

CORA WILSON STEWART AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOONLIGHT SCHOOL

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by
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INTRODUCTION

The story of the movement to wipe out illiteracy is a record of high-hearted service on the part of teachers and others from its beginning in the Kentucky hills nineteen years ago. And how well these teachers have been reinforced and strengthened by the act of President Hoover and Secretary Wilbur in creating a National Commission on Illiteracy with headquarters in Washington! Thus from the mountain school-house to the White House the challenge of illiteracy has been accepted.

"For every day's a battlefield
In school, or shop, or cattlefield.
Yet banners of the flaming skies
Still beckon us to high emprise
And cheer us on our way."

The various impressions which have prevailed throughout the country in regard to moonlight schools have been amusing indeed. Some have imagined them to be schools where children studied and played and scampered on the green like faries in the moonlight. Others have believed them to be ideal courting schools, where lovers strolled arm in arm, quoted, poetry, and told the old, old story by the light of a bewitching moon. Others have speculated upon their being schools where moonshiners, youthful and aged, were instructed in the most scientific methods of extracting the juice from the corn, and, at the same time, the most secretive, to prevent government interference.

When I was superintendent of Rowan County (Kentucky) school, I served as secretary to a number of illiterate folk--a mistaken kindness. I ought to have been teaching them to read and write. Among these fold was a woman whose children had grown up without education, except one daughter, who had had omited schooling. She had gone to Chicago, and there had profited by that one advantage at least which the city posesses over the rural district, the night school. Her letters were the only source of joy that came into that aged mother's life, and the drafts which they contained were the only means of relieving her necessities.

Often she brought the daughter's letters over the hill, seven miles, to the county seat, for me to read and answer for her. After an absence of six weeks, she came in one morning fondling a letter. I anticipated her mission, and said: "A letter from your daughter? Shall I read and answer it for you?"

With dignity and pride, she replied: "I kin answer it fer myself--I've larned to read and write."

In amazement I questioned her, and this is the story she told: "Sometimes I couldn't get over here to see you and the 'cricks' would be up between me and the neighbors, or the neighbors would be away from home, and I could not get a letter read and answered for three or four days; and, anyway, it jist seemed thar wuz a wall 'twixt Jane and me all the time, and I wanted to read with my own eyes what she had

writ with her own hand. So I went to a store and bought me a speller, and I sot up at nights till midnights, and sometimes till skylight--and I learned to read and write."

And to demonstrate her accomplishment, she slowly spelled out the words of that precious letter, and then she sat down and, under my direction, answered it--wrote her first letter, an achievement which pleased her immeasurably, and one which must have pleased the absent Jane still more.

Shortly after this, there came into my office one morning a middle-aged man, handsome and intelligent in appearance. While waiting for me to dispatch the business in hand, I gave him two books. He fingered the leaves hurriedly, like a child, turned the books over and looked at the backs, and laid them down with a sigh. Knowing the scarcity of interesting reading through the country, I proffered him the loan of these two books. He shook his head, and said: "No, I cannot read or write." And then the tears came into the eyes of that stalwart man, and he added: "I would give twenty years of my life if I could."

A few evenings later I attended an entertainment in a rural district school. A stalwart lad of twenty sang a beautiful ballad, mostly original, but partly borrowed from his English ancestors. When he had finished, amid deafening applause, I went over and congratulated him. "Dennis, that was a beautiful ballad--it is worthy of publication. Will you write it down for me?" "I would if I could write," he replied, crestfallen, "but I cannot. I've thought of a

hundred of 'em better'n that, but I'd forgotten 'em before anybody came along to set 'em down,"

These three incidents led directly to the establishment of the moonlight schools. Not merely the call of three individuals was sounded, but the appeal of three classes: illiterate mothers separated from their absent children farther than sea or land or any other condition than death; middle-aged men shut out from the world of books and unable to cast their ballot with intelligence and in secrecy and security; young people who possess undeveloped talents which might yet be made to contribute much to the world of literature, art, science or invention.

The public school teachers of the county were called together. These specific incidents were related to them, and the fact that there were 1,152 such men and women whom the schools of the past had left behind was dwelt upon. The teachers were asked to volunteer for night-school service, to open their schools on moonlight evenings--to give these people a chance.

This they cheerfully agreed to do, and on Labor Day, September 4, 1911, these teachers celebrated by visiting every farmhouse and every hovel, inviting people of all classes to attend the moonlight schools which were to open their sessions the next evening. They expected some response and hoped for from one to three pupils in attendance at each school--perhaps one hundred and fifty the county over,

These county folk had all the excuses that any toil-worn people ever had. There were rugged roads to travel, high hills

to climb, streams without bridges to cross, children to lead, and babes to carry; but they were not seeking excuses, they were seeking knowledge. And so they came. They came, some singly and alone; they came hurrying in groups; they came traveling for miles; they came carrying babes in arms; they came bent with age and leaning on canes; they came 1,200 strong.

The youngest student was eighteen, and the oldest eighty-six. Some learned to write their names the first evening, and some required two evenings for this feat. Their joy in this achievement, simple though it was, is beyond the power of pen to describe. They wrote their names on trees, fences, posts, barns, barrel-staves, and every available scrap of paper. Those who possessed even meager means drew it out of hiding and deposited it in bank, writing their checks and signing their names with childish pride. Letters soon began to go to loved ones in other counties and far distant states.

Usually the first of these letters came to the office of the county superintendent. Romantic in the history of this is the fact that the first three letters written from the moonlight schools came in this order; the first from a mother who had children absent in the West; the second from the man who had said he would give twenty years of his life if he could read and write, and the third from the boy who would forget his ballads before anybody came along to set them down.

Educators were skeptical of the plan, and freely predicted that, after the novelty had worn off, the interest would wane. But in the second session, the first year's record was surpassed in every particular: 1,600 were enrolled, 350 learned to read and write, and a man eighty-seven years old entered and put to shame the record of the proud "school-girl" of eighty-six of the year before.

There were many incidents of really remarkable individual development. A man who had labored for years at \$1.50 a day enrolled, specializing in mathematics—in that particular branch in which he was interested, lumbering. At the end of the six-weeks' session he was promoted at a salary double that which he had received before.

It was not unusual in traveling over the county to find in the day schools here and there, after the moonlight schools had closed, a man or woman seated at the desk with a child. One school trustee who had attended a moonlight school entered the day school afterward, and sat in the seat with his own twelve-year-old boy, studying the same books and reciting in the same classes. Another school trustee accompanied his wife to the moonlight school, she being the teacher, and afterward became her pupil during the day as well. Two young men who learned to read and write went to a factory town in Indiana to work during the winter, and finding thirteen young men employed there who could not read and write, proceeded to start a moonlight school in the factory. With the assistance of one who was better educated than themselves, they taught them all.

In March, 1913, the teachers of Rowan county met in the office of the county superintendent and declared their determination to wipe illiteracy out of that county that year. First, the school trustees were induced to take a census of the illiterates. When this was completed, an illiteracy record was made. On this record was not only the name and the age of every illiterate in the county, but his history as well: his home environment, family ties, religious faith, political belief, weaknesses, tastes and peculiarities, and the influence or combination of influences through which he might be reached in case the teacher failed with him.

Each teacher was given a list of the illiterates in her district when she opened her day school. She called on these people and cultivated their acquaintance before the moonlight schools began their sessions. The home department of the moonlight schools was established that year, in which the indifferent, the disinclined, the stubborn and the decrepit were taught by the teacher or by someone under the teacher's direction at home. "One for everyone," was the slogan which brought into service doctors, who could teach their convalescent patients; ministers who might find a pupil among the member of their flock; stenographers who could interest waitresses in the small-town hotels, and any others who would seek and teach a pupil. Each district was striving to be the first to completely stamp out illiteracy.

