



This is to certify that

*Berry Mountain School*

has been deemed  
a significant landmark  
by the

**ALABAMA  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

and added to the

**ALABAMA REGISTER OF  
LANDMARKS AND HERITAGE**

on

October 7, 1998

*Foltz James, Jr.*

Governor of Alabama

*James H. ...*

Executive Director

Alabama Historical Commission



BERRY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL  
Blount County Road 57, 1.9 mi E of U.S. Hwy 231  
(Sec 2, Twnshp 11S, Rge 1E, Blountsville Quad)  
Berry Mountain community, Rosa vic., 6 mi N of Oneonta, Blount County

Property owner:

Berry Mountain Community Improvement Club  
c/o Mrs. Charles E. (Kay) King  
1405 County Road 57  
Blountsville, AL 35031  
205-274-8757

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY:

Dating from 1921, the Berry Mountain School is a wood-frame one-room school house, featuring a large (32' x 26') side-gabled classroom and wide (24') front-gabled recessed entry/cloakroom element. It is situated on 2 acres of rural landscape, surrounded by pasture-land and facing Blount County Road 57 in a northerly direction, just east of its intersection with Sloan Drive. Though alteration and neglect have threatened the integrity of the building, a local preservation group has emerged with a vigorous fight to restore the structure to its original condition.

At the present time, the exterior weatherboard is covered with masonite siding that was installed in the 1960s. This alteration resulted in the covering of a window and door in the cloakroom, the covering of a row of five 9/9 double-hung sash windows on the south wall, and the covering of the transom on the entry. All of these elements are being restored or reconstructed. The building rests on its original foundation, though the original wood porch and steps have been replaced with concrete. The original interior tongue-and-groove wall, floor, and ceiling covering, as well as the chair rail and base trim, door and window trim remain intact. The chalkboard that was located on the solid west wall has been lost, but a similar period replacement has been located and will be installed. Overall, the building has retained a significant degree of its historic fabric and significant efforts have been made to restore it to its original condition.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Berry Mountain School is eligible for listing on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage under Criteria A and C, in the areas of education and architecture. Of 47 one-room schools located in Blount County when Berry Mountain opened in 1921, this is believed by local historians to be the only one remaining. It was significant in offering six grades of education to the children of the mountain families for three decades, until school consolidation led to its closing in 1951. It is furthermore significant as an increasingly rare example of the rural school house, featuring its single classroom, its wide grouping of south-facing windows, and its simple but sturdy construction. It depicts a rapidly vanishing type and style of vernacular architecture. Like many rural schools, it has continued to be important to the community as a social gathering place. Its threatened loss has generated a successful preservation effort.



# ALABAMA REGISTER OF LANDMARKS AND HERITAGE

## Nomination Form

SEP 8 1998

### 1. Name

historic Berry Mountain School (Located in S.J. King Community Park) <sup>Ala. Historical Commission</sup>  
and/or common

### 2. Location

1.9 mi. e. of U.S. 231 on Blount Co. 57 (S.2, T.11-S, R.1-E)  
street & number (Blountsville Quad.)  
~~city/town~~ community: Berry Mountain ---vicinity of Rosa (4 mi. n. of Oneonta)  
state Alabama county Blount zip 35031

### 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Community Center

### 4. Owner of Property

name Berry Mountain Community Improvement Club Phone number 205-274-8757  
street & number c/o Mrs. Charles E. (Kay) King, 1405 County Road 57  
city/town Blountsville, AL ---vicinity of Berry Mountain zip 35031

### 5. Floor plan & site plan. Use space below to sketch floor plan and site plan or attach additional sheet.

(Refer to addendum.)

---

**6. Description** (See attached instructions for specific guidelines.)

---

**Condition**

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered

altered

**Check one**

original site

moved date \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance.**

(Refer to addendum.)

**7. Significance** (See attached instructions for specific guidelines.)

Period	Areas of Significance-Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- 1921	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1921 **Builder/Architect** Men of the community  
**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph).** ↳(Refer to addendum.)

