

Appalachian-Based Settlement Schools Left Their Mark in Eastern Kentucky



Settlement schools in the Appalachian region of Kentucky cropped up over a century ago as the continued isolation of communities from public education and health care met with a national movement of social reform

championed by an accumulation of young, idealistic, educated women. A model based primarily on the urban model of settlement schools popular at the turn of the century in cities like Chicago, these schools focused on developing the overall character of the student by developing skills like sewing, furniture making, agriculture and weaving in addition to a core academic education. School founders and early educators were principally women reformers from outside the Eastern Kentucky region.

Settlement schools often became community centers for the more remote locations, regularly boarding students, offering area health clinics, running cooperative stores, collecting regional music and stories, and sustaining their campus through farming their own crops.

By the early 1920s and 1930s, the necessity of these schools began to decline with the emergence of more extensive roads, public schools and public health services. Two settlement schools still operating today are the Hindman Settlement School (Knott County), since 1902, and the Pine Mountain Settlement School (Harlan County), since 1913. Many early Kentucky settlement schools are still in evidence, for example what started as Caney Creek School developed into Alice Lloyd College (Knott County).

Oral history interviews with former settlement school students and employees can be found at <http://passtheword.ky.gov>.

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