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The Pack Horse Library Project of Eastern Kentucky: 1936-1943

Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer entitled "The Pack Horse Library Project of Eastern Kentucky: 1936-1943." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Information Sciences.

N. Douglas Raber, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

George Hoemann, Jinx Watson

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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THE PACK HORSE LIBRARY PROJECT OF EASTERN KENTUCKY: 1936-1943

A Thesis
Presented for the Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Pack Horse Library Project, partially supported by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), in eastern Kentucky from 1936 to 1943. The WPA supported the project by providing work relief for local women and a few local men. Communities, individuals, and organizations such as county boards of education, civic clubs, and Kentucky PTAs funded materials, operating expenses, and overhead. For hundreds of isolated mountain communities, schools, and individuals the Pack Horse Library Project provided the first public library service ever experienced.

The Pack Horse Library Project provided library service to an area of Kentucky that was geographically isolated and economically and socially depressed. Residents welcomed and utilized the service becoming regular users. Despite the most unfavorable geographical and social conditions, dependence on donated materials in poor condition, and meager operating resources, the Project offered unique, regular library service.

Documents and correspondence from the Kentucky State Librarian's records between 1935 to 1943 provide a core of source materials for this study. Other documents include published journal and newspaper articles between 1935 and 1943. Interviews with participants in the Project still living during this investigation offer important insights, as well as other participants interviewed and recorded by the Kentucky Oral History Commission of the Kentucky Historical Society in 1984 and 1986.

PREFACE

In the 1930s under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, many programs were developed in an effort to assist the nation out of poverty. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided employment relief in public projects. Many of these projects continued the Progressive Era's ideals to better society and the general welfare. WPA projects included highways, parks, sanitation, and pure food and nutrition. Art, cultural, educational, and library projects were aimed at developing more enlightened, informed citizens to participate in democracy. Administrators hoped that WPA library programs would help citizens improve themselves through reading and self-education.

Library service to citizens in eastern Kentucky required ingenuity. Shallow streambeds and horse paths provided most access to that area of the state. Entire communities existed in detached mountain pockets and hollows not linked by roads or highways. Because of their extreme isolation, many areas had either minimal or no access to books. Libraries were virtually non-existent in the region except for a few meager school, club, and personal libraries. And these were inaccessible to the majority of scattered residents.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs (KFWC) made a concerted effort to promote library service within the state. As participants in progressive social reform, the KFWC worked toward educational advancement in Kentucky and supported libraries to assist in this endeavor. Realizing the poverty and isolation of the eastern counties, the KFWC sought to serve the area through

a traveling book program. Communities or schools could request from the KFWC a crate of fifty books, shipped via the Adams Express Company or the L&N Railroad, then periodically exchange the shipment for a new selection. Unfortunately, not all communities and schools knew of or utilized the service. Also, many areas not served by the Adams Express Company or L&N Railroad service could not participate in traveling library service.

From 1936 to 1943 the WPA supported the Pack Horse Library Project by employing local women and a few local men to carry books and library materials packed in saddlebags on horses and mules to mountain residents, schools, and communities. Because of the area's rugged topography, isolation, and difficult accessibility, library service could only be provided by horseback delivery. One of the most innovative, yet primitive approaches to library service, the pack horse delivery method made library service a feasible reality. Residents embraced the project, enthusiastic to regularly borrow books and magazines.

But the WPA was not solely responsible for the Pack Horse Library Project. Instead many groups and individuals working together made the project viable. The Pack Horse Library Project operated as a joint effort between the WPA, the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers (KCPT), and individual communities and persons. The Pack Horse Library Project provided library service during the height of the Depression to one of the most poverty-stricken areas of the country. Pack Horse Library Project successes include accessing nearly inaccessible places, providing educational materials to schools,

individuals, and communities, furnishing information on health, nutrition, childcare, and farming, bringing pleasure and enjoyment to children and adults, and creating local jobs. Overall, the project supported education, supplied information and pleasure, and enlightened a geographically secluded people to things they knew little or nothing about.

This paper looks at the development and operation of the Pack Horse Library Project. Chapter 1 considers the economic and social conditions in Kentucky and library service in the state prior to and during the Depression. Chapter 2 investigates the purposes and development of the Pack Horse Library Project, as well as the major institutions and persons throughout the Project's existence. Chapter 3 discusses the day to day operations of pack horse libraries and their popularity among local residents. Finally, chapter 4 looks at the successes and problems of pack horse libraries, and considers what happened to library service in eastern Kentucky after the dissolution of the Pack Horse Library Project in 1943 until bookmobile service entered the area in the 1950s.

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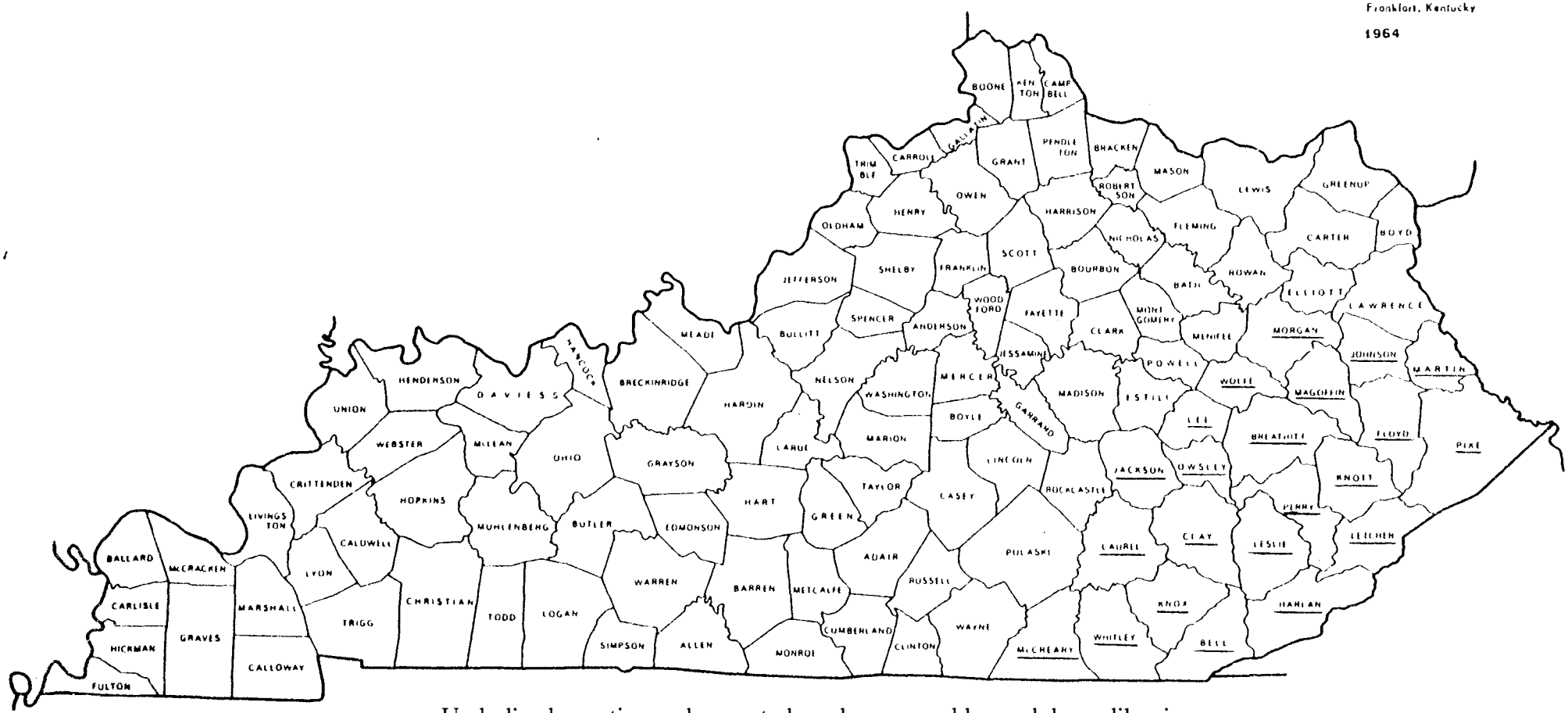

Underlined counties are known to have been served by pack horse libraries.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

Following World War I rapid technological change affected the country. Paved highways began to replace dirt and gravel roads, and automobiles began to replace horses and wagons as a primary means of transportation. Commercial radio stations began to broadcast news and entertainment in 1920. By 1930 forty percent of families in the United States owned at least one radio.[1] Hollywood filmmakers offered adventure and entertainment through moving picture shows. Chambers of commerce, civic organizations, and businesses promoted industrial expansion and profit.

The state of Kentucky shared in this progress and prosperity following the Great War. Although largely an agricultural state, the lumber, grain mills, mining, and meat-packing industries developed throughout the state. Of 2.6 million residents in Kentucky more than 300,000 owned automobiles by 1929.[2] Most rural Kentuckians lived close enough to towns that supported movie theaters to attend on occasion.[3] "Still," as Kentucky historian George Blakey has written, "by almost every criterion Kentucky trailed the rest of the nation in the frenzied growth of the late 1920s."[4]

By 1930 radio ownership in Kentucky lagged behind the national average by one half.[5] In 1929 outside investors requested information about potential industrial sites in

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[1] Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*, 6:10.
[2] Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1930*, 387.
[3] George T. Blakey, *Hard Times and New Deal in Kentucky: 1929-1939* (University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 5.
[4] Ibid, 6.
[5] *Census: 1930*, 6:52.

Kentucky including water, utilities, and labor. Since no cities or towns met the necessary requirements Kentucky lost opportunities for industrial growth.[6]

Likewise Kentucky lagged behind in electrical power and paved roads – both of which were crucial to industrial development. A comparison between Kentucky (population 2,614,589) and Tennessee (population 2,616,566), a border state similar in geography, resources, economic base and social makeup in 1930, offers some perspective. In 1930 Tennessee produced 1,037 million kilowatt hours of electricity while Kentucky produced 719 million kilowatt hours.[7] In 1934 Tennessee paved 1,070 miles of road while Kentucky paved 761 miles.[8]

Most economic progress and industry in Kentucky developed in the central and western regions. Because of its rugged topography eastern Kentucky remained isolated and relatively inaccessible. Few highways linked the area to the outside world, and electricity remained unobtainable. Both these factors hindered industrial development. Most eastern Kentuckians lives were untouched by movies, radio shows, popular music, and news broadcasts.

