

One-Room Schools Quickly Fading From The Public Education Scene

By Elizabeth Smith

One-room, one-teacher schools — the state's first form of public education — will soon exist only in the memories of many Kentuckians as these rural facilities are being phased out as quickly as possible.

The state Department of Education recently reported that only 15 one-room, one-teacher schools, with a total enrollment of 301 elementary pupils, are now operating in Kentucky.

Thirty-three such schools were open

EX-MOREHEADIAN WILL BE IN 'WHO'S WHO IN KENTUCKY'

Keen W. Johnson, a former resident of Morehead who is now employed in the Office of Counsel, Huntington District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has been selected to appear in the 1974 edition of "Who's Who in Kentucky".

The edition is a compilation of biographical information on outstanding citizens of the state of Kentucky. To be considered for listing in the publication, one must have distinguished himself in business, government or civic awareness within his own community.

Johnson formerly was an attorney-adviser for the local Corps of Engineers office. While in Morehead he was a member of the Kiwanis Club and First Baptist Church.

during the 1972-73 school year in contrast to 695 just 10 years ago. The largest number of one-room schools in the state — 7,150 — operated during the 1917-18 school year.

The reason for this drastic decline, said Don C. Bale, assistant superintendent of instruction, is the consolidation of the small schools into larger facilities.

Greater Opportunities

"Larger schools can provide more and better educational programs and more qualified teachers," he said. "In the past, emergency teachers (those certified for one year under emergency conditions) were often the only ones willing to teach in the small rural schools.

"Consolidation has been the attitude of educational leaders in Kentucky for a long time and Kentucky has made more progress toward consolidation in the last 20 years than possibly any other state," he added.

Better roads, which facilitate the transportation of pupils, are the main reason consolidation has been so successful. "Even though the total pupil population is decreasing, the state transports more pupils each year because of consolidation," said Louis Yandell, director of the Division of Pupil Transportation.

T.O. Thompson, director of the Division of Buildings and Grounds, added that the foundation program, initiated in the 1950's for financing public education, also speeded up the consolidation of small schools. This

money provided needed funds for instruction, transportation, operating expenses and capital outlay for construction, he said.

Floyd County Has Two

The one-room schools of today are in the most isolated and remote areas of Kentucky. Fourteen of the schools are in mountainous regions of Eastern Kentucky. Two are in Floyd County, four in Knott County, two in both Lawrence and Letcher counties, three in Perry County and one in Wayne County.

The George H. Goodman School, near Big Clifty in Grayson County, is the only one-room school operating outside of Eastern Kentucky. A spokesman from the Grayson County Board of Education said that this fall, the school's enrollment dwindled to 24 pupils so they were put in one room of the school. This is the last year for the Goodman School, he added, as the students will be sent to the new Clarkson Elementary School next year.

The other schools are also operating on an interim basis, Bale said, until adequate roads can be built to accommodate buses and other vehicles to transport students living in isolated areas.

Courses Are Same

Although the one-room schools have been called "a last resort" in modern education, they are not as backward and primitive as one might think, said Omeda Salyers, supervisor for the Perry County School Board.

All schools have a certified teacher and offer the same basic courses as the larger schools. Most of them have their own small libraries and all have access to bookmobiles. Also, most of the schools offer a hot lunch every day.

Mrs. Helen Martin, teacher of the one-room Daniels Creek School, near Allen in Floyd County, said she feels she has certain advantages over teachers at larger schools. In her third year of teaching there, she knows every child and the families very well. "We're much closer than those in larger schools," she said.

She noted that this factor helps her group her 27 pupils, who are in the first through eighth grades, on ability rather than grade levels. While some subjects, such as reading and math, are geared to particular grades, Mrs. Martin said she teaches basic, general courses to all her students.

In addition, she also conducts a regular art class and an outside gym class when the weather permits.

More Individual Attention

Mrs. Martin said that the small size of her class enables her to give each child individual attention and she often depends on the older students to help the younger ones in their work.

The school facilities are adequate, she added. She has several books and encyclopedias, a film projector and record player. The school was recently painted, both inside and out, and an air conditioner was installed.

Mrs. Martin admits that the children could benefit from the guidance of an additional teacher, and added that she feels the team teaching method used in larger schools would be ideal for the one-room school.

Unlike some of the other one-room schools, no definite plans have yet been made for the closing of Daniels Creek. However, "as soon as space allows" the children will be sent to the nearby Betsy Layne Elementary School, said Floyd County Superintendent Charles F. Clark.

While the future of Daniels Creek and the state's other one-room schools is definitely not long-term, these schools are still fulfilling a vital educational need in remote areas. And as further consolidation closes the last one-room school, an institution in public education will be a thing of the past.

A New Year's Prayer

Unto Thee, O Lord my God, do I open my heart at this time of the turn of the year. As I review my conduct during the months that are passed, I am deeply conscious of my shortcomings. Often righteousness called to me in vain and I yielded to selfishness, anger and pride. I acknowledge my failings and I repent of them. I pray for Thy forgiveness and for the forgiveness of those whom I have wronged and hurt. Whatever life has brought me during the year now ended, grant that it may become unto me a source of strength and wisdom. O that the year now begun may be for me a new year indeed; new in consecration of purpose and in renewal of earnestness and sincerity; steadfast in rejecting all that is unworthy of me and of my heritage. Grant me strength of will to live as Thou wouldst have me live. Incline Thine ear unto me; be gracious unto me, O Lord. Lead me and guide me for my times are in Thy hand. Amen.

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