One school trustee, who had been campaigning strenuously against illiteracy, came in at the end of the week, and said with grim determination: "I'll bet you I'll have illiteracy out of my district by Monday morning. There's only one illiterate over there, and he's a tenant on my place. I'm going to run him out over into Fleming county." He was counseled that that was not the way to get rid of illiteracy, and that he must teach the tenant.

A young teacher, who was making a pronounced success, came in one Saturday, rather discouraged, and said: "You gave me a list of sixteen illiterates in my district, and I have taught fifteen of them to read and write. But there is one stubborn old woman out there who absolutely refuses to be taught. I have exhausted my resources with her, and have come in for advice." I expressed my confidence in his ultimate success; but we took out the illiteracy record and looked up this old woman's history. We found that she considered herself a physician, and was flattered when anyone sought her services as such.

The young man went back to his district. Later when an eruption developed on his wrist, he consulted the old woman. She diagnosed his case as crysipelas, for which she proceeded to treat him. And finally she concluded that a young man who possessed such excellent judgment in the selection of a physician knew enough to teach her something; and while she treated him for crysipelas, he treated her for illiteracy, and she learned to read and write.

We tried, by every means, fair and foul, to get illiteracy out of the county to the last individual. At the close of the third session, we had but a straggling few who could not read and write--twenty-three in all, mainly defectives, invalids and the blind,

Meanwhile, the moonlight schools had been extended to twenty-five other counties in the state, and whether it was in distillery section or among the tenant class, or in mining region or among the farmers, it was ever with the same results. Men and women thronged to the schools, striving to make up for the time they had lost, and they pled for a longer term when the session closed.

The governor of Kentucky, seeing the determined warfare which was being waged against illiteracy, urged in his message to the legislature that an Illiteracy Commission be created to drive illiteracy from the state. The measure creating this commission passed the legislature of 1914 without a dissenting vote, and the seat of the war against illiteracy in Kentucky was transferred from the Court House in the county seat of Rowan to the state capitol at Frankfort. The commission is directing the statewide campaign to remove illiteracy from Kentucky by the time the census of 1920 is taken,

One of the first activities of the Illiteracy Commission was to enlist the various organizations in the state to aid the teachers in their warfare on illiteracy. The Kentucky Educational Association was induced to pass a resolution

expressing commendation and pledging its support. The Kentucky Press Association was approached for assistance, which was cheerfully given. The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs, the Society of Colonial Dames, and other organizations, were among those to early lend their aid.

Governor James B. McCreery of Kentucky issued, in September, 1914, the first proclamation against illiteracy in the history of the world, urging all classes to join the fight. Again, in 1915, he issued a similar proclamation. Kentucky has celebrated "no illiteracy" Sunday in October, for the past two successive years. A galaxy of one hundred and twenty speakers covered the state during the summer of 1915, condemning the evils of illiteracy and advocating moonlight schools as a remedy. These speakers consisted of the governor, state officials, United States senators, congressmen, judges of the court of appeals, circuit judges, prominent educators and club women.

Moonlight school graduates have been asked to volunteer to teach at least one to read and write. Individuals and organizations have offered prizes to stimulate teachers in their moonlight school work. A teacher who has taught sixty-two illiterates during a session this year believes that he is very close to the \$100 state prize. Yet he, like thousands of other volunteer teachers, trudges back to the school at night with no thought of reward, save that of the joy of service and the emancipation of those enslaved in the bondage of illiteracy.

Kentucky will owe her public school teachers a debt that can never be estimated when they shall have wiped out her illiteracy, which they propose to do by 1920, and in many counties will do even before that time. That county in the state which has the largest percentage of illiteracy has taught 1,000 persons in the moonlight schools this year to read and write, while many counties have taught two and three hundred, besides raising the standard of education of many semi-illiterates and others who have enrolled.

The moonlight school curriculum embraces more than reading and writing: It includes arithmetic, history, geography, civics, agriculture, horticulture, home economics and road building. A special method of writing is taught--a moonlight school tablet, with indented letters for acquiring the form, and ruled sheets with wide spaces, designed especially for adult pupils. Readers have also been prepared for such beginners, dealing with roads, silos, seed-testing, crop rotation, piping water into the house, value of the daily bath, extermination of the fly, ways of cooking, and such problems as the people are facing every day. For example, a lesson on roads reads:

This is a road.
It is a good road.
It will save time.
It will save my team.
It will save my wagon,
The good road is my friend.
I will work for the good road.

The script lesson follows; "I will work for the good road," which pledge the student writes ten times, and if the

law of suggestion works, he becomes truly a friend and promotor of good roads.

Moonlight schools are conducted in seventeen states, Oklahoma, Alabama, and North Carolina following closely Kentucky's lead. These schools minister equally to illiterate Indians in Oklahoma, illiterate Negroes in Alabama, and illiterate whites in North Carolina and other states. California and New Mexico, the last states to adopt the institution, are finding it useful in the education of the immigrant population of the one, and the large Mexican population of the other.

There are 5,516,163 illiterates in this country, according to the federal census of 1910--more than the entire population of Denmark, also more than the population of Sweden or Norway, and of serveral other prosperous countries. Some countries thrive, support churches, schools and industries on the number of people that America is permitting to go to waste. Illiteracy in the United States is largely a rural problem; it exists in rural districts in double the proportion found in urban communities. Until the moonlight school was established, there was absolutely no provision for the education of illiterate adults in rural sections, and there in none in urban districts now, save the city night school, which receives illiterate foreigners, but in most cities, at least, does not coax or compel them to attend.

It is the privilege of American public school teachers to wipe out America's illiteracy. Back to the school-house twenty to twenty-four evenings and, with proper organization,

the deed is done: for experience has proved that all but abnormal adults can escape from illiteracy in a month's time, and some in even less.

Could there be more valiant and heroic service to humanity than the stamping out of illiteracy, the most insidious foe of the nation?

BIOGRAPHY OF MRS. CORA WILSON STEWART

Mrs. Stewart was born in Rowan County in 1875 the daughter of Dr. Jeremiah Wilson. She was first married to Mr. Grant Carey but was divorced in less than two years. She later married Abe Stewart. One child came to this union who died in infancy and is buried in Lee Cemetery.

As Superintendent of Schools in Rowan County she acted as a voluntary secretary to illiterate adults. She read letters to mothers whose children had all grown up unable to read or write except one girl who had moved away and attended night school. One man came into her office saying he could neither read nor write and would give twenty years of his life if he could. She heard a twenty year old boy sing a beautiful ballad and asked for a copy of the song. The boy replied saying he couldn't write and said that he had thought up several songs better than that one but had forgotten them before he could find some one to write them down for him.

These three incidents plus many more led, directly, to the establishment of the Moonlight Schools in Rowan County in 1911. These schools got their name from the fact that they were held on nights when the moon was shining and lighted the peoples' way to the school. Because of the bad roads and the distance the pupils had to travel it was next to impossible to have schools on any other but moonlit nights.

Textbooks were unavailable so "Miss Cora" published a weekly newspaper which not only served as a reading text but also stimulated curiosity through news of their neighbors' activities, and developed the desire to make similar civic improvements in their own districts. Through this newspaper and the ideas it set forth, clubs were formed and people came in closer contact with their neighbors and learned to work in harmony.

In 1914 Kentucky's Governor James B. McCreary appointed the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission, with Mrs. Stewart as chairman. This spurred the movement to appoint attendance commissioners to make sure illiteracy did not occur in the oncoming generations.