In 1929 bank closures, business failures, and glutted agricultural markets helped plunge the nation into depression. Kentucky was no exception. As might be suspected eastern Kentucky fared worse than the rest of the state. Many eastern counties depended almost entirely on the coal mining industry. Coal production in the area peaked in 1927

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[6] Blakey, *Hard Times and New Deal in Kentucky*, 7.
[7] *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1936*, 349.
[8] Ibid, 359.

with 622 mines operating. By the end of 1932 only 380 mines survived.[9] A national shift from coal energy to oil and gas lessened overall demand. Moreover miners were pitted against mine owners over labor practices, safety, and wages. Union recruitment, violent strikes, and military intervention all contributed to failed mines in eastern Kentucky. "Only work around was grubbing, moonshining, railroading, and a few pensioners," remembered Grace Lucas, now eighty-six years old.[10]

By 1930 eastern counties ranged in population from just over 64,000 residents in Harlan County to just over 7,000 residents in Owsley County. The majority population was white, native-born. For the most part blacks made up a miniscule part of the population, less than ten percent. For example blacks represented 8.4 percent of Harlan County's population, and less than one percent of Leslie County's population. Most residents lived off subsistence farms, timber, and whatever mining still existed.

The area was inaccessible and crippled, disconnected from the outside world economically, culturally, socially, and educationally. Homes sparsely dotted isolated hollows, and scattered communities existed untouched by electricity, sewage systems, and running water. Mountain streams and creek beds provided the primary avenues for travel and communication. Motorized travel was almost entirely impossible. Wagons transported commodities across rugged haul roads, and postal riders followed streambeds and trails to mountain communities. Medical care was rudimentary. Isolated one-room schoolhouses, shabbily equipped, deteriorated because the residents had no funds to maintain or improve them.

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[9] Blakey, *Hard Times and New Deal in Kentucky*, 12.

This rugged separation is what set eastern Kentucky apart from the rest of the state and much of the rest of the country. For example, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama were likewise deep in poverty at the time. The tremendous difference lay in the fact that they were largely accessible geographically. Such states felt the effects of roads and electricity reaching into their borders making them candidates for new industry.

Despite rugged isolation, most eastern Kentuckians were literate. In 1939 the *Journal of Adult Education* noted that some eastern residents learned to read in order to correspond with their sons during World War I.[11] In 1930 6.6 percent of Kentucky's population was considered illiterate compared to 8.7 percent in Virginia, 7.2 percent in Tennessee, and 10.0 percent in North Carolina.[12] Balanced to the rest of the state, eastern Kentucky counties experienced somewhat higher illiteracy rates ranging from 6.5 percent to 13.9 percent while the rest of the state ranged from 1.1 percent to 8.3 percent.[13]

Poverty had engulfed eastern Kentucky by the time Franklin Roosevelt assumed the presidency. In 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Administration director Harry Hopkins sent Lorena Hickok to eastern Kentucky to report on social and economic conditions there. A reporter for the Minneapolis *Tribune* Hickok left her job to travel for Hopkins as a field reporter on the scope and conditions of the Depression. In the fall of 1933 she visited the eastern Kentucky counties of Bell, Harlan, Clay, Knox, Leslie, Perry, and Whitley. Hickok reported that many residents "live in abandoned mining camps. The rest

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[10] Grace Lucas, interview by author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 31 May 1998.
[11] Marion Humble, "In the Kentucky Mountains," *Journal of Adult Education* 11 (1939): 67.
[12] *Census 1930*, 2:1229.
[13] Ibid., 3:913-920.

live in little communities, rather like Indian villages – and without any kind of sanitation whatever – back up at the headwaters of the creeks, in the mountains." [14] She further described the population as barely subsisting off gardens in poor, thin soil made worse by a summer drought. One resident told Hickok that "five babies up one of those creeks had died of starvation in the last ten days."[15] While on a mountain trail she witnessed for herself an old woman "half dead from pellegra, stumbling along on bare, gnarled old feet," begging for food.[16] Unable to raise relief funds, in November 1933 Governor Ruby Laffoon declared Kentucky a pauper state and requested that the federal government take full responsibility for state relief.[17] Considering such dire circumstances at the time it is no wonder that public libraries received little or no consideration by local governments in eastern Kentucky.

In 1932 a survey of library service in Southern Appalachia (encompassing the mountain areas of West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Georgia) revealed a dismal picture. Seventy-seven percent of the area population "are without access to local library service of any kind."[18] Moreover, "the service available to

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[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.
[15] Ibid., 60.
[16] Ibid., 62.
[17] Robert J. Leupold, "Kentucky WPA: Relief and Politics, May-November 1935," *Filson Club History Quarterly* 49 (Spring 1975): 153; Blakey, *Hard Time and New Deal in Kentucky*, 51.
[18] Tommie Dora Barker, "Library Facilities in the Southern Appalachians," *Mountain Life and Work* 8 (July 1932): 14, 16.

the other 23 per cent in many instances falls so far below the recognized [ALA] standards of good library service that it may be said to exist in name only."[19]

Library service in Kentucky was extremely poor. Sixty-three percent of the state's residents had no ready access to public library facilities, especially in the eastern mountains. Kentucky's library expenditure in 1934 of ten cents per capita was far below the annual standards set by the American Library Association (ALA) of one dollar per capita. Likewise, Kentucky libraries circulated only one book per capita compared to the ALA's standard of five to ten books per capita in 1934. "These figures show the utter inadequacy of public libraries to supply sufficient reading materials," reported Lena Nofcier, Chairman of Library Services for the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers. She pronounced the situation as "a distressing picture of library conditions and needs in Kentucky."[20]

Women's clubs and private organizations largely established the few libraries that did exist in early twentieth century Kentucky. Most instrumental in library establishment was the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs (KFWC), an active participant in the progressive reform spirit of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. In 1894 women's clubs across Kentucky joined together as a federation devoted to moral and social betterment of local communities and families. Primarily the Federation stood for education, art, civics, and household economics with the intent of "making better

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[19] Ibid., 14.

[20] Lena Nofcier, "Library Conditions in Kentucky," Kentucky Parent Teacher Association Bulletin (October 1935), State Librarian Official Correspondence, box 28, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (hereafter cited as SLOC).

homes for better people."[21] Membership came from upper class, reform-minded society women dedicated to issues such as child labor, pure food, and improved education. As a large federation the KFWC created committees and departments dedicated to specific issues and chose women who by vocation, training, or interest were best fitted to promote that work. Such was the Library Extension Division of the KFWC dedicated to developing and supporting libraries in Kentucky.

Of sixty-nine public libraries operating in the state in 1932, the KFWC had established forty-three. Still, these libraries were located mostly in western and central Kentucky, which was geographically accessible. In 1897 KFWC leaders such as Fanny Castleman Rawson and Mrs. Sarah (C. P.) Barnes rallied support and established the Traveling Libraries Project as part of the Federation's service to eastern Kentucky.[22] Member clubs from around the state collected books and packed wooden crates with fifty to fifty-five books per crate. The Adams Express Company and L&N Railroad agreed to transport the crated books free of charge within their service areas. Schools, post offices, general stores, community centers, logging camps, or the like served as central distributing stations. One person at each site took charge of lending the books, keeping inventory, and sending the crate back every three to six month for an exchange of materials.

Traveling libraries met such an enthusiastic reception that in short time the KFWC received requests for the service from all parts of eastern Kentucky. In 1910 five

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[21] Emily McMeekin, "The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs," *Kentucky Magazine* (July 1917): 169.

thousand books in one hundred crates circulated among thirty-two mountain stations.[23] The collections reflected the goals of the KFWC to better society. Traveling libraries largely consisted of educational, consumer, and classic works intended to encourage individuals toward self-betterment.[24] Children's books invariably taught a moral lesson, and adult books encouraged moral and physical improvement. Fictional works provided virtuous examples of self-progress rather than simply a story of entertaining pleasure. Non-fictional works offered a variety of ways to improve the home, family, and farm with the intent that such improvements ultimately spill over into the entire community.

Traveling library service became especially popular among settlement schools and educators teaching in the mountains who utilized the collections in their classrooms. Sometimes referred to as mission schools, settlement schools became common in eastern Kentucky in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Quality education to mountain children for the purpose of developing better individuals to participate in society reflected the primary mission of settlement schools.[25] Their reform mindedness merged well with the goals of the KFWC and the Progressive Era. In the nineteenth century, reformers from outside the region began establishing settlement schools in remote areas of Kentucky through private support and philanthropy. Although not supported by one single religious denomination most were inter-denominationally supported and included Christian ideals into their programs. Some of the schools became

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[22] McMeekin, "Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs," 170; Lena Nofcier, "Another Milestone," March 1932, SLOC, box 28.
[23] Nofcier, "Another Milestone, March 1932," SLOC, box 28.
[24] McMeekin, "Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs," 171.
[25] John Kleber, editor, *Kentucky Encyclopedia* (University Press of Kentucky, 1992): 850.

more involved in total community reform by providing community-betterment services such as health clinics, traveling medical service, and farmers assistance. Settlement schools became some of the foremost users of the KFWC's traveling library service.

By 1900 the KFWC had become an organized, informed group powerful enough to lobby state government for improved education. The federation included 9,525 members who represented some of the most prominent and prestigious families in the state, and by 1917 had grown to 16,000 members.[26] Their husbands, fathers, and sons supported their efforts, and often held local or state political office.[27] Such factors enabled the federation to command respect from male legislatures. Moreover, the KFWC represented traditional feminine interests that did not challenge accepted female behavior. They supported causes relating to the home and community – improved schools, urban beautification, playgrounds, pure food, and consumer concerns. Such projects reflected "the moral housekeeper point of view that the community is only a large home."[28]

Between 1903 and 1909 the KFWC carried out well-planned strategies to secure education reform. Federation members researched and prepared reports on the status of education in Kentucky and released their findings at annual conventions. They held formal campaigns to tell Kentuckians about educational needs in the state. They encouraged local ministers to address educational concerns from the pulpit. During the first week in February 1907 members throughout the state, armed with information and

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[26] Nancy K. Forderhase, "Clear Call of Thoroughbred Women: The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs and the Crusade for Educational Reform." *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83 (Winter 1985): 35.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 21.

statistics, visited local newspaper editors requesting their support in school reform. In 1909 the Louisville *Courier-Journal* devoted a special issue to the KFWC educational efforts. Articles written and prepared by the federation's educational committee included the need for public libraries in the state.