The Berry Mountain School opened in 1921 and held classes there until 1951. Grades one through six were taught there with approximately 15-20 students in attendance yearly. The old log cabin school, which was located across a pasture behind this two acre site, had fallen into disrepair. This "new" school insured that mountain children would not have to walk several miles to other schools off the mountain. This encouraged new families to settle on Berry Mountain. The school and grounds have served as the site for many community activities such as school socials, quilting bees, home demonstration meetings, church fellowships, box suppers, fish fries, family reunions, weddings and hay rides. The Berry Mountain School and grounds have been a cohesive element for this community.

When this school opened in 1921 there were 47 one-room schools in Blount County. From all accounts, Berry Mountain School is the only one surviving.

(Refer to addendum for additional history.)



---

## 8. Major Bibliographical References

---

(Refer to addendum.)

---

## 9. Geographical Data

---

Acreage of nominated property School is on a two acre site.

Quadrangle name Blountsville  
(S.2, T.11-S, R.1-E)

---

Enclose map showing location of property. (city or county map, state highway department map, or USGS map)

(Enclosed)

---

## 10. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Mrs. Charles E. (Kay) King, secretary  
organization Berry Mountain Community Improvement Club date September 2, 1998  
street & number c/o 1405 County Road 57 telephone 205-274-8757  
city or town Blountsville state AL zip 35031

---

## 11. Please submit color slides of the property with this form.

---

Color slides are essential to the review process.

(Enclosed)

---

## 12. Please return ALABAMA REGISTER form and documentation to:

---

Alabama Register Coordinator  
Alabama Historical Commission  
468 South Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900

