Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, 83, Nation’s Great Pioneer Leader In Adult Education, Is Claimed

Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, who brought more publicity and favorable recognition to Eastern Kentucky than any Rowan Countian in history, died Tuesday of last week at St. Luke’s Hospital, Tyrone, N.C.

The founder of the Moonlight Schools, first coordinated effort in the United States in the field of adult education, was 83 years of age. She had been in failing health for some time.

Mrs. Stewart, listed in Who’s Who as a retired educator, lecturer and writer, observed from her position as a stenographer in a Morehead law office, that many of Eastern Kentucky’s citizens were unable to read and write.

This was the beginning of the Moonlight Schools in 1911.

Friends and advisors told her the undertaking was doomed to failure because elderly folks were too self-conscious and old to go to night school, particularly since many would have to reveal they could sign their own names only with an ‘X’.

Schools Gain Favor

But, the young, and attractive Morehead woman, who had a knack of making people like her and winning them over to her cause, was undaunted.

Within two years the Moonlight Schools were not only flourishing throughout Rowan County, but had spread to 25 Kentucky counties and other states.

Such publications as the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune gave considerable illustrated space to the effort and Moonlight Schools developed in many isolated areas of the United States and other countries.

Rowan teachers were awarded an all-expense paid trip to Canada in recognition of their work.

One remarkable phase of the Moonlight Schools, often cited in national magazines, etc., was the enthusiasm shown by the students, many of them 60 years of age. They accepted the schools as their own, and the progress they achieved was generally rapid. Many were able to read a part of the Bible within a few weeks.

Early in 1914 Kentucky Governor McCrory appointed Mrs. Stewart Chairman of the Illiteracy Commission, first of its kind in the United States.

Mrs. Stewart then moved into policy positions of the United States government and international groups, promoting adult learning in a nation of mostly one-room schools back in those days.

As Mrs. Wilson transferred her talents and zeal from the East... (Continued on next page, this section)

47 YEARS AGO—This is how Cora Wilson Stewart looked in 1911 when she started the Moonlight Schools in Eastern Kentucky. She died at age 83 after receiving many national and international citations.

This is one of the last pictures of Cora Wilson Stewart before her death. Illness kept her from recently being honored on the “This Is Your Life” television program.