The power it developed and exercised during educational reform helped the KFWC wield later influence for advancing public library service, which its members believed to be "a vital factor in education and a necessity for successful living."[29] In 1909 the KFWC requested of and lobbied the Kentucky legislature for a bill to create a Kentucky Library Commission. Flooding the state with information and statistics of Kentucky's literacy rates, public library service, and school libraries the Federation illustrated the need for an established state library service. The bill passed in 1910 largely due to the leadership and campaign work of federation members Sarah Barnes and Fannie C. Rawson.[30] For the first time, an official library governing body existed in the state of Kentucky. Rawson, a leader in the Commission's establishment, became secretary. The Traveling Libraries Project became one service provided by the new Commission through its Library Extension Division.[31]

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[29] Nofcier, "Another Milestone," March 1932, SLOC, box 28.
[30] McMeekin, "The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs," 170; Forderhase, "Clear Call," 32.
[31] McMeekin, "The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs," 179; Virginia E. Engle, State Librarian, "Report of the Department of Libraries & Archives to the Postwar Advisory Planning Commission on Library Needs in Kentucky," 20 April 1945, Kentucky Subject Vertical File, Kentucky Historical Society. Lena Nofcier, interview by John Klee, audiocassette, 27 September 1984, *Bookmobiles: Historical Perspective*, Kentucky Oral History Commission, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

The KFWC collected their 5,000 books and 100 traveling library crates scattered throughout eastern Kentucky and sent them to the new state Library Commission in Frankfort as a nucleus for beginning the service on a professional, state supported basis. Traveling libraries now began serving the entire state wherever requested. By 1932 they served over 1,400 stations with 26,939 volumes, and by 1945 the traveling collection had grown to 35,000 books, plus thousands of magazines, pamphlets, and other materials.[32]

The service now operated more efficiently out of one office in Frankfort rather than various women's clubs scattered around the state. Rawson established detailed procedures for traveling library service operations. Deposit stations received due notices reminding them when and where to return their crates. Central records helped eliminate any confusion as to what crates had circulated to which deposit stations. Additionally, materials were inspected, cleaned, and repaired if necessary each time they returned to Frankfort before being sent to their next destination.[33]

While the traveling library service provided materials in parts of eastern Kentucky, other eastern areas never used the service. Many residents did not know a traveling library service existed, nor how to initiate the service in their area. They did not know that the Kentucky Library Commission had been organized, nor were they aware of its purpose, goals, and services. Isolated towns and communities not accessible by roads or rail lines could not receive the service even if residents knew about it.

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[32] Nofcier, "Another Milestone"; Engle, "Report of the Department of Libraries & Archives."

[33] Nofcier, interview by John Klee; Traveling Library Procedures Manual, 1930, SLOC, Box 29.

Occasionally private clubs, churches, schools, and individuals loaned books among eastern Kentucky communities. For example the Homeplace Settlement School in Perry County enjoyed a substantial book collection in 1923 entirely donated by Julia Carter of the Cincinnati (Ohio) Public Library. The school loaned materials to anyone in the community, whether student or not, who wanted to borrow.[34]

The Hindman Settlement School in Knott County shared its library collection with nearby community schools that had no books. When he became librarian of the school in 1930, James Still left at dawn every Wednesday morning and took the school bus till the paved road ended. From there he carried a box packed with books to the first school on his self-designated route and exchanged it for the box he had left the previous week. He continued on his trek rotating boxes between eight schools and reaching the paved road in time for the afternoon school bus.[35] "It was too bad I couldn't serve the whole county, but that's the best I could do."[36]

McKee, Kentucky, a rural community of 250 in Jackson County, had a common library of 3,000 miscellaneous donations. Unfortunately most of the collection consisted of old, disintegrated works, popular with generations long past. Berea College offered traveling library collections to former students now teaching in eastern Kentucky. Nevertheless, for the most part, mountain communities throughout eastern Kentucky had little or no public library service. Not until the implementation of New Deal relief

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[34] "Homeplace," typed manuscript, 1923, State Librarian Historical Sketches, box 1, Kentucky Department for Libraries & Archives.
[35] James Still, interview by Jean Wiggins, audiocassette, 27 September 1986, *Bookmobiles: Historical Perspective*, Kentucky Oral History Commission, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

programs did public library service begin to reach into the area. The service that most effected eastern Kentucky was the Pack Horse Library Project, supported in part by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The WPA began work relief programs in 1935, well into the third year of the New Deal. Not only did it work toward economic goals and work relief, but many programs also held social and cultural objectives similar to those of the Progressive Era. Many WPA jobs, such as pure food programs, school lunches, public works, parks and conservation, and adult education, intended to contribute to and better communities and society.[37] Other programs sought to promote cultural awareness. The Federal Theatre Project presented plays across the country in many communities that had never experienced live theatre productions. Likewise, the Federal Art Project painted murals in post offices and public buildings throughout the country with scenes depictive of common American life. Not only did these New Deal programs enrich the more culturally deprived sectors of the country, but they also provided employment for many actors, writers, painters, and teachers among others.

In Kentucky the WPA employed men to build roads, bridges, public buildings, and recreation areas. Public sanitation systems and running water began reaching many Kentucky towns and communities for the first time. Sewing projects employed women to make clothes for statewide distribution, and food projects employed women as dieticians,

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Michael S. Blayney, "Libraries for the Millions: Adult Public Library Services and the New Deal," *Journal of Library History* 12, no. 3 (1977): 235.

gardeners, and canners. Other Kentucky women collected oral histories, transcribed historical documents, and worked in secretarial jobs.

Educational programs represented a facet of the WPA's larger campaign to better society, and libraries played a key part in these programs. Administrators believed that library programs could increase literacy and, in turn, lead to greater understanding and appreciation of democratic culture.[38] A literate society would hopefully induce a more informed society willing to participate in democratic practices. To help achieve these goals WPA library projects expanded library service in two specific areas: adult education and rural extension.

The administrative director of the WPA's Education Division reported that no other institution for adult education was more important than libraries.[39] Learning would improve "the earning power, the living conditions, the health, and family life of millions," as well as strengthen homes and families through nutritional and consumer education, and child care education.[40] Library programs also meant to encourage people to "read things that will be useful to them and that will help them to keep growing."[41] Citizens needed "to understand the economic and political problems of our time, and the democratic way of meeting these." However, "in order to act intelligently as citizens of democracy, they

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[38] Ibid, 236.
[39] G.L. Maxwell, "Education Program of the Works Progress Administration and the Public Library," in *Role of the Library in Adult Education* (University of Chicago Press, 1937), 48.
[40] Ibid., 51.
[41] Ibid., 54.

need access to reliable facts and opportunity for free, informed discussion."[42] Library programs were intended to help achieve such goals.

WPA library programs transcribed and preserved manuscripts and cataloged library collections. In Detroit 1,000 women repaired and restored materials in libraries and schools.[43] Nevada, Virginia, Michigan, California, and other states employed relief workers in cataloging projects and binding materials.[44] WPA library reading programs taught basic reading and literacy skills. Bookmobiles provided outreach and support for education in areas accessible by negotiable terrain and roads. Ohio, South Carolina, Iowa, and other states established bookmobile service to schools and deposit stations in small communities.[45] Many states initiated or increased traveling library programs as another way of serving rural areas. In 1939 WPA library projects employed over 14,000 people in forty-five states, established 2,300 new libraries, and initiated over 5,800 traveling libraries.[46]

Kentucky library projects functioned under the Division of Women's and Professional Projects of the WPA. This division handled many WPA women's projects focused on the home, family, and community. For example, sewing programs, food distribution, nutrition and home health care projects, as well as recreational and leisure

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[42] Ibid., 55.
[43] Ellen S. Woodward, "WPA Library Projects," *Wilson Bulletin for Libraries* 12 (April 1938): 518.
[44] Library Work Relief Project Issuances, Record Series 29/4/3, American Library Association Archives.
[45] Ibid.; Edward A. Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries," *ALA Bulletin* 32 (October 1938): 703.
[46] Ellen S. Woodward, "WPA Library Projects," *Wilson Bulletin for Libraries* 12 (April 1938): 518.

programs operated under the auspices of the Division of Women's and Professional Projects. Persons employed in WPA library programs established libraries in many rural areas of western and central Kentucky where roads allowed most residents access. In larger urban libraries such as Louisville, WPA library personnel classified, cataloged, and mended materials. Larger libraries also enjoyed several special services especially for children such as storytelling and puppet shows.[47]

One of the most innovative and unique library projects in Kentucky, was the Pack Horse Library Project which brought information, knowledge and pleasure to eastern Kentucky residents. Between 1936 and 1943 pack horse libraries served an area populated by over 550,000 residents. Thirty counties maintained pack horse library service, but no documents have been found that identify all counties by name. Each library paid five to seven workers twenty-eight dollars per month. While no definite totals have been found, the Pack Horse Library Project employed approximately two-hundred people at an estimated 3,700 dollars annually.

For the first time public library service reached areas of the state inaccessible by motorized transportation. Mules and horses negotiated the only means of service up mountain streams and trails to residents and communities tucked into Kentucky's most rugged country. Many of these mountain patrons had never visited a library or even knew of traveling library service. Now, packed in saddlebags and delivered by horses, world cultures, ideas, science, literature, and art came to a region largely untouched by such knowledge.

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[47] WPA Kentucky Records, box 309, Kentucky Department for Libraries & Archives.

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPMENT OF THE PACK HORSE LIBRARY PROJECT

Pack horse library service did not originate with the WPA nor with Kentucky library officials. In 1913 May Stafford began pack horse library service to Johnson County residents out of the county seat at Paintsville. A resident of Johnson County, Stafford believed library service would not only support local mountain schools, but would also provide pleasure and information to isolated residents throughout the county.[1] She approached John Caldwell Calhoun Mayo with her idea of horseback delivery and he agreed to finance the enterprise.

