondence 1939, Kentucky State Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁶⁷ “Annual Report of Library Services, 1938-39.” Kentucky Department of Libraries, 9.

having received any Christmas cards for the holidays, requested that some be brought. The following week, the packhorse librarian delivered Christmas cards from the entire library staff and several city residents.⁶⁸ During the entire run of the packhorse program, requests for recipes were constant. Cook books were extremely popular, and some libraries assembled their own cookbooks, or “scrapbooks” made from newspaper and magazine clippings.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Nofcier was placing requests for the kinds of reading demanded by mountain families. She notified local PTA chapters that there were specific needs for reading material. By 1941, she had instructed her sources for donations to include textbooks, literature and instructional material. Nofcier continued to support the demand for religious material, although such requests dropped significantly toward the end of the program. She specifically promoted traditional literature especially with respect to children’s books.⁷⁰ There is no evidence she supported popular reading such as comic books or dime novels. However, there is no indication this type of material was being discouraged. In fact, there is no evidence of any type of censorship among the packhorse librarians other than the selection process used in meeting demand which remained broad in scope. Records seem to indicate that the overwhelming focus of the Packhorse Library Program was meeting the needs of readers without any sense of paternalism. There is no evidence of any controversy over collections or specific books being offered or withdrawn. Censorship issues do not appear in library records or reports, and a self-imposed strict adherence to library ethics was an apparent concern among packhorse librarians. Ethical awareness was especially acute with respect to the censorship issue and the idea of service to the community. This professional approach to library extension provided a

⁶⁸ “Footback Librarians of the Hills,” *Press Digest* (March 30, 1938), 1-2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Nofcier to the Junior Literary Guild, September 7, 1939.

relationship between librarian and patron that allowed for the free flow of knowledge and information, and a level of trust that fostered an expansion of reading interest. Moreover, this approach to librarianship was conducive to the establishment of a broad range of reading appetites that eventually evolved into a new reading canon that focused on practical learning and entertainment. These relationships were an important factor in the development of book collections and the demand for books. To illustrate this point, Kentucky Assistant Librarian Mary U. Rothrock described in 1937 the coordinated efforts of packhorse libraries and their patrons:

It is not surprising that the collections vary from those usually found libraries of similar size. Selection of books is made a cooperative exercise wherein the interests of staff and patron are actively sought. It has not been a premeditated policy, but a response to public demand, which has led to special emphasis on the natural sciences, the useful arts, and economic subjects. Pamphlets, bulletins, and magazines are circulated freely. So-called “basic” books are borrowed from nearby libraries to meet infrequent calls for them. In fact, observation of the books which are actually used and those which are not tends to shake—not to say shatter—one’s faith in the efficacy of “basic” book lists.⁷¹

Rural one-room schools benefited from this same philosophy having been regularly served by the Packhorse Library Program resulting in a broader reading selection. Reading material for the lower grades was in extreme short supply during the Depression. This shortage was caused in large part due to the demographic make-up of rural Kentucky schools. Most students attended school sporadically, and many upper grade students remained at lower levels of reading. Thus, the wear and tear on books for beginning readers was high. The young reader books often wore out well before their normal life expectancy and money to replace them was not available.⁷² Packhorse Libraries were overwhelmed with requests from rural teachers for

⁷¹ Mary U. Rothrock. “Kentucky’s Rural Libraries,” *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 31:12 (December, 1937), 961-967.

⁷² Herman N. Morse, “Report of the Southern Mountain Educational Commission,” *Mountain Life and Work*, 12:7 (July 1937), 11-13.

lower level reading material. Specific requests were made by teachers for titles including *Sun Bonnet Babies*, *Raggedy Ann*, and the *Just So Stories* series. Children's books were high priority for Nofcier, and they were purchased and supplied to rural schools as money became available. By 1938, small school libraries began to appear on teacher book shelves throughout the region offering a new variety of high interest reading for children of all ages.⁷³

There is ample evidence the combined contact with children at school and at home was having a significant positive impact on recreational reading. There are many accounts of packhorse librarians encountering unprecedented interest in reading among the youngest members of mountain communities. Their anecdotal reports of these encounters are revealing. In Owsley County, a packhorse librarian reported in 1938 that she had recently "passed three little boys on their way to a day's fishing...I heard one of them say 'No, I ain't going now. Yonder comes the Bookwoman'." Another carrier reported that "a little boy permanently invalidated with a broken back begged, 'Teach me to read an I won't never be lonesome'."⁷⁴ Perhaps the most colorful account of a young reader was recorded by packhorse librarian Susie Brown:

One day this week, we rode up to the fence of a mountain cabin, and asked for a little girl whom we have been taking books to. Her father came out and told us he had just as soon that we didn't leave any books for his gal because he couldn't get her to do anything except read. He said, "My cornfield needs hoeing and sitting in a corner with your nose in a book wouldn't get them weeds out." We talked to him about the value of reading good books, so we finally got his consent to leave a new selection for our little friend.⁷⁵

This type of interaction, compromise, and consent was what made the program a success, and allowed packhorse librarians eventually to enter the homes and cabins of mountain folk to expand their horizons to more types of reading material. One account documents the highly

⁷³ "Annual Report of Library Services, 1938-39." Kentucky Department of Libraries, 14-16.

⁷⁴ E. Fullerton, "Just What is a Packhorse Library?" 4.

⁷⁵ Ibid

personal nature of patron-librarian interaction and illustrates the success of the Packhorse Library Program:

I stopped at one home and discovered that no member of the family had ever been higher than the third grade. The old woman of the family told her granddaughter to bring out a letter she had gotten three weeks before to see if the bookwoman could read it to her. She had been saving it all of this time. I opened the letter and found it was the announcement of a new great-grandson. Tears fell from her eyes as I told her the baby's name as it had been named for her husband.⁷⁶

Encounters like these represented the best work of the Packhorse Librarians. By adhering to the basic principles of librarianship requiring the free flow of knowledge, and their sensitivity to the demands of patrons, the packhorse librarians nurtured the practical daily use of reading, making literacy an integral part of life in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Their work broadened opportunities for reading and literacy in the mountains during a time of important economic and social change, and their work preceded mass media, public libraries, and consolidated schools. Thus, by 1943, the packhorse librarians were pioneers of reading and literacy in the most isolated mountain communities of Eastern Kentucky.

Conclusion

The success of the Packhorse Library Program can be identified through a number of indicators. First, the demand for reading material increased at a constant rate during the years of operation. Expansion of book collections, book drives, and pleas from state officials for fund raising points to a high demand for reading material. Librarian journals repeatedly refer to increasing interests in reading, and daily entries suggest a growing relationship between patron and librarian premised on trust and a high degree of respect. What little resistance encountered dissipated quickly as relationships grew. There is little written by patrons about the packhorse

⁷⁶ Leland E. Owen, "First District Report," *Kentucky Parent Teacher: The Official Bulletin, Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers*, (May 1938), 7.

librarians. However, the librarian reports and journals are consistent in suggesting a growing interest in reading. Moreover, circulation reports provide evidence that soon after implementation, patrons were comfortable with making requests for particular books, and librarians were willing to meet those requests. Public school teachers also reported that packhorse librarians were intensely popular among their students, and looked forward to classroom visits. Teachers were also reporting a significant increase in student motivation for reading. Additionally, the willingness of local volunteers to assist with maintaining local libraries suggests that success of packhorse libraries was in part due to the customization of the program to fit local needs, and by using local resources in a way that placed in federal government far into the background of daily operations. Thus, reports from librarians, teachers, administrators, and circulation data point to a high degree of success early on in the program.

This investigation into the years of implementation and growth of the WPA Packhorse Library Program sheds light on three historical inquiries. First, the packhorse libraries extended the outreach work previously conducted by higher education institutions in the region. Shannon Wilson's scholarship on the extensive educational outreach programs conducted by Berea College and the pioneer settlement schools can be viewed as a significant precedent that laid the foundation for bringing several hundred thousand books into a region where virtually none had existed beyond the occasional family Bible and church pamphlet.⁷⁷ These earlier extension programs promoted and financed by small private colleges were part of a national effort to implement extension education programs beginning in the late 1800s. Extension programs sponsored by higher education institutions including the University of Wisconsin and University of Chicago targeted rural farm families as a means of increasing agricultural production, and

⁷⁷ Shannon H. Wilson, *Berea College, An Illustrated History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006) 84-87.

provide correspondence courses to enhance daily life. Although the Packhorse Library Program was not directly connected to any particular higher education institution, that program was effectively modeled after the Berea College extension programs. Establishing the packhorse libraries as a surrogate to the efforts of earlier missionary programs and local colleges helped to ensure the success and popularity of the program.

Second, the overwhelming response to the packhorse librarians and the reading material they supplied occurred during a period of significant economic and social change in the mountain region. The demand to read for pleasure and entertainment suggests a significant shift away from the missionary and religious reading material supplied to them during the previous half century. With a broader selection of books and magazines, mountain folk were able to make more complex choices about what they read. The new and diverse reading canon that enveloped the mountains during the Depression years was, as suggested by historian William J. Gilmore in his study of the Upper Vermont Valley, an expanded access to print and written matter that “led to vastly different levels of cultural participation.”⁷⁸ Moreover, this study reveals that men and women coming into contact with this federally funded program were more similar than divergent in their acceptance of new reading material, and is further confirmation of the social processes of literacy and reading as outlined by Gilmore.

Third, the relationships established between patrons and packhorse librarians offers further insight into the empowering effects of communication theory. The packhorse librarians facilitated the gradual emergence of a new and broad reading ethos among mountain folk. Although program administrators and librarians made decisions with respect to book and magazine collections, it was their collective demand for diverse materials that eventually

⁷⁸ William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 33.

empowered mountain folk to read what they believed was important to their daily lives. This free flowing communication between supplier and recipient was arguably the key component for the success of the program as it relates to several hundred thousand new library patrons with established reading habits. The growth of library readership as a response to the work of the packhorse librarians in Eastern Kentucky from 1936 until the end of the program in 1943 had lasting consequences on the future of the Kentucky library system, and national implications with respect to the future of library extension services and the role of the federal government in improving the lives of individuals.

These three considerations suggest that a significant shift had occurred in local perceptions regarding the value of literacy. The involvement of local school boards, state government, and the WPA provided a broad confirmation within mountain communities that the social utility of literacy involved all aspects of daily living including work, farming, religion, government, recreation, and socialization. Moreover, this shift would play an important role in the long-term relationships between mountain folk and future literacy outreach programs in Eastern Kentucky.

CHAPTER 5
POLITICS AND PROGRESS: DECLINE OF THE PACKHORSE LIBRARIES, 1940-1943

Introduction

By 1940, proponents of the New Deal faced a new and complex political landscape that challenged the conventional arguments made in favor of the massive economic intervention programs of the previous decade. Accusations of patronage, corruption, and reminders from Republican opponents of the temporary nature of New Deal programs caught the attention of many Americans by 1940.¹ Moreover, the popularity of the Roosevelt administration among Washington insiders declined significantly as a result of the president's Supreme Court restructuring plan.² Additionally, Southern resistance to New Deal programs, and the loss of small farmer support due to relocation programs and favoritism for corporate agriculture increased resistance to federal programs in the south.³ The obvious approach of war and the retooling of the American economy put millions of Americans back to work making wages far better than those provided by government job programs of the past. Thus, the decline of New Deal programs designed to support the economy through the creation of jobs became an almost inevitable political process in the early 1940s.

As New Deal programs moved forward, public schools had made significant progress toward consolidation during the 1930s, especially in the South and in Appalachia. By 1942, all Kentucky school districts had complied with state laws requiring a comprehensive high school in each county. WPA and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) programs constructed schools

¹ Alonzo L. Hamby. *For the Survival of Democracy: Franklin Roosevelt and the World Crisis of the 1930s* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 364-366.

² Ronald L. Feinman. *Twilight of Progressivism: The Western Republican Senators and the New Deal* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 117-135.

³ Michael Janeway. *The Fall of the House of Roosevelt: Brokers of Ideas and Power from FDR to LBJ* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 37-39.

throughout Eastern Kentucky including several large multi-classroom schools with additional space for libraries.⁴ In addition to the proliferation of comprehensive high schools, the Kentucky Department of Libraries had significant political success acquiring state funding for local public libraries in rural counties. The district library system was established in 1943, and state funding provided money for the purchase of books for each district.⁵ By 1943, The Packhorse Library Program was a victim of the success and obsolescence of the New Deal, the establishment of consolidated schools in rural counties, and expansion of public libraries. Moreover, the significant increase in new roads throughout the Eastern Kentucky region during the 1930s provided better access to schools and libraries, and eventually facilitated inter-library circulation and bookmobiles. Thus, the changing political climate prior to World War II, and the sudden barrage of modernization during the Great Depression in Eastern Kentucky made the Packhorse Library obsolete by 1943. However, the demise of the Packhorse Library Program and subsequent replacement by public and school libraries, and better infrastructure that provided contact with the outside world ensured that government education programs and library services would continue in post-war rural Kentucky.

The Politics of an Old New Deal

For New Dealers, the antidote for joblessness was work rather than charity. United by this belief, economic reformers designed myriad work relief programs at the local, state, and federal levels. Federal work relief policies were significantly influenced by New York Democrats. William Mathews and Homer Folks, designers of the New York City Temporary Emergency

⁴ Harry M Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1962), 240; Dominic W. Moreo. *Schools in the Great Depression* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 124-126.

⁵ Kentucky Department of Libraries. “*Annual Report of the State Librarian, 1942*” (Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Department of Libraries, 1942), 7-10.

Relief Administration (TERA), and Harry Hopkins, who served as chairman of TERA, espoused the notion that work would be the best remedy for current economic conditions. Hopkins, who later became the head of the federal government's Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), and who would eventually direct the WPA, argued that work was "a habit liked, and from which they [the unemployed] drew their self respect."⁶ Thus, for Hopkins and other New Deal architects, work relief programs were for the purpose of addressing the psychological aspects of economic recovery. Physical well-being in the short term was not the overriding concern. Economic historian William W. Brenner suggested that if economic and physical welfare had been the primary concern of New Deal administrators, they would have supported "massive deficit expenditures for direct relief."⁷ In Kentucky, the Packhorse Library Program operated from the perspective of the Hopkins philosophy. Over one thousand women served in the program during seven years of operation.⁸ However, the longevity of the program and the sense of mission in terms of bringing reading into the mountains added an unintended dynamic to what was initially another small employment program for women: the proliferation of reading material at an unprecedented level. The packhorse libraries had an additional psychological dimension found in the relationships between librarians and patrons. Ending the Packhorse Library Program would become a process of replacement and rebuilding of those relationships with new institutions for literacy and learning.

New Dealers had always conformed to the conservative notion that government programs should not interfere with the ongoing capitalistic economy. This idea went beyond a concern

⁶ Harry L. Hopkins. *Spending to Save: The Complete Story of Relief* (New York: Viking, 1936), 109.

⁷ William W. Bremer. "Along the 'American Way': The New Deal's Work Relief Programs for the Unemployed," *Journal of American History*, 62:3 (December, 1975), 636-652.

⁸ Robert Beach. "Book Extension Services in Eastern Kentucky," *Mountain Life and Work*, 17:12 (Summer, 1941), 1-8, 18.

about competing with private business. The administration did not allow New Deal programs to compete with state and local programs. This was especially true with respect to public school districts.⁹ The Packhorse Libraries found a comfortable existence in a region of Kentucky with little competition from public libraries or schools. Institutions of higher learning, including Berea College, had disengaged from outreach reading programs by 1936. Thus, the Packhorse Library Program fit well within Hopkins' restriction that programs were to be relegated to work that "would not otherwise be done."¹⁰ Additionally, New Deal administrators operated all programs on temporary terms. According to historian James T. Patterson, high level administrators in the New Deal maintained conservative assumptions and beliefs with respect to the temporary nature of work relief.¹¹ In fact, from the inception of the first major New Deal programs, administrators refused to champion work relief as a permanent federal policy because the ideal violated their longstanding conception of the "American way."¹² As an offshoot to this approach, and as a means to make New Deal programs palatable to the business sector, new work relief programs were governed throughout their existence by a policy of noncompetitive wages. This policy was designed to keep the federal government from competing with private business for labor, and encourage workers to move out of work relief programs when private jobs became available. However, wages had to be high enough to maintain the morale of workers, and sustain their families.¹³ In the cash strapped region of Eastern Kentucky, twenty-eight dollars per month was an attractive sum for the packhorse librarians. Teachers in the area

⁹ Robert E. Sherwood. *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1948), 84-87.

¹⁰ Harry L. Hopkins. *Spending to Save*, 122.

¹¹ James T. Patterson. "A Conservative Coalition Forms in Congress, 1933-1939," *Journal of American History* 52 (March 1966), 759-770.

¹² William W. Brenner, "Along the American Way,"

¹³ Harry L. Hopkins. "Employment in America," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 3 (December 1, 1936), 106.

were earning about seventy dollars per month. However, packhorse library jobs were intended to merely supplement the farms on which the women lived with their families.¹⁴ From that perspective, the pay was sufficient and attractive, and at no time did the program find it difficult to hire workers. Morale was typically high, and packhorse librarians took the initiative in ways that made their jobs more demanding. Thus, the Packhorse Library Program fit within most of the important parameters of administrative expectations for a federal work relief program.