World War I broke out and it was found in the first army draft in the U. S. nearly 25% could neither read ordinary English nor write a letter home. Again "Miss Cora" and the Illiteracy Commission came to the rescue. Teachers volunteered their services to try to teach the men to read and write before they went to camp because it would be essential that the men were able to read instructions posted on bulletin boards and to be able to take tests. "Miss Cora" again prepared a book for the illiterate soldiers. She had previously produced County Life Readers, and a reader for men in prison. Now she produced the Soldier's First Book and Soldier's Tablet. The following is a sample lesson:

"Why are we at war?
To keep our country free,
To keep other people free,
To make the world safe to live in.
To stop the rule of kings,
To put an end to war."

Also, the men would need an introduction to camp life. Many would not even know what a bulletin board was nor be able to use it unless he learned something like this;

"Let us read this.
What is it?
It is a bulletin board.
What is it about?
It tells when one is on detail.
What is that?
It is one's duty for the day.
Am I on duty for the today?
Yes, you are on guard duty.
Are you on?
Yes, I am on kitchen police."

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

For her great work in education, Mrs. Stewart was awarded several national and international prizes. In 1925 she received the Pictorial Review award for the greatest humanitarian service rendered by an American woman. She received the Zella Flagg Young medal for distinguished services to education, and the Clara Barton medal for humanitarian service. In 1941 she was given an award by the General Federation of Women's Clubs, at their Golden Jubilee Convention, for pioneer work in combating illiteracy in the nation.

Mrs. Stewart came to make her home in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, to be near her sisters but after their death she moved, growing blind, to South Carolina where she died and was buried there in 1958,

One of her last trips to Morehead was in 1935 to attend the funeral of a nephew, Madison Wilson, a son of her brother, the late Dr. Homer Wilson. Her half-brother, Mr. Marvin Wilson and step-mother, Mrs. Burns Johnson recently died in Morehead. Mr. Paul and Don Blair are great-nephews and Mrs. Becky Hogge Brand is a great niece who, while a student of Kentucky History in University Breckinridge School, wrote this brief life.

STEWART, CORA WILSON

Born: January 17, 1875

Died: December 9, 1958

Cora Wilson Stewart, educator was born at Farmers, Rowan County, Kentucky, January 17, 1875. Cora Wilson Stewart was the daughter of Dr. Jeremiah and Annie Eliza (Holly) Wilson. Cora was educated at Morehead Normal School, also attended State University of Kentucky, Commercial College of Kentucky University and the National Normal University of Lebanon, Ohio.

Miss Cora, was Rowan County's first woman Superintendent of Schools. Principal of Public Schools, Morehead, Kentucky 1901-5; County Supt. of Schools, Rowan County, Ky., 1901-5, 1909-13. She became president of the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission May 1, 1913. Cora was the founder of "moonlight" schools which was established in Rowan County Kentucky in 1911. The goal of the moonlight school was "to emancipate from illiteracy those enslaved in the bondage." Because the people had to labor by day it was decided to have schools on moonlight nights so the moon could light the way. The schools were taught by volunteer teachers. Moonlight schools (evening schools) in rural districts for education of illiterate adults. Movement soon spread nationally and internationally.

Cora Wilson Stewart was author of a bill creating the first illiteracy commission.

Cora Wilson Stewart was awarded medals for educational service by Kentucky's Educational Association and by Trustees of Clara Barton Medal Fund.

Miss Cora was President of the Kentucky Educational Association from 1911-1912. She was a member of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Club. She was a member of the National Arts Club (New York). Member of the Morehead Woman's Club, also a honoree member of Frankfort Woman's Club, member of the Christian Church, Morehead, Kentucky. Miss Cora was a Sunday school teacher at the Christian Church.

Her Books: Author of Country Life Reader (Series for illiterate adult)
Soldiers First Book (for illiterate soldiers)
The Moonlight School
Contributions to magazines
Speeches

Home: Morehead, Kentucky

Miss Cora was a lecturer before educational and civic bodies, was a Trustee of Morehead Normal School.

Miss Cora was awarded the first medal ever presented by Ky. Ednl. Assn. - 1913.

She became President of Ky. Ednl. Assn. 1911-1912.

Cora Wilson Stewart

Moonlight schools are no longer in the experimental stage, but have become a permanent institution in Rowan County at least, and have spread to a greater or less extent over some eight or ten other counties in Kentucky, and to many counties in Tennessee. In Rowan County the system has become as firmly established as the day school, and here the word "school" is never used alone, but is always qualified by the word "day" or "night" to distinguish which institution is referred to; and the people would as think of abandoning the one as the other.

While it was for those who had been deprived of earlier opportunities, or had, in some way, missed their chance in life, that moonlight schools were primarily designed and to such they came as the greatest boon; it has been proven that they provide as distinct and lasting advantages to the educated and the half-educated man or woman who desires a broader culture and a higher sphere of usefulness as the day school offers to its students, for what the day school and its longer hours and longer sessions, can impart to immature minds, the night school, in its short hours and brief sessions can impart to mature minds which are eager "to know" and to those who have no other motive in coming to school than to wrest from each passing moment some precious bit of knowledge.

Adult Aptness Proved

The progress made by beginning students seems almost phenomenal, but even though psychologists may shake their

heads in in doubt, the actual cannot be controverted. These adults students have substantiated the theory long pre-pounded by the eminent Dr, Arnold L. Gesell, dean of the Department of Education of Yale University, who long has held that reading, writing and arithmetic were relatively simple subjects when freshly attacked by mature minds, and that adults could learn to read and write and solve problems in an incredibly brief space of time. It is an established fact that the average adult can learn to write his name with ease and legibility, and can be transferred from the illiterate to the more independent class in two evening sessions, for in several instances in Floyd, Johnston, Lawrence, Boyd, Wiley, Perry, Morgan, Madison and Garrad counties and in several hundred cases in Rowan, was this fact successfully demonstrated in the "moonlight schools" during the session of 1912.

A man in Rowan county, aged 30, learned to write in four evenings sufficiently to pen the County Superintendent a legible letter. A man of 50 mastered the mechanics of writing and wrote the same official a letter after seven nights attendance at school. A woman of 70 wrote a short but legible letter in even graceful chirography after but eight night practices, and many other students learned within the same or slightly longer time. Whether the eager desire of these students to learn or their vigorous and superior mentality was responsible for this remarkable progress the writer does not attempt to say.

Teachers Volunteer Services

The first night school institute in the world was held at Morehead early in September, 1912, and was instructed by the superintendent and teachers, and from it the teachers went forth with inspiration and zeal to carry out their high plans and holy purposes. The teachers gladly gave volunteer services, and received no compensation- whatever. A few prizes were offered to stimulate teachers and trustees, and were to be awarded on the highest enrollment, the largest attendance, and the number of illiterates taught, but teachers and trustees announced that any prizes won by them would be donated to the district for libraries and other needed improvements. The teachers are, in the main, natives of Rowan County, young in years and in experience, deeply in sympathy with the people and their needs, consecrated to the cause of education and determined to wipe out illiteracy from the county and to make of each and every citizen, high or low, an intelligent, active, happy factor in the school. They possess a high degree, an average amount of scholarship, and the mission spirit, the most essential qualification of a teacher, in the highest degree.