Mayo, a wealthy coal industrialist who grew up in mountainous Pike County, knew the limited economic and social conditions of people in the area. As a child he attended a one-room log schoolhouse and developed a love for reading anything he could obtain from teachers. In the 1880s he moved away to attend school at Kentucky Wesleyan College in Millersburg, then returned to eastern Kentucky where he taught school in Johnson County. Mayo's interest in geology led him to purchase mineral rights to enormous tracts of land, and he entered into profitable business partnerships. Mayo also operated a successful timber company, and became a major figure in railroad corporations. When he died in 1914 he was considered Kentucky's wealthiest citizen.[2]

Since Mayo experienced places outside the eastern Kentucky mountains and gained a professional education, he may have known that Andrew Carnegie and other

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[1] Beth Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky," *Louisville Courier Journal*, 11 December 1938.
[2] John E. Kleber, editor, *Kentucky Encyclopedia* (University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 620.

philanthropists successfully established libraries in more urban areas. Perhaps Mayo's support for rural library service in his own county was inspired by their examples. Unfortunately, Mayo's library service remained a small operation entirely dependent upon his resources. Therefore, when he died so did the unique service he financed.[3]

Prior to 1930, Homeplace Settlement School in Perry County also offered pack horse library service. Every Friday the school sent a mounted carrier to take books to homes, community centers, and other schools in the county. The service could not possibly serve all residents, but in many cases children would walk several miles following creek beds to meet the carrier while enroute.[4]

It is difficult to establish the place and time of the first WPA pack horse library. Beth Rhodenbaugh and Robert Beach, two journalists writing in 1938 and 1941, respectively, attributed the first WPA pack horse library service to Benton Deaton, a Presbyterian minister at the Wooten community in Leslie County. Reportedly Deaton approached the WPA and offered the Wooten community center's library collection. If the WPA would pay carriers to transport books by horseback many isolated residents unable to come the community center could still borrow books.[5]

On the other hand, official documents from the state librarian's correspondence attribute the idea of pack horse service to Elizabeth Fullerton, State Director of the

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[3] "Library Project was a Community Service Project," WPA Kentucky Records, box 309; Robert Beach, "Book-Extension Services in Eastern Kentucky," *Mountain Life and Work* 17 (Summer 1941): 7; Reverend G.W. Townsend, "Book Women Carry Culture to Eastern Kentucky Hills," *In Kentucky* (Winter 1939): 38.

[4] "Homeplace," State Librarian Historical Sketches, box 1.

[5] Beach, "Book Extension Services," 7; Beth Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky," *Louisville Courier Journal*, 11 December 1938.

WPA's Women's and Professional Projects in Louisville.[6] In 1936 correspondence from the state librarian's office stated that pack horse library service existed in Harlan, Clay, Whitley, Jackson, Owsley, and Lee counties. Neither Leslie County nor Benton Deaton was mentioned.[7]

The WPA supported the Pack Horse Library Project by hiring local women and occasionally local men to maintain a headquarters library, usually at the county seat, and to carry books on horseback throughout the county.[8] All other funding and support came from outside resources. Local sponsors provided building quarters, heat, light, and operating supplies. Usually the county board of education acted as the sponsor, but there could also be joint sponsorship. For example in Johnson County the Board of Education provided quarters while Kiwanis Club members subscribed monthly to meet expenses and provide supplies.[9] General stores, post offices, courthouses, churches, and community centers often agreed to house local pack horse library headquarters. Books, magazines, and reading materials depended entirely on donations. Individuals, clubs, churches, and organizations across and outside the state answered the need for materials throughout the existence of pack horse libraries. "It is possibly true that no other W.P.A.

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[6] Lena Nofcier to Mrs. Dallas Brightwell, Acting Secretary Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers, 6 April 1938, SLOC, box 28; Nofcier to Dr. William H. Bristow, 6 April 1938, SLOC, box 28.

[7] Ethel Perryman, District Supervisor of Women's and Professional Projects to Mrs. B.W. Whitaker, President of State Parent Teacher Association, 1 August 1936, SLOC, box 28

[8] Nofcier to Mrs. Dallas Brightwell, Acting Secretary of the KCPT, 6 April 1938, SLOC, box 28; Nofcier, "Annual Report of Library Service, 1937-1938," SLOC, box 28; "Pack Horse Library: A Kentucky W.P.A. Project," *Rural America* (October 1939): 12.

[9] Reverend G.W. Townsend, "Book Women Carry Culture to Eastern Kentucky Hills," *In Kentucky* (Winter 1939): 38.

project has been so completely dependent upon the co-operation of the public in establishing itself," wrote journalist Beth Rhodenbaugh.[10]

Ethel Perryman, a resident of Laurel County in eastern Kentucky, understood the geographic and social situations in her area of the state. As District Supervisor of Women's and Professional Projects in London, Kentucky she oversaw library projects in the eastern region of the state. Perryman recognized the potential of pack horse service. She also realized the overwhelming need for materials. Unfortunately, since materials depended on inconsistent and often inadequate donations, they remained meager and irregular. The six established pack horse libraries had become so popular with local residents that they were requesting more materials. Moreover, other eastern Kentucky counties began to request pack horse library service for their residents. Perryman sought support through the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers (KCPT). Perhaps if parent-teacher organizationss around the state supported pack horse service then maybe funds and donations would be greater and more consistent.

Perryman turned to the president of the KCPT, Mrs. B.W. (Vivien) Whitaker in Frankfort. Library outreach was different in mountain counties, explained Perryman, because "modern methods of transportation can not [sic] be used" in much of eastern Kentucky. "Some of the folks who want books live back in the mountains, and they use the creek beds for travel, as there are no roads to their places." She illustrated that only mounted riders could access the area effectively. "Splashing up the creek beds, winding along ravines, they carry books to isolated rural schools and community centers, picking

[10] Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky."

up and replenishing book stocks as they go so that the entire number of books circulates throughout the county."[11]

Books, however, were an enormous problem; there simply were not enough. Nor did the WPA provide them. The mountain counties, she explained, most of them "pauper counties," had no funds to purchase reading materials. "Would you be kind enough to interest the Parent Teachers Association in these projects, and donate as many books and magazines as possible?"[12]

After receiving in early August 1938 Perryman's outline of the project and her request for assistance, Whitaker forwarded Perryman's letter on to Lena Nofcier, Chairman of Library Service for the KCPT. An organization of educators, teachers, and concerned parents, the KCPT strove for better education in Kentucky by supporting local or state programs, and through political lobbying at the state legislature. The Pack Horse Library Project would offer library books and access to many Kentucky schools that had no such luxury – an important boost to teachers and parents alike. Nofcier replied to Perryman, but her response gave little hope. "It has always been a source of deep regret to me that we have not had and will not have books from this office to aid you." However, Nofcier promised, "I am outlining some plans to be submitted to the Board of Managers [of the KCPT] at their fall [October 1936] meeting."[13]

Nofcier may have felt unsure that the KCPT would endorse pack horse service, or would offer consistent support. Still, the project could not have been referred to a greater

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[11] Perryman to Whitaker, 1 August 1936, SLOC, box 28.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Nofcier to Perryman, 1 August 1936, SLOC, box 28.

champion of library services in Kentucky. Not only was Nofcier chairman of Library Service for the KCPT, she was also the director of the Kentucky Library Commission. After receiving her library degree at the University of Iowa in 1926, Nofcier became librarian at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky. Under her term as librarian she began a reorganization of the library, and oversaw its movement into new facilities. Nofcier also participated in the library profession by serving on committees with the American Library Association, Southeastern Library Association, and the Kentucky Library Association.

As director of the Kentucky Library Commission, Nofcier's staff compiled statistics and information on libraries in Kentucky compared with national standards. Her official correspondence reflects a determined woman who doggedly encouraged KCPT members to voice library issues to their state legislatures. In 1934 she argued to the KCPT the need for the state to provide printed materials to schools. "It is impossible for a teacher to conduct classes without books and other printed aids," she reasoned. "After a child learns to read, he must have access to books."[14] The next year she argued to the KCPT that "adequate library service should be provided for all people, rural as well as urban, colored as well as white." But to do this more funds had to be made available. "A more adequate state appropriation is necessary to meet the present demands for service," she flatly stated. "With such a distressing picture of library conditions and needs in

[14] Nofcier, "Library Extension Activities of the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers Association," 10 December 1934, SLOC, box 28.

Kentucky should we not bestir ourselves to provide not only adequate library facilities, but also equal library privileges for every citizen?"[15]

As she promised Perryman, Nofcier outlined support plans for pack horse library service and presented them to the KCPT Board of Managers in October 1936. Pack Horse library service could provide educational support to one of the poorest, secluded areas of the state. Undoubtedly, she was persuasive in her presentation, for two months after seeking support Perryman learned that the KCPT had officially and overwhelmingly endorsed the Pack Horse Library Project. "The Board of Managers at its October meeting endorsed one of the most unique and interesting projects in the world. Your unit is cordially invited to participate in it."[16]

Nofcier immediately advised local PTA's throughout Kentucky of the Board's endorsement of the project. She also informed PTA groups how they could help to meet the project's needs. "New books, children's books and readable books on all subjects are desperately needed."[17] She encouraged every PTA unit in the state to formally participate in the Pack Horse Library Project. Procedures were simple. Each PTA appointed one chairman to be in charge of its pack horse library support efforts, and each PTA established one convenient location to assemble donated books, magazines, and other materials. Boy Scout groups, Sunday school classes, and children's school groups collected materials and delivered them to a local collection point. Collected materials

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[15] Nofcier, "Library Conditions in Kentucky,"*Kentucky Parent Teacher*, October 1935, 3; Typed manuscript in SLOC, box 28.
[16] Nofcier, "Pack Horse Libraries," *Kentucky Parent Teacher*, November 1936, 11.
[17] Nofcier to PTA Presidents and Library Service Chairmen, 21 October 1936, SLOC, box 28.

were sent to either the nearest pack horse library, or to Ethel Perryman at the district WPA office in London, Kentucky, for distribution.[18]

Nofcier was not satisfied with support just from PTA groups around the state. She also encouraged every PTA member to participate in the project. Through the establishment of the Penny Fund, Nofcier asked every PTA member in the state of Kentucky to give at least one penny with which to buy new books for pack horse libraries.[19] New children's books averaged between $1.75 and $2.00, and the penny fund became a consistent means of new book purchases throughout the entire existence of the Pack Horse Library Project.