New Deal Support Erodes

In 1938, historian Walter Millis declared that the New Deal had been “reduced to a movement with no program with no effective political organization.”¹⁵ More recent analysis has been less kind to the Roosevelt Administration. Robert Shogan suggested that the New Deal was killed by a series of political moves from 1937 to 1942. Moreover, Shogan argues that the decline of the New Deal was “one of the great collapses in the history of American politics.”¹⁶ Historians including Arthur M. Schlesinger and Richard Hofstadter emphasized Roosevelt’s attempt to restructure the Supreme Court to explain the demise of New Deal political support.¹⁷ However, their explanation ignores several other political variables at play prior to World War II.

Growing dissent among Washington politicians caused additional uncertainty among New Dealers in 1938. The November elections left Democrats still in control of both houses. However, Republicans gained seventy-five seats in the House and seven seats in the Senate. Many of these seats were previously held by leftist Democrats. Additionally, conservative

¹⁴ Thomas H. Coode and John F. Bauman. “Dear Mr. Hopkins: A New Dealer Reports from Eastern Kentucky.” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 78 (Winter 1980), 59-62.

¹⁵ Walter Millis, “The President’s Political Strategy,” *Yale Review* (September 1938), 569-575.

¹⁶ Robert Shogan, *Backlash: The Killing of the New Deal* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 233-34.

¹⁷ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 447-496; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 316-318.

Democrats gained in their power resulting in the 1939 committee appointments.¹⁸ Several political issues were at play in the 1938 election. First, Roosevelt's stubborn pursuit of a balanced budget in 1937 alienated most Republicans and conservative Democrats. Several economic indicators pointed to a full recovery in late 1936 and early 1937. Unemployment fell to 7.7 million, a 50 percent decline since 1932. Wages had increased from \$1,086 to \$1,376 and corporate income nearly tripled. Railroads were operating at 80 percent capacity, and factories were adding extra shifts. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau advised Roosevelt in the spring of 1937 that the national economy no longer needed the current levels of economic priming. On April 20th, the president submitted his balanced budget for fiscal year 1938 containing significant program cuts for most of the major New Deal programs. The WPA budget was reduced by nearly one-third to \$1.3 billion. This was after the WPA had trimmed a half million jobs during the 1937 calendar year. Additionally, the CCC lost more than 200,000 jobs and a 25 percent cut in funding. Other programs including the NYA experienced similar cuts.¹⁹

Just as Congress was passing the 1938 budget, economic reports were indicating a slump across most economic sectors overshadowing the long term gains made during the previous five years. The economic recovery that Morgenthau touted had not run as deep as suspected. Weak numbers in the major indicators, including employment and consumer spending, raised eyebrows in both houses of Congress. The first Social Security deductions amounting to \$2 billion per year began in January of 1937 adding more pressure to disposable income. In March 1938 the stock market lost half of its value, unemployment increased by a half million, and by summer

¹⁸ T. H. Watkins. *The Hungry Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 504-505.

¹⁹ Kenneth S. Davis. *FDR: Into the Storm, 1937-1940* (New York: Random House, 1993), 9-13.

corporate profits were down 78 percent. On April 14, Roosevelt sent a request to Congress for \$3 billion for a loan stimulus bill that was responsible for turning the economy around in 1939.²⁰ However, the political damage had been done. In late 1938 Congress refused to pass an executive reorganization bill that would have given Roosevelt more autonomy and power. Those voting against the bill included 108 Democrats. During the rest of the congressional session, FDR managed to get only the Fair Labor Standards Act passed. In reaction to congressional opposition to his legislative agenda, Roosevelt aired a “Fireside Chat” on June 24th. He attacked Republicans as “Copperheads,” taking the term from Abraham Lincoln’s castigation of Democrats who opposed his war policies. He went further by suggesting that all conservatives, whether Republican or Democrat, had entirely abandoned the idea that government should step in and take action to stabilize the economy. He then turned his sights on nine conservative Democrats and called for their removal in the upcoming interim election.²¹ By November 1939, Roosevelt had created a political rift between the administration and Congress that would take a war to repair. The major New Deal programs were caught in the middle of a Washington political stalemate that would prove fatal by 1943.

Politics and the WPA

At the start of 1936, the WPA had three and a half million people employed. However, there were more than a half million applicants each month for WPA jobs. Not everyone who needed work could get it from the government.²² Hopkins had achieved his goal of creating a government vast in scope and with relatively small administrative costs. Having served more

²⁰ Kenneth S. Davis, *Into the Storm*, 17-18.

²¹ William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 204-210; Max Lerner. “The Lincoln Image,” *New Republic* (November 9, 1938), 18-23.

²² Donald S. Howard. *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1943), 77.

than eight million persons, WPA administrators boasted in 1940 that of the \$10 billion appropriated for work relief, 86 percent had been spent for wage payments. The WPA left a legacy of buildings, bridges, roads, and parks, built mostly with materials furnished at the local and state level.²³ Hopkins managed to keep wages low, and the program was generally tightly run following his administrative principles. Many economists argued that WPA work relief programs operated efficiently as a rational actor of “classical liberal economic theory” by utilizing labor surplus and low wages to build a useful national infrastructure that significantly offset the costs of addressing unemployment and economic distress.²⁴

The apparent success of the WPA was countered with a barrage of criticism delivered from several political corners including from within the Roosevelt Administration. By 1937, after only a year of operation, Hopkins had managed to create a federal relief program that wrestled the lead from the Public Works Administration (PWA) as the most influential force in economic relief. Bold actions by Hopkins at the onset of the WPA eventually incited one of the most notorious political feuds during the New Deal Era between himself and Harold Ickes. As a liberal Republican, Ickes had been responsible for the formation of the Progressive Republican League for Roosevelt. He and Roosevelt met for the first time in 1933, and wanting the support of independent Republicans, the president offered him the Department of Interior. As Secretary of the Interior, Ickes was in charge of the PWA. His background included a B.A. from the University of Chicago, and a short career as a newspaper journalist before completing law school

²³ William E. Leuchtenburg. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, 55-58.

²⁴ Barton J. Bernstein. “The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform,” in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon, 1967), 22-27.

in 1907. Ickes practiced law for twenty-five years during which he worked for various political campaigns of mostly progressive independent candidates.²⁵

Ickes reorganized the Department of Interior with a focus on conservation and natural resources. He also emerged as one of Roosevelt's most ardent supporters, and perhaps his most politically active cabinet member. In 1933, the PWA was the most important agency for work relief and construction projects with a budget exceeding \$6 billion dollars. Additionally, Ickes served as administrator of the National Industrial Recovery Act and the nation's first federal housing program. In November 1934, Ickes asked Roosevelt in private to make Hopkins a deputy administrator in the PWA. Although there were public comments made by Ickes that suggested he and Hopkins were getting along, an all out power struggle was going on behind the scenes. Unbeknownst to Ickes, Roosevelt had already asked Hopkins to design a complete recovery package that included a works program, social security, and wage support programs.²⁶

During the Thanksgiving Holiday, Roosevelt met with Ickes and Hopkins in Warm Springs to hear the ideas of both men. Ickes suggested a recovery program that would be a long-term commitment by the federal government for public works and employment. Moreover, he argued that government should provide work for anyone needing a job regardless of the economic times. Hopkins offered a more conservative approach calling for a set of temporary programs that would serve as a short-term stimulus to the economy. Hopkins argued that rapid reemployment would ensue without the need for long-term spending policies, and he specifically attacked the Ickes plan by suggesting it would be in direct competition with private business, especially in the housing and public utility sectors. Hopkins also argued that the Ickes plan would discourage

²⁵ Harold L. Ickes. *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The First Thousand Days, 1933-1936* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953), 17-21, 203.

²⁶ Robert E. Sherwood. *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*, 122-141.

private investment in these sectors, and work relief should include jobs that would not ordinarily exist including employment in the arts, museums, literary projects, and libraries. Having witnessed the Warm Springs meeting, Morgenthau wrote that “Ickes and Hopkins are so worried about who is to do the job they can hardly think of the job itself.” Morgenthau advised the President that he would have to choose between the two men and their antagonism, or get nowhere.²⁷

Roosevelt, seeing that the temporary plan fit current economic conditions and political realities, favored the Hopkins model. Politically, the administration was interested in doing something as quickly as possible about unemployment. Thus, Roosevelt went with the plan that would provide the most jobs and the least expense to the government. There were other obvious advantages to the Hopkins plan. First, the amount of funds going directly to wages was double of that proposed by Ickes. Moreover, WPA gave more people direct employment as opposed to relief pay. The PWA hired in the general labor market rather than giving preference to those on the relief pay rolls, having only a secondary impact on the high unemployment rate. Thus, what emerged from the Warm Springs meeting was a set of long and short term job programs that could be quickly implemented, managed at the local level, and did not compete with the private sector once recovery began.²⁸ However, the decision to go with the Hopkins model created an immediate set of political enemies. The first funding resolution essentially asked Congress to allow Roosevelt to spend billions of dollars as he saw fit. Opposition came from conservative Democrats, Republicans, and Progressives like Ickes who believed the plan was too conservative. By 1937, the budget of the WPA had surpassed the total budget of the Interior

²⁷ Alan Lawson, *The Politics of Hope: The New Deal Response to Crisis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 120-123.

²⁸ Frank Freidel. *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Launching the New Deal* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 178-183.

Department, and Ickes publicly voiced his concern over WPA administrative policies. Ickes found the Hopkins policy of local control of WPA programs particularly disturbing. With his past record as a belligerent critic of government waste and corruption, Ickes warned of these possibilities within the WPA. By 1937, Roosevelt found himself in the middle of the Ickes-Hopkins issue.²⁹ Hopkins supporters within the administration accused Ickes of kicking Hopkins while he was down. Hopkins had suffered from a severe digestive disorder in the spring of 1937 and was bedridden for most of the year. That same year, his second wife died. Upon returning to work, Roosevelt invited Hopkins to move into the White House along with his daughter.³⁰ Soon after, Ickes increased his public rhetoric against loose WPA management policies, and he had supporters in and out of Congress providing him additional political clout. However, the speed and flexibility of WPA work programs won the day. The Ickes-Hopkins rivalry eventually developed into party politics. By 1938, labor, business and the Republican opposition provided the political impetus that Ickes had been wanting, and by 1941 the WPA faced a far different political climate.³¹

Southern Opposition to the New Deal and Defection of the Farmer

By 1933, the Roosevelt administration faced mounting economic difficulties in the South especially among small farmers, and the need for swift action became a political imperative.³² Roosevelt's concern over the plight of the southern farmer, and his support of southern politics, was driven by two factors. First, Roosevelt had a long standing connection with the South. In the 1920s, Roosevelt made several trips to Eastern Kentucky as a family representative buying

²⁹ Alan Brinkley. "The New Deal: Prelude," *Wilson Quarterly* 6 (1982), 50-61.

³⁰ Alonzo L. Hamby. *For the Survival of Democracy*, 273-277.

³¹ Searl F. Charles. *Minister of Relief: Harry Hopkins and the Depression* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), 64-68, 77-81.

³² Dixon Wecter. *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941*, (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 140-141.

land for railroad and mining development. He became embroiled in a legal battle in Hazard Kentucky after being accused of buying land for as little as fifty cents per acre without divulging to the owners that the sale of their land would mean forfeiture of mineral rights. The attorney representing local land owners was murdered in 1922 during the lawsuit, and Roosevelt eventually abandoned his business ventures in the area after losing in court. However, the time spent in Eastern Kentucky provided some insights into Appalachian economics and culture.³³ Years later, Roosevelt cultivated strong ties with the people of Georgia. His long stays at Warm Springs made him a local personality. Moreover, he took a genuine interest in the people and politics of the region by becoming involved with development of the local community including the establishment of the Warm Springs Foundation for the treatment and cure of polio. Georgia voters had elected Eugene Talmadge as governor in 1932, and his administration was labeled by opponents as a “champion of white supremacy.” A citizen “fact-finding movement” erupted across the state and was supported by Roosevelt. The resulting report suggested that Georgia was among the highest in church attendance, but stood near the bottom in education with an annual per capita spending of thirty dollars per pupil. In his 1932 campaign, Roosevelt suggested that the plight of southerners was the “nation’s number one political problem.” However, his response to the farming crisis in the South in 1933 would create significant political problems by his third term in office.³⁴

The second factor accounting for Roosevelt’s economic plan for the south was the general national interest in the region. This interest had been stimulated by a flood of scholarly and fictional literature during 1930s that had captivated the rest of the country. Old South

³³ Frances Perkins. *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York: Viking, 1946), 47-49.

³⁴Dixon Wecter. *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-194*, 59.

“honeysuckle” novels included Stark Young’s *So Red the Rose*, Caroline Miller’s *Lamb in His Boston*, and Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings’ *The Yearling*, and George Gershwin’s Broadway play “Porgy and Bess” added to the genre. More realistic literature included Thomas S. Stribling’s trilogy, *The Forge, Unfinished Cathedral, and Forged*. Books addressing social issues in the South like Arthur Raper’s *Preface to Peasantry*, and John Dollard’s *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* gained national attention throughout the 1930s.³⁵

A common theme that ran throughout the pages of these works was the spirit and sentiments of southern regionalism. These sentiments tended to reject urban industrialism and espouse the “culture of the soil.” By reasons of economics, geography, climate, history, and traditions, the South during the 1930s was the most unyielding and least assimilated region in the nation. Roosevelt’s compulsion to improve conditions in the South was the typical humanitarian response. Roosevelt’s challenge in addressing southern economic issues was in developing an overall national farm policy that would accommodate the regional uniqueness of the South including issues of race and gender. However, Roosevelt’s decision to implement the Hopkins Plan and his focus on helping large corporate farm interests alienated many small farmers. Moreover, his interest in the economic problems of the south was not interpreted by southerners as a genuine concern, especially in light of the massive relocation programs combined with a general distrust of the federal government.³⁶

Roosevelt’s National Agriculture Policy

In 1933, Roosevelt appointed Henry Wallace to serve as Secretary of Agriculture. Wallace had little regard for labor unions in general, and frequently voiced specific opposition to the

³⁵ Douglas Waples. “Research Memorandum on Reading Habits in the Depression,” *Social Science Research Bulletin*, 37 (1937), 8-11.

³⁶ Dixon Wecter. *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941*, 148-152.

Farmer's Union and the Farmer's Holiday Association. Wallace moved quickly with a set of agriculture relief proposals. However, his plan met intense opposition from within the administration while an army of lobbyists poured into the capital representing "every opinion, every commodity, and every locality."³⁷ Additionally, representatives of hundreds of business sectors affected by agriculture policies added to the political complexity. Out of this political arena emerged the Agriculture Adjustment Act of 1933 (AAA). This law provided lines of credit for farmers facing bankruptcy. However, an amendment made it into the bill at the last minute that gave the government control over farm prices and to regulate the price of gold and silver. Additionally, Title I of the AAA established an allotment program for most agricultural commodities by restricting production.³⁸

In Appalachia, people regarded this portion of the law as intrusive and anti-capitalistic. Land for the production of food was scarce, and only a small portion of Appalachian farms could be used for crops. Thus, the glaring flaw of new production limits was that amidst rumors of starvation on small farms across the nation and especially in Appalachia, the federal government was insisting on cutbacks of food commodities. While the policy drove up food prices and provided better profits for farmers, subsistence farmers in Eastern Kentucky feared food shortages. Many mountain farms sent little or no food to market, keeping most for feeding their families and livestock. Cutbacks in food production were unthinkable for most in the Appalachian region.³⁹

³⁷ Robert F. Hunter. "Virginia and the New Deal," in *The New Deal: The State and Local Levels* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1975), 119-121.

³⁸ T. H. Watkins. *The Hungry Years*, 357-361.

³⁹ John Shover. "Depression Letters From American Farmers," *Agricultural History* (July 1962), 13-22.

Adding to the distrust brought on by the AAA in 1933, mountain folk were subjected to a federal relocation program that uprooted families from the farms they had occupied for generations. New Deal relocation programs in Kentucky and Tennessee supported two massive recovery programs: The Tennessee Valley Authority, and a series of Eastern national parks. Beginning in 1934 and ending in 1942 with the Oak Ridge nuclear project relocation, the Resettlement Administration relocated more than a half million people in what proved to be one of the most disastrous programs within the New Deal.⁴⁰ Families relocated from the Norris Basin in Southeastern Kentucky and Northeastern Tennessee were part of the first wave of resettlement. Families had only weeks to leave their homesteads and payment for their land was based on severely deflated prices brought on by the Depression. Land could not be replaced for the prices paid by the federal government. Estimates of families leaving farming altogether and taking up industrial jobs range from 40 to 60 percent. Relocation caseworker investigations in the Norris Basin revealed that in one 239 square mile area there were 204 churches, 25 percent of landowners had less than a third grade education, and only 16 percent owned automobiles. The ability of farm families to relocate to similar communities and find employment that would provide a similar lifestyle was virtually nonexistent.⁴¹ By 1938, the federal government owned much of the land in Eastern Kentucky. Clay County had forfeited 80 percent of the county to the Department of Interior. Families had been torn apart, livelihoods destroyed, and generations of cultural tradition dismantled. Resentment to Roosevelt and the New Deal ran high, and the

⁴⁰ Michael McDonald and John Muldowney. *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 50, 57.