If obstacles presented themselves, the teachers promptly removed them, and if excuses were made, they met them with argument and persuasion and overcome them. Several married teachers, who lived at home and rode on horseback to school each day, left their homes when the night school term began, and took up their abode in the district. Teachers who lived

or boarded long distances from the schoolhouse remained at school from the time the day school began at 8 o'clock in the morning until the night school ended at 9 o'clock in the evening, making a thirteen-hour day. Some canvasses their districts regularly during the few hours which intervened between the close of the day school and the beginning of the night school, and started many who were too diffident to come to school, to writing at home, and after they were slightly advanced, persuaded them into the school. One widow, who not only taught, but was burdened with household chores, walked back and forth three miles with her two children twice each day to the schoolhouse to instruct the pupils in both the day and night school sessions. School was conducted for two hours each evening or four nights during the week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, leaving the teachers three nights for complete rest and relaxation to refresh them for the work of the next week. None showed any particular evidence of strain or fatigue or overwork, and each and everyone declared the work a most delightful and fascinating one, and one which even greatly increased the interest and added to the success of the day school.

To much credit cannot be given these teachers-faithful, earnest, heroic servants of the Commonwealth, who volunteered to teach by night as well as by day. In no crusade or march of progress has more self-sacrifice or heroism been shown than has been displayed by them. Patriots they are of the truest kind!

One Pupil Eighty-Seven

The enrollment of last year of more than 1,200 students was exceeded this year of an enrollment of nearly 1,600, an average of about thirty-five to the school. Aunt Dicle Carter the famous octogenarian student, whose name and face became familar to people in all parts of the county as the oldest school girl in America, has had her record surpassed by Uncle Martin Sloan, of Tabor Hill, who, at the age of 87, was happy to be and to be known as a "Rowan county schoolboy."

A happier lot of schoolboys and girls could hardly be found than these boys and girls of 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70 years. The only individuals who were happier were the teachers who found so much joy in the service of helping these eager, ambitious students to attain and to fill a new and more useful sphere in life.

Among the 1,600 enrolled, only about 300 were unlearned, while 300 were those who had passed out of the illiterate class last year, and who sought to add to their acquirement the knowledge of arithmetic, language and history and other information. One thousand were men and women of some education, usually limited, who sought to learn because they appreciate learning, and because "in these parts" learning had become the popular tning. Those who were most advanced assisted in teaching, or, oftentimes, to encourage others, took an active part in the regular class woek, even reviewing lessons with which they were actually familiar.

The enrollment ran even higher in number of districts than that of the day school. In several districts as many as

sixty-five students were enrolled, and in two, the enrollment ran as high as seventy. The lowest number in any school was a class of four, and the members of this class were as interested and as busy as if there had been forty.

Preachers Learn To Read

From this school, under the instruction of an 18 year-old girl, a beginner in the profession of teaching, a preacher 60 years of age was graduated in reading and writing, for the terms of graduation were only that he should be able to read his Bible and the newspaper with reasonable facility, and should write a legible letter, and both of these he now can do to his unspeakable pride and joy.

He signed his name to the Assessor's list for the first time, later for night instructions, and wrote the superintendent a legible, four-page, enthusiastic-letter, with a period at the close of each sentence as large as a bird's eye, when he had been a pupil of the school but seven evenings. The youthful teacher was inclined to apologize for the few that she had enrolled, and said: "I didn't have as large school as the others --- just four --- but they were in earnest, and I did my best for them, and told them that I would teach as long as a one of them would come," Then she said with a twinkle in her eyes, and an evident thrill of pride, "but I taught a preacher to read and write, and that was something, wasn't it,"

One school of sixty-five pupils had twenty-three illiterates, all of whom were taught by a young teacher to read and write.

Three preachers were enrolled in this school, and added much by their interest, their zeal and their influence. In fact, all ministers in the rural sections aided much in the work. They assisted in campaigning and organizing, and the more learned assisted in teaching, while those who were unlearned sought more eagerly than any others to acquire some education. Four preachers were taught to read and write and who wrote the superintendent their first letter, received as a prize a Bible with their names engraved upon it.

Thirst For Knowledge At Eighty

Each teacher made an effort to enroll the greatest number, to keep up the largest attendance and to enroll the oldest pupil. A number of octogenarians were enrolled, and in a few cases there were persons who had never entered a schoolhouse on any mission before. They found it a good place to be, and they came again and continued to come, sometimes walking long distances over rugged roads. While the presence of these venerable students gave the school a unique appearance and was most inspiring, it is by no means estimated that their progress was so important or so marked as that of the men and women in middle life, who may yet live three or four-score years or half a century to help write Kentucky's history in brighter pages.

On one of her visits to a moonlight school, the writer watched the eager, happy throng come trooping through the moonlight, laughing and talking together in free and easy schoolmate fashion, and, as they entered the door, noted that

there were not only students of all ages, from the maid of 18 and the youth who had just attained his majority to the grandame of 50 and the grandfather of 80, but there were a carpenter, a merchant, a manufacturer, a postmaster, a magistrate, a doctor, a preacher, school trustee, five former teachers, farmers and farmers wives and their sons and daughters, many educated persons and eight illiterates. That the thirst for knowledge and the determination to reach a more elevated station in life were not confined to any age or any class seemed self-evident, and that the moonlight school met the demands of those in any age and of all those various classes was proven by the fact that they came again and again, and plead for a longer term when its sessions closed.

Paper For Students

The studies pursued were, essentially, reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic, but brief drills were given on the most significant fact in language, history, geography, civics, sanitation, agriculture and horticulture. With beginners writing was the most fascinating study, while the more advanced were divided in their preference between arithmetic and agriculture, and made most rapid progress in the study of each. Horticulture was discussed and fruit grafting was performed in some schools.

The reading text was a little newspaper, the Rowan County School Messenger, edited by the County Superintendent and published weekly for the special benefit of the adult students,

and furnished to them free of charge. Its motto and the motto of the Moonlight Schools was;

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

This paper dealt largely with school and county affairs, and was made up of short sentences intended to inspire effort and to arouse the curiosity of the beginner so that he would immediately seek to read the next sentence. And it had the desired effect, for the sentence in any book could have spurred the reader on to seek further as did the announcement that "John Brown has moved to Kansas," for immediately the desire to know, such as impels the reader of fiction, what was going to happen next, or what had happened, was uppermost, and so there was renewed zeal and effort to master the next sentence, and to see who else had moved, and who was visiting and who had painted or built a new house. They were the only students of all ages from the maid of 18 and the youth who had just attained jobs.

Rivalry Among Schools

The statements of school improvements, too, served two purposes, one for practice in reading, and the other to arouse the readers to make their district excel the one which was being exploited, and this, also, was effective, for when the people of Slab Camp read this statement, "They are putting up window shades and hemstitching curtains for the school at Chestnut Grove," they at once decided that Slab Camp could do, and curtains went up, without delay, in Slab Camp school-

house, too. And if one school read that another was germinating seed corn or grafting fruit trees, the same course was adopted by them then and there,

The newspaper contained one poem, running in sections, a stanza, or two to be memorized each week. This was Longfellow's "Psalm of Life", and was learned more for its sublimity of thought, the training of expression and the acquisition of new words and phrases than as a memory drill. All drill questions on the various branches were published in the paper. Among them all none created a more genuine interest than the drill in language. Drills in the correction of such words as "crick", "kiver", "git", "yit", "hit", "seed", "hyeard", "tuck", "just", "hain't", "skeered", and many others caused much merriment among even those who had been in the habit of employing them, as well as those who were accustomed only to using the proper forms. All joined heartily in drilling on the correct forms, and afterward took great pride in using them. Drills on words ending in "g" resulted in the correction of the careless habit of saying "doin", and "goin", "readin", "writin", and of other words which had been abridged in the same way.

The text used in arithmetic was Calfee's Rural Arithmetic, a small book recently published.

Teachers that taught the Moonlight Schools - here in Rowan Co.