Though the KCPT had only endorsed the project in October of 1936, the response across the state yielded positive results by December of that year. Eighty-three PTA units donated 7,120 books and magazines, and the penny fund yielded $101.70 of individual contributions within two months. Pack horse library service had extended to an additional two counties making a total of eight counties.[20] For the rest of the project's existence it received regular support from PTAs across the state. In a spirit of unselfishness, Kentucky PTA members consistently worked together in order to assist a particularly needy region of their state.

Nofcier also solicited the assistance of Mrs. A.B. (Katie) Crawford, Chairman of State Publicity for the KCPT. Crawford immediately replied, "I shall give your splendid project 'The Pack Horse Library' as much publicity as I possibly can. I think it is a fine

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[18]Ibid.
[19] Nofcier, "Pack Horse Library Project," 12 October 1937.
[20] Ibid.

project."[21] As chairman of publicity, Crawford could keep the project before the organization, the state legislature, and the public eye. Constant publicity articles would keep parties informed of the project's needs and actions.

Crawford went to work, and the following year the Pack Horse Library Project became the central focus of the KCPT Book Week, observed each November. "The Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers believes this project to be one of its most worth while [sic] endeavors, and is attempting to focus the attention of the public on this great need during Book Week," stated Crawford. "Those who have access to libraries or who have the means to build up libraries of their own can scarcely understand what it means to be totally deprived of books," she remarked. "A parent-teacher member lives next door to you; call her in and give her the books and magazines you no longer need."[22]

Along with supportive efforts from the KCPT Nofcier and Crawford launched publicity drives through newspaper articles, schools, clubs, radio announcements, and pie and box suppers. Special drives each November during Book Week helped gain additional materials and money. Nofcier remained tireless in her efforts to promote the Pack Horse Library Project. In one month alone she attended five different district meetings of the KCPT across the state presenting the project and encouraging greater publicity.[23]

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[21] Crawford to Nofcier, 1 November 1936, SLOC, box 28.
[22] Crawford, "Pack Horse Library Book Week Project," November 13-19, 1938, SLOC, box 28.
[23] Nofcier to Mrs. C.A. Schroetter, President of the KCPT, 28 August 1937, SLOC, box 28.

Moreover, Nofcier maintained an endless barrage of correspondence with private citizens, schools, YMCAs, churches, women's clubs, and other groups. She outlined the operations and services of pack horse libraries making known their needs and soliciting more donations. "Let's make [reading] a reality for more than ½ million people," encouraged Nofcier. "Let's send our pennies, books, and magazines traveling through Pack Horse Libraries."[24]

As donations accumulated Nofcier personally wrote innumerable thank-you letters. Even schools donated for the benefit of less fortunate schools in the mountains. School children in Piner, Kentucky sent a donation of $2.23 along with a note, "accept our little gift from our school children that it might make some other children happy to have some library books to read in their schools too."[25] Donations came from throughout Kentucky as well as outside the state. Individuals such as Mrs. Malcolm McCleod of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania heard of the project and gave a generous contribution.[26] Likewise, a group of unidentified Iowa public libraries donated books and materials.[27] "This project is so unique and intriguing that people from 19 different states have participated in supplying reading material for it," reported Nofcier.[28]

While the condition of donations did not matter, content was a particular concern for Nofcier who carefully considered the patrons in pack horse library service areas. For the most part they were people born and raised in the eastern Kentucky mountains. Most

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[24] Nofcier, "Pack Horse Library Project," 12 October 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[25] Mr. Norton, Principle of Piner School to Nofcier, 11 January 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[26] Nofcier to Perryman, 25 August 1936, SLOC, box 28.
[27] Perryman to Nofcier, 16 April 1938, SLOC, box 28.
[28] Nofcier, "Pack Horse Library Project," 12 October 1937, SLOC, box 28.

descended from ancestors who had settled the area after finding it rich in game, or received veterans land allotments after the Revolutionary War.[29] For many years wild game and fur supplied their food and money along with subsistence farming. Later in the 1860s they began cutting and selling timber, then began coal mining in the 1890s. From frontier days eastern Kentuckians developed herbal medicine due to lack of physicians – some of which was still practiced in the 1930s. Protestant religious roots ran deep within the area and were a large part of mountain society. Lorena Hickock described residents as "deeply religious," often singing spirituals whenever they came together at public gatherings.[30] She also referred to them as "passionately patriotic," stating that nearly one hundred percent of the men in the area enlisted during World War I.[31] Living a self-sufficient, subsistence lifestyle they had developed deeply set value systems, beliefs, and outlooks through generations.

Nofcier stressed a selection process that censored out any materials that might offend the mountain sentiments and destroy trust in the service. If local trust were destroyed then the entire service would be rendered useless. Nofcier requested the KCPT not to send magazines such as *Love Story*, *True Story*, or detective magazines. Nor did she want old chemistry, foreign language, and arithmetic textbooks. Instead, she encouraged donations that included art and music, short stories, cooking, gardening, health, history, and invention. Preferred magazines included *Reader's Digest, National*

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[29] Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 9-10.
[30] Coode and Bauman, "Dear Mr. Hopkins," 59.
[31] Ibid., 58.

Geographic, Newsweek, Parents Magazine, Ladies Home Journal, American Boy, and *Good Housekeeping.*[32]

Her insistence paid off. Despite their condition, "you would be amazed at the quality of the larger percentage of books and magazines which the Pack Horse libraries receive as gifts," she reported.[33] In one instance a mother continuously declined the service despite the pack horse carrier's encouragement. Finally she agreed to take some of the material. On her next visit the woman greeted the carrier enthusiastically. "They're all nice clean stories!" From then on she was a regular, loyal patron[34]

By the end of 1936 eight pack horse libraries operated in eight counties. By the spring of 1938 pack horse libraries expanded to cover thirty eastern counties. Mounted carriers averaged over 5,000 miles per month visiting over 4,000 families and 55,000 individuals.[35] In a single month, carriers of the Johnson County Pack Horse Library traveled 1,858 miles and served 9,466 individuals. This included 352 schools and 1,702 homes.[36] Whitley County Pack Horse Library served 5,200 individuals, and 800 families.[37] As many as thirty-two mountain residents congregated at one dropoff site anticipating the sound of horse's hooves to announce the arrival of books.[38] Four pack horse carriers in Leslie County covered an area greater than the state of Delaware to serve

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[32] Ibid.; Nofcier to Mrs. J. Preston Dabney, Smithland, Kentucky PTA, 18 January 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[33] Nofcier to Miss Virginia Hayes, Holmes High School, Covington, Kentucky, 24 November 1939, SLOC, box 28.
[34] Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky."
[35] Nofcier to Mrs. D.J. Jones, 9 February 1938, SLOC, box 28.
[36] Townsend, "Book Women," 38.
[37] Woodward, "WPA Libray Projects," 518.
[38] Ibid.

8,000 people in fifty-seven mountain communities.[39] Morgan County Pack Horse Library grew from 200 items of material in 1938 to over 6,000 items by 1941, and reached eighty-five percent of the county's residents.[40] Patrons in Harlan County ranged in age from six to ninety-eight served by five carriers criss-crossing the county on various routes each week. Supervisor Ann Richards reported, "there are entire families who cannot read but clamor for picture books."[41]

As soon as one county established a pack horse library, surrounding counties clamored for the service in their own locales. "I should like to get more information on how to establish a Pack Horse Library in our community," wrote Effie S. Heskamp. "We have no public library here, and our schools are not very centrally located...."[42] Mrs. A.J. Tucker of the Allias, Kentucky PTA wrote, "I am writing for further information about the Pack Horse Library Project. We do not have a complete library in our school and the children do not have enough reading material available."[43] Knowing nothing more than the fact that the project existed, the Allias PTA unanimously voted to establish a pack horse library in Perry County. "We are very anxious to begin work on this project, but since we have not had it before, we want to know just how we may go about this work."[44]

Many residents had never enjoyed books in their own homes before pack horse service. Adults and children alike embraced the service wherever it existed. "'Book

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[39] "Library Work Relief Projects," Record series 29/4/3, American Library Association Archives, Urbana-Champaign, Illinios.
[40] Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky."
[41] "Harlan County's 'Book Woman' HitchHikes [sic]," *Louisville Courier Journal*, 23 August 1936.
[42] Heskamp to Nofcier, 1 November 1938, SLOC, box 28.
[43] Tucker to Nofcier, 25 December 1938, SLOC, box 28.

Women' are among the most popular individuals Johnson County folk ever knew," said one Paintsville resident.[45] A Perry County resident wrote to express sincere appreciation "for the opportunity that is being given to people in this section of the country by the WPA Packhorse Library." His entire family enjoyed the service and had "developed the reading habit and appreciation of good reading material." This was not only true in his home, however, but in the "many homes that are not able to have any reading material whatever, had it not been for the WPA Library."[46] In one county a family reportedly declined moving to an adjoining county simply because it had no pack horse library service.[47] Another family lived so secluded that their mail reached them every three days by horseback. "We have been unable to purchase books for a year and have been lost beyond measure without them. So you see what a blessing your library would be to us."[48] Despite the fact that pack horse libraries rarely offered new books and largely circulated cast-offs and used donations, they suffered no lack of patrons.

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Townsend, "Book Women," 38.
[46] Beach, "Book-Extension Services," 7.
[47] Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries," 709.
[48] Beach, "Book-Extension Services," 7.