⁴¹ John A. Williams. *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 305-306.

Appalachian dirt farmer in Southeastern Kentucky joined much of the South in resisting New Deal economic policies.⁴²

Although the Packhorse Libraries remained popular, the loss of support for federal recovery programs accelerated the eventual end of the New Deal. The very people who were being helped by the WPA library program were rejecting the broader tenets of the recovery effort. Crop limits, price controls, land acquisition, relocation, and policies unfriendly to labor unions overshadowed the Packhorse Library Program by 1941. After the New Deal, the rural counties in Eastern Kentucky were permanently changed in both economic and cultural terms, placing the Packhorse Library Program at risk of becoming obsolete and a victim of national politics.

Modernization in Eastern Kentucky

By 1943, the last year of operation for the packhorse librarians, the economic and cultural landscape of Eastern Kentucky had changed significantly. Economic historian W. W. Rostow provided a set of explanations for what was occurring in Appalachia in his book *Stages of Economic Growth*. As an economist, Rostow suggested that Appalachia in the Great Depression experienced the first phase of modernization: extractive industry. Rostow traced the origins of the American industrial economy to the mass removal and use of natural resources in the last half of the nineteenth century.⁴³ This “sector theory” defined the economic processes that had occurred in Eastern Kentucky in the late 1800s and early 1900s. During this period when mining, forestry, and agriculture were the economic staples of mountain communities, three important areas of improvement occurred that had a direct impact on the viability and practicality

⁴² Harry M. Caudill. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, 123.

⁴³ Walt Whitman Rostow. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 92-96.

of the Packhorse Library Program: the gradual emergence of public library systems, the onset of consolidated schools, and the proliferation of modern roadways where none had previously existed. These factors eventually contributed to the end of traditional outreach reading and literacy programs in Kentucky including the packhorse libraries.⁴⁴

Library Growth in Kentucky, 1935-1943

By the time funding for the Packhorse Library ended in 1943, library service for Kentucky residents had improved. Many Eastern Kentucky counties established public libraries during the 1930s. Moreover, the administration of Governor Chandler was successful in the creation of a comprehensive plan for improving library services throughout the state. On the 100th anniversary of the birth of Andrew Carnegie, the Kentucky Library Commission reported that contributions from the Carnegie Foundation paid for twenty-three public and four college library buildings totaling \$1,211,600 in grants. Local gifts paid for an additional ten libraries. In May 1935, Governor Chandler and President Roosevelt shared the stage while addressing the American Library Association Conference. In his address, Chandler summarized his goals for Kentucky libraries which included the formation of regional libraries, state and federal aid for public and education libraries, creation of a federal library agency, integrating public libraries and public education, and better pay for librarians.⁴⁵

During the next five years many of Chandler's ideas were implemented. By 1937, The Kentucky Library Commission developed a comprehensive plan for state-wide equalized library services. The plan included the establishment of regional libraries, legal certification of librarians, cooperation with library agencies in other states, and a state-wide campaign to

⁴⁴ Rostow, 103.

⁴⁵ Florence H. Ridgeway. *Developments in Library Service in Kentucky* (Berea, Kentucky: Berea College Press, 1935), 8-9.

establish a public library in all Kentucky counties.⁴⁶ The 1937 American Library survey on resources in American libraries cited sixty public libraries in operation throughout Kentucky. This was nearly double the number in 1930. In line with the national Citizen's Library Movement, the Kentucky Citizen's Library League (KCLL) was established in Louisville on January 5, 1937. The KCLL immediately suggested that the state needed to reorganize the public library system into sixteen regions. This reorganization would place at least two well established libraries in each region that would support new libraries in smaller rural counties.⁴⁷ On July 8, the Kentucky State Board of Education passed a regulation stipulating that four percent of annual state appropriations to school districts be used for purchasing library books. Half of that money had to be used to develop libraries in elementary schools.⁴⁸ The combined efforts of the KCLL and the State Board of Education contributed to significant growth of the state's library system and the availability of books to rural schools. By 1943, library books were more prevalent in Eastern Kentucky and accessibility to those books had improved. Counties without public library service were included in the regional library system, and library books were part of mandated funding at the county level. Thus, the proliferation of libraries and improved accessibility to reading material in Kentucky's rural counties decreased the importance of the packhorse libraries, and decreased the dependence of rural library patrons on the limited collections carried on horseback.

⁴⁶ Ira Bell. "Problems of Equalization of Public Education in Kentucky," *Kentucky School Journal* 17:5 (January 1939), 10-15.

⁴⁷ Lena Nofcier. *History of the Public Library in Kentucky* (Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Library Commission, 1938), 23-29.

⁴⁸ Ruth T. Young. "Growth of the School Library in Kentucky," *Kentucky School Journal* 16:8 (April 1938), 36-38.

School Consolidation in Eastern Kentucky

Resistance to school consolidation in Eastern Kentucky counties was a local political tradition reaching back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Protestant sentiments regarding the purpose of public education provided what historian William J. Reese called a “leavening influence of churches.”⁴⁹ Public school superintendents in Kentucky were often Protestant ministers who opposed school consolidation proposals and regularly ignored state mandates requiring county high schools.⁵⁰ However, education reformers eventually succeeded in developing a strong consolidation movement in Eastern Kentucky during the 1920s and 1930s. Superintendent of Columbia County Schools O. E. Huddle promoted a professionally managed consolidated school district during the 1930s. In a letter to Lena Nofcier, he suggested that public schools in rural Kentucky could move toward centralization “due to the modern state of things.” By November 1936, Columbia County had eliminated all one-room schools and religious education that could be divisive.⁵¹

Huddle’s success was largely due to the philosophical link between reformers and the evangelical movement regarding the purpose of public education. Settlement schools including Hindman and Pine Mountain were the products of the evangelical missionary movement. These schools were established by missionaries in the last decades of the nineteenth century as large comprehensive schools offering a wide range of vocational programs. By the middle of the 1930s, the Kentucky State Legislature required a comprehensive high school in every county. The reputation of the settlement schools had been well established in many mountain

⁴⁹ William J. Reese, *The Origins of the American High School* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 118.

⁵⁰ John A. Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 201-210.

⁵¹ O. E. Huddle to Lena Nofcier, Letter dated 4 November 1936. In series “Kentucky Libraries History” Box 4, folder “Correspondence 1936,” Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

communities since the late 1800s. Thus, merging these private schools into the public school system as the first consolidated high schools in many Eastern Kentucky counties was an effective way of addressing the concerns of Protestant school officials.⁵²

In addition to the transfer of settlement schools into county school districts, the work of Berea College President William Frost and literacy activist Cora Wilson Stewart played a key role in the success of the rural school consolidation movement in Kentucky. In her book *Moonlight Schools for the Emancipation of Adult Illiterates*, Stewart echoed the rhetoric of Frost in describing the Appalachian people as “anxious to enter in and take their part in the work of the world.” Frost and Wilson successfully brought the missionary uplift message into the school reform movement dialogue.⁵³ Historian Yvonne H. Baldwin described Stewart’s rhetoric as “a faith in education” that held a promise of a better life for the poor and powerless. Moreover, this ‘rhetoric of benevolence’ suggested that upward mobility was a real possibility for mountain folk. Additionally, Stewart and Frost acknowledged that schooling was deeply connected to the class and economic structure of capitalism and the modern wage system.⁵⁴

Frost and Stewart consistently wrote of the ‘classical benefits’ of literacy and the development of an appreciation of learning for its own sake. Linking literacy to progress was the essence of progressive thinking at the time, and such a message coming from the most significant education missionaries in Eastern Kentucky played well at the local level and with state officials advocating reform. When school consolidation within school districts became a state mandate in

⁵² Henderson Dangerfield, “Social Settlement and Educational Work in the Kentucky Mountains,” *Journal of Social Science* 39 (November 1901), 176-189.

⁵³ Cora Wilson Stewart. *Moonlight Schools for the Emancipation of Adult Illiterates* (New York: E.P. Button Company, 1922), 70-91.

⁵⁴ Yvonne H. Baldwin, *Cora Wilson Stewart and Kentucky’s Moonlight Schools: Fighting for Literacy in America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 67-71.

1936, Frost and Wilson supported the move. Both wanted an education system that would be competitive by delivering instruction that would “enable adults to read and write basic sentences.”⁵⁵ In keeping pace with the thinking of progressive school reformers, Frost and Stewart firmly believed that as schools produce more literate people, the economy improves causing additional demands to be placed on public schools. Thus, the comprehensive high school and professional management through consolidated school districts fit within the philosophical frameworks of both the Protestant education leaders in Eastern Kentucky and Progressive school reformers calling for change through state regulation of local schools.

By the mid 1930s, local resistance to the establishment of comprehensive high schools and consolidated school districts in Eastern Kentucky had effectively disappeared. By 1943, every rural county in Kentucky had a comprehensive high school with space for a library. Several counties including Hyden, Scott, and Laurel had established more than one high school. By 1945, no county in Eastern Kentucky had more than two school districts. The number of students attending one-room schools dropped from 74 percent in 1930 to 40 percent by 1940. Moreover, school reform provided most public school students in Eastern Kentucky access to a library collection.⁵⁶

During the years of packhorse library operation, public school districts in Eastern Kentucky showed interest in the development of outreach library services. Mrs. David Heskamp, head librarian for Columbia County Schools, requested that a packhorse library be established in her district. Heskamp also served as the local P.T.A. Library Service Chair, and she justified her request for a packhorse library citing “we have no public library here, and our

⁵⁵ Stewart, 102.

⁵⁶Kentucky Educational Commission. *Report of the Kentucky Educational Commission, 1935* (Frankfort, 1935), 11-14, 22-24.

schools are not centrally located.”⁵⁷ Public libraries in counties where there were no packhorse libraries assisted in book collection. Kathryn Luse, head librarian of Mentor Township Public Library in Ohio, offered several hundred duplicate copy books. Her offer was gladly accepted, and the books were delivered to Nofcier’s office.⁵⁸

By 1943, Packhorse libraries were competing with new public and school libraries in the Appalachian counties. Bookmobiles were beginning to appear where roads permitted travel, and public library services were emerging in the new regional systems. However, outreach to the most remote areas of the mountains would not be replaced by the proliferation of library collections. Many adult readers in Eastern Kentucky would lose access to reading material when funding for the Packhorse Library Program ended.

Improvement in Roads and Infrastructure

Prior to the construction of highways and railroads, travel within the mountains was restricted to pack animal or foot. Those who lived near a road or stream had a clear economic advantage. For those living in the most remote areas of Eastern Kentucky, a network of trails, dry creek beds, and the occasional dirt road represented the heart of the mountain transportation system. In 1870, only one railroad had been constructed in Appalachia, and it had bypassed Eastern Kentucky altogether. By 1900, however, four major railroads extended into Kentucky and Tennessee allowing speculators and coal companies to exploit the natural resources. Railroad executives wishing to maximize profits avoided low-profit passenger services and were

⁵⁷ Mrs. David Heskamp to Lena Nofcier, 1 November, 1938. In series “Kentucky Libraries History” Box 4, folder “Correspondence 1938,” Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

⁵⁸ Kathryn Luse to Fannie A. Watts, 8 October 1938. . In series “Kentucky Libraries History” Box 4, folder “Correspondence 1938,” Kentucky State Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).

unwilling to establish rail lines to communities with no development or profit potential.⁵⁹ A survey of the region conducted in the 1930s suggested that only five percent of rural farms had running water, two percent had an inside toilet, and four percent had electricity.⁶⁰ The isolation of the mountain family translated into a highly subsistence lifestyle with few amenities and little if any access to schools, libraries, and health care.

The 1930s brought little economic relief to the mountain folk in Eastern Kentucky. However, infrastructure development resumed by 1937 as coal speculators expanded the number of coal mine operations. Company towns failed to develop any viable business community, but continued to focus on growth. Infrastructure in and around company towns were specifically for support of coal operations and providing transportation for company purposes only. Thus, road construction increased after 1937 in Eastern Kentucky providing much needed access to remote communities. However, several road projects in Eastern Kentucky, including the Daniel Boone Parkway, were initiated by the WPA and CCC. Sixty percent of farmers worked off the farm by 1935, and providing the labor force with a means to get to work was a priority of federal work programs in Appalachia. Additional road construction was necessary for supporting the large construction projects of the TVA. Highway 25 in Eastern Kentucky was built to support the Norris Dam construction site, but provided important transportation for local farmers needing to take farm products to market. School districts also benefited from new road construction that provided year-round transportation and better access to rural public schools.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Scott R. Nelson. *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 11-29.

⁶⁰ Dixon Wector. *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941*(New York: Macmillan, 1948), 141.

⁶¹ Harry M. Caudill. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company), 130-131.

The increase in road construction in the late 1930s facilitated the increase in the availability and access to reading material. Public libraries were more accessible to mountain folk. Libraries opened on Saturdays to facilitate weekly visits by patrons living in the outlying areas and opened evenings to accommodate working adults. Library construction included parking lots to accommodate the rising number of automobiles in the region. Additionally, new roads allowed book mobiles to penetrate into remote areas where they could not go a few years earlier. By 1942, most of the regional libraries were implementing bookmobile service or book delivery by automobile.⁶² Thus, by 1943 the packhorse librarians were becoming less crucial in supplying books even though their popularity among rural families remained high until the program ended. The distance traveled by Packhorse Librarians was reduced significantly after 1940 due to more patrons visiting center libraries where book selection was better. Many librarians traded their horses for automobiles, and one packhorse librarian reportedly delivered books on her family's new farm tractor.⁶³ The improvements in roads, bridges, flood control projects, and the onset of the automobile changed how mountain folk accessed reading material by the early 1940s. By 1943 the Packhorse Library Program was competing with a library system supported by new roads and the automobile.

Conclusion

Prior to the cancellation of the Packhorse Library in 1943, the convergence of New Deal politics and regional modernization in Appalachia compromised the practicality of delivering books on horseback. Internal turmoil among Roosevelt's program designers and managers weakened the resolve to extend work relief beyond 1943. Key congressional seats were replaced

⁶² Kentucky Department of Libraries. "Annual Report of Library Services, 1941-1942" Series: Kentucky Library History, Box 2, Folder "Library Reports, 1942" (Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives), 6.

⁶³ Kentucky Library Association. "Kentucky Library Association Bulletin, July 1942" Kentucky State Archives, Series 6, Box 41, Folder "KLA Bulletins, 1942," 4-6.

by conservatives from both parties in what amounted to a purge of the most ardent supporters of proactive government. By 1942, significant funding cuts for WPA programs brought an end to the massive civilian payrolls of the previous decade. Roosevelt's vision of a temporary economic underpinning faded into the background of party politics and global war. By 1943, Washington politics had extended its reach into Appalachia to the demise of the packhorse librarians.

As Washington politics and federal government policy gradually brought an end to the New Deal, modernization and industrialization in Eastern Kentucky transformed the economic landscape. Large scale relocation programs, land acquisition by the federal government, and federal farm policies that favored corporate farming interests renewed local distrust of the federal government and made it more difficult to present federal programs as desirable community assets. Railroads, highway construction, and electricity provided by the TVA dam system provided mobility within the mountains and better access to schools, libraries, and the outside world. School consolidation and the emergence of a regional library system during the late 1930s added a competitive dimension to the eventual decline of the packhorse libraries.

In the wake of the political and economic changes that ended the mission of the Kentucky book women, a modernized professional education system emerged. Additionally, new demands and expectations for literacy and the education of Appalachia's children echoed tones reminiscent of John Dewey's pedagogical creed that suggested education had the responsibility to continually strive for "the perpetual regeneration of society."⁶⁴ Moreover, the reinvention of Eastern Kentucky in terms of economics and education during the first half of the twentieth century requires a new consideration of past historical interpretations. Cora Stewart and Yvonne

⁶⁴ Robert Ulich, *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom* (Harvard University Press, 1954), 629-631.

Baldwin were among contemporary authors espousing a perennial faith in education that provided the hope of a better life and a permanent solution for the illiteracy problem. Frequent reference to the possibility of upward mobility, and the acknowledgment that schooling and literacy was inextricably tied to success in a capitalistic wage system were common themes. Moreover, rural residents, mine and factory workers, and union members were acting on this faith by reading a broad set of material addressing better living, social and economic justice, and scientific farming.⁶⁵

The end of the Packhorse Library Program represents a departure of an outdated means of delivering the printed word to mountain folk that was replaced by the school and public library. If literacy was nothing more than a perceived means of improving and uplifting the people and communities of Appalachia, then some consideration must be given to Lawrence Cremin's notion that education has been a "liberating" tool over time. Cremin's interpretation of the American education system and the expansion of literacy as a mechanism for the "advancement of liberty and equality" may best describe what mountain folk of Kentucky had hoped for during The Great Depression.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Cora Wilson Stewart, *Moonlight Schools*, 70-91.