1.	Jim Harris	Dry Creek	1912
2.	Steve Caudill	Poplar Grove	1912
3.	Claude Crosthwaite	Alfrey School	
4.	Bethel Ellington	Upper Lick Fork	
6.	Amanda Hunt	Bangor	
7.	Clella Porter	Carey	

Jess Link was a student of Bethel Hall. Bethel Hall is the only teacher who has a student still living.

HISTORY OF THE MOONLIGHT SCHOOLS

Moonlight was flooding the whole countryside, and from all over Rowan County a stranger procession was moving. Singly or hurrying in groups they came, some of them walking for miles. Some of them were carrying babies; others were bent with age and leaned on canes, but all of them moved along with a single purpose through the moonlight. Twelve hundred strong they came to the first school of its kind, to learn, they hoped humbly, just to read and write. The oldest of them was 86 and the youngest 18. The eyes of those who had brought them together were wet, but their hearts rejoiced, for all these hoary-headed old people and these robust youngsters had come with one accord, to get what to them seemed the most precious thing in the world.

That first evening many of them learned to wrtie their names for the first time and that was a moment for such rejoicing as life had never contained before. When one old man found that he had actually written his name, his joy was unconfined. "Glory to God" he shouted, "I will never have to make my mark any more."

So began the dramatic story of the moonlight schools inaugurated in Rowan County, Kentucky by Cora Wilson Stewart. For years she had been county superintendent and she realized as she came to know the people better and better, that the ignorance among them was terrific, that their longing for a minimum of literacy was filled with pathos. The imperative

need for some kind of opportunity for these hundreds of hill folks enslaved in illiteracy was brought home to Mrs. Stewart, for she acted as voluntary secretary for some of them who could not read and write for themselves,

IMPACT ON SOCIETY BOTH FAR AND NEAR

Hustled out of Darkness - Editorial - New York Times
By; Cora Wilson Stewart January 12, 1914

States and parts of states that have too many illiterates always confess the fact with humiliation, but too often their better-educated inhabitants assume that the situation is one remediable only by some slow process, and infrequently they leave the work to "nature", almost or quite unassisted.

A different course has been followed presently down in Rowan County, Kentucky. There, in 1910, the people who couldn't read or write numbered 1, 152, but among those who could do both - and a good many things besides - was a woman, Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart. By some happy chance in 1911 she was elected County Superintendent of Education and at once she undertook the task of removing the county's disgrace, not slowly, but rapidly. In other words, she went after those 1, 152 illiterates and so dealt with them when captured that now, only two years later, their ranks had been thinned to twenty-three.

Of these twenty-three she describes four as "too stubborn to learn." - six are confirmed invalids, or have been seriously ill, while the "campaign" has been in progress - six have seriously defective eyesight, five are idiots, and two have recently moved into the county.

The Berea Citizen, in commenting on this triumph of feminine energy and intelligence, says:

It is the first practical demonstration of the ability of the people of a political unit to educate all their people that has been furnished by any portion of the United States. No other county in all America has such a record. It is a demonstration of the efficiency of the rural schools when they are enlisted in a common cause, It is also a demonstration of the ability of the mountain people to handle their own problems.

Moral Influence

I am not here concerned with those grosser immoral acts for which teachers may be dismissed, I am thinking of that raising of the moral tone of a community by direct precept and unimpeachable example. No person has more opportunity to lift the moral plane in the rural community than has the teacher. She has in her control all the children between about six and sixteen years of age, Through them she influence the general social affairs. Many communities owe their present plane of thinking and acting to the efforts of a high-minded teacher. Her presence has often transformed many a rough, unwholesome social affair into one of innocent pleasure and jollification,

Russia Campaigns Against Illiteracy

Moscow - The government hopes by 1935 to exterminate illiteracy completely among the 150,000,000 population.

"No country in this world," says Investia in commenting upon the new compulsory education decree, "approaches Soviet Russia for the speed with which it is reducing illiteracy.

No one can longer speak of the barbarism, backwardness, and darkness of Russia, which will soon be a land without illiteracy.

Before the war two-thirds of Russia was illiterate. During the last two years they taught 13,000,000 illiterate adults to read and write."

China's Drive Against Illiteracy

A program to wipe out illiteracy among adults in China in a period of the next six years has been adopted by the National Education Conference at Nanking. According to statistics, about eighty per cent of the entire Chinese population of 348,875,962 persons cannot read or write. Mass education schools will be opened throughout the country, supplemented by reading and writing classes to be established in homes, stores, factories, armies, prisons, and other institutions. It is estimated that 132,000 teachers, 116,470 schoolrooms, and \$283,400,000 will be needed in the six-year campaign. The movement is to be compulsory in nature. A mandate was issued by the Central Government, July 1, requiring every Chinese citizen to know the Thousand Characters Reader before the end of 1935. No government or public organs, schools, factories, and stores will be permitted to employ persons more than eighteen years old who are unable to read or write.

Wiping Out Illiteracy In Kentucky

The absorbing chain of events which led her to captain and fight victoriously Kentucky's battle against illiteracy

began in 1910, when Mrs. Stewart became Superintendent of Schools in her native county of Rowan. Different events followed each other quickly, of course, but the first landmark was the visit of a farmer to her office. While waiting, he stood looking so wistfully at some shelves of books, that the Superintendent was moved to offer him some of the volumes. At this his eyes filled with tears, and, in a voice husky with emotion, he said: "I can't read! I'd give twenty years of my life to be able to read!"

That was the first great shock to Mrs. Stewart. The second came when a woman, who had a daughter in a distant city, came to the office to get Mrs. Stewart to read a letter from the daughter and to write a reply. This woman bared her heart to the Superintendent. She could not say what she wished to her daughter, nor the daughter to her: it seemed that there was "a great wall betwixt them" - as she put it, "If I could only read with my own eyes what Jane has writ with her own hand!"

That visit produced a profound impression upon Mrs. Stewart. She sat thinking in her office long after her visitor was gone. She knew that the pathetic cases she had recently seen were only a few of the many to be found among her people; for the Federal census showed that there were in Rowan County 1,152 persons ten years of age and over who were unable to read and write. She knew, too, that these persons were not to blame for their illiteracy. They were people of energy and fine native ability who had simply never had a chance. Owing to the prejudice of a proud people who long

persisted in regarding the public schools of the State as an institution for the benefit of those who were too poor and shiftless to afford to send their children to private schools--a prejudice which arose, not from lack of generosity, but from the traditions of an aristocratic, rather than a democratic, civilization--owing to this, the development of public education in Kentucky had been very tardy. Within the last decade and a half--thanks to the women of the State--excellent schools had been provided for training the young; but what about these older folk who had many years yet to live? What about the community? Should it wait for greater efficiency and completer culture until these unfortunate ones lived out their twenty-five or fifty years more in ignorance and died?

All these thoughts coursed through Mrs. Stewart's mind, and her sensitive nature rose against the cruelty of leaving these people in darkness. She resolved that every person in her county should be given an opportunity to acquire at least the great key to knowledge--the ability to read.

That was the resolution born of these visitis. The next problem was that of method. There are two ways to go about any such task: One is to provide facilities, methods, and equipment, and then to wait for the public to come--a sort of impresonal appeal shouted into space from the house-tops, with the hope that those who need help will hear and respond; the other is the personal method--the method of listing every soul in the county, finding out who can read, and then working "face to face" with each one who cannot,

to convince him first, of necessary, that he should be taught, and then to teach him.

But how to accomplish this? The problem seemed insolvable, and Mrs. Stewart struggled long over it. At length, however, she conceived the idea of opening schools for adults during the bright moonlight nights in the autumn, when the weather was pleasant and the roads good. Here was the solution!