CHAPTER 3: DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS

Pack horse library workers collected, repaired, and carried books into the Kentucky mountains for twenty-eight dollars per month; welcome income during the depression.[1] Most library workers were, with few exceptions, local women. In large part, local employees insured the service's success. Local riders knew many of the residents and communities along their routes, and they were familiar with the destinations of shallow creek beds and trails. Moreover, they understood their patrons' ways of life. As locals they understood all the cultural and social norms throughout the area.[2]

For each pack horse library the WPA employed one supervisor who remained at the county headquarters, and four or five mounted carriers who packed materials into the mountains. Headquarters supervisors received donations, cleaned and reconditioned books, magazines, and other materials, and sorted items for delivery. Carriers picked up collections from headquarters and delivered them to different drop-off sites throughout the county. Such sites included schools, homes, and community centers. Carriers traveled three or four different routes each week and covered about eighteen miles a day.[3]

The job required navigating a horse or mule over difficult terrain in all types of weather and seasons. For some, such as Grace Lucas, it was life-sustaining employment. As a single mother raising two young children alone, "I had to make a living for them,"

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[1] Lucas, interview by author, 31 May 1998.
[2] Marion Humble, "In the Kentucky Mountains," *Journal of Adult Education* 11 (1939): 68; Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries," 707.
[3] Crawford, "Pack Horse Libraries Book Week Project," November 1938, SLOC, box 28; Nofcier, "Kentucky Pack Horse Libraries," 19 March 1938, SLOC, box 28.

she matter-of-factly stated.[4] Initially she found employment with a local WPA sewing project, then switched to the packhorse library when it was established in Lee County. At twenty-eight dollars a month she supported herself and children, but the work could be challenging.[5]

Since Lucas did not own a horse or mule she had to hire a mount. She hired Bill, a large chestnut gelding, for fifty cents a week and feed. He turned out to be a gentle, trusted companion, and they spent many hours and miles together. They had to leave at daybreak in order to cover the entire route before dark. Often Lucas whistled as they traveled long, remote stretches between back woods communities and homes. In some areas the terrain was so steep and rocky that Lucas dismounted and led Bill rather than risk a fall. Weather did not keep them from making their rounds. In winter temperatures dropped so cold that Lucas' feet froze to the stirrups from the creek water splashed up from Bill's pace. One winter, caught in an all night downpour Lucas had to spend the night at a home along her route. Spring rains could mean fording rivers up to the saddlebags. Such experiences as these were common to all pack horse librarians.[6]

Though no documented qualifications have yet been found, pack horse library workers had to have enough education to read to patrons, and to create scrapbooks and stories from dilapidated donations. Carriers also recommend materials to patrons, and tried to fill requests. Grace Lucas read as much as she possibly could to keep abreast of available selections and make appropriate recommendations to patrons. Often she packed

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[4] Lucas, interview by author, 31 May 1998.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

particular authors and titles requested by residents.[7] After receiving a shipment of donations one worker excitedly wrote Nofcier, "I'm so excited to read these good books but I cant [sic] find time for getting things ready for other folks to read."[8]

If time permitted, carriers stopped to read to a group of children, the bedridden, ill, and blind. In one case an elderly patron, unable to read, produced a letter for the mounted carrier that she had received several weeks prior. The carrier read to the woman about the birth of her great-grandson outside the mountains. When the woman learned the new baby had been named for her deceased husband she could not contain her emotion.[9]

In many cases, pack horse workers solicited donations for their individual libraries. For example Maggie May Smith, supervisor of the Whitley County Pack Horse Library in Williamsburg, wrote to the editor of the *Louisville Courier Journal*. "Seven thousand six hundred children scattered over the hills of Whitley County, Kentucky are trying to get an education without books," she began. The pack horse library provided materials to "inspire their starving minds."[10] To other libraries Smith wrote that children in Whitley county "have no access to books except a few textbooks from the state." The pack horse library was trying to address the problem but "our library cannot fill one-tenth of the requests." She ended with a plea for donations. "If you have any discarded books, regardless of how bad they are worn, we will greatly appreciate them. We will repair them and send them on to bring hours of pleasure and instruction….."[11]

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Maggie Mae Smith to Nofcier, 18 May 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[9] "Pack Horse Library: A Kentucky W.P.A. Project," *Rural America*, 12.
[10] Maggie May Smith, "Letter to the Editor," *Louisville Courier Journal*, 15 April 1938.
[11] Smith to unidentified librarians, 7 September 1938, SLOC, box 28.

Gladys Lainhart, of the pack horse library in McKee, Kentucky, personally solicited the Lexington, Kentucky, PTA describing her work and making known the library's needs for donations including children's books and health periodicals.[12] "[A] young girl, perhaps seventeen, and very enthusiastic about her work," Lainhart's letter so impressed PTA members that they forwarded it on to Lena Nofcier as an example of effective fundraising.[13]

Holdings packed in saddlebags would likely have appalled other librarians who enjoyed a materials budget even during the depression. While the KCPT provided some new books through the Penny Fund, the vast majority of donations were used and worn. Literally cast-offs in "unusable" condition, books, magazines, and printed materials received by pack horse libraries "would be considered worthless in an average public library."[14] Yet the need was such that pack horse libraries welcomed any discarded books no matter how worn.[15]

Realizing their challenge to create circulating material from a dilapidated hodge-podge of donations, Nofcier arranged special training for packhorse library workers. For example Alice Palmer Morris, librarian at Morehead State Teachers College, demonstrated book-mending methods to twelve pack horse employees.[16] Likewise, a library representative from Union College in Barbourville gave a bookbinding

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[12] Gladys Lainhart to Mrs. D.J. Jones, 13 March 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[13] Mrs. D.J. Matilda Jones to Lena Nofcier, 30 March 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[14] Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries," 708.
[15] Smith, "Letter to the Editor," 15 April 1938.
[16] Morris to Nofcier, 24 May 1937, SLOC, box 28.

demonstration.[17] After attending the demonstration one pack horse employee excitedly wrote Nofcier, "it was a real treet [sic]. I wouldn't take anything for what I learned."[18]

Once each week carriers met together at headquarters to sift through tattered donations. Discarded trash soon transformed into useable treasures. Snipping pictures, articles, essays, and poems, they glued and bound them, transforming ragged cast-offs into usable formats of picture books, children's books, and adult interest scrapbooks. Sometimes they even clipped and colored newspaper pictures to make children's picture books.[19] They also created unique regional works with the help of mountain women who lived along their routes. Many women passed along recipes and quilt patterns to mounted carriers who bound them into scrapbooks, then circulated them among other routes and pack horse libraries in other counties.[20]

Supplies for pack horse libraries reflected ingenuity in a situation of little or no resources. Headquarters librarians found that "3x15" cheese boxes worked perfectly for card files. Prune boxes doubled well as sorting boxes for incoming donations. License plates folded to a ninety-degree angle served well as bookends for the collection, and broom handles worked as newspaper racks. An auto jack received new purpose as a book press to bind the collections of scrapbooks created from discards.[21]

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[17] Nofcier to Perryman, 4 May 1937, SLOC. box 28.
[18] Smith to Nofcier, 18 May 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[19] Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries," 708.
[20] Grace Lucas, interview by author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 31 May 1998; Beth Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky."
[21] Dorothy Edwards, "The Romance of Kentucky Libraries," *Wilson Library Bulletin* 17 (December 1942): 294.

Because of limited collections, circulation of pack horse library material was generally limited to one item per reader or three items per family.[22] Sharing predominated. School children passed their borrowings around till every child in the class had an opportunity to read them. Older children read to younger children, and family members read to each other. Families close to each other traded material before the next visit by the carrier.[23] Pack horse libraries served children at school and at home, and served adults through home visits and community drop-off points. Grace Lucas, who served throughout Lee County, remembered that "everyone – adults and children alike – couldn't wait for me to ride up. They wanted *anything* they could get a hold of to read."[24]

"The book woman's comin' up the creek!" children cried making a beeline to her horse. Clustering around they took the load of books as she dismounted.[25] Often the "book woman" read short bits from a book, enticing children with its contents. If time permitted, she occasionally read an entire story at the schoolhouse. Schools had few meager books, and some schools had none. The state provided no books, and often counties were too poor to obtain them.[26] Schoolteacher Carrie Lynch, who taught at a one-room school in Lee County, provided a few of her own books for her students to use. When the pack horse library began visiting her school in the Monica community everything changed. "The children just ate those books up!"[27] The entire class passed the books around, and shared them with their families for two weeks at a time till the next

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[22] Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries," 707.
[23] Carrie Lynch, interview by author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 17 June 1998.
[24] Grace Lucas, interview by author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 31 May, 1998.
[25] Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky."
[26] Carrie Lynch, interview by author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 17 June 1998.

pack horse visit. Children read to each other, and literate persons in communities and families read to those who could not read.[28] "Everybody enjoyed things from the pack horse library."[29]

Children enjoyed stories that included rural lifestyles, conditions, and animals – *Charles and His Puppy Bingo, Mrs. Goose and the Three Ducks, Shoes for Sandy, Up Creek Down Creek, Mountain Path,* and *Farm Boy*. Other books brought them new adventures and encouraged new thoughts. Books such as *Aircraft, Microbe Hunters, Automobiles from Start to Finish,* and *Ships* told them about modern science and technology. Other books such as *Heidi, Eskimo Twins, Jungle Book, Japanese Twins,* and *Rebecca of Sunny Brook Farm* took them to faraway places to visit children different from themselves. Fantasies, fairy tales, and classics also circulated among children increasing their awareness of the world outside Kentucky's mountains. "'Bring me a book to read,' is the cry of every child as he runs to meet the librarian with whom he has become acquainted. Not a certain book, but any kind of book. The child has read none of them."[30]

Contrary to hillbilly stereotypes, Kentucky mountaineers showed interest in the outside world. Reverend G.W. Townsend of the First Methodist Church in Paintsville described the mountain people as having come "far from native superstitions and crude living. They possess fine intellects, and progress rapidly when given the opportunity.[31]

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Smith, "Letter to the Editor," 15 April 1938.
[31] Townsend, "Book Women," 38.

When pack horse library service finally provided them access and opportunity, they were particularly interested in current news, biographies, and history. Just like the children, adults also "grasped and clung to the pack horse library with all the tenacity of one starved for learning."[32] Mountain women requested illustrated home magazines such as *Country Woman, Woman's Home Companion,* and *Good Housekeeping*. Pack horse libraries could not supply them with enough articles and information on childcare and parenting, health and hygiene, and food and nutrition.[33] Illustrated materials featuring practical ideas and how-to information were particularly popular with adult patrons.[34] Also popular among adults were western fiction, and biographies.[35]

In 1937 pack horse libraries began to offer a new service. That year Nofcier sent four "Tru-vue" viewers and forty films to District Supervisor, Ethel Perryman to circulate among pack horse libraries. The miniature, hand-operated movie sets featured films with children's stories, animals, air travel, a circus, and vignettes around the world.[36] Perryman initially sent them to Pike, Johnson, Magoffin, and Leslie counties for two months. In the course of a year each county circulated all the films.