⁶⁶ Lawrence A. Cremin, *Traditions of American Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 127-131.

CHAPTER 6
LIBRARIES AND LITERACY AFTER THE PACKHORSE LIBRARIES, 1943-1970

Introduction

Funding for the WPA Packhorse Library Program ended suddenly in 1943. However, the momentum of local and state support for a more modern and expanded library system remained as did the demand for books and reading. The Kentucky Department of Libraries continued to develop regional libraries in the mid-1940s with little interruption from the distractions of World War II.¹ Public school libraries continued to expand, and students attended comprehensive schools at increasing rates. In Kentucky, more than seventy percent of public school students were attending one-room schools prior to the depression. Between 1930 and 1946, the number of Kentucky students attending comprehensive public schools with a library had doubled. Additionally, reading material including magazines, newspapers, advertising, political and union pamphlets, and technical manuals ranging from farm science to operator manuals for machinery were flowing into the Kentucky mountains at unprecedented levels. Moreover, the rate at which mountain families were sending their sons and daughters off to war was double that of the nation.² The necessity to write and correspond with those serving overseas was suddenly thrust upon mountain folk in the 1940s. After the war, many veterans returned to the mountains with reading and writing skills developed during their military service.

The expansion of library services in Eastern Kentucky after World War II reflected the continuing demand for reading material, and increasing dependence on literacy that improved daily living and work in an area of the country that remained economically challenged. The

¹ O. B. Stafford. *Annual Conference Report, 1943-44* (Frankfort: Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1944), 6-7.

² Harry Caudill. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1962), 226-227.

modern library system that emerged in the wake of war developed rapidly and without noticeable opposition or debate from residents and politicians. This was in stark contrast to the development and funding of comprehensive public schools that remained controversial beyond the end of World War II. Local resistance to school consolidation in Kentucky slowed the development of the modern school district although most counties had one comprehensive high school by 1950.³ By the mid-1950s, public libraries in Kentucky managed to develop into regional systems offering a broad range of services to their patrons. Moreover, the new and more complex public library organizations promoted reading with far less political scrutiny than public schools experienced. Historian Jane H. Hunter suggested that the public library emerged as the “institutional underpinning of the reading revolution.”⁴ Library book selection, although controversial at times, was far less political than the text book wars of mid-century.⁵ The freedoms enjoyed in terms of institutional and program development allowed public libraries, especially in Eastern Kentucky, to develop and expand utilizing advancements in technology as a means for improvement during the years following the work of the packhorse librarians.

Historian Joel Spring argued that public schools had difficulty in developing functional learning environments due to the preoccupation with social control. Spring suggested that “education can become anti-democratic” in a controlled environment centered on “overt authority.” Public libraries exhibited what Spring described as “anonymous authority.”⁶

Librarians generally operated within the frameworks of professional guidelines developed for the

³ David B. Tyack. *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 25-27.

⁴ Jane H. Hunter. *How Young Ladies Became Girls: The Victorian Origins of American Girlhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 59.

⁵ Jonathan Zimmerman. *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 55-80.

⁶ Joel Spring. *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 164-165.

protection of the patron as opposed to organizational constructs that focused on the library and its preservation. In Eastern Kentucky, these guidelines, including allowing patrons to choose their reading material within a relatively broad collection of books, had been well established by the packhorse librarians. The packhorse libraries were indicators of the emphasis and value placed on local libraries in Kentucky's rural communities. The development of a modern statewide library system after World War II was a continuation of that momentum. Moreover, the development and subsequent success of modern library extension services in Kentucky can be attributed to administrators and activists implementing program strategies tested and proven by the packhorse libraries.

A Continuing Need for Libraries

In 1937, Professor Louis R. Wilson addressed the plight of library service in rural America. Wilson cited a set of startling statistics: forty-five million Americans were without access to any library. Twenty-two million lived in the fourteen southern states including Kentucky. With just over seven million books in southern library collections, the number of books per capita was about three tenths of a volume. The \$2,558,262 spent on public libraries in the South in 1935 represented a per capita expenditure of about eight cents.⁷ The ability to support library services in the South was marginalized by the lack of wealth and the declining value of property. During the 1930s, per capita income was \$252 compared with \$681 in the North. Urbanization and the value of real estate, the primary factors in the provision of library services, remained stagnant well into the 1930s.⁸ Thus, funding for school and public libraries were mostly impossible for local communities throughout the South.

⁷ Louis R. Wilson, "Library Service in Rural Areas," *Social Forces* 15:4 (May 1937), 525-530. Wilson compares library service regionally and concludes that the South was far behind when compared to other areas of the country. In the thirteen southern states studied, half of the population had no access to library programs in 1937.

⁸ Ibid.

By 1930, there were 25,000 public high schools in the United States, of which only about 3,000 had libraries. Most high schools with libraries were located in centralized city school systems. Moreover, school libraries were maintained by the individual school, and lacked district or state supervision.⁹ This was especially true in Eastern Kentucky where most schools maintained minimal library services void of professional staff. A few comprehensive schools in the nineteen Appalachian counties in Kentucky had small libraries maintained by local PTA chapters or the Junior League.¹⁰

In 1931, there were only seventeen accredited library schools including Columbia University, University of Illinois, and the George Peabody College for Teachers. Attracting the few professional librarians into Appalachia during a time when public and school libraries in larger cities were rapidly expanding proved difficult and expensive.¹¹ School and public libraries in the major cities evolved during the 1930s as a vital agent providing educational enrichment. However, the expansion of library services in Eastern Kentucky remained little more than a perennial topic of discussion among local leaders and state politicians. Specialized programs for children in the few existing libraries were nonexistent, the choice of books poor, and organization was lacking. Funding for state mandated outreach library services failed to materialize during the 1930s.¹² Thus, rural Kentucky libraries were unable to implement programs for providing books to isolated mountain families, and the Packhorse Library Program remained the primary outreach service through 1943. When the program suddenly ended, state

⁹ Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 77.

¹⁰ Ruth L. Theobald, "School Library Service in Kentucky," *Peabody Journal of Education* 13:1 (July 1935), 28-31.

¹¹ Louis R. Wilson and Edward A. Wright, *County Library Service in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 138-43. Also see Tommie Dora Barker, *Libraries of the South: A Report on Developments, 1930-1935*. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1936), 172-78.

¹² Ruth L. Theobald, "School Library Service in Kentucky," 28-31.

library officials and local librarians sought to continue the tradition of extension programs. However, the financial means to continue that tradition through public library outreach was uncertain.

WPA Libraries in Kentucky

The WPA Library Project, a national program providing library services to local communities, was responsible for funding twenty-two public libraries in Kentucky. This program was separate from the Packhorse Library Program, and was managed by the state WPA projects director bypassing the Kentucky Department of Libraries.¹³ WPA libraries were more in line with the general goal of creating more jobs in rural areas than promoting literacy. Packhorse libraries were managed by the Woman's Programs director. Thus, the two programs were on separate organizational ladders within the WPA. In December 1941, May V. Kunz, director of statewide library projects for the WPA, addressed the Kentucky Library Association (KLA). Kunz suggested that the purpose of WPA libraries was to demonstrate the advantages of library service "insofar as is possible with untrained personnel." She also emphasized that part of the WPA Library Program mission was to assist "established public libraries to extend their services to surrounding territory which is without such service." Her pronouncement that community outreach was the primary mission for Kentucky libraries would be the foundation for future growth of the state library system. WPA libraries operated as public libraries in small towns, and many isolated residents could not access them. From an organizational standpoint, the program was managed directly by the WPA state director. These libraries were not

¹³ Jonathan Jeffrey, "Looking Back: WPA Library Work in Kentucky," *Kentucky Libraries* 65:3 (Summer 2001), 28-29. Jeffrey pays particular attention to the interaction between the WPA and local libraries in Kentucky, and the use of shared resources, staff, and coordination at the local and federal levels.

considered part of the Kentucky Library System, and were not bound by the mandates of the 1936 library reforms requiring libraries to develop outreach services.¹⁴

Using local nonprofessional relief workers had been a prime objective of WPA library programs since their inception in the early 1930s. Local patrons often viewed these libraries as resources for WPA workers only, and a federal entity not entirely friendly to local communities. Critics accused the WPA of establishing local library programs for the purpose of creating headlines. In April 1942, the KLA encouraged WPA libraries to be called “county libraries,” allowing the community to feel possessive and proud of this cultural addition. Rather than emphasizing strict accounting of property and preparing reports, the KLA encouraged WPA librarians to expand their “knowledge of books.” Kunz directed that all WPA librarians read at least two books per month, and announced that “any librarian who does not know her book stock fails in her prime duty of connecting books to people.”¹⁵

The WPA closed all packhorse libraries and seven of the WPA libraries by the end of 1943. The remaining fourteen WPA libraries were taken over by school districts and county governments. Three of the fourteen surviving libraries evolved into regional libraries, and unskilled relief workers were replaced with professional librarians. Collections provided by the demonstration project and WPA funding totaled 22,000 volumes. An additional 15,000 books left over from the packhorse libraries were turned over to the remaining WPA libraries. The KLA asked for and received funding from the Kentucky Department of Libraries for cleaning, repair, and binding salvageable books.¹⁶ Kunz gave Nofcier credit for having played a crucial role in the transition of library services in Kentucky from a WPA work relief program to a

¹⁴ *Bulletin of the Kentucky Library Association* (December 1941), 6-9.

¹⁵ *Bulletin of the Kentucky Library Association* (June 1942), 2-3.

¹⁶ Jonathan Jeffrey, “Looking Back: WPA Library Work in Kentucky,” 28-29.

network of regional libraries serving mostly rural areas. She also credited Nofcier with establishing the Citizens Library League in 1944. This was the first statewide support group in the nation established for promoting public libraries and their programs. In one of her last addresses to the KLA, Nofcier called for an “investment in books for the people.” Moreover, she suggested that if efforts for further library development did not continue in Kentucky, “all this work will have been in vain.” In referring to the emerging professional library system, she announced a call to arms: “If you are really convinced of the worth of your own work, is it unreasonable to expect you to pass on to others less fortunate the privileges you enjoy and know about? The future is in your hands to develop or retreat.”¹⁷ Thus, Kentucky library officials and librarians were committed to preserving the momentum of library service growth that would have ended at the close of the New Deal.

The Kentucky Legacy: Bookmobiles

In 1943, many of the women serving in the Packhorse Library Program returned to their farms. Some remained in library service working in public libraries or attending college to obtain professional librarian credentials. One packhorse librarian, Mary Gray, became a charter member of the Friends of Kentucky Libraries. Gray, a Louisville resident and longtime supporter of rural library services, campaigned for the establishment of bookmobile programs in Eastern Kentucky in 1948. Working with her close friend Frances Jane Porter, director of the State Library Extension Division, Gray managed to convince local libraries and state library officials the potential for bookmobiles to deliver books to rural residents and meet the extension program requirement mandated by state law. Her efforts resulted in six bookmobiles serving Breathitt, Madison, Bell, Wayne, Bath, and Hart counties by the end of 1948. By 1953, ten

¹⁷ *Bulletin of the Kentucky Library Association* (October 1944), 1-2.

bookmobiles were serving across the state with funding from the Kentucky Department of Libraries.¹⁸

Expansion of State Funding

In 1952, Kentucky author Jesse Stuart addressed the Annual Meeting of the Friends of Kentucky Libraries. Stuart noted that eighty percent of rural Kentuckians were without public library service and 46 counties had no libraries. Harry Schacter, a successful Louisville businessman and a close friend of Mary Gray heard Stuart's address, and was motivated to call for the purchase of 100 bookmobiles. His plan called for private donations totaling \$300,000, a yearly appropriation of \$200,000 for books, and contributions at the local level to house, staff, and maintain the bookmobiles. The program was to be administered by the Library Extension Division. The Friends of the Kentucky Library Association formed a five person Kentucky Bookmobile Project Committee chaired by Mary C. Bingham, book editor for the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and longtime friend of Lena Nofcier. Bingham, using tactics similar to Nofcier's during the Packhorse Library Program, solicited donations from individuals and businesses for the purchase of bookmobiles and books. Bingham conducted a book drive in early 1953 and collected more than 600,000 volumes for the state bookmobile program. The Library Extension Division worked with local libraries in developing funding sources for bookmobile staff and maintenance, and to contribute staff at the state level for cataloging the contributed books.¹⁹

In addition to seeking support for the operation of the Kentucky bookmobile program, Bingham asked for funding to develop training for librarians. Her requests to the Department of

¹⁸Suzanne Crowder, "Wooden Crates and Women's Clubs: Kentucky Bookmobile and Outreach Services," *Bookmobiles and Outreach Services* 5:1 (2002), 17-24.

¹⁹D. Cadle, "That All May Read," *Better Roads* 28:3 (1958), 44-49.

Libraries and the extension division were turned down repeatedly. However, the University of Kentucky established a summer training program that included scholarships for librarians who could not afford to attend. The training included a driving and operations course, collections and circulation management, and new book conferences.²⁰

During the 18 month fundraising campaign, \$275,000 was raised to purchase bookmobiles. In the spring of 1954, the Kentucky Legislature passed an appropriations bill that provided books and equipment. In September, 84 bookmobiles were distributed to regional libraries. The following year, twelve bookmobiles were added. Thus, prior to the passage of the federal Library Service Act, Kentucky had provided at least one bookmobile to every rural county in the state. The most isolated counties were operating more than one bookmobile. Statewide, book circulation had doubled within a period of two years. The informal atmosphere of the bookmobile was less intimidating than traditional libraries and the drivers were sometimes familiar due to having served as packhorse librarians. The bookmobile had an immediate impact on the state's library system accounting for over 6 million volumes in circulation.²¹

In 1954, fourteen public libraries were established. One new library was a converted railroad car located on an abandoned sidetrack. By 1955, the percentage of rural residents having no access to library services fell from 90 percent to 10 percent. In 1958, one year after the passage of federal funding legislation, the Library Extension Division of the Kentucky Department of Libraries had added four regional libraries and 23 county libraries with the assistance of federal funding.²²

²⁰ D. Cadle, "That They All May Read"

²¹ Kentucky Department of Libraries, "Extension Division Report, 1959," Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Library History Series, Box 4, Folder 1959.

²² John Jeffrey, "Friends of the Kentucky Libraries From its Beginnings in the 1930s to Today," *Kentucky Libraries* 59 (Winter 1995), 18-22.

Reports by bookmobile librarians confirmed an overwhelming support by the patrons they served. With improved roads and motorized transportation, Kentucky bookmobiles were serving over one million patrons. Additional funding from the LSA in 1957 allowed for growth of bookmobile services in rural Kentucky. In some counties, bookmobile librarians extended their reach into local hospitals and prisons, carried phonograph records, and conducted children's programs. Additionally, bookmobiles were serving public schools. One teacher from Long Branch School expressed her sentiments about the new outreach service: "The bookmobile is like a dreamland for children."²³ Thus, federal funding for libraries presented greater opportunities for reaching out into isolated communities and schools in Kentucky by providing more libraries and supporting bookmobile services.

The Library Services Act

Although the Kentucky Department of Libraries had developed a philosophy centered on outreach programs and professional development, rural libraries remained poorly funded and understaffed. Local libraries could not match the level of services provided by the Packhorse Library Program, and library service development focused on public libraries located in large cities and towns. In 1950, the Louisville and Lexington public libraries, along with the Kentucky State Library in Frankfort, accounted for about half of state library funding. The budget difficulties faced by Kentucky libraries were part of a nationwide dilemma that eventually caught the attention of national legislators.²⁴

In 1956, U.S. Representative for Kentucky Carl D. Perkins (Democrat) sponsored the first successful legislation providing federal funding to public libraries. Perkins had served as a

²³ F. J. Porter and Mary Willis, "Kentucky's Bookmobiles: Reports from the Counties," *Kentucky Library Extension Division*, p.1.

²⁴ "Library Service Available in the Public Schools of Kentucky," Kentucky Department of Education Educational Bulletin, 2:11 (January 1935), 3-5.

teacher in a one-room school house in Knott County during the 1930s. The school in which he taught was serviced by the packhorse librarians. In 1948, he was appointed counsel for the Department of Highways. Thus, he developed a deep understanding of road conditions in Eastern Kentucky and the difficulty in providing outreach services to rural families. Elected to Congress in 1948, Perkins also promoted federal support of education. The federal student loan program was named after him, and he authored several bills funding technical and vocational education in rural areas. Moreover, he spent much of his legislative career advocating federal support of rural public library extension programs.²⁵

Several attempts to provide federal funding for public libraries failed in the years immediately following World War II. In 1946, Alabama Senator Lister Hill (Democrat), Ralph R. Shaw, Librarian for the Department of Agriculture, and Carl Milam, Executive Secretary of the ALA, collaborated on a library funding bill. However, the bill failed a number of times in the Senate.²⁶

In 1956, another attempt at providing funding to libraries was H.R. 2884 sponsored by Perkins and twenty-six other Representatives and six senators. The bill cited a U.S. Office of Education study conducted the same year revealing more than 300 counties in the South with 16 million rural residents were without library services.²⁷ The bill was endorsed by a broad spectrum of groups and organizations including the ALA, the American Booksellers Association, Federation of Woman's Clubs, the NEA, the Catholic Library Association, and the National PTA Congress. An editorial in the *New York Times* supported the bill and called the public library a

²⁵ Donald Reid Damron. "The Contributions of Carl D. Perkins on Higher Education Legislation, 1948-1984." Ph.D. dissertation, Middle Tennessee State University, 1990, 42-46.

