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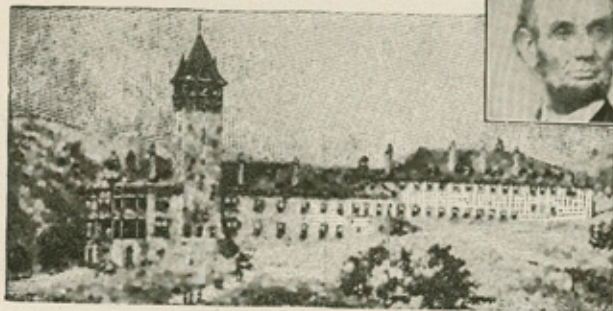
The Folk . . .
of the
Cumberland Gap



BY
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U. S. A.

THOMPSON, PRINTER, BURLINGTON, VT.

**A LIVING MONUMENT TO
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.**



Grant-Lee Hall, Lincoln Memorial University.
Industrial Department, Farming, Printing and Domestic Science.

The Folk

OF THE

Cumberland Gap, Tenn.

A Neglected Corner of the United States, and what the Lincoln Memorial University is doing for the white People of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia Mountains.

ON the 26th of September, 1863, as I was about to leave Washington with my command for Chattanooga, almost the last words that President Lincoln spoke to me concerned Cumberland Gap and the people of East Tennessee. As that interview was the last I had with him before his death, I have endeavored to recall and treasure up what he said.

In manner and words he manifested a peculiar tenderness towards the people of that mountain region. His largeness of heart took in all. He wanted me to understand them and to appreciate their worth.

A few months later, about the 1st of December, after our victory at Chattanooga, General Sherman with the Fifteenth Corps, and I with the Eleventh marched a few miles apart into East Tennessee to save Burnside, then threatened by Longstreet at Knoxville. Many of my men were short of clothing, some were without overcoats and blankets, and some were barefooted. The kindness of the people was marked, exceeding what we had met in Ohio and Indiana. They supplied us to the limits of their ability. Women and children brought food and water, and men took off their shoes to give them to the soldiers who had none. As we moved along from valley to valley in our march, I came to understand Mr. Lincoln's confidence in those mountaineers.

In the following winter, during our bivouac in Lookout Valley, General von Steinwehr, one of my division commanders, kindly rebuilt the log church which on the eve of arrival had been ruthlessly reduced to firewood.

Very soon we had schools for the children in the new structure, and in the canvas pavilion

which had been pitched for the soldiers' benefit. The young folks of the mountains came gladly from the slopes and valleys for miles around. Simple hearted, honest, quick to see and to understand, they felt that hitherto they had been destitute of the privilege which our Northern country people everywhere possessed, and were eager to embrace those we offered.

Five years ago last spring, Hon. D. R. James of Brooklyn, the Rev. Fred B. Avery, of Painesville, Ohio, with our host and hostess, sat beside me on the broad veranda of what is now Harrow Hall of the Lincoln Memorial University. At that time it was still the Harrow School building, on the high plateau east of the village of Cumberland Gap.

The Gap itself, famous in the Civil War, a dip in the lofty range, lay beyond the village westward, fringed with trees and clad with a curtain of clouds. We wondered what might be beyond that fissure in the hills. Our host told us that it separated us from a Kentucky settlement and village, that the crest of the rugged mountain range divided Tennessee from Kentucky. We had glimpses, southward, westward, and northward, of piles of mountains about our bird's nest of a valley. Not far from where we sat was the old log church before which Henry Clay had stood and spoken to the people.

The Four Seasons Hotel, erected at a cost of more than half a million dollars, had stood but half a mile to the eastward, in a beautiful opening; and when the main building was demolished the wreckers had spared its sanitarium. This was a large structure, capable of housing two hundred students. Around it were six hundred acres of rich land, with good barn and stable room, and with macadamized roads built by the late Colonel Waring, the well known New York engineer. Boys and girls were coming and going across the veranda, student girls were doing the work of the hall under a matron's supervision. Before us were lads at work in the grounds—the mountain youths, docile and industrious.

This Harrow School was but a beginning. The village was small, and almost without business;

the friends that came to the great Four Seasons Hotel would come no more, and whence would be the future support of the teachers?

The Beginning of the University.

As we gazed about us, our host and hostess explained where the steep paths and rugged roads came from. To me it seemed that if five thousand people could gather there from the hills, forests, mountains and valleys to hear the voice of Henry Clay, the young people could and would come by the scores and hundreds to secure a practical education. At that time there were fourteen counties, ranged about the beautiful valley, without any school whatever.

In answer to the question of our host: "How can we go on?" I spoke, and my companions endorsed my proposition: "Let us make this a larger enterprise! There could not be a better center." Out of that small beginning has grown the Lincoln Memorial University.

A capital charter was obtained, giving authority to organize a board of directors and different departments. As soon as the board was in practical working shape, it purchased the entire Four Seasons property, with its land fertile for crops, and its woodland—subject to heavy mortgages. For three years we went from one business man to another. We prayed, we planned, we worked; but the running expenses were diligently raised and always paid. Finally by the kindness of Mr. Carnegie, the last money—a sum of \$2,300, was raised, and every mortgage discharged.

The sanitarium, much out of repair from years of disuse, we partially renovated, and put into it as many students and teachers as it would hold.

I was asked to call it "Grant Hall" or "Lee Hall." I answered, "No, we want them joining hands. The Confederate and Union men are in the same board, working actively and harmoniously together to build up the institution. Let us call it Grant-Lee Hall." And so was it called.

We have had some opposition. Our opponents say: "Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia, which touch one another at the door of your assembly of

schools, have enough high grade institutions already. There would be no harm in an academy, but a university is a mistake."