Though planned for patrons with reading difficulties, the films fascinated all library users, most of who had never been in a movie theatre. They were so popular that every pack horse library hoped to obtain a viewer for service to their county and several films to circulate among all pack horse libraries. "We are trying to raise enough money

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[32] "Pack Horse Library," *Rural America*, 11.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Chapman, "WPA and Rural Libraries," 708.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Nofcier, "Annual Report of Library Service 1937-1938."

through plays, picture shows, etc. to buy a Vuer No. 1 for every library," wrote Perryman.[37] Whether or not they achieved their goal is unknown. But no doubt this service broadened the experience of many individuals by introducing new technological media to their lives.

[37] Perryman to Nofcier, 16 April 1938, SLOC, box 28.

CHAPTER 4: SUCCESSES, PROBLEMS, and CONCLUSION

Pack horse libraries succeeded in bringing library experience to rural people who had never experienced any library service whatsoever. However, their accomplishments did not occur without problems. Access to isolated mountain areas was difficult even for horses and mules. Hell-Fer Sartin Creek, "a tortuous, twisting stream with a rocky bed and brush-tangled banks," aptly described common routes traveled by pack horse libraries.[1] Rocky inclines required librarians to dismount and lead their animals, especially in muddy or snowy conditions. Carriers largely depended on their own senses for weather forecasts, knowing full well that they could be miles out in a snowfall or rainstorm. Without a horse or mule such a trek would be doubly demanding. One worker hiked her eighteen-mile route carrying materials on her own back after her mule died.[2]

Other problems plagued the service through managerial and bureaucratic frustrations, especially for Lena Nofcier and other officials in Frankfort. "We are having difficulty in getting our magazines collected for our Pack Horse Library. [Our] WPA headquarters has changed managers and she seems to know nothing about it," complained a member of the Newport PTA to Nofcier. "Just what can we do about the matter?"[3] Nofcier handled numerous such complaints. Repeatedly she clarified issues with local WPA offices to keep materials moving out to the pack horse libraries.

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[1] "Pack-horse Library Unique among 903 Library Projects Providing Work Relief," Library Work Relief Project Issuances, Record series 29/4/3, American Library Association Archives, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
[2] "Pack Horse Library," 12; "Bookmobiles bring Mohammed to the Mountains," *Mountain Life and Work* 35 (Summer 1959): 6.

Some situations were not quickly or easily solved, but Nofcier always tried to rectify problems, then followed up to make sure things were operating smoothly. "Who is our district Library Supervisor and when will she call for the books and magazines sent to the local W.P.A. office?" asked Mary Fox Clardy of Pineville City schools. The local WPA was puzzled over the books and magazines piling up at their office. None of the material moved out to the pack horse libraries. "For the sake of all concerned and the project itself we should like this material to reach its destination," stressed Clardy.[4]

Likely Clardy was even more frustrated when she did not receive a response from Nofcier. Clardy's letter arrived in December during Nofcier's vacation. Nofcier did not see the letter till she found it two months later in February misplaced among past reports. She immediately wrote Clardy to see if the problem had been resolved, and encouraged Clardy to contact her if it had not. "I am very much humiliated that this oversight occurred," apologized Nofcier.[5]

Nofcier's reports also reflected frustrating organizational problems. "Several changes in WPA districts and the slow process of recertifying workers on WPA projects has handicapped our library project," she stated.[6] In a letter to Mrs. John Shaw of the Maysville PTA, Nofcier expressed her annoyance with government bureaucracy. "The affiliation with the W.P.A. this year has been most unsatisfactory because of the continual

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[3] Miss Massie to Nofcier, 13 March 1938, SLOC, box 28.
[4] Clardy to Nofcier, 14 December 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[5] Nofcier to Clardy, 15 February 1938, SLOC, box 28.
[6] Nofcier, "Report on Pack Horse Library Project, 1939," SLOC, box 28.

changes in the W.P.A. set-up," she wrote. "As you perhaps know, these regulations are handed down from Washington and have proved a great handicap."[7]

However problems with bureaucracy, disorganization, transportation, and access paled in comparison to the problem of enough materials. The biggest shortcoming of the entire Pack Horse Library Project was the fact that it could not begin to supply the demand from patrons who received their first taste of public library service. Ethel Perryman reflected the foremost concern of every pack horse librarian when she told Nofcier, "we are going to need all the books we can get our hands on."[8] "The demand for fiction has become so great that the supply in our library is inadequate," stated Virginia Brogan of the Knox County Pack Horse Library.[9] Likewise, Ruth Gross requested more materials "as the demand is so great in this [Perry] county we can hardly keep supplied.[10]

Despite shortages of material and various logistical problems pack horse libraries touched the lives of countless mountain residents. Grace Lucas will never forget one particularly poor family's appreciation of pack horse service. Every time she delivered books to their home the mother insisted that Lucas eat a meager meal. "I didn't want to eat because I thought I would be taking something [food] away from the children, but she would make me eat."[11]

Success also brought a few problems for patrons. One family complained that their son's new nightly reading habits meant purchasing more lamp oil. One mother only

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[7] Nofcier to Shaw, 26 April 1940, SLOC, box 28.
[8] Perryman to Nofcier, 14 July 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[9] Brogan to Nofcier, 5 May 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[10] Gross to Nofcier, 21 November 1938, SLOC, box 28.
[11] Lucas, interview with author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 31 May 1998.

allowed a single book for all her children in order to prevent squabbles over various selections.[12] In one instance an irate father met a pack horse carrier on the trail to complain that he could not get his children to do chores – all they wanted to do was sit and read.[13]

Still, the benefits outweighed the drawbacks. "Where Pack Horse Libraries have wended their way through the Kentucky mountains there has been a noticeable upward trend in the standard of living," reported the *Rural American.* This was largely due to the information provided on health, hygiene, food and nutrition, and childcare.[14] Pack horse libraries helped to dispel common myths and old wives tales such as rubbing warm rabbit's brains on a baby's gums to help cut teeth, or a teaspoon of breast milk with tobacco smoke blown into it to remedy colic.[15]

Also, pack horse libraries helped prepare young people for future endeavors. Many learned about worlds far apart from the Kentucky mountains – places they were destined to go, away from the mountains they were destined to leave. In the Civilian Conservation Corps eastern Kentucky boys worked with enrollees from California to New York – places they read about through the pack horse library. Others obtained jobs, joined the military service, or went to school far away from home. Sometimes they knew about their destination from reading something provided by the pack horse library.

Most importantly, pack horse libraries instilled in many the love of reading. "The pack horse library was the thing that really got the children interested in reading, and

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[12] Rhodenbaugh, "Book Women Started in Kentucky."
[13] "Pack Horse Library: A Kentucky W.P.A. Project," 12.
[14] Ibid.

really gave them a desire to read," insisted teacher Carrie Lynch.[16] "It would be difficult to estimate how much good this work is doing to brighten the lives of the people in our Kentucky mountains," wrote one pack horse worker.[17] Remembering his library delivery service in Knott County, James Still reflected, "I like to think that I put a book in a few people's hands that changed their lives."[18]

Despite their success and popularity, pack horse libraries did not last for long. In 1943 the project ended with the dismantling of the WPA. Without the WPA pack horse libraries could no longer pay workers. One of the most unique and well-liked rural outreach services came to an end. Their demise often meant no library service whatsoever for countless mountain residents in eastern Kentucky. Carrie Lynch remembered that after the pack horse library disbanded in Lee County there remained a small library at the county seat in Beattyville. However many residents throughout the county could not easily or regularly make the trip to town. For a considerable stretch of years many residents in Lee County did not have library service again until bookmobiles began serving the area in the 1950s. Till that time Lynch and several parents had a few books that they would share amongst themselves and with students, but "there was very, very little. We just didn't have access to much after the pack horse library." [19]

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Lynch, interview with author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 17 June 1998.
[17] Gladys Lainhart to Mrs. D.J. Jones, Kenwick PTA, Lexington, Kentuck, 13 March 1937, SLOC, box 28.
[18] Still, interview by Jean Wiggins, 16 January 1986, *Bookmobiles: Historical Perspective*. Kentucky Oral History Commission, Kentucky Historical Society.
[19] Lynch, interview with author, Beattyville, Kentucky, 17 June 1998.

Other counties experienced similar situations. Both Jackson and Johnson Counties had a public library at the county seats, but none had any kind of rural outreach to isolated communities, schools, and residents. Most libraries that existed operated off inadequate funds that only allowed limited operations. Whitley County maintained a small library by collecting thirty percent of police court fines.[20] Other counties, like Clay County, no longer offered library service of any kind. Once again, communities had to depend on traveling library service, or find appropriations to establish their own library.[21] In 1945, within two years after pack horse libraries ceased operation, state librarian Virginia Engle reported that "the underserved areas are the poorer economic areas least able to provide this [library] service with local monies."[22]

Some areas fared better than others did. For example, Berea College maintained book delivery service to parts of Jackson and Rockcastle Counties, but only to schools accessible by car.[23] In several cases community centers maintained small libraries and loaned materials to individuals and families. Still, only those who could travel to the collections could borrow books. This eliminated many isolated residents and entire communities that had previously used pack horse service.

In rare cases wealthy philanthropists might provide some means of library service for eastern Kentucky. In 1946 Lawrence O. Davis, owner of the Virginia Theatre and

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[20] "Historical Sketches," typed manuscript dated 1946, State Librarian Records, box 1.
[21] Doll L. Cornett to Frances Jane Porter, 27 October 1947, State Librarian Official Correspondence with County Library Boards (hereafter cited as SLOC/CLB), box 5.
[22] Virginia E. Engle, "Report of the Department of Libraries & Archives to the Postwar Advisory Planning Commission on Library Needs in Kentucky," 20 April 1945, Kentucky Subject Vertical File, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.
[23] State Librarian Bookmobile File, History, 1940-1969, box 4.

Virginia Amusement Company, contributed money to provide Perry County a library in Hazard. He provided enough money to build a new library with books, furniture, shelves, files, and all other necessities.[24] Unfortunately such endowments were rare, and did not provide for rural outreach.