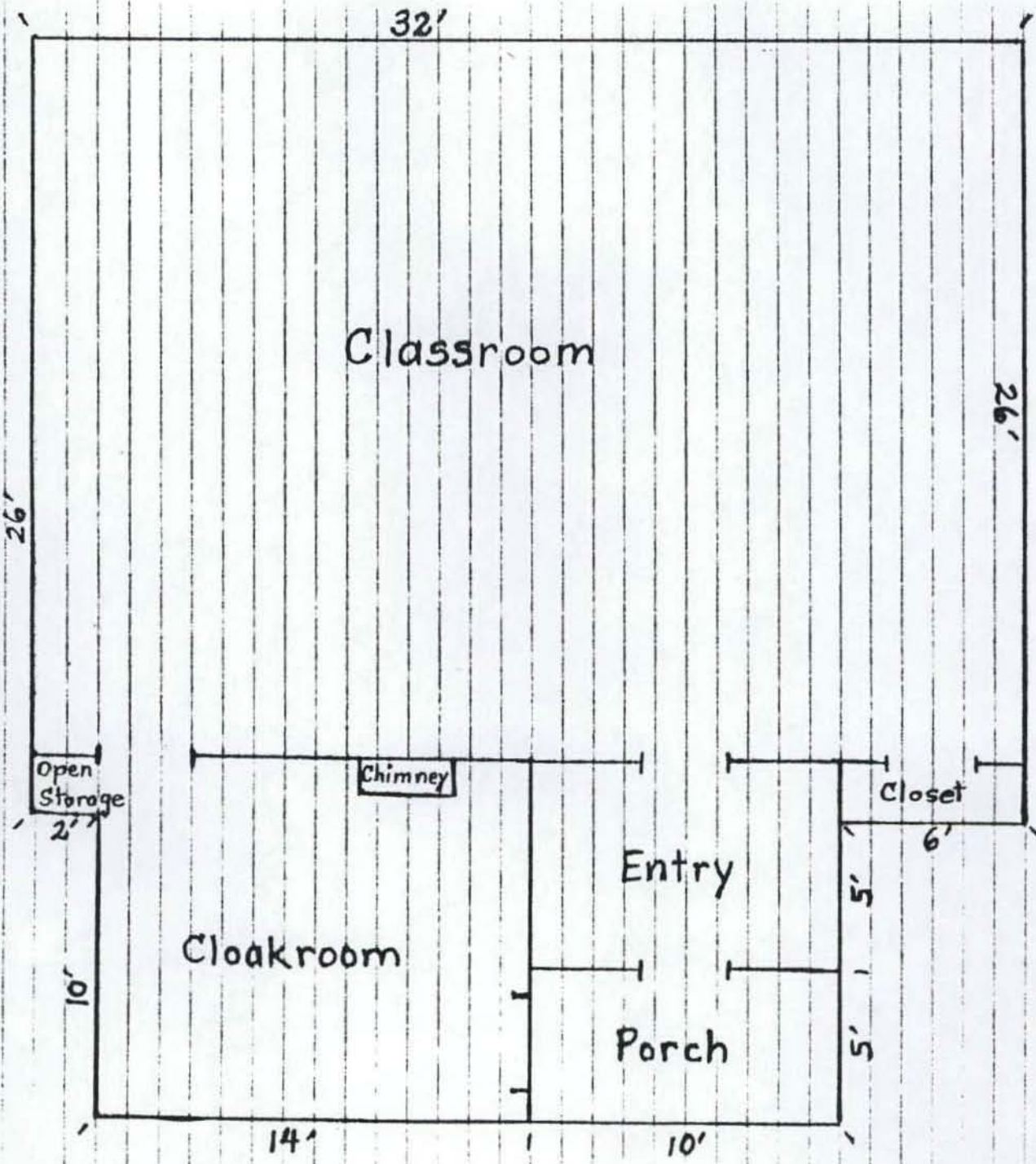
A D D E N D U M

to the

BERRY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Nomination to the Alabama Register