²⁶ Hawthorne Daniel, *Public Libraries for Everyone* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), 34.

²⁷ Daniel, 38-39.

“vital symbol of educational opportunity.”²⁸ Three days later, the Library Services Act passed in the House, and the Senate followed on 6 June. Two weeks later, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the bill into law. At the signing ceremony, Eisenhower stated that the law “represents an effort to stimulate the states and local communities to increase library services available to rural Americans.”²⁹

Congress provided an initial appropriation of 7.5 million dollars for rural library service in 1957. The major provisions of the act included mandatory programs for extension and outreach services. Funds were distributed based on the rural population of states, and could be used for salaries, books, materials and equipment, and operating expenses. However, federal money could not be used to erect buildings or purchase land. Additionally, each state was required to establish a “library extension agency” and submit an operational plan to the U.S. Commissioner of Education demonstrating how library resources would be made available to rural residents.³⁰ The emphasis on extension and outreach to rural residents was similar to the 1936 library reform legislation passed by the Kentucky Legislature.

Impact and Legacy of the Library Services Act

According to historian James W. Fry, the Library Services Act (LSA) redefined the role of the federal government in providing assistance to state library systems from 1957 to 1960. State library extension agencies offered larger collections and expanded services to rural patrons. Nationally, more than five million volumes were added and 200 new bookmobiles were provided to people in “remote areas.” Library usage increased significantly with many county and

²⁸ “Library Service Bill,” *New York Times* p.18, sec. 2, 5 May 1956.

²⁹ Edmon Low, “Two Decisive Decades: Federal Consciousness and Libraries,” *American Libraries* 3:4 (July/August 1972), 717-18.

³⁰ United States Office of Education, *State Plans Under the Library Services Act* (Washington, D.C., 1958), 3.

regional libraries reporting a forty percent increase in circulation.³¹ Comments in annual state reports to Washington in 1960 illustrate the success of the program. Florida reported a 32 percent increase in interlibrary loans. The Kentucky report stated that “The greatest single accomplishment has been to bring large numbers of rural people—farmers, housewives, unemployed, small businessmen, day laborers, and workers of all kinds—into libraries and bookmobiles.” Minnesota reported that the LSA has stimulated the first state grant program for local libraries. Five new regional libraries were established, and library service was available for the first time to 68,000 rural residents. New Hampshire reported that loans had increased by forty-seven percent. Ohio library book purchases tripled in three years, and bookmobiles were purchased for five counties. Under the LSA, Indiana was the only state not to accept funds. Governor Harold Hanley took a hard line stance against the legislation by refusing \$700,000 in federal funding. He suggested that “Hoosiers would be brainwashed with books handpicked by Washington bureaucrats.” However, the act reserved the selection of library books solely to the states. An estimated 800,000 Hoosiers were without library service in 1960.³²

The 1960 Extension of the Library Service Act

Seven bills were introduced in January 1960 to extend the LSA for five more years. The bill with the most apparent support was S. 2830 introduced by Alabama Senator Lister Hill (Democrat). Hill argued that ending federal support of libraries would leave forty million library patrons with no library service. On 26 May, the Senate passed the LSA extension by unanimous vote. In the House, opposition was minimal. Ohio Representative Frank Bow (Republican) led the opposition, and stated “there is nothing as permanent as a temporary agency in Washington.”

³¹ James W. Fry, “LSA and LSCA, 1956-1973: A Legislative History,” *Library Trends* (July 1975), 7-26.

³² American Library Association Washington Newsletter, 2 June 1960, p.1.

The argument was a leftover vestige of New Deal political opposition, and after a forty minute debate the House passed the bill 190 to 29. The LSA extension provided \$7.5 million per year through 1966. Additionally, a more specific definition of “rural” was provided in the legislation based on the 1960 census. This new language defined rural communities as those with less than 10,000 residents, and assured LSA funds would focus on the most isolated patrons.³³

Three years before the expiration of the LSA, President John F. Kennedy initiated renewed support of library services. In a special education message sent to Congress on January 29, 1963, Kennedy suggested “the public library is an important resource for continuing education.” The president cited data suggesting millions of Americans were without access to library services, and library buildings were the oldest public buildings suffering from lack of upkeep. He concluded his message with a bold recommendation for expanding the LSA: “I recommend the enactment of legislation to amend the Library Services Act by authorizing a three-year program of grants for urban as well as rural libraries and for construction as well as operation.”³⁴ Kennedy’s recommendation was the pronouncement of a new level of federal support for local public libraries. In 1963, four days before his assassination, Kennedy’s vision was realized when the Senate passed the Library Services Construction Act. With only four percent of the nation’s libraries constructed after 1940, the federal government authorized \$80 million for the construction of new buildings. The preamble of the bill asserted a new faith in the value of the library: “A good public library provides the necessary continuity in our democratic tradition and serves as the springboard in the future growth of the individual and of society.”³⁵ The mission of

³³ American Library Association Washington Newsletter. 7 June, 1956, p.1.

³⁴ “Library Construction,” *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 26 (1970), 851.

³⁵ United States Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *The Library Services and Construction Act of 1964: A Compilation of Material Relevant to Public Law 88-269*, (1964), 11-12.

the WPA Packhorse Library project as an extension program serving the mountain folk of Kentucky anticipated Kennedy's call for federal support of rural libraries, and passage of the revised Library Services and Construction Act. The continued focus on rural library patrons, and the expansion of public libraries in small communities evolved from a vision of a few proponents of library outreach to a national policy for library development.

Conclusion

During the 1930s, and extending into the 1950s, library service to rural Americans remained scattered. Millions had little or no access to libraries, especially in the South. In Kentucky, the Packhorse Library Project ended in 1943 leaving most Eastern Kentucky counties without library services.³⁶ However, the growth of library services emerged during and immediately after World War II. Lawrence Cremin concluded: "During the post-World War II era, with increased amounts of federal and state money available to them, librarians 'reached out' to their clienteles in an effort to achieve a broader pattern of use."³⁷ In Kentucky, this broader pattern of use evolved into the primary mission of the Department of Libraries. The implementation of the state bookmobile program and the proliferation of over 100 bookmobiles represented the most comprehensive commitment to reaching out to rural library patrons. Historian Bernard Berelson observed in 1949 that public libraries were underutilized. He noted that most library patrons were children working on their school lessons and a few adults reading for entertainment.³⁸ In Kentucky and elsewhere, the advent of the modern bookmobile diffused library services to a broader audience including direct service to public schools and neighborhoods.

³⁶ Wilson, "Library Service in Rural Areas," 525-530.

³⁷ Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience*, 146.

³⁸ Bernard Berelson, *The Library's Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 124.

In 1957, Congress passed the Library Service Act representing the first major federal funding for local libraries. According to historian Gerald L. Gutek, the LSA was the first of nearly seventy education bills passed between 1957 and 1965 including the Library Services and Construction Act providing the first federal funding for library construction. Gutek also noted education legislation during the 1960s included specific funding to upgrade college and research university libraries.³⁹ In the year following the enactment of the LSA, Kentucky expanded the state library system by 23 local libraries and four regional libraries. Moreover, the LSA required libraries to conduct outreach services by providing services to rural residents. This aspect of the federal law is perhaps the most significant legacy of the Kentucky library system and the packhorse librarians. Kentucky lawmakers, bureaucrats managing with the stylistic tradition of Lena Nofcier, community activists including Mary C. Bingham, and governors like Happy Chandler were pioneers in the library outreach movement that influenced national library policy by 1957. The old idea of uplifting the mountain folk of Kentucky evolved into one of the earliest federal education policies on a national level.

In the early twenty-first century, Kentucky leads every state in bookmobile inventory. With over 200 bookmobiles in service, Kentucky has ten percent of the nation's fleet. Kentucky's status as the leader in library outreach services is the result of the ongoing commitment to provide access to books for all rural residents. This commitment is part of the legacy of the WPA Packhorse Library Project. Moreover, this legacy can be traced forward into modern library legislation including the Library Services Act and the Library Services and Construction Act. These federal initiatives contributed significantly to perpetuating Andrew Carnegie's dream: "The Library belongs to every citizen richest and poorest alike, that gives it a

³⁹ Gerald L. Gutek, *American Education, 1945-2000* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2000), 181.

soul.”⁴⁰ Thus, the modern library hinged itself on the notion that reaching out to all citizens would be the best approach to meeting the new demands created by the rise of “near-universal literacy” and the “rapid rise in the number of knowledge generating agencies.”⁴¹ Knowledge diffusion became more complex immediately following the World War II. Access to film, museums, lectures, advertisement, and radio created what Cremin called the “community intelligence service.”⁴² The demand for knowledge also increased in complexity, and the legacy of the packhorse librarians played an important role in meeting that demand.

⁴⁰ George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and impact on American Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1968), 43.

⁴¹ Cremin, 447.

⁴² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Introduction

In 1936, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) sponsored the Packhorse Library Program in Eastern Kentucky. Packhorse libraries provided reading material to hundreds of thousands of rural mountain families at a time when public and school libraries were almost nonexistent in Kentucky's isolated communities. Employing over one thousand local women, this library extension program went beyond the definition of a New Deal work program by developing into one of the most successful outreach reading programs serving rural Kentucky families during the Great Depression. The packhorse librarians were intensely popular within the communities they served, and represented an ongoing effort by local, state, and federal agencies at uplifting mountain folk to prepare them for coping with a modern industrial society. They represented the value that Eastern Kentucky communities placed on libraries and the social utility of literacy, and the desire for empowerment among individuals struggling to survive in a new economic environment. Additionally, the program was a precursor for future library outreach after World War II.

High rates of illiteracy and acute geographical isolation had limited the availability of the printed word in rural Kentucky communities prior to the early decades of the twentieth century. However, packhorse libraries contributed to reversing those conditions, and foreshadowed future library extension programs. Additionally, this chapter in the history of reading and literacy illuminates the role of the federal government in promoting literacy and education during the Great Depression utilizing programs designed to meet local community needs.

Altered Perceptions in a Time of Change

The history of the packhorse librarians builds on existing scholarship illuminating the history of literacy in rural areas since the early eighteenth century. Historical discourse on the subject suggests isolated communities experienced significant shifts in the way literacy was perceived and valued when the written word was made available on a broad commercial scale. Historian Richard D. Brown gives agency to the rise of local newspapers in mid-eighteenth century Massachusetts as a catalyst for a deeper appreciation for literacy among all economic classes. Brown commits to the idea that once newspapers gained a foothold in towns and provinces, they gradually came to have “important effects on the character of the information system.” The important outcome was a greater measure of access to information and knowledge for “more men and women, young and old.”¹ This access, Brown argues, “provided a sure foundation for the development of self-respect among people of all ages and conditions.”² Historian Kenneth A. Lockridge argued the rise of newspapers translated into a “relish for reading” extending into other genres including fiction, poetry, and children’s literature. His argument extends beyond what rural people were reading by suggesting the social context of literacy changed in the mid-eighteenth century from a desire for participation in an emerging industrialized economy to participation in revolutionary ideology and intellectual fulfillment.³ William J. Gilmore traces the social and cultural development of literacy in rural Vermont during the last decades of the eighteenth century until 1835, and argues that a transformation of cultural

¹ Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The diffusion of Information in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 38-39.

² Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 162.

³ Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England: An Enquiry into the Social Context of Literacy in the Early Modern West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 23-27.

participation among self-sufficient rural families “substantially expanded the family’s mental horizons.” Moreover, a broader secular reading canon expanded and modified rather than obliterated the core religious beliefs of mountain folk.⁴ The work of these historians anticipated the call made by Carl Kaestle for a broader understanding of the relationship between literacy, community values, and individual priorities. The story of the packhorse librarians uniquely illustrates these relationships occurring in twentieth-century rural communities.⁵

The altering of perspectives about reading among mountain families during the Great Depression years coincided with increased challenges in their everyday lives. David Barton recently argued that functionally illiterate persons struggle to “fit into contemporary society” weighted by a common image of the illiterate outsider and the isolated loner compensating for a “secret disability.” This image has been the stereotype of the Kentucky “Hillbilly” for over a century. The illiterate hillbilly had to make excuses by “carrying around an empty glasses case and claiming to have forgotten their spectacles,” or bandaging the writing hand. Barton suggests that these images have been powerful, and have been important in the promotion of literacy campaigns and adult literacy programs. Additionally, those with literacy problems have been viewed by those managing literacy programs as ordinary people who often do not see themselves as needing assistance. According to Barton, they had “a variety of strategies dealing with the written word.” These strategies may include having a neighbor read for them, or a friend fill out a form or legal document.⁶

⁴ William J. Gilmore *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 318-319.

⁵ Kaestle, Carl F. "Studying the History of Literacy." In *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading Since 1880*, edited by Carl F. Kaestle. New haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

⁶ Barton , David. *Literacy: The Ecology of the Written Word*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing: 2007), 196-197.

Sociologist Hannah Arlene Fingeret's studies anticipated Barton's model. Her studies revealed that rural people without reading skills were able to maintain their view that illiteracy was not a problem due to having been a part of rich social networks with considerable exchange of skills and services among family, neighbors, and friends. Thus, not everyone had to develop every skill personally. Fingeret demonstrated the different ways people with literacy problems coped within these community networks. One important observation in her studies was that people who could not read well usually lived very "localized lives," and were treated as equals and accepted for what they could contribute to the network. The ability to "fix" things was considered a valuable resource in the mountains. The man who could repair a plow blade during planting season was much more valuable than one who could read. Moreover, when people needed help they chose "appropriate readers" for specific tasks. The person asked to assist with an official form may have not been the same person asked to read a personal letter.⁷

The inability to read or write did not necessarily keep mountain folk from keeping diaries or conducting personal writing as long as such activities could be done with the assistance from their social network. Thus, although mountain folk were geographically isolated and constituted a somewhat closed society where outsiders were often shunned, they were extremely interdependent with strong social networks where difficulties with reading were addressed in a variety of ways. For Barton and Fingeret, literacy ceases to be an individual affair, and is a relative idea based on needs and the ability to address those needs utilizing a community network. Resources available within the community that can solve the challenges to everyday

⁷ A. Fingeret, "Social Network: A New Perspective on Independence and Illiterate Adults," *Adult Education Quarterly* 33:1 (Spring 1983), 133-146. Also see Fingeret and C. Drennon, *Literacy for Life: Adult Learners, New Practices*, (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1977), 27-44. Fingeret conducted studies in rural communities examining the role of social networks in manipulating and acquiring knowledge for daily living. However, the notion that people live their lives "locally" can also be applied to urban and suburban populations. Although this set of studies did not account for economic status, they imply that this model cuts across all economic strata.

living were important in shaping the attitudes of people regarding the importance and significance of literacy. As long as those needs could be met, there was no perceived literacy problem. However, decoding these challenges was only effective as long as the social network remained intact, or conditions did not change to the extent of making the social network outdated in terms of offering support for different situations requiring reading and literacy skills.⁸ The sudden social and economic changes to Eastern Kentucky communities in the early twentieth century challenged the effectiveness of long established social network as a means of acquiring knowledge. The packhorse librarians represented one alternative source for knowledge during the turbulent years of the Depression, and provided another means of decoding the challenges of everyday life in the mountains at a time of significant social and economic change.

The Informed Citizen and the Modern Industrial Economy

Some historical discourse, including that provided by Brown, suggests that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century the notion of an informed citizenry shifted away from its “revolutionary legacy,” and transformed into a popular belief that people should be literate for their own economic opportunity and personal fulfillment. The idea that citizens must be informed simply because they were voters had been undermined by political enfranchisement occurring in the last decades of the 1800s. Part of that enfranchisement was the popular rejection of the top-down leadership criteria long accepted by the rural working class, and distrust of government was part of that criteria. Labor union officers and local politicians could be elected with confidence if they represented a “frugality in living.” The apron and lunch pail was no longer regarded as unfitting for those desiring to serve in public office.⁹ Few national politicians

⁸ S. Lytle, “Living Literacy: Rethinking Development in Adulthood,” *Linguistics and Education* 3:1 (Spring 1991), 109-38.

⁹ Diana N. Jones. “Appalachia’s War: The Poorest of the Poor Struggle Back.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, (November 26, 2000), B1.

carried this image during the early stages of the Great Depression, and the confiscatory nature of federal relocation and land acquisition programs confirmed as much.