Failure to maintain or continue library service in eastern Kentucky often resulted from local politicians who did not want to raise taxes for library service, or had no interest in providing library service despite the fact that it had proved so successful. Kentucky provided no state aid for public library development but the state library would lend books to public libraries if they met certain conditions. "Some of those conditions are that a legal library board must be appointed and that the county levy an annual tax for the operation and maintenance of the library."[25] Unfortunately local politics often prevented the appointment of library boards or the levying of taxes for library service. Bernice Hiser, of Breathitt County attempted to rally political support for county library service but could not garner support from county officials.[26] Bell County likewise lacked political support. "You know how we are situated here," wrote Dorothy Sprague, "our mayor and commissioners not the least interested in the library."[27] In Whitley County

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[24] Virginia E. Engle, state librarian, to Mr. L.O. Davis, 1 November 1946, SLOC/CLB, box 8; Almeda L. Leake to Mr. Lawrence Davis, 16 July 1946, SLOC/CLB, box 8; L.O. Davis to Almeda Leake, 20 July 1946, SLOC/CLB, box 8.
[25] Nofcier to Bernice T. Hiser, 3 March 1944, State Librarian Official Correspondence with County Libraries (hereafter cited as SLOC/CL), box 5.
[26] Hiser to Nofcier, 14 August 1944, SLOC/CL, box 5.
[27] Sprague to Nofcier, 1 June 1944, SLOC/CL, box 5.

"the mayor calls a library a place to store books," stated Tallu Fish. But "as far as reading one – he just never has."[28]

Even though Whitley County appointed a library board, the board remained reluctant to develop greater library service. Fish became increasingly frustrated with the lack of political interest in the library despite the fact that there were readers wanting books. "Mrs. Archer, alias the Duchess – (you remember she runs our library board) – said 'We've already raised our quotas and I see no need [to raise them more]' – so that was that – (the Oracle spoke)." Fish continued, "I'm so discouraged with this doggoned library I could scream. All we've got is [sic] plenty readers and no books!"[29] Lacking political support and library board support, the library in Whitley County disbanded entirely in 1945 despite the fact that residents wanted library service.[30]

Counties that had supportive library boards still found it difficult to gain political and tax support. Pike county library board was "struggling along trying to get more financial help from the city," but with little luck.[31] When the WPA discontinued funds for pack horse library service in Laurel County the local library board could find no endorsements for library service nor local political support. They felt they had no choice but to dissolve.[32] Such situations distressed Lena Nofcier who knew that "it would be most unfortunate not to have a library open and its books accessible to the public." But she also knew that "every privately sponsored library sooner or later finds it impossible to

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[28] Tallu Fish to Nofcier, 13 January 1939, SLOC/CL. Box 19.
[29] Fish to Nofcier 23 February 1944, SLOC/CL, box 19.
[30] Fish to Frances Jane Porter, 9 May 1947, SLOC/CL, box 19.
[31] Polly M. Osborne to Nofcier, 11 January 1943, SLOC/CL box 17.

continue providing a free service to the public." Therefore, she stressed that libraries "should be a regular item on the city or county budget."[33]

Despite Nofcier's discouragement to do so, the Laurel County Library Board dissolved as a corporation, helpless to gain tax support through local government. Fortunately women's clubs, once again, assured library service, no matter how small. Soon after the library board's dissolution, the Women's Club of London, Kentucky, sought and obtained appropriations from the fiscal court and the city council. They reopened the county library in 1945 determined to maintain library service.[34] Also, they requested support from the state Library Extension Division through traveling library service and donated children's books.

The Women's Club of London provided the energy and effort to ensure the existence of a county library in Laurel County and did everything in their power to make it an exceptional entity. Members Louise Hackney, Lucy Dillon, and Mrs. Van B. Smith carried on purposeful correspondence for several years with officials at the Library Extension Division in Frankfort. They solicited professional advice and suggestions, and asked questions about cataloging, book drives, and resources. They even asked for an official visit from the Library Extension Division to help them plan improvements. "We want to do what is necessary to make it a real library...."[35]

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[32] Mrs. R.S. Dyche, secretary, London Library Board to Lena Nofcier, 3 July 1942, SLOC/CLB, box 5.
[33] Nofcier to Mrs. Frank Pennington, Chairman, Laurel County Library Board, 13 July 1942, SLOC/CLB, box 5.
[34] Nofcier to Mrs. Horace B. Hackney, Women's Club of London, 26 March 1945, SLOC/CLB, box 5.
[35] Dillon to Frances Jane Porter, 10 August 1948, SLOC/CLB, box 5.

Dillon spoke to local groups describing the need for libraries, and especially the responsibility of London residents to provide library service for themselves.[36] Later they arranged for Francis Jane Porter of the Library Extension Division to come and talk to the community about the importance of library service. "A lot of people think our library is perfect because it has books!" complained Mrs. Van B. Smith, president of the London Women's Club. Hopefully Porter could convey to the community that a good library needed more.[37]

Other counties fared much worse in library service, especially if there was no group or organization committed to maintaining a library. After the library closed in Breathitt County the county school board requested assistance and funds from the Kentucky Library Extension Division in hopes of maintaining at least minimal service. "Unfortunately," replied Porter, "there are no state or Federal funds available to assist public libraries. [W]e introduced a bill in the 1948 General Assembly requesting state aid [for public libraries] but it was killed in the Senate Rules Committee."[38]

The bill Porter referred to was the Library State Aid Bill, introduced to the Kentucky General Assembly in 1948. Francis Jane Porter and the Library Extension Division fought for the bill's passage knowing especially what it would mean to mountainous eastern Kentucky.[39] When the bill was introduced, fifty-two counties in Kentucky had no library service whatsoever, many located in eastern Kentucky. This left

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[36] Dillon to Porter, 29 October 1949, SLOC/CLB, box 5.
[37] Smith to Porter, 20 September 1950, SLOC/CLB, box 5.
[38] Marie R. Turner, Superintendent of Breathitt County Schools to Porter, 21 October 1948; Porter to Turner, 29 October 1948, SLOC/CLB, box 2.

sixty-two percent of the population without library access. "Even the existing libraries have, in many instances, such small incomes that very little service can be given. Forty percent of our public libraries have annual incomes of less than one thousand dollars for all purposes, including salaries!"[40]

Porter solicited support for the bill from the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers asking them to write the governor and assemblymen indicating the KCPT's interest in the legislation. Unfortunately the bill failed in the Senate leaving library service in Kentucky worse than it had been during the pack horse library years. Still, the KCPT pledged to Porter the organization's interest and support in later assembly sessions. "[W]e realize how much it would have meant to adults as well as children in our state had it passed."[41] Any rural service, especially outreach, would continue to depend on the support and commitment of individuals and groups in Kentucky.

The privately endowed Homeplace Settlement School in Perry County began providing limited bookmobile service to parts of Perry, Wolfe, and Breathitt Counties in 1946.[42] This by no means provided the amount of outreach achieved by pack horse libraries, but it was certainly an improvement since the Pack Horse Project had been discontinued. Then, in 1950, Breathitt County Schools began operating their own

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[39] Porter to Mrs. Charles T. Shelton, President, Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers, 27 February 1948, SLOC, box 28.
[40]Ibid.
[41] Shelton to Porter, 6 April 1948, SLOC, box 28.
[42] "Perry Homeplace Library: History of Development," State Librarian Historical Sketches, box 1.

bookmobile service to rural schools. It became so successful that they could hardly meet the demand.[43]

Finally, in 1953, the Friends of the Kentucky Libraries bought six bookmobiles to officially begin rural outreach throughout the state. Mrs. George Gray, president of the organization worked to raise money to purchase bookmobiles, and the Library Extension Division operated them. Even though they did not provide the outreach to eastern Kentucky as pack horse libraries had, bookmobile service was beginning to develop and grow in Kentucky. Then, in 1957 the federal Library Services Act, supported by Congressman Carl Perkins from mountainous Knott County, made the first federal appropriations for library service.

Born in 1912, Carl Perkins attended school as a child in Knott County, and later taught there at a remote country school. Later, after graduating from law school at the University of Louisville, Perkins practiced law in Knott County. Elected to congress in 1941 Perkins served on the House Education and Labor Committee and supported many liberal initiatives. In 1961 he became chairman of the committee. Perkins supported federal programs for the disadvantaged and introduced numerous federal education programs. He advocated Head Start, school lunch programs, adult education, and federal assistance to libraries. His experiences as a student and as a teacher in Knott County schools no doubt convinced Perkins of the need and importance of library services.

Between 1943 when pack horse library service ended, and 1957 when bookmobiles pervaded much of the state, eastern Kentuckians were left with little library

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[45] Porter to Turner, 21 June 1950, and 29 August 1950, SLOC/CLB, box 2.

service, and many experienced none at all. County libraries struggled to keep their heads above water and could not even consider delivery or outreach. Local governments offered little support, reluctant to raise taxes and often uninterested in library service. Likewise, library boards often proved ineffective. In some cases organizations or schools tried to provide some rural service, but it was limited and spotty at best. Bookmobile service reached many schools and communities accessible by road, but could not reach more inaccessible areas and did not serve individual homes. Nothing matched the services provided by the Pack Horse Library Project.

Discontinuance of pack horse library service, that had proved so successful, raises many questions for further research and investigation. For example, since the local population used and wanted the service why did local or county officials not try to garner financial support to continue the service after WPA funds were withdrawn? Once federal funds dried up, library service largely disappeared in an area that demonstrated a desire and appreciation for the service. Where did organizations such as the Kentucky Library Association stand on this issue, or did they even notice? Why did not other powers, institutions, or interest groups continue the service that was so obviously successful? These are important questions that merit investigation. Knowing the answers may help to avoid similar circumstances today and in the future. Many library programs today operate on limited funds or grants. When the money is gone, how can we maintain and continue a successful service? If we understand how and why others have failed in the past, then perhaps we can avoid the same outcome in the future.

Pack horse libraries served many that had never known library service before. Every mile traveled brought new ideas and fresh interests previously inaccessible to isolated areas. The project created and cultivated a desire for reading and learning. They operated in the most unfavorable topographical and social conditions, and created a useable collection from ragged, unwanted donations. Tallu Fish of Whitley County described it as "one of the most far reaching of the entire [WPA library] program. It has taken books up these creeks and hollows where they are needed, and given us libraries that would have otherwise been impossible."[44] The Pack horse libraries deserve credit for their services, and acknowledgment for their part in library history. Their example can have implications and provide guidance for us today and in the future.

[44] Fish to George Goodman, 1 April 1940, SLOC/CL. Box 19.

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