\*\*\* FLOOR PLAN \*\*\*

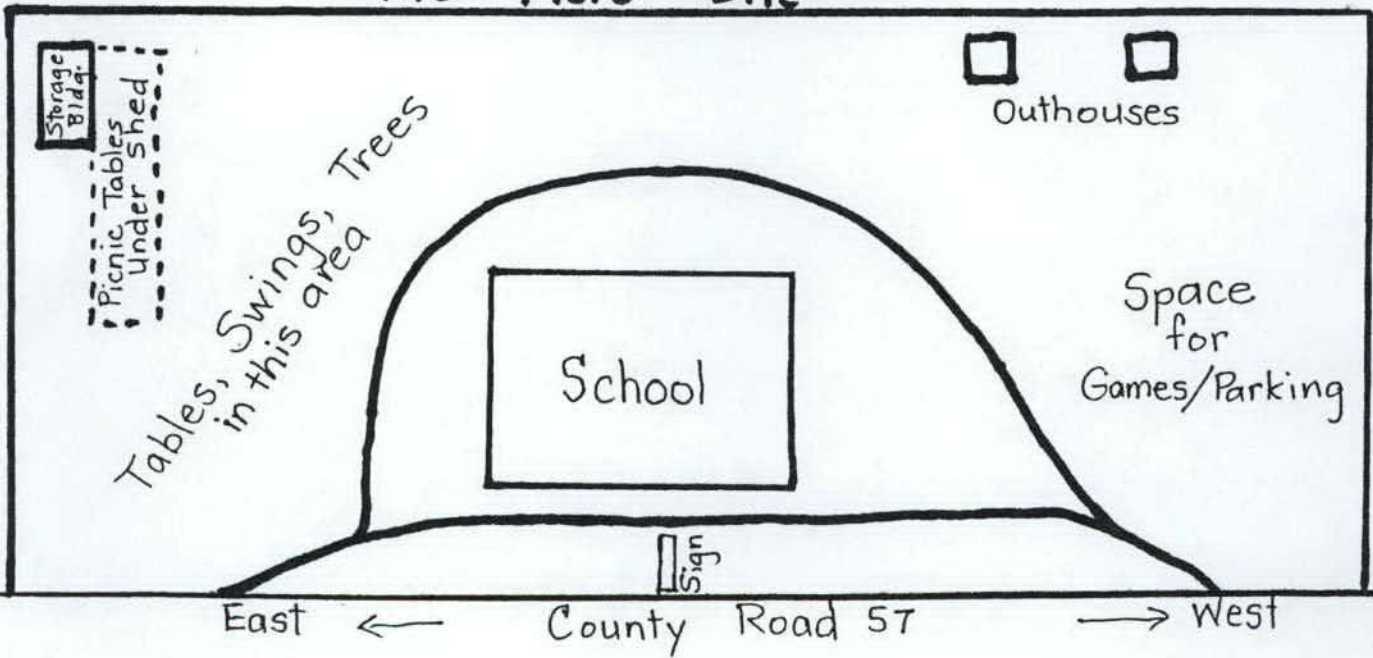


School Floor Plan



\*\*\* SITE PLAN \*\*\*

Two Acre Site



\*\*\* DESCRIPTION \*\*\*

Present and original physical appearance:

The Berry Mountain School is a one-room schoolhouse built in 1921 by community men. The building has one story. It sits 2' to 3' above the ground and is supported on brick piers.

The school is a wood frame building. The interior walls are the original tongue and grooved yellow pine lumber. The original exterior wooden walls were covered with white masonite siding in the 1960's.

The roof is of the gable style. The original roof, made of wooden shingles, was replaced later with a metal roof. This roof had begun to leak and was replaced by a red metal roof in January 1998. (Please refer to Photo #1 for view of roof edges.) The opening where the chimney had been was closed when the last roof was put on.

The one entrance is at the front of the building. There is a concrete porch which had replaced a wooden floor in the 1970's. The original grouping of three posts is still in place at the front corner of the porch. Each post is 11½' high and 3½" x 5½" in breadth. In June 1998, a wooden railing was added to the porch to match the one seen in a 1927's photo. (Please refer to Photo #2.) The railing was extended down the steps to insure the safety of those who enter and exit. The dimensions of the porch are 5½' x 10'. The original steps were plank but were replaced with four concrete steps which come down from the porch on the front.

The original deteriorated single wood door (3' x 6'8") with six glass panes is being replicated by a local millworks firm. (Please refer to Photo #3 for view of original front door.) That door will probably be repaired as best as possible and used as an interior door but it is not strong enough any longer to be used as the exterior door. Temporarily, a strong wooden door from the interior of the building is being used at the front entrance. The doorway has simple wood framing. A rectangular two-pane glass transom over the door was covered on the outside by the masonite siding but is still in view on the inside. The transom will be made visible again to the outside.

On the front wall of the school, there are two large double-hung windows with nine panes in each sash. Each entire window measures 4½' x 8'. The trim is simple wood.

On the eastern wall are two small single-sash windows with six panes in each. They measure 30" x 36" and do not open.



The back wall originally had five windows like the two in front. They were removed when the siding was applied. The window openings were covered with plywood on the inside. Two small windows were left but have since been boarded over also, making it very dark inside. Some of those original window sashes were found stored in the closet and the local millworks owner is working with us to restore the five windows.

On the western side, there are no windows because the long chalkboard was on that interior wall.

There is a rectangular louvered gable vent on the front wall and one on the eastern wall.

The interior of the school consists of a small entry, a closet, a cloakroom and one large classroom. There are no mantels or stairways. The entry is  $6\frac{1}{2}'$  x  $9\frac{1}{2}'$ . A window ( $4\frac{1}{2}'$  x  $8'$ ) on the western wall in the entry was removed and covered by the siding. Straight across the entry from the front entrance is an interior door leading into the classroom. That door is a single, solid wood five-panel door that measures  $3'$  x  $6'8"$ .

After entering the classroom, the closet is to the right on the front wall. It is approximately  $2'$  x  $5\frac{1}{2}'$ . It has double wooden doors, each with five panels. The door opening is  $5'$  x  $6\frac{1}{2}'$ .