In August, 1911, after a year spent in planning the details of the campaign, the Superintendent called her teachers together and outlined to them her plan for the Moonlight Schools. In the whole corps of teachers--mostly mountain boys and girls--there was not a dissenter. When they were given a chance to colunteer to teach night schools without pay, everyone volunteered.

The questions, "Do these adults desire education? Will they attend a night school?" were answered emphatically in the affirmative, for when the Moonlight School bells rand on the evening of September 5, twelve hundred pupils ranging in age from eighteen to eighty-six--nearly one-third the population of the county--enrolled. Twenty-five per cent of these were wholly illiterate.

Another important question, "Can and will the adult illiterate learn to read and write?" was also answered unequivocally in the affirmative. These students learned with almost incredible rapidity. When the Moonlight Schools of 1911 closed, several hundred men and women were reading newspapers, magazines, and Bibles, who had never read them

before. Nor was this all they were reading; they were earnestly seeking knowledge of the most practical kind. Congressman William J. Fields has said that since the first session of these night schools, he has had ten times as many request from Rowan County for government bulletins on agriculture, horticulture, etc., as he formerly received. Dr. P. P. Claston, United States Commissioner of Education, endorsed the schools as eminently successful. This success was greatly enhanced the following year.

Then, in 1913, Mrs. Stewart and her teachers elaborated their purpose a bit. They determined to wipe illiteracy completely out of Rowan County that year. If, because of timidity, or for any other reason, and illiterate man or woman could not or would not come to the school, the teacher went to his home and taught him.

SUMMARY

A one room school has been restored on the campus of Morehead State University. This one room school was dedicated in honor of Cora Wilson Stewart and the Moonlight Schools of Rowan County.

The Moonlight Schools were so named because these schools were opened in the evening permitting adults to attend after they had completed their days work. It is most appropriate that this memorial be established on the campus of Morehead State University because of Morehead State University's National and International reputation in Adult Education. The formal dedication of this Museum is September 23, 1973.

The first Moonlight Schools opened in September 1911 under Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, County Superintendent of Schools. Regular teachers volunteered to teach in the evening sessions. The anticipated enrollment for the first session was 150 - but 1150 were enrolled the first session. Pins, certificates, and diplomas were awarded the students at various levels of achievement. Textbooks and programs of study were specifically written for the Moonlight Schools. Morehead State University is issuing an appeal to people throughout the region who may have some of these pins, diplomas, textbooks, letters, or other materials and equipment which they might wish to donate to this historic endeavor. Should interested citizens wish to donate any of these things

to this museum please contact Dr. Jack D. Ellis, Director of Libraries at Morehead State University. Proper credit will be given to those who contribute.

Moonlight Schools

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

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APPENDIX

TEACHERS THAT TAUGHT THE MOONLIGHT SCHOOLS - HERE IN ROWAN COUNTY

1.	Jim Harris	Dry Creek	1912
2.	Steve Caudill	Popular Grove	1912
3.	Claude Crosthwaite	Alfrey School	
4.	Bethel Hall	Upper Lick Fork	
5.	Farmer Ellington	Bangor	
6.	Amanda Hunt	Carey	
7.	Clella Porter		

Jess Link was a student of Bethel Hall. Bethel Hall is the only teacher who has a student still living.

Who's Who in America
Stewart, Cora Wilson
Vol. 9 - 1916-1917
Vol. 10 - 1918-1919
Vol. 15 - 1928-1929

.. She established a weekly newspaper. Was it the Moonlighter?

Gov. McCreary appointed Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, Chairman of Kentucky Illiteracy Commission in 1914.

1920 law - passed to employ regular attendance officers to prevent illiteracy in the oncoming generations.

Miss Cora was Advisory Chairman - Illiteracy National Congress of Parents and Teachers since 1924.

She also was adviser to Gen. Federation Women's Clubs on illiteracy.

Co-author with someone on Indian First Book.

Received Pictorial Review's prize \$5,000 in 1924 to American Woman for greatest contribution to advance human welfare. She took this money and went to Europe.

Miss Cora did go blind before her death. Died in Tryon, N.C.

Miss Cora was awarded the Ella Flagg Young Medal - 1930 - for distinguished services to Education.

Moonlight schools - pioneer schools for educating adult illiteracy.

Cora Wilson Stewart presided over the illiteracy section of World Conference on Education at San Francisco, California-1923
Edinburg-1925
Toronto-1927
Geneva-1929
Denver-1931

She was Chairman, of Executive Commission of President Hoover's Committee on Illiteracy - 1929.

Name of child - her one and only son - William is buried at Lee's Cemetery, Morehead, Kentucky, Miss Cora is buried at Tryon, N.C. She requested to be buried there,

She was a stenographer in a Morehead law office.

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Interviews:

6. Mrs. J.H. Power
Morehead, Ky. AGE 90
7. Mrs. Lola Bell Blair
Morehead, Ky. age 70
8. Nephew Paul Blair AGE 37
Lawyer, Morehead, Ky.
9. Mrs. D.H. Gevendon
Morehead, Ky. AGE 94 RAN A BOARDING HOUSE IN ROWAN COUNTY .
10. Dr. Jack Ellis AGE 42
Wilson Ave., Morehead, Ky.
11. Mr. William Allie Wilson a half brother
of Mrs. Stewarts, Montgomery City, Mo.
AGE 75

One Room School in Rowan County

Thomas Davis
Alfrey
Big Brushy
Bluestone
Freestone
Bradley
Pratton Branch
Fullfork
Corey
Cherry
Clark
Clearfield
Clearfork
Crane
Cranston
Ditney
Dry Creek
Elliotville
Farmers
Gates
Bronston
Gayhart or Gearheart
Glenwood
Haldeman
Hardenan
Holly
Island Fork
Johnson
Little Brushy
Little Ferry
Lower Lick
Minor
Moore
Morehead

Mt. Hope
McKenzie
New Home
Oak Grove
Open Fork
Old House Creek
Pine Grove
Pond Lick
Popar Grove
Ramey
Razor
Rock Fork
Rodburn
Rosedale
Sand Gap
Seas Branch
Sharkey
Slab Camp
Tabor Hill
Upper Lick Fork
Tackett
Three Lick
Waltz
Wes Cox

A Part of the Kentucky Bi-Centennial

Sundays, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Mon-Thurs, 8:30-10:00 a.m.

July 8-July 26, 1974

Exhibition Schedule

The Little Brown School building was donated to Morehead State University by Mr. William Bailey, Morehead, Kentucky, and moved to Morehead State University campus and restored with the aid of many American educators.

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



Visit The Core Wilson Stewart Moonlight Schoolhouse

LITTLE BRUSHY SCHOOL

Rowan County, Kentucky

The Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight School, formerly known as the Little Brushy School, was originally located on Kentucky Highway 32 eight miles north of Morehead in Rowan County. This building replaced two earlier school buildings on the site, both of which had been destroyed by fire. The original building dated back to the turn of the century.

This building was constructed in 1910 by William Jasper Johnson and Henry Perry. One point of interest is that Mr. Johnson's son was one of the first students to attend school in the new building. The building was erected during the administration of Superintendent Cora Wilson Stewart and used as one of the moonlight schools in Rowan County. Mr. Ferris Cooke, who had served as the teacher in the previous building which had burned in 1909, was the first teacher.

Under the administration of Superintendent Roy Cornett, an additional room was erected in 1936 and the school's first lunch program was introduced in 1941.