At the same time that perceptions were changing regarding the role of literacy and citizenship, industrialization was transforming the economic landscape of Eastern Kentucky. This transformation was primarily an extractive process whereby natural resources including timber and coal were removed from the region. According to historian John Alexander Williams, the incursion of a railroad network into the Appalachian Mountains during the fifty years prior to the Great Depression was the decisive development in reshaping the region's economy. Immediately following the development of railroads, Pennsylvania mining companies moved into Eastern Kentucky establishing coal mining operations, banks, and company owned communities. However, the development of regional coal mining cooperatives created a new informal folk system of learning. Coping with an oppressive wage system through union activity, increased interest in company communications through written announcements, and newsletters were the adaptations of modern Appalachia. This more complex response to big coal became a long struggle for unionization, political empowerment, and a better standard of living.¹⁰

Coal companies reacted to efforts by coal miners to organize by creating captive communities in an effort to lower overhead and increase profits. Coal companies increasingly moved against coal miners by seeing that company mine guards were appointed as deputy sheriffs, utilizing convict labor to bust strikes and lower wages, and resorting to the use of violence. However, union membership increased to eighty-five percent of eligible workers in Eastern Kentucky by 1939. The growth of unions increased demands for local government services, and modernization created a broader spectrum of jobs including bank workers, school

¹⁰ John A. Williams. "Appalachian History: Regional History in the Post Modern Zone," *Appalachian Journal* 28 (Winter 2001), 168-187

personnel, and construction workers. The expansion of the job market and industrialization placed additional pressure on local residents to alter their “support system” by including a more prominent role of literacy as part of everyday living in mountain communities. Included in this process was the local acceptance of a modern centralized school system where teachers and administrators successfully preached the gospel of literacy to students and parents.¹¹

The Southern rural working class including miners, mechanics, and factory workers engaged in the emerging national labor movement by taking a stand against long hours and poor working conditions. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, organized labor in Eastern Kentucky focused on coal mining and the company towns where many workers found it difficult to move up the economic ladder. Records of union hall meetings and union literature suggested a desire among labor activists and workers for an informed and literate working class that was directly connected to the hope of better working conditions in the coal mines. Complaints at labor meetings were registered concerning the need to shorten the long workday that, according to one example of labor literature, shut out all opportunity for the improvement of the mind.¹² Moreover, extra time for personal fulfillment could be used for purposes of acquiring useful and practical intelligence, and of disseminating the same to others. Little time was available for self-education, and this was a central complaint among workers who viewed greedy bosses as “major barriers to elevating their social standing and becoming empowered through being informed.”¹³

Thus, mountain folk in Eastern Kentucky were reacting to the oftentimes oppressive nature of industrialization. Coal mining and railroads took their toll on Appalachian

¹¹ Ronald D. Eller. *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 75-76.

¹² John A. Williams. *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 331-332.

¹³ *Ibid.*

communities. Few opportunities existed for improving their standard of living, and safety issues resulting in frequent loss of life in the mines represented new “obstacles” for getting through the workday in the mountains. Maneuvering through the workday required a new social network requiring more individuals to become literate. This pressure, along with more time and opportunity for recreational reading, were powerful motivations for picking up a book. The Packhorse Library Program coincided with these significant social and economic adjustments in Eastern Kentucky. The timing and location of the project meant that packhorse librarians had opportunities to become part of a new social network designed to address the changes brought on by the incursion of a modern economy. Mountain people perceived literacy as a means of countering the manipulations of company bosses who often used illiteracy as a tool for oppression. Thus, the dynamics of reading evolved into a more complex set of social interactions than those encountered by earlier outreach programs such as the Berea College book wagon and traveling libraries.

This adjustment in the social network also coincided with the establishment of the comprehensive high school in Eastern Kentucky.¹⁴ Children were sent to school more frequently and expected to stay in school more years than their parents. The school, and eventually the public library system, was perceived by mountain folk as additions to an expanding social structure required for new challenges that included the intrusion of government agencies and large private business interests, scientific farming, and more active participation in the politics of work.

¹⁴ Mary Bowman and Warren Hayes. *Resources and People in Eastern Kentucky* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1963), 214-215.

Federal Involvement in Education: A Reassessment

The Packhorse Library Program was a demonstration of federal policies toward education and training during the Great Depression. Although a historical consensus exists suggesting a lack of direct federal support for public schools, a close examination of New Deal policies and the desire of Washington bureaucrats to promote literacy and training programs reveal a broad effort to provide education that would benefit those attempting to reenter the job market during the 1930s. Moreover, many historians have often hesitated from acknowledging these policies as part of an educational mission, and have regarded these efforts as purely back to work programs having little long term effect on public education.¹⁵ However, the Packhorse Library Program is evidence of a federal commitment to include literacy as part of economic recovery, and suggests the beginning of a national policy on rural library outreach that extended into the Post-War Era.

One overriding concern of FDR and the New Dealers was the possibility that federal work programs would compete with existing local programs. The timing and location of the packhorse libraries meant little competition with the almost non-existent public library system and county school districts with few school libraries. Historian James Patterson emphasized the conservative assumptions maintained by New Deal Democrats in Washington regarding the temporary nature of work programs. Administrators refused to make work relief a permanent federal policy, and the temporary nature of this program fit within the parameters of federal economic policy, and provided a less threatening appearance to local residents who might otherwise avoid participation. WPA officials touted data that suggested more than three million Americans had improved their literacy skills during the first few years of its existence.¹⁶

¹⁵ For a discussion concerning the historiography of the Great Depression, see Morton Keller, "The New Deal: A New Look." *Polity* 31:4 (Summer 1999):657-663.

¹⁶ James T. Patterson. "A Conservative Coalition Forms in Congress, 1933-1939," *Journal of American History* 52 (March 1966), 759-770.

Moreover, literacy outcomes seemed palatable to both political parties during the 1930s, and as a program goal, met with little if any political resistance in Washington.

Packhorse libraries operated longer than most WPA programs, and it was one of the last to be cut from its budget in 1943. However, they did not employ large numbers of people. At the height of the program in 1940 when they served forty-two Kentucky counties, packhorse libraries employed about a thousand women.¹⁷ The twenty-eight dollars per month paid to each librarian did little to stimulate the broken economy of Appalachia. Thus, the economic impact of the program, and the potential for putting a significant number of Eastern Kentucky residents to work did not exist. The packhorse libraries represented, in the absence of any significant economic benefit, the desire of federal, state, and local government officials to promote programs that could potentially increase literacy in the region. Much of the dialogue between State Library Director Lena Nofcier and WPA directors addressed the uplifting issue more than creating jobs in Appalachia.

Local school boards were asked to provide local packhorse libraries with funding for center libraries and utilities. In forty-two instances, school boards agreed to offer financial assistance.¹⁸ This unprecedented support at the local level suggests a strong perception by local school board official that the program had strong potential for promoting reading among mountain folk. Moreover, examples of school district librarians and superintendents asking for packhorse libraries in their communities suggested broad local interest in this federal program. State Library officials and State WPA staff responded with little delay to provide the books and

¹⁷ "Looking Back: 50 year Ago: WPA Libraries in Kentucky." *Kentucky Libraries*, 53 (Spring 1985), 28-29.

¹⁸ Jeanne C. Schmitzer, "The Packhorse Library Project of Eastern Kentucky: 1936-1943." Masters Thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, December 1998. 12-19.

community support required to establish center libraries.¹⁹ At the federal level, the immediate approval, and longevity of annual funding from the WPA suggest that Washington officials perceived the program as something more than a work relief program.

Perhaps the best confirmation of packhorse libraries as a literacy program is from the women who rode on horseback into the hills with their books. Their attitudes toward the mission and their patrons gave the program both its meaning and reputation. From their anecdotal comments in journals to their acceptance of a salary one-third that of local school teachers, their sense of mission, and their desire to bring the printed word into the mountains of Kentucky provided a real impetus that meant literacy and reading was the prime objective. Among the pages of journals, monthly and annual reports, and communications between local packhorse libraries and state officials during a seven year period, there was not a single recognizable reference to the employment of women as packhorse librarians as a means to address the economic problems of themselves, their families, or the communities they served. Packhorse library jobs did provide operating capital for the small farms on which the packhorse librarians lived with their families, and the program fit within the parameters of WPA expectations for a federal work relief program.²⁰ However, the overriding day-to-day concern of packhorse librarians and the administrators who supported them was the need to supply books and reading material to the residents of Eastern Kentucky. This was the strongest testimony of the intent and purpose of packhorse libraries, and at no time did the federal government object or intervene with that mission.

¹⁹ The Library History Series at the Kentucky Department of Archives provides various sets of reports and correspondence demonstrating the commitment of Nofcier toward the Packhorse Library Program. See Series "Library History," Boxes 1-4, Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Frankfort Kentucky.

²⁰ Kentucky Department of Libraries, "Annual Report of Library Services, 1937-38." Series *Library History*, Box 2, Folder "Library Reports." (Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives), 4.

The attitude and boldness with which state officials developed library service outreach as part of a broader national response to provide equalized library services to all communities can be traced to the Packhorse Library Program. Kentucky Governor Happy Chandler supported the Kentucky Library Commission in developing a comprehensive plan for regional libraries in 1937.²¹ The reorganization of the Kentucky library system into sixteen state districts with increased funding for collections and the hiring of professional librarians came during the height of the Packhorse Library Program. Moreover, this interest in library development focused on rural library patrons and outreach services.²² In July 1937, the State Board of Education required local school boards to allocate four percent of school budgets for school libraries. These actions came on the heels of the most comprehensive library reform legislation in the history of Kentucky. The state legislature passed a complete set of reform laws in the previous year requiring libraries across the state to focus on outreach services. Additional emphasis was placed on improving professional standards, and requiring public libraries to maintain working relationships with local schools.²³ This set of reforms aimed to bring reading material into rural areas and increase literacy rates. The packhorse libraries fit snugly into this design and represented the states' largest effort at library outreach during the 1930s. As a work relief program, packhorse libraries received little state attention in terms of increasing its numbers solely for the sake of putting people to work. In fact, employment numbers were apparently considered only when discussing the professional status of these women in the later stages of the program, and when WPA sponsored county libraries were transferred to state control at the end

²¹ Lena Nofcier. *History of the Public Library in Kentucky* (Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Library Commission, 1938), 23-29

²² Florence H. Ridgeway. *Developments in Library Service in Kentucky* (Berea, Kentucky: Berea College Press, 1939), 8-9.

²³ Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, *Public Library Service*, Publication No. 65 (1959), 8-14.

of the New Deal.²⁴ Thus, packhorse libraries were an integral part of library outreach for the state during the 1930s and early 1940s, and were part of a broader state commitment to providing reading material to rural residents in Eastern Kentucky.

Packhorse Libraries and the Legacy of Uplift

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, the typical view of the Appalachian mountain family had been established in national literature. Publications including *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Weekly* devoted much attention to what many writers considered the unfortunate plight of the hillbilly. Books published during this period, including Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlander* and Mary Noailles Murfree's *In the Tennessee Mountains*, brought widespread public attention to Appalachian culture. The mountaineer received definitive form in these works as self-sacrificing, hard working, loyal, and hospitable, but countered with images of self-destruction, ignorance, and ill-fated romance.²⁵

Soon after the local color literary movement established the images of Appalachia in the minds of the American Public, national church organizations infiltrated the region in an effort to save souls by improving individual lives. Outreach into the mountains took the form of traveling preachers and missionaries dedicated to providing lessons for reading and bible study. The missionary movement provided mountain families with religious reading material including pamphlets, bibles, and church bulletins. However, it was not until the 1930s that reading opportunities expanded significantly with the assistance of the packhorse libraries.

²⁴Michael S. Blayney, "Libraries for the Millions: Adult Public Library Services and the New Deal," *Journal of Library History* 12 (1977): 235.

²⁵ Mary Noailles Murfree. *In the Tennessee Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970); Horace Kephart. *Our Southern Highlanders* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913). Murfree's book was first published in 1884 and contains eight short stories that are a superior example of local color fiction that pervaded American literature in the last years of the nineteenth century.

By the first decades of the twentieth-century, institutions of higher education initiated outreach programs into the mountains for the purpose of increasing literacy. Berea College, under the tutelage of President William Frost, sponsored several initiatives including the book wagon program, traveling professors, and opening the college library for public use. The book wagon service, lasting nearly a decade, served several hundred families in Eastern Kentucky.²⁶ Former missionaries and professors from the region established settlement schools and “moonlight schools” in an effort to spread literacy to isolated communities. By 1936, the Kentucky State Legislature took notice of these efforts to support literacy in rural areas. New library reforms passed in the spring of 1936 required the Kentucky Department of Libraries (KDL) to place an emphasis on outreach services. Six months later, the Packhorse Library Program was initiated as an outreach program financed by the WPA and managed by the KDL. Using the tradition of outreach into the mountains, the packhorse libraries thrived. Building on the traditions of past outreach programs and utilizing the Progressive notion of the service intellectual, the Packhorse Library Program emerged as the most significant and varied source of reading material for mountain folk in Eastern Kentucky.

The acceptance of a new and expanded reading canon by rural mountain folk is very similar to William J. Gilmore’s model that better access to the printed word “led to vastly different levels of cultural participation.”²⁷ This was evident during the 1930s with local labor movements encouraging reading as a means of personal empowerment, and promoting shorter workdays as a means of providing better opportunities for improving living conditions for families through literacy. With few roads and limited communications, opportunities for

²⁶ Shannon H. Wilson. *Berea College: An Illustrated History* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 92-94.

²⁷ William J. Gilmore. *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*, 33.

interaction between libraries and patrons were minimal. However, the establishment of the Packhorse Library Program, and subsequent popularity of reading library books was a product of what Gilmore called “a new mass culture of reading and writing.” Moreover, the eagerness of mountain folk to increase their access to reading material was part of what historian Richard D. Brown deemed as a normal desire to learn about the outside world.²⁸ This “ideology of literacy” as described by Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, was part of a broad set of correlating factors including industrialization, modern consumerism, and the growth of political activism among the working class.²⁹ Circulation records showing steady increases in demand, a willingness among local officials to provide funding for packhorse libraries, and increased participation in union activities promoting reading and literacy meant that rural people in Eastern Kentucky were willing to accept library outreach programs as a means of increasing their exposure to the written word. The Packhorse Library Program illuminates perhaps the last instance of such a process having occurred in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth-century.

The history of library outreach in Eastern Kentucky is part of a broader narrative about the printed word in Appalachia during the half-century prior to the Great Depression. Moreover, it is a history of a diverse set of institutions ranging from national church organizations, higher education, and volunteer organization including the tireless work of Kentucky’s women’s clubs. It is also a history of how local, state, and federal government worked together in designing an effective means of providing library services, and implementing library reforms designed specifically to address the needs of rural patrons. Additionally, this dissertation illuminates the role of the New Deal in promoting and funding education programs. The role of public schools

²⁸ Richard D. Brown. *Knowledge is Power*, 43.

²⁹ Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States*, 50-52.

in promoting the Packhorse Library funding provided a direct link between public education and WPA efforts to increase literacy in rural communities, and was part of a broader mission to increase literacy within the U.S. work force. A coordinated attempt by local, state, and federal governments to serve public schools indirectly and the development of an improved workforce were demonstrated in both the development and operation of the packhorse libraries.

State administrators including Lena B. Nofcier and Ethyl Perryman, and New Deal Architects such as Harold Ickes were the embodiment of Roosevelt's army of service intellectuals. Government officials and program organizers implemented Roosevelt's vision of strengthening the nation by implementing local prescriptions for social and economic improvement. These efforts included coordinating all levels of government and the resources of private organizations such as women's clubs, businesses, and parent teacher organizations. The Packhorse Library Program was part of a broad set of WPA initiatives, often path breaking in the delivery of federal resources outside normal channels, yet retaining a strong commitment to local and state government and community control. Thus, packhorse libraries represented the efforts of New Deal agencies to reconcile the necessary authority at the federal level to address national economic distress with the necessity of local autonomy required to maintain efficiency and confidence in democratic values.

In addition to illustrating the cooperative nature of public and private institutions for the purpose of providing social uplift to the mountain folk of Kentucky, this dissertation reveals a unique set of attitudes toward the stereotypical hillbilly. The letters and communications between WPA officials and state officers including Lena Nofcier reveal an almost urgent sense that cultural deficiency in the mountains presented a threat to mountain communities struggling to survive in a new economic arena. However, this view was more often a reference to the actual

living conditions of the region, especially with respect to the plight of public education and the availability of reading material, than an indictment of mountain folk. However, it is their almost forgotten voices the perhaps tells this story best. In one packhorse library report, a remark of an illiterate woman whose husband reads to her is recalled: “It’s the nicest thing I know, the way you bring books for us to read.”³⁰

Historian Carl Kaestle suggested that historical studies of literacy have abandoned treatment of the topic as a dichotomous variable tracing how many people were literate and how their characteristics differed from those who were literate. Kaestle suggested that identifying trends in literacy has been difficult for the historian. Precise historical definitions must occur within what he terms as “cultural and economic dimensions, personal as well as collective importance using psychological as well as social meanings.”³¹ The packhorse librarians penetrated into the rugged isolated mountains of Kentucky and executed a successful library outreach program that managed to connect with patrons in a way that helps us understand these complex dynamics.