I reply that in its best sense a university is a group of schools and departments: that the word "university" is a proper honor to Lincoln, who was born and bred in the Kentucky hills: that the university may be down reaching as well as up reaching. We are fitting our plan to the necessities of the people. Some students, aided by their work, are able now to enter high departments, while others, educated only in woodcraft, rough farming or mountain ways, need to begin at the threshold of book learning. So we keep for the present all the grades necessary to meet their needs.

Most of our students are at work part of the time for their support. Ninety nine hundredths of them could not go to Knoxville, sixty-five miles away, nor to Berea, one hundred and ten miles to the north in Kentucky.

Again, in time, after the districts round about Cumberland Gap shall have started and sustained good schools, and enough of them, then can we abolish the lower grades, preserving the normal, the industrial, the academic, and such other departments as the region and the people may require.

What the University is doing.

"But, general," says one, "the population is too sparse!" Indeed it is not. After careful inquiry, a member of our board reports: "Within a radius of fifty miles are more than two hundred and thirty thousand people with no well equipped college." "But will the students come?" They do come. Our highest number admitted in one year is three hundred and sixty-eight. They are eager to come, and they apply in larger numbers than we can care for.

A doubter of Southern youth asks: "Will they work?" A little study of our industries will answer that question. They who have no money entreat for work. In type setting, carpentering, gardening, and general farming, the young men have done wonders.

We have sent forth more than twenty teachers into the neighboring districts. After their short terms of school, they have returned to us to pursue their studies still further.

Have the girls any industries? They are taught what an industrious housekeeper ought to know. In the new girls' dormitory, now being built by student labor from the brick making and stone laying to the final finish, we have a special portion constructed with a view to teach all branches of domestic science. Meanwhile, while we wait for these new facilities, sewing, the care of a room, the making of good bread, and the cooking and proper serving of meats have been successfully taught by accomplished and self-sacrificing lady teachers.

How able are these mountain youth? We answer that their progress in three years' time is extraordinary. In listening to their school debates, for example, I found that they handled public questions understandingly, and showed that they had been reading diligently and thinking with care and quick intelligence. In supervising their prize essays and declamations at the last commencement, members of our board were satisfied with the results.

How about the conduct of the young people? It will compare favorably with that in any other college that I know. Quick tempered they are, and sensitive to fancied encroachment upon their mountain freedom; they want all the liberty that they can have consistent with good order; but they see the reasonableness of wholesome discipline.

Is the institution intended as a charity? Far from it. Our board determined in the outset that it would be better that every student should pay. The students who work in the industrial connection are credited so much for their labor, and arrangements are made at Grant-Lee Hall for the board and lodging of most of those who come from distant places. Their board has averaged two dollars per week for each scholar, and three dollars for each teacher.

In clubs, table board is about one dollar and fifty cents. The Grant-Lee Hall Club, for mess-

ing purposes, keeps a direct account with the treasurer. It is charged with all that it receives from the farm at reasonable rates.

We now have six horses and two mules, for work on the farm: ten cows for milk: and hogs, calves, and fowls are among our products. The farm thus becomes a feeder to the institution. Its grain, potatoes, onions, squash and other vegetables help largely to support not only the students of Grant-Lee Hall, but the teachers and boarders at Harrow Hall, nearer the village.

To state the case concisely, the student at the University pays his way entirely, in money, in work, or partly in money and partly in work. A scholarship of one hundred dollars, I am assured, will carry a student through one year. With fifty dollars he can, by his credits in the industrial division, get through the year and maintain his studies.

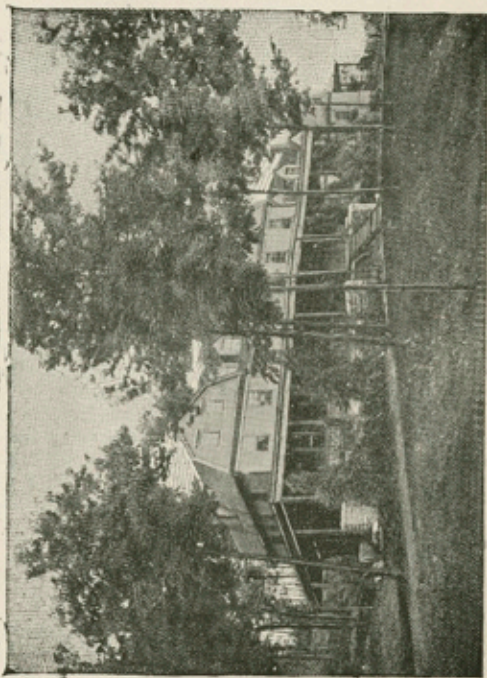
I am so anxious to present the case of these mountain people—people who have our best blood in their veins, and yet who have been overlooked and left behind in all our educational privileges—that I am fearful of an inability properly to picture the situation so as to enlist the practical sympathy and interest of my countrymen.

As I see the matter, half a million dollars of endowment for this institution, with all the expansion that would come from that sum, would be of greater service than two millions used in any city in the land. This may seem a bold statement, but remember that Webster, Clay, Lincoln, Garfield, Grant and Blaine came from the country. The tendency to run to the city for every sort of enterprise and for every privilege of education is not a wholesome one.

There around Cumberland Gap a people needing help, and my experience has been that my countrymen are quick to stretch forth a hand when the need has been made clear to them. In their generosity I place my trust and the care of the poorer whites of the country that Abraham Lincoln loved.

From Mensey, July, 1902

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"In the Mountains for the Mountaineers."



We ask everybody to contribute to this practical and patriotic memorial to Abraham Lincoln.

