

Herbert Hoover Rapidan Community School. February 23, 1930

THE PRESIDENT'S Community School in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia near the Hoover camp at the headwaters of the Rapidan in Madison County will be opened next Monday.

The gathering of the mountain children for the initial session will be without formality of any kind as the formal dedication of the school will be deferred until the classes have been organized and until such time as either the President or Mrs. Hoover, or both, can be present.

Then there will be a flag-raising and other exercises in which it is proposed that the pupils shall have an important part under the direction of Miss Christine Vest, of Yosemite, Ky., the new teacher, who is a graduate of Berea College and who has had much experience in teaching mountain children in her native State.

Financed by President Hoover and a few of his friends and built by the men of the mountains under the direction of a trained constructor, the school is perched on the lee side of one of the highest of the mountains in the Blue Ridge chain in that section.

The building is of the story and a half bungalow type, approximately 50 by 23 feet and is divided on the ground floor as half schoolroom and half living quarters for Miss Vest. The schoolroom is 20 by 22 feet and can accommodate a maximum of 30 pupils, which is perhaps almost twice the number of pupils who will be enrolled on opening day.

The room is light and airy, has plenty of blackboard space, and is equipped with the most modern of school furniture which was donated by a large seating company. This furniture is of steel construction, with adjustable desks and with room under the seats for the books and pads and pencils of the students.

At one end of the room is a huge stone fireplace constructed of stone found on the site. In addition there is a wood stove for use in extremely cold weather.

The other half of the ground floor is divided into a large living room, a bedroom, kitchen, and bath, and there are two bedrooms on the second floor. The furniture in these rooms is in keeping with the simplicity of the school building. It is of the spool wood colonial type.

The kitchen and bathroom equipment, almost all of it donated, is of the most modern type with a kitchen cabinet, electric stove and a wood range. There is a large stone fireplace in the living room and a new radio set has been installed.

Aside from its use as a school, the frame structure, with its wide clapboards painted brown and its asbestos shingle roof, and its small front porch, will be a gathering place for the mountain folks of that section and will be their point of contact with the outside world.

The site for the school, which has been constructed on plans prepared by the Virginia State Board of Education, under the direction of which it will be operated, is one of the best in that whole

section. Facing south by east, the school overlooks ridge after ridge of the mountains, with high ridges to the right and smaller ridges to the left. One of the larger of the mountains is Fork Mountain, the precipitous side of which walls in the President's camp, which is only about a mile below the schoolhouse.

The school is set in a grove of chestnut, oak, and pine trees and nearby is a crystal clear spring from which the mountain folks obtain water. A reservoir has been constructed on the mountain side in the rear of the school and this will supply running water for the building.

A state highway, which is to become a main entrance to the proposed Shenandoah National Park and which winds past the President's summer lodge and camp, leads to the school building from Criglersville. There is another road from Syria, some 5 or 6 miles distant from the school on the opposite side of the mountain, but at present this is little more than a trail which may be negotiated either afoot or on horseback.

The plan is to improve this roadway and when that shall have been done a school bus will be operated to pick up the children in several of the mountain hollows adjacent to the one in which the building is located. It is in anticipation of this that the building was constructed to accommodate many more pupils than are living within the immediate vicinity.

Miss Vest, in her few days in her new home preparing for the beginning of the school session, has found the mountain people very responsive to the movement initiated by the President last summer after his talk with some of the mountain boys who visited him at his camp.

Many of the womenfolks have called on the new teacher and have shown the keenest interest in the modern equipment of the kitchen and bath and in the lighting fixtures which have been installed to furnish a system of indirect lighting.

Miss Vest has found that her pupils are going to range in age from 6 to 20 years. Some of the children have had some slight educational advantages, but most of them will be starting on an education.

One hardy mountain man, who is considerably beyond the school age as it is established in the cities, has served notice that he wants to enroll. He explained that while he was fairly good at his letters, he was deficient in figuring and so wants to take up arithmetic.

The thought behind the plan of having the school building constructed entirely by the mountaineers was that the men would gain an experience which would enable them to make their own homes more comfortable by changes and additions which would be suggested by the work they did on the school building.

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