The entrance to the cloakroom is to the left when one enters the classroom from the entry and is at the end of the front inside wall. The dimensions of the cloakroom are  $12'$  x  $13'$ . Originally, there had been an exterior doorway connecting the cloakroom and porch. The siding covered that opening. The door is still there and visible inside the cloakroom. The cloakroom seems to have the original paint. It is aqua below the chairrail and cream above the chairrail and on the ceiling. The  $3'$  x  $6'8"$  solid wood, five-paneled door that connected the cloakroom to the classroom is temporarily being used as the front entrance door. Linoleum is being ordered from a shop in New York to replace the linoleum that had deteriorated in this room. (Only in the cloakroom.) The original wooden floor under the linoleum had termite damage and a plywood floor was put down in July 1998 and awaits the new linoleum. The building was treated for termites in July 1998.

The classroom measures  $23'$  x  $31'$ . The trim work is very plain. There are simple chairrails on three walls that are  $3\frac{1}{2}'$  from the floor and  $2\frac{1}{2}"$  wide. The fourth wall (western) had had a long blackboard and does not have a chairrail. The classroom floor is tongue and grooved yellow pine. The walls and ceiling are also pine tongue and groove. They were painted many years ago in two colors of green. The doors, door trim, chairrails and walls below the chairrails are dark green. Walls above the chairrail and the ceiling are light green. The  $4\frac{1}{2}"$  wide baseboards are stained pine. The ceiling is  $11' 8"$  high.



The two light fixtures hanging from the ceiling in the classroom have the original white globes. There are light bulbs on the ceilings in the cloakroom and on the porch. The building was wired for electricity in the 1940's after World War II.

The original old potbellied stove is in the classroom but not in use. A gas heater was installed many years ago. There are no air-conditioning units.

There have been no additions and all alterations have been previously mentioned.

Berry Mountain's one-room schoolhouse sits on a little rise in the front center of a two-acre rural park. The site is located on Blount County Road 57 and is six miles north of Oneonta.

The park is a naturally wooded area. Many old hardwood and pine trees provide shade for family reunions, church and community get-togethers. There is an old cedar tree on the western side of the school that is taller than the building itself. Near the back wall is a very old crab-apple tree. A dogwood tree and several bushes are around the school. Recently, hosta and monkey grass have been planted.

The two-acre park is surrounded by pastures on three sides and the road in front. Another pasture is across the road.

A 10' x 20' concrete block, white storage building sits in the back, eastern corner of the park near the picnic tables. There is a tin shed over the long row of concrete tables. Other picnic tables and also playground equipment dot the grounds. The old well site is in that area. Two old wooden outhouses (4' x 6') are behind the school near the back fence.

A new sign is being built in front of the school overlooking the road. It will be framed with Blount County moss rock. The sign will have these words: "STEPHEN JONAH KING, COMMUNITY PARK".

\*\*\* SIGNIFICANCE \*\*\*

Builder / Architect:

No one remembers who designed the building or who the master carpenter was. Frank Sloan had a sawmill nearby and cut the wood for the building and also the wood shingles for the roof. The following men had a part in the construction: D. D. Self, Jonah Wynn, Billy Jones, Sol Alred, Riley Messer, Walter and Arthur King, and Webb, Alvin and Melvin Ellis.

Statement of Significance: (Refer to form.)

Additional History:

Stephen Jonah King was born on July 20, 1850 in Buncombe County, North Carolina. He and Sarah Ann Murray were married there on March 26, 1876. They lived on a farm that was a part of the present site of the Biltmore Farm of Asheville, North Carolina. At that time the land was poor so in c. 1882 Jonah sold his farm to George W. Vanderbilt as his neighbors were also doing. He moved his family by wagons to Blount County, Alabama and settled on Berry Mountain. He became well known for his apple seedlings that he brought with him and he was considered to be a progressive farmer for that time. He had fine orchards of apples, peaches, plums and cherries with his own cannery for the fruits and vegetables. Jonah and Sarah had fourteen children. Many of their descendants continue to live on Berry Mountain.