This dissertation considers the Packhorse Library Program within the broad historical canvass of education and literacy during the New Deal Era. Additionally, this study considers how New Deal Programs interacted with local Appalachian communities at a time when mountain folk had an active interest in the social utility of literacy. This multi-layered analysis considers the function of outside forces promoting the notion of social and economic uplift in rural Kentucky communities, and the role that outreach literacy programs played in shaping perceptions of education as a means for improving the lives of peopls. The legacy of outreach

³⁰ “Extract from the Report of the Assistant Librarian, 1937.” In series “Library History,” Box 2, Folder “Library Reports.”

³¹ Carl F. Kaestle ed., *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading since 1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), xiii- xiv.

programs beginning with the early missionary movements during the last decades of the eighteenth century, programs sponsored by higher education in the region during the early decades of the twentieth century, and the development of a library reform movement in the Kentucky Legislature in the 1930s provided the historical precedence for the success of the packhorse libraries as a function of local implementation of a federal program. Ultimately, the success of the Packhorse library program can be attributed to cooperation among local, state, and federal agencies emphasizing local control.

Moreover, this study examines the desire of mountain folk to manipulate through a more complex industrial society and an oftentimes oppressive wage system. Thus, the archetype of “hillbilly” as presented in American literature in the decades prior to the Great Depression is effectively deconstructed when placed into the complex historical backdrop of social and economic development in the twentieth century. By deconstructing the traditional notions of Appalachian otherness, we can better understand how mountain folk found themselves caught up in the currents of human progress in the twentieth century, and how the written word served as a means to navigate those currents.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Allen, James L. *The Bluegrass Region of Kentucky and Other Kentucky Articles*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892.
- American Association of School Administrators. *Schools in Small Communities*. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1939.
- American Library Association Newsletter*, 2 June, 1960.
- American Library Association Newsletter*, 7 June, 1956.
- Anderson, James D., *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Appelt, Kathi and Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer. *Down Cut Shin Creek: The Packhorse Librarians of Kentucky*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.
- Bailyn, Bernard. *Education and Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960.
- Baldwin, William Edward. *Kentucky Statutes Annotated: 1936 Revision*. Cleaveland: Banks-Baldwin Company, 1936.
- Banks, Alan. "Labor and Development of Industrial Capitalism in Eastern Kentucky." PhD dissertation, McMaster University (1979): 27-39.
- Baritz, Loren. *The Servants of Power: A History of the Use of Social Science in American Industry*. Middleton: Connecticut Press, 1960.
- Barker, Tommie Dora. *Libraries in the South: A Report on Developments, 1930-1935*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1936.
- Barney, Sandra. *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Barton, Keith C. *The Gates Shut Quickly: Education and Reform in Kentucky, 1903-1908*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972.
- Batteau, Allen W. *The Invention of Appalachia*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990.
- Beach, Robert. "Book Extension Services in Eastern Kentucky." *Mountain Life and Work* 17:2 (Summer 1941): 1-8, 18.
- Becker, Jane S. *Inventing Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Bell, Ira. "Problems of Equalization of Public Education in Kentucky." *Kentucky School Journal* 17:5 (January 1939): 10-15.

- Berea College. "Report of the Director of Library Extension, 1920." (Berea College Archives, Berea Kentucky: Box 28, Folder "Extension Library Reports," 1915-1922).
- Berea College Libraries. "Enlarged Program for Berea College Extension Library." Frost Papers, Box 28, Folder "Reports, 1916-1921" (Berea: Berea College Archives): 8.
- . "Extract From Berea College Library Report, 1917-18." Frost Papers, Box 28, Folder "Reports, 1916-1921" (Berea: Berea College Archives).
- . "Extracts from the Report of the ASsistant Librarian, 1921-1922." Frost Papers, Box 28, Folder "Extension Library History" (Berea: Berea College Archives).
- Berea College Library. "Extract From Berea College Library Report, 1916-1917." Frost Papers, Box 28, Folder "Reports, 1916-1921" (Berea: Berea College Archives).
- . "Report of the Assistant Librarian, 1919." Frost Papers, Box 28, Folder "Reports, 1916-1921" (Berea: Berea College Archives).
- Berelson, Bernard. *The Library's Public*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1949.
- . "What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means." In *Communication Research*, edited by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949.
- Bernstein, Barton J. "The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform." In *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, edited by Barton J. Bernstein. New York: Pantheon, 1967.
- Berryman, Olivia. "Report of Services Rendered." Dated December 1, 1936. In series Library History, Box 3, folder "1936 Correspondence." Kentucky Library Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).
- .Bertrand, J'May. "The Appalachian Settlement Schools: The Rural Response to the Urban Concept." M.A. Thesis, Bryn Mawr College, 1975: 27-31.
- Biebel, Charles D. "Private Foundations and Public Policy: The Case of Secondary Education During the Great Depression." *History of Education Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1976): 3-33.
- Billings, Dwight, Kathleen Blee, and Lewis Swanson. "Culture, Family, and Community in Preindustrial Appalachia." *Appalachian Journal* 13, no.4 (Winter, 1986): 154-55.
- Billings, Dwight and Kathleen Blee. "Causes and Consequences of Persistent Rural Poverty: A Longitudinal Case Study of an Appalachian Community." *Final Report to the Ford Foundation and the Rural Economic Policy Program of the Aspen Institute* (1991): 14-33.
- Blakey, George T. *Hard Times and New Deal in Kentucky*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986.

- Blayney, Michael S. "Libraries for the Millions: Adult Public Library Services and the New Deal." *Journal of Library History* 12 (1977): 235.
- Bobinski, George S. *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Library Development*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1968.
- Bremer, William W. "Along the American Way: The New Deal's Work Relief Programs for the Unemployed." *Journal of American History* 62:3 (December 1975): 636-652.
- Brinkley, Alan. "The New Prelude." *Wilson Quarterly* 6 (1982): 50-61.
- Brown, Dale. *Berea College: Spiritual and Intellectual Roots*. Berea, Kentucky: Berea College Press, 1982.
- Brown, Euphemia K. "Carnegie Endowment for Extension Work, 1915: Reasons for asking Mr. Carnegie for \$25,000 Endowment." Frost Papers, Box 28, Folder "Extension Library Reports, 1915-1922": Berea, Kentucky: Berea College Archives.
- Brown, Richard D. "From Cohesion to Competition." In *Printing and Society in Early America*, edited by William L. Joyce et al. Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1983.
- . *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Brubacher, John S. and Willis Rudy. *Higher Education in Transition*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.
- Buchart, Ronald E. "Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World: A Historiography of the African American Struggle for Education." *History of Education Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Fall, 1988): 333-366.
- Cadle, D. "That All May Read." *Better Roads* 28:3 (1958): 44-49.
- Campbell, John C. *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921.
- Campbell, Olive D. "Adjustments to Rural Industrial Change with Special Reference to Mountain Areas." *National Education Association of the United States: Proceedings* 67 (1929): 484-488.
- Carey, James W. and Albert Kreiling. "Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications." in *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report on the Commission on Reading*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education (1985).
- . "Popular Culture and Uses and Gratifications: Notes Toward an Accommodation." In *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratification Research*, edited by Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1974.

- Caudill, Harry M. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1962.
- Chapman, Edward. "WPA and Rural Libraries." *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 32:10 (Spring 1986): 28-29.
- Charles, Searl F. *Minister of Relief: Harry Hopkins and the Depression*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963.
- Combs, Norris K. "Memories of Hindman Settlement School." *Troublesome Creek Times* (July 25, 1984): 4.
- Commonwealth of Kentucky. Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky: 1936*. Frankfort, Kentucky: State Law Library, 1936.
- Corbin, David. *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.
- Cornett, William Terrell. "Untying Some Knots in Knott County: Two Education Experiments in Eastern Kentucky." *Proceedings, Appalachia America* (Appalachian Studies Conference, 1980): 179-187.
- Corwin, Euphemia. "Carnegie Endowment for Extension Work." Berea College Archives, Series II "Library Reports," Box 12, Folder: "Extension Library Reports, 1915-1922."
- Cremin, Lawrence A. *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.
- . *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.
- . *Traditions of American Education*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
- Crowder, Suzanne. "Wooden Crates and Women's Clubs: Kentucky Bookmobile and Outreach Services." *Bookmobiles and Outreach Services* 5:1 (1962):17-24.
- Cubberly, Elwood. *Rural Life and Education*. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1922.
- Cutler, Phoebe. *The Public Landscape of the New Deal*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Damron, Donald Reid. "The Contributions of Carl D. Perkins on Higher Education Legislation." Ph.D. dissertation, Middle Tennessee State University, 1990.
- Dangerfield, Henderson. "Social Settlement and Educational Work in the Kentucky Mountains." *Journal of Social Science* 39 (November 1901): 176-189.
- Daniel, Hawthorne. *Public Libraries for Everyone*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1961.

- Davis, Allen F. *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Hartley Davis, "The Land of Feuds: A Region of the United States in Which Bloodshed is a Pastime and Cruel and Cowardly Murder Goes Unpunished—The Terrible Story of the Seven Great Kentucky Feuds." *Munsey's Magazine* 30 (November, 1903)
- Davis, Kenneth S. *FDR: Into the Storm, 1937-1940*. New York: Random House, 1993.
- Downs, Robert B. *Resources in Public Libraries*. New York: American Library Association, 1938.
- . "The South Looks at its Libraries." *Social Forces* 1:1 (October 1936): 123-127.
- Eller, Ronald D. *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982.
- Fairchild, Charles G. "Address of Professor C.G. Fairchild." *American Missionary* 36 (December 1883): 391-393.
- Fairchild, J. H. *Oberlin: The Colony and the College*. Oberlin, Ohio: E.J. Goodrich, 1883.
- Fass, Paula. "Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal." *American Journal of Education* 91 (1982): 36-64.
- Fee, John G. *Autobiography of John G. Fee*. Chicago: National Christian Association, 1891.
- . *The Sinfulness of Slaveholding*. New York: John A. Gray, Inc., 1851.
- Feinman, Ronald L. *Twilight of Progressivism: The Western Republican Senators and the New Deal*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- Forderhase, Nancy K. "The Clear Call of Thoroughbred Women: The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs and the Crusade for Educational Reform, 1903-1909." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83 (1985): 29.
- Fox, John Jr. "A Mountain Europa," *Century* 42 (1892) 760-765, 846-858.
- . *The Kentuckians*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897.
- . *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901.
- . *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.
- Freidel, Frank. *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Launching the New Deal*. Boston: Little Brown, 1973.
- Frost, William G. Series II, Box 42, Correspondence, 1899: (Berea, Ky: Berea College Archives).

- . W. G. Frost Papers, Series III, Box 14, Folder "Presidential Reports": Berea, Kentucky: Berea College Archives.
- . "Address at Trinity Church." *Boston Evening Journal* (1 December, 1896): 1.
- . "Appalachian America." *Women's Home Companion* September (1896): 3-4, 21.
- . "Berea College." *Berea Quarterly* May (1895): 22-23.
- . *For the Mountains*. New York: Fleming Revell, 1907.
- . "God's Plan for the Southern Mountains." *Biblical Review* 6 (1921): 405-425.
- . "The Last Log School-House: Address Before the Cincinnati Teacher's Club." *Berea Quarterly* (May 1896): 3-11.
- . "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains." *Atlantic Monthly* March (1899): 311-319.
- . *Synopsis of the President's Report Presented to the Trustees and Faculty, June 28, 1894*. Berea, Kentucky: Berea College, 1894.
- . "University Extension in Kentucky." *Outlook* 60 (September 3, 1922): 73-79.
- Fry, James W. "LSA and LSCA, 1956-1973: A Legislative History." *Library Trends* (July 1975): 7-26.
- Fullerton, E. "Just What is a Packhorse Library." In series 711-A, Box 7, Folder 4, Kentucky State Library and Archives (Frankfort, Kentucky).
- Gilmore, William J. *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989.
- Glander, Tomothy R. "Education and the Mass Media: The Origins of Mass Communication Research in the United States, 1939-1955." PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1990.
- Goodman, George H. Kentucky State Archive Library, Series VI: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 8, (Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Libraries).
- . "George H. Goodman to Harry L. Hopkins, WPA Administrator, 10 August 10, 1936." Series 6, Box 46, Folder 8. Frankfort: Kentucky State Archives Library.
- Gower, Calvin W. "The Civilian Conservation Corps and American Education: Threat to Local Control?" *History of Education Quarterly* 7 (1967): 58-70.
- Gray, Lewis Cecil. "Economic Conditions and Tendencies in the Southern Appalachians as Indicated by the Cooperative Survey." *Mountain Life and Work* 9 (July 1933): 7-12.

- Gray, Wayne T. "Mountain Dilemmas: A Study of Mountain Attitudes." *Mountain Life and Work* 12 (April 1936): 1-3.
- Gulliford, Andrew. *America's Country Schools*. Washington, D. C.: The Preservation Press, 1984.
- Guttek, Gerald L. *American Education, 1945-2000*. Chicago: Waveland Press, 2000.
- Guthrie, John, Mary Siefert, and Irwin Kirsch. "Effects of Education, Occupation, and Setting on Reading Practices." *American Educational Research Journal* 23 (1986): 151-160.
- Gutjahr, Paul. *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Hale, Lula. "Monthly Report for October 1937." Folder "Homeplace Community Center, 1937." Box 1, Series "Library History," Kentucky Department of Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Hamby, Alonzo L. *For the Survival of Democracy: Franklin Roosevelt and the World Crisis of the 1930s*. New York: Free Press, 2004.
- Haney, William Henry. *The Mountain People of Kentucky: An Account of Present Conditions with the Attitude of the People Toward Improvement* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1906), 27-41.
- Harney, Will Wallace. "A Strange Land and Peculiar People," *Lippincott's Magazine* 12 (October 1873)
- Henderson, Helen R. *A Curriculum Study in a Mountain District*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1937.
- Heskamp, Mrs. David to Lena Nofcier, 1 November, 1938. In Series "Kentucky Library History," folder "Correspondence 1938," Kentucky State Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Hofstadter, Richard. *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955.
- . "A Note on Intellect and Power." *American Scholar* 30:3 (Autumn 1961): 594-98.
- Hooker, Elizabeth R. *Religion in the Highlands: Native Churches and Missionary Enterprises in the Southern Appalachia Area*. New York: Home Missions Council, 1933.
- Hopkins, Harry L. "Employment in America." *Vital Speeches of the Day* 3 (December 1, 1936): 106.
- . *Spending to Save: The Complete Story of Relief*. New York: Viking, 1936.
- Houle, Cyril O. "Federal Policies Concerning Adult Education." *The School Review* 76:2 (June 1968): 166-189.

- Howard, Donald S. *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1943.
- Huddle, O. E., Letter to Lena Nofcier date 4 November 1936. In Series "Kentucky Library History," folder "Correspondence 1936," Kentucky State Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Hummel, B. L. "New Opportunities for Mountain Communities." *Mountain Life and Work* (July 1935): 21-23.
- Hunter, Robert F. "Virginia and the New Deal." In *The New Deal: The State and Local Levels*, edited by Robert F. Hunter. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975.
- Ikes, Harold L. *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ikes: The First Thousand Days, 1933-1936*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953.
- Janeway, Michael. *The Fall of the House of Roosevelt: Brokers of Ideas and Power from FDR to LBJ*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Jeffrey, Jonathan. "Friends of the Kentucky Libraries From its Beginnings in the 1930s to Today." *Kentucky Libraries* 59 (Winter 1995): 18-22.
- . "Looking Back: WPA Library Work in Kentucky." *Kentucky Libraries* 65:3 (Summer 2001): 28-29.
- Kaestle, Carl F. "Studying the History of Literacy." In *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading Since 1880*, edited by Carl F. Kaestle. New haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Kane, Harnett T. *Miracle in the Mountains*. New York: Doubleday, 1956.
- Kantor, Harvey. "Work, Education, and Vocational Reform: The Ideological Origins of Vocational Education, 1890-1920." *American Journal of Education* 94:4 (August 1986): 401-426.
- Katz, Elihu and Paul F. Lazarsfeld. *Personal Influence*. New York: Free Press, 1955.
- Keller, Morton. "The New Deal: A New Look." *Polity* 31:4 (Summer 1999): 657-663.
- Kentucky Department of Education. "Library Service Available in the Public Schools of Kentucky." *Kentucky Department of Education Educational Bulletin* 2:11 (January 1935): 3-5.
- Kentucky Department of Libraries. "1936 Library Report." Folder 11, Series "Library History," Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives.
- . "Annual Report of Library Services, 1937-1938." Series "Library History," Box 2, Folder "Library Reports." Kentucky Department of Archives, Frankfort.