During the period of the late 1920's through the early 1940's the enrollment ranged from 40 to 60 students per year. One highlight during each school year was the annual pie supper. The students took great pride in clearing the grounds for the event because the money collected was used to hire a truck to transport them to the Morehead Fair. An annual occurrence was Doctor Evans' visit to the school to immunize the students. When the students would see Dr. Evans' car they would run through the door or jump out the window to "escape." The teacher would then have to go through the community to "collect" the students for their shots.

Because of the consolidation of the schools in that area of the county and construction of the Tildon Hogge School, the school was closed in 1963.

The "Little Brushy School" building was donated to Morehead State University by Mr. William Dailey, Morehead, Kentucky.

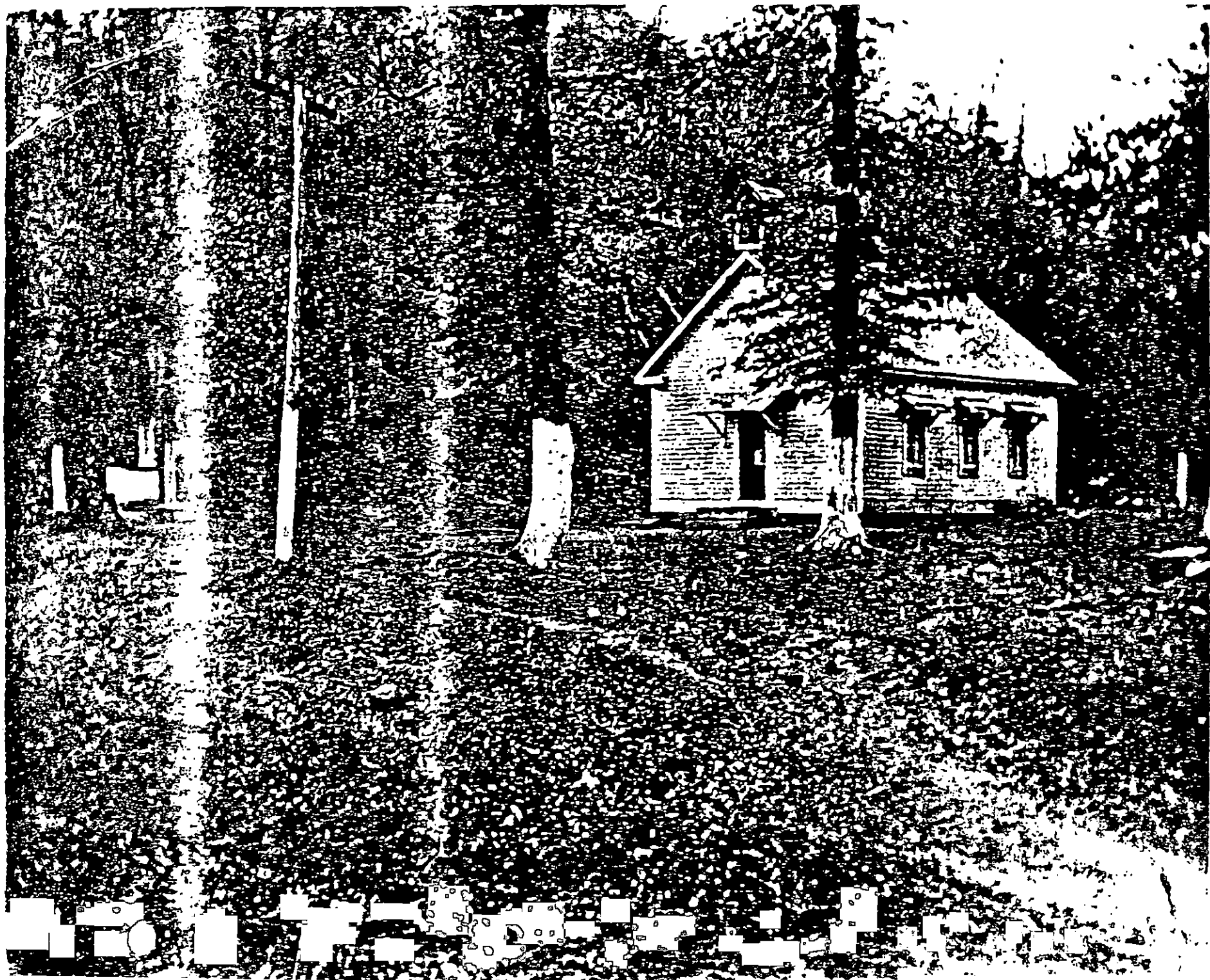
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*Cora Wilson Stewart Founder
of Moonlight School.*