On August 30, 1919, Stephen Jonah donated two acres of land, centrally located on the seven mile-long mountain road, for the building of a new school. The state paid Jonah five dollars. The one-room school was built by local men and was opened in 1921. The first session was a summer school which was known as a "Subscription School" where the patrons would pay the teacher. The school was used continuously as a six-grade school until 1951. School terms were shorter than today. For instance, in 1930 the term was seven months.

Having only one classroom, each grade level had a separate row. The basics were stressed: reading, writing and arithmetic.

Teacher salaries needed to be supplemented by patron donations when times were rough. During World War II, the teaching require-



ments changed from a college degree to a high school degree. Teachers were sometimes hard to find and, in a few cases, teachers were hired who did not have high school diplomas. All were hard working and dedicated. Many of the teachers boarded with families that lived nearby. This was convenient for the teachers because, in some cases, they also walked to school.

Among the teachers at Berry Mountain School were: Ruby Allgood, Matharee J. Boles, Hampton Bowman, Molly Burgess, Marvin Burnette, Estelle Clayton, Alma Dingler, Genevie Ellis, J. B. Faulkner, Joseph Holcombe, Agnes M. King, Jennie Lou K. Sterling, Easley Tidwell, Edwin Tidwell and Mertice Graves Wood.

There was no well on the grounds in the early years. Students had to walk to a neighbor's home to get pails of water for drinking. Needless to say, there were no indoor facilities either. There were two outhouses behind the school.

In winter, the teacher would get to school early each day to start the coal fire in the potbellied stove which is still there.

The old building holds many memories for former students and teachers. Matharee Jones Boles recalls how she and other students, after passing notes, would roll them up and stuff them into a certain hole in the back wall before the teacher caught them. She also remembers how she had memorized her big brother's primer before she even started to school at age four. Her teacher, Joseph Holcombe, was amazed on Matharee's first day of school when she sat on his knee and recited the first page of that primer to him, all the while looking around the room, not at the reader he held. She can still recite that first page---"The little red hen found a seed. It was a wheat seed." Later Matharee became a reading teacher and taught for awhile at Berry Mountain School.

James King, 81, by his own admission, spent much time standing in the corner for a multitude of failings. He remembers putting a pin in the chair of his teacher, Easley Tidwill, 94, and delighting in Mr. Tidwell's reaction. Also, James laughs about the time after school one rainy day that he and several other boys told Mr. Tidwell that they would help push his car out into the road when it got stuck in the mud. Without Mr. Tidwell knowing, the boys pulled on the bumper instead of pushing. They considered the mud that splattered all over them to be a real bonus.

Louise Jones Sloan recalls her first day of school that almost wasn't. She was so small that when she arrived at school she was not able to budge open the front door. Thinking that she had gone on the wrong day and there was no one there, she happily returned home to her mother. Of course, mother saw that this mistake was rectified.



There were several crab-apple trees, no doubt planted earlier by Jonah King, that bordered the school grounds. The students enjoyed getting crab-apples during recesses and taking them back into class to eat. Then they would throw the cores out the back windows where new trees eventually volunteered. There is still one scrawny crab-apple tree surviving today from that period of time.

In 1951, Berry Mountain students consolidated with Cleveland School six miles to the north. A truck, driven by J. P. King, picked up the mountain students and took them to Rosa to meet a bus going to Cleveland School. So, after thirty years, Berry Mountain School closed its doors. But not permanently because the community would later find many other uses for the old building and grounds.

On February 27, 1956, the state and county boards of education deeded the land and school to the Berry Mountain Community Improvement Club for community activities. The trustees of this organization were Z. H. Cornelius, E. C. Sloan and O. C. Jones.

Many of the young children who had attended school there were now adults with children of their own. This new generation enjoyed the building and grounds also, but in a different way than their parents because they attended school elsewhere. The community put this property to many uses. There were many social, family and civic events. The grounds were turned into a pleasant, shaded park with a nice picnic and playground area.