- . "Annual Report of Library Services, 1937-1938." In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 7, "Library Reports, 1938," Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . "Annual Report of Library Services, 1938-1939." In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 7, folder "Library Reports, 1939," Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . "Annual Report of Library Services, 1939-1940." In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 7, folder "Library Reports, 1940," Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . "Annual Report of Library Services, 1941-1942." series Kentucky Library History, Box 2, folder "Library Reports, 1942" Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives.
- . "The Beginnings of the Kentucky State Library and Archive System." Frankfort: Kentucky State Archives, Series 6: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 12, 1936.
- . "Extension Division Report, 1959." Series "Library History," Box 4, Folder "1959" Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives.
- . "Library Report, 1935." Series: "Library History," Box 2, Folder "1935." Kentucky Department of Libraries Archives,
- Kentucky Educational Commission. *Report of the Kentucky Educational Commission, 1935*. Frankfort, 1935.
- Kentucky Legislative Research Commission. *Public Library Service: Publication No. 65* (1959), 8-14.
- Kentucky Library Association. *Kentucky Library Association Bulletin*. (July 1936) in Kentucky State Archives, Series VI: Box 41, Folder "KLA Bulletins, 1936".
- . "Kentucky Library Association Bulletin, July 1942." series 6, Box 41, folder "KLA Bulletins, 1942," Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives.
- . "Library Extension Division Report, 1939." Kentucky Library Association Bulletin (October 1939): 1.
- Kenworthy, Wilmer E. "First Aid to Soft Coal: Then a Major Operation." *Mountain Life and Work* 9 (April 1933): 1.
- Kephart, Horace. *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among Mountaineers*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1913.
- Kirkendall, Richard S. "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Service Intellectual." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49:3 (December 1962): 456-471.

- Kirsch, Irwin S. and John T. Guthrie. "Adult Reading Practices for Work and Leisure." *Reading Research Quarterly* 24 (1973): 213-232.
- Lair, John. "Monday Night Radio Hour." Program script. In series "Monday Night Radio Hour," Box 41, folder 8, Berea College Archives, Berea, Kentucky.
- Larson, Gary. *The Reluctant Patron: The United States Government and the Arts, 1943-1965*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.
- Latham, Michael D. *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kentucky Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Lawson, Alan. *The Politics of Hope: The New Deal Response to Crisis*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. *The People's Choice*. New York: Harper & Row, 1944.
- Lerner, Max. "The Lincoln Image." *New Republic* (November 9, 1938): 18-23.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.
- Lewis, Ronald L. and Dwight B. Billings, "Appalachian Culture and Economic Development: A Retrospective on the Theory and Literature" *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, 3:1 (Spring 1997), 3-42
- Kentucky Department of Libraries. *Annual Report of the State Librarian*. Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Libraries, 1942.
- "Library Construction." *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* 26 (1970): 11-12.
- "Library Service Bill." *New York Times* 5 May 1956, p.18, sec.2.
- Lilienthal, David. "The Central Problem in the South: Increased Income." *Mountain Life and Work* 12:4 (January 1937): 4-7.
- Link, Henry C. and Harry Hopf. *People and Books: A Study of Reading and Book-Buying Habits*. New York: Book Industry Committee, 1946.
- Link, William A. *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- _____. *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism 1880-1930*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Low, Edmon. "Two Decisive Decades: Federal Consciousness and Libraries." *American Libraries* 3:4 (July/August 1972): 717-18.

- Lynd, Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd. *Middletown: A Study of American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1929.
- Mayberry, B. D. "The Tuskegee Movable School: A Unique Contribution to National and International Agriculture and Rural Development." *Agricultural History* 65:2 (Spring 1991): 85-104.
- McCauley, Deborah. *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.
- McDonald, Michael and John Muldowney. *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- McDonald, Michael J. and John Muldowney. *TVA and the Dispossessed*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982.
- McDonald, William F. *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973.
- McLeod, Jack M. and Lee B. Baker. "The Uses and Gratification Approach." In *Handbook of Political Communications*, edited by D. Nimmo and K. Sanders. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981.
- MacGowan, Alice. "The Homecoming of Byrd Forebush: A Love Story of Little Turkey Creek." *Munsey's Magazine* 30 (December 1903), 429-432.
- Michael, Robert D. *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990.
- Millis, Walter. "The President's Political Strategy." *Yale Review* (September 1938): 569-575.
- Minehan, Thomas. *Boy and Girl Tramps of America*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934.
- Mirel, Jefferey. "The Politics of Educational Retrenchment in Detroit." *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1984): 323-358.
- Moffet, James. *Storm in the Mountains: A Case Study of Censorship, Conflict, and Consciousness*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.
- Morehead, C. S. and Mason Brown. *Digest of the State Laws of Kentucky*. Frankfort, Kentucky: Albert Hodges, 1834.
- Morris, Homer L. *The Plight of the Bituminous Coal Miner*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934.
- Morse, Herman N. "Report of the Southern Mountain Educational Commission." *Mountain Life and Work* (July 1937): 11-13.

- Murfree, Mary Noailles [Charles Edward Craddock, pseudo]. *In the Tennessee Mountains*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884.
- Nelms, Willie E. "Cora Wilson Stewart and the Crusade Against Literacy in Kentucky." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 74 (1976): 12-15.
- Nelson, Scott R. *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Newhall, Elizabeth B. "Schools." *Child Welfare in Kentucky* 6 (1919): 79.
- Nofcier, Lena. to Helen Stearns, dated August 17, 1935. In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 3, folder "Correspondence, 1935," Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . to Martha Shaw, dated October 22, 1935. In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 3, folder "Correspondence, 1935." Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . Memorandum dated February 22, 1937. In Series "Kentucky Library History," folder "Correspondence 1937," Kentucky State Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . to Watkins. Letter in Reply dated April 4, 1939. In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 4, folder "Correspondence 1939," Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . to the Junior Literary Guild dated September 7, 1939. In series "Kentucky Libraries History" Box 4, folder "Correspondence 1939," Kentucky State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . to Ethyl Perryman. Letter dated December 12, 1938. In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 7, folder "Correspondence 1938," Kentucky Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . "Bank Ledger." In Series "Library History," Box 4, folder "Packhorse Libraries," Kentucky Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- . *History of the Public Library in Kentucky*. Frankfort: Kentucky Library Commission, 1938.
- . "Just What is a Packhorse Library." Document 12158, Series 6, Box 46, Folder 12, Kentucky State Archive Library.
- . "Packhorse Library Project." Report to Mrs. J. Adams (WPA) dated October 17, 1939. In series "Kentucky Libraries History," Box 7, folder "Correspondence 1939," Kentucky State Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Nofcier, Lena B. "Lena Nofcier to B. W. Whitaker, 1 August 1936." Folder "1936 Correspondence," Box 10, Record Group SAA63, Berea Archives, Berea Kentucky.

- . "Proposal: Pack Horse Library Project." Series VI: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 12, Frankfort: Kentucky State Archive Library.
- Nord, David P. "Working Class Readers: Family, Community, and Reading in Late Nineteenth-Century America " *Communication Research* 13 (1986): 156-181.
- Owen, Leland E. "First District Report." *Kentucky Parent Teacher: The Official Bulletin*, Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers (May 1938): 7.
- Palmgreen, Philip, Lawrence A. Wagoner, and Karl E. Rosengren "Uses and Gratification Research: The Past Ten Years." In *Media Gratifications Research*, edited by Wenner Rosengren, and Palmgreen. Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Education, 1982.
- Patterson, James T. "A Conservative Coalition Forms in Congress." *Journal of American History* 52 (March 1966): 759-770.
- Peck, Elizabeth S. *Berea's First Century*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1955.
- Perkins, Francis. *The Roosevelt I Knew*. New York: Viking, 1946.
- Perryman, Ethyl to John Lear, Letter dated February 22, 1941. In series BCA, Box 54, folder "Renfro Valley Papers," Berea College Archives, Berea Kentucky.
- Perryman, Ethyl to Norma Whitaker, 10 November 1936. Record Group SAA63, Box 10, Folder "1936 Correspondence," Berea College Archives, Berea Kentucky.
- Porter, F.J. and Mary Willis. "Kentucky's Bookmobiles: Reports from the Counties." Kentucky Library Extension Division (1960): 1.
- Projects, Conference of Women's and Professional. "Excerpt From Conference of Women's and Professional Projects." Series VI: Kentucky Library History, Box 46, Folder 8, Kentucky State Archive Library, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Pudup, Mary Beth. "Social Class and Economic Development in Southeast Kentucky, 1820-1880." In *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era*, edited by Robert D. Mitchell. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991.
- Raine, James Watt. *Land of the Saddle Bags*. New York: Council of Women for Home Missions, 1924.
- Ralph, Julian. "Our Appalachian Americans." *Harper's Weekly* 107 (June 1903): 32-41
- Ratner, Joseph. *Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey's Philosophy*. New York: Modern Library, 1939.
- Real, Michael R. "Media Theory: Contributions to an Understanding of American Mass Communications." *American Quarterly* 32 (Bibliographical Issue, 1980): 240-244.

- Reese, William J. *The Origins of the American High School*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Ridgeway, Florence. *Developments in Library Service in Kentucky*. Berea, Kentucky: Berea College Press, 1940.
- Ridgeway, Florence H. "Kentucky's First Book Wagon." *The Berea Alumnus Newsletter* (December 1958): 7-8.
- Rippa, Alexander. "The Business Community and the Public Schools on the Eve of the Great Depression." *History of Education Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (1964): 33-43.
- Rogers, John A. R. *Birth of Berea College: A Story of Providence*. Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates, 1902.
- Rogers, Mary. *The Pine Mountain Story, 1913-1918*. Pine Mountain, Kentucky: Pine Mountain Settlement School, 1980.
- Rostow, Walt Whitman. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. New York: Macmillan, 1960.
- Rothrock, Mary U. "Kentucky's Rural Libraries," *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 31:12 (December 1937), 961-963.
- Rudolph, Frederick. *The American College and University: A History*. New York: Vintage, 1963.
- Salstrom, Paul. *Appalachia's Path to Dependency: Rethinking a Region's Economic History, 1730-1940*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M. *The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960.
- Schmitzer, Jeanne C. "The Packhorse Library Project of Eastern Kentucky, 1936-1943." Masters Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1998.
- . "Reaching out to the Mountains: The Packhorse Library Program of Eastern Kentucky." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 95, no. 1 (1997): 57-77.
- Schreiner, Andrew. to John Lair. Letter dated March 31, 1941. In series "Monday Night Radio Hour, Box 41, folder "Letters," Berea College Archives, Berea, Kentucky.
- Scott, John C. "The Chautauqua Movement: Revolution in Popular Higher Education." *The Journal of Higher Education* 70:4 (July-August 1999): 389-412.
- Scott, M. to John Lair. Letter dated April 7, 1941. In series "Monday Night Radio Hour," Box 41, folder "Letters," Berea College Archives, Berea, Kentucky.

- Semple, E. C. "The Anglo Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains: A Study in Anthropology." *Bulletin of the National Geographic Society* 41, no. 8 (1910): 561-594.
- Shapiro, Henry D. *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978.
- Sherwood, Robert E. *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*. New York: Harper, 1948.
- Shogan, Robert. *Backlash: The Killing of the New Deal*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006.
- Shover, John. "Depression Letters From American Farmers." *Agricultural History* (July 1962): 13-22.
- Skean, Marion Holcomb. "Book Larnin." *Mountain Life and Work* (October 1937): 6-8.
- Slichter, Gertrude A. "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Farm Problem, 1929-1932." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 18:3 (September 1956): 238-258.
- Smith, Beverly. "The Change in the Mountains." *Saturday Evening Post* 23 (December 1964): 60-62.
- Smith, Larry R. "The New Deal and Higher Education in Florida, 1933-1939: Temporary Assistance and Promises." Masters Thesis, University of Florida, 2004.
- Smith, Maggie Mae. "Letter to the Editor." *Louisville Courier Journal* (April 11, 1938): 6.
- Soltow, Lee and Edward Stevens. *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States: A Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Spaulding, Arthur W. *The Men of the Mountains: The Story of the Southern Mountaineer and His Kin in the Piedmont*. Nashville: Southern Press, 1915.
- Spring, Joel. *Education and the Corporate State*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.
- Stafford, O. B. *Annual Conference Report, 1943-1944*. Frankfort: Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1944.
- Stamper, Pete. *It all Happened in Renfro Valley*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999.
- Stewart, Cora Wilson. *Moonlight Schools for the Emancipation of Adult Illiterates*. New York: E.P. Button Company, 1922.
- Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Kentucky Superintendent of Public Instruction Report, 1907-1908*. Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Education, 1908.
- Swanson, David S. "Communication Research and the Uses and Gratification Model: A Critique." *Communication Research* 6 (1979): 37-53.

- Theobald, Ruth L. "School Library Service in Kentucky." *Peabody Journal of Education* 13:1 (July 1935): 28-31.
- Thomas H. Coode and John F. Bauman. "Dear Mr. Hopkins: A New Dealer Reports from Eastern Kentucky." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 78:4 (Winter 1980): 59-62.
- Thompson, James H. *Significant Trends in the Coal Industry, 1900-1957*. Morgantown: Bureau of Business Statistics, 1958.
- Tindall, George B. *The Emergence of a New South, 1913-1945*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967.
- Townsend, G. W. "Book Women Carry Culture to Eastern Kentucky Hills." *Kentucky* (Winter 1939): 38.
- Trotter, Margaret. "Appalachia Speaking." *Mountain Life and Work* 13:3 (October 1937), 3.
- Tyack, David, Robert Lowe, and Elizabeth Hansot. *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Tyack, David B. *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Ulich, Robert. *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954.
- United States Bureau of Census. *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States*. New York: New York Press, 1976.
- . *Census of Manufacturing, 1930*. Washington, D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930.
- United States Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. *The Library Services and Construction Act of 1964: A Compilation of Material Relevant to Public Law 88-269*, 1964.
- Unknown. "Footback Librarians of the Hills." *Press Digest* (March 30, 1938): 1-2.
- . "Looking Back 50 Years Ago: WPA Libraries in Kentucky." *Kentucky Libraries*, 53 (Spring, 1985).
- Unkown. "Carrier Report." Dated October 30, 1936. In Series 711-A, Box 7, Folder "Packhorse Libraries," Kentucky State Library Archives Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Untitled Document, Document 10940-B dated 13 August 1940. Kentucky State Archive Library, Series 6, Box 46, Folder 12, Kentukey State Archive Library.
- Vaughn, Marshall E. "Resident Forces in the Southern Mountains." *Mountain Life and Work* 12:7 (July 1936): 17-23.

- Vincent, G. "A Retarded Frontier." *American Sociological Review* 4 (1898): 1-20.
- Waples, Douglas. "Research Memorandum on Reading Habits in the Depression." *Social Science Research Bulletin* 37 (1937): 8-11.
- Watkins, S. C. to Lena Nofcier, Letter on behalf of the Wilcox & Follet Book Company dated April 29, 1939. In series "Kentucky Library History," Box 4, folder "Correspondence 1939, Kentucky State Library Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.
- Watkins, T. H. *The Hungary Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999.
- Weller, J. E. *Yesterday's People*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969.
- Weller, Jack E. *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia* Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965.
- Whisnant, David. *Modernizing the Mountaineer*. Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1980.
- Whitaker, B. W. "B.W. Whitaker to Lena Nofcier, 4 October 1936." Folder "1936 Correspondence," Box 10, Record Group SAA63, Berea College Archives.
- William and Wilma Wirt to Peggy Westerfield. 19 September 1938, Peggy Westerfield Papers, Folder No. 1430, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
- Williams, Cratis D. "Heritage of Appalachia." In *The Future of Appalachia*, edited by Southern Appalachian Regional Conference, 128-132. Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1975.
- Williams, John Alexander. *Appalachia: A History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Wilson, Louis R. "Library Service in Rural Areas." *Social Forces* 15:4 (May 1937): 525-530.
- Wilson, Louis R. and Edward A. Wright. *County Library Service in the South*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935.
- Wilson, Shannon H. *Berea College: An Illustrated History*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006.
- Winson, Sanford. *Illiteracy in the United States from 1870 to 1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930.
- Woodward, Ellen S. "The Lasting Values of WPA." Date Unknown, Works Progress Administration Papers. Record Group 69, Series 737, Box 8. National Archives, Washington D.C.
- _____ "WPA Library Projects," *Wilson Library Bulletin* (1938), 518-520.

- Works Progress Administration. *Kentucky County Profiles*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938.
- . "WPA Traveling Libraries." Date Unknown. Works Progress Administration Papers. Record Group 69, Series 743, Box 1. National Archives, Washington D.C.
- Worthington, W. A. "A Church School in Readjustment." *Mountain Life and Work* 12:3 (October 1936): 4.
- Wosh, Peter J. *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Wright, J. W. to John Lair, Letter dated March 2, 1941. In series "Monday Night Radio Hour," Box 41, folder "Letters," Berea College Archives, Berea, Kentucky.
- Young, Ruth T. "Growth of the School Library in Kentucky." *Kentucky School Journal* 16:8 (April 1938): 36-38.
- Youngman, Anna. "The Revenue System of Kentucky: A Study in State Finance." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 32 (1917): 202.
- Zimmerman, Jonathan. *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Donald C. Boyd is a native of Junction City, Kentucky. He graduated from Tates Creek High School in Lexington Kentucky, Central Florida Community College, the University of Florida (B.A., history), and Nova Southeastern University (M.S., social studies education). He served in the United States Army (1981-1986), and is the recipient of the 2005 Justin Winsor Prize for research in library history.