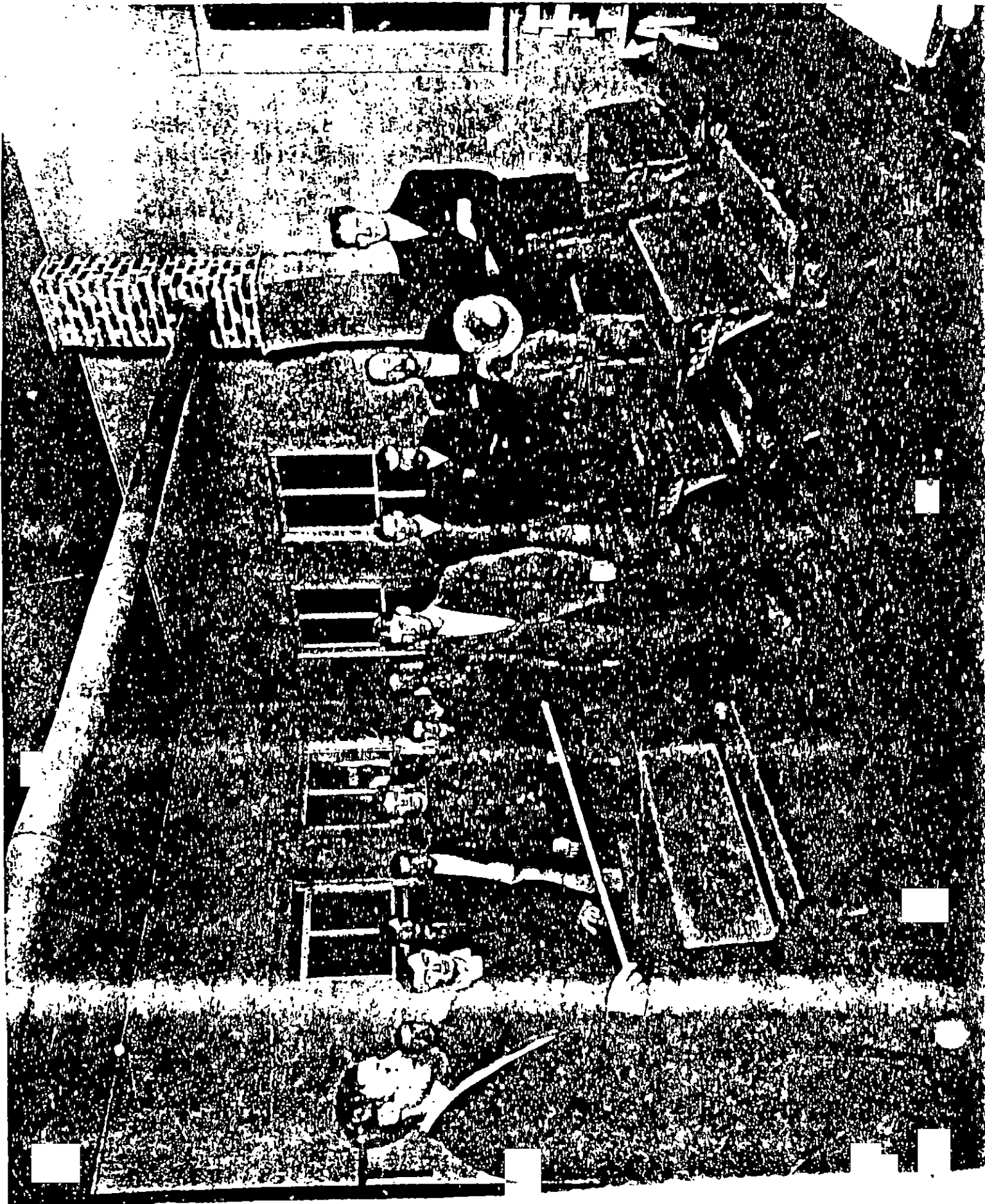
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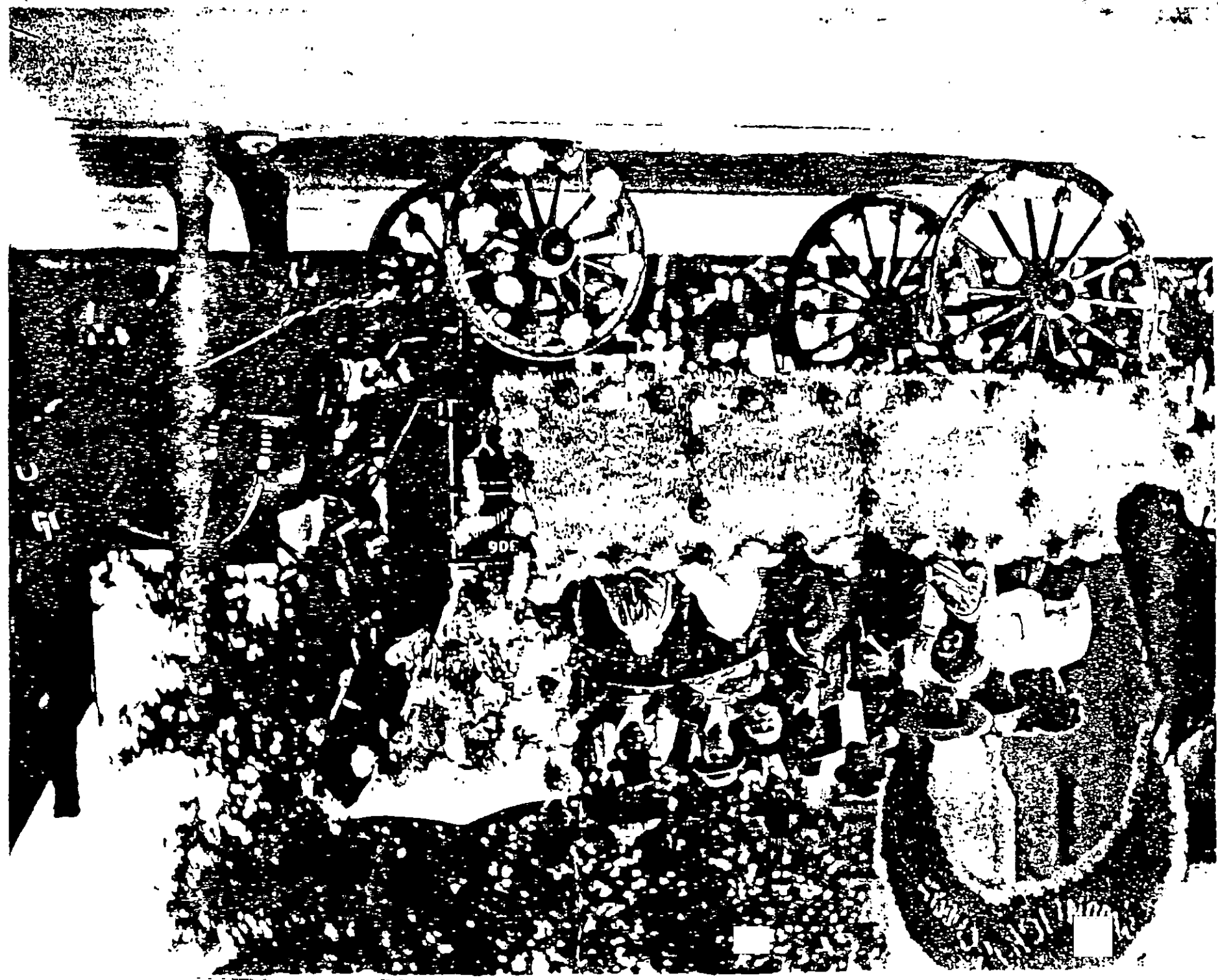
THE MOTHERS CAME TO SCHOOL BRINGING THEIR BABES IN ARMS

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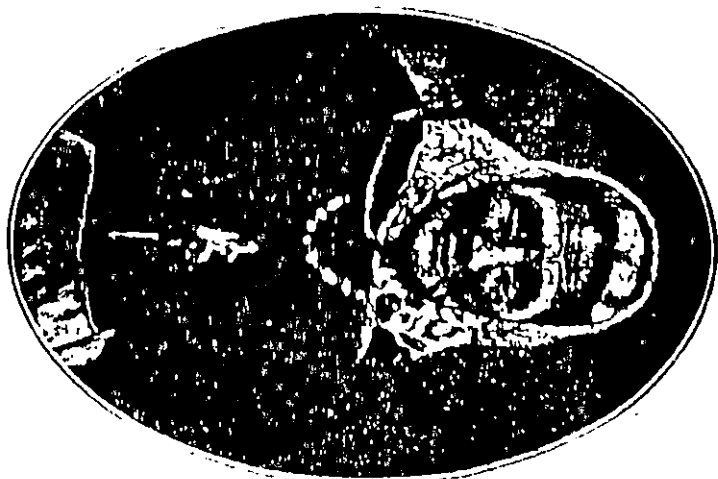
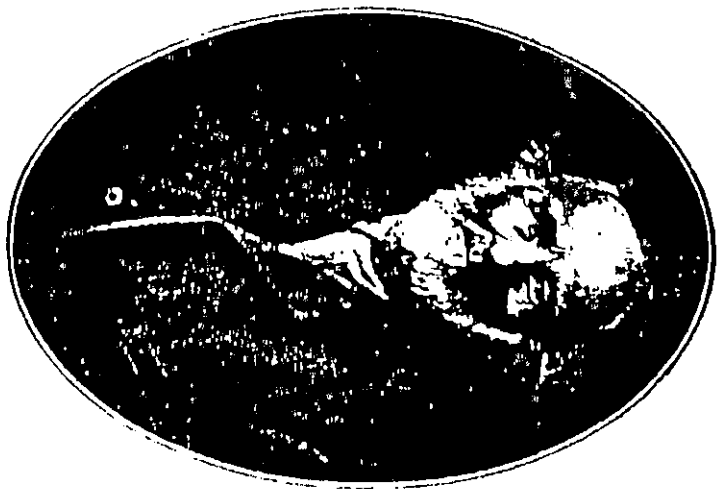
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A man aged 87 entered and put to shame the record of the proud school girl of 86 of the year before.

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MOONLIGHT SCHOOLS

where men slave and women
e the food and to produce
feeds and clothes their fellow-
from the mountain fastnesses
ed in, have preserved the blood
to pour like the elixir of life
blood-stream, they call from
on fields where Lincoln's black
knows no real emancipation—
of the mind—but waits for us
him free. They call from the
here dwell the sons of pioneers
loneliness and dangers of a vast
ney might advance the outposts

when the rural as well as the
atter where he may be, whether
otton fields or on the Western
ountains, or by the sea, shall
hich is not only open to his
grand-children by day, but one
o his father, his mother, his
man and himself at night.



Alex Webb, aged 98, who learned to read and write in the Moonlight Schools.

17