#### Present and Planned Preservation Efforts:

In recent years the school had begun to need repairs. The metal roof that had replaced the original wood shingles had started to leak. Several window panes were broken and some window frames and muntins were deteriorating. The brick piers in the foundation needed repairs. There was a small amount of water damage from the leaking roof and some termite damage to the cloakroom floor.

King cousins along with several concerned community members organized the Stephen Jonah King Community Preservation Group in order to address the needs of the school and park. This organization met for the first time September 28, 1997. The ownership is being transferred from the old Berry Mountain Community Improvement Club to the newly formed preservation group. Local attorney Steven D. King, great-great-grandson of Stephen Jonah, is handling the legal work for the preservation group. Also, the preservation group is applying for non-profit status and planning to set up a perpetual care trust fund as soon as is feasibly possible.



Our project is a work in progress. Many of the needs have already been met. These have been specified in the "Description" section. In making our repairs, we have diligently tried to preserve the original integrity of the building and of its time period. We have sought out experts and informational sources toward this end. We appreciate the help given to us by the office of the Alabama Historical Commission.

The following is a partial list of things we plan to do in the near future that we believe will bring the property up from fair condition to good.

- 1) Repair and restore all windows.  
(A local millworks shop owner who has an appreciation for old buildings is working with us on this project.)
- 2) Paint the interior.
- 3) Install linoleum on cloakroom floor.
- 4) Put blackboard and original wooden chalkrack on western wall.
- 5) Expose transom over front door.
- 6) Run a new front fence using pine posts.
- 7) Re-open well and add well cover and windlass.
- 8) Repair two louvered air vents and put screen behind them.

When restoration work is completed on the building, we plan to leave the six large, old wooden tables and old metal chairs in the classroom so that groups can continue to meet there. We will turn one end of the room (the western end) into a classroom scene from the past. We have acquired a used blackboard (4' x 8') that is in good condition. A 7' section of the original wooden chalkrack has been salvaged.

We have many old school items that we plan to use. A few of these are a teacher's desk, student's desk, globe, books, toys and an American flag with 48 stars. Other miscellaneous items include an old electric fan, coat and hat rack, wash stand with bowl and pitcher, wall clock and several framed pictures including a Grandma Moses scene of a rural schoolhouse and a series of Mother Goose cartoons from an antique book.

Eventually, we plan to invite groups of children to visit the school. One possible scenario would be for an adult to dress in 1920's attire as a teacher and perform a humorous skit or reading related to schools of that time. Afterwards, the children would have teacakes and lemonade in the park.

\* \* \* \* \*

Those who are working on this preservation effort have gained a new interest in and appreciation for this property and for

the significance it has made to several generations of Berry Mountain residents. Surely Stephen Jonah King would have been proud to know that his donation back in 1919 has made a big difference to the community that he loved so much.

We could all take note of Jonah's words found in a letter to his sister, Emma Pruett, on May 3, 1925: "I must be cheerful and kind and live so the world will not be worse by my living in it."



\*\*\* BIBLIOGRAPHY \*\*\*

Interviews:

Boles, Matharee.  
King, James.  
Sloan, E. C.  
Sloan, Louise.

Books:

Billingsley, Nadine, Descendants of Joshua Jones and Solomon King 1771-1994, Decorah, Iowa, Anundsen Publishing Co., 1994.  
Blount County Historical Society, The Heritage of Blount County, 1972.  
King, Sam, The Stephen Jonah King Family, Decorah, Iowa, Anundsen Publishing Co., 1981.

Magazine:

Alexander, William, "Going Gold: The Fall Gardens at Biltmore," Colonial Homes, September 1997.

Newspaper:

Tidwell, Sue, "Jonah King's Descendants to Hold 80th Reunion Sunday," Blount Countian, July 24, 1991.

Pamphlet:

Young, Ann, Berry Mountain School, 1979.

Documents:

Deeds  
Incorporation Papers of Preservation Group