

Kentucky's Elk Country

HERITAGE TOURISM

Family units were vital to the self-sustaining lifestyle of Southeastern Kentucky's early pioneers. Their days were filled with necessary chores including tending to animals, farming the rugged land, preparing meals, making clothes, chopping wood and hunting and fishing. Due to the region's small population in the mid- to late-1800s, members of extended families were cherished. The family Bible often doubled as a record of births, deaths and marriages. Family histories remain important to the residents of the Elk Country Corridor. Breathitt, Clay, Knott, Leslie, Letcher and Perry Counties each have a Historical and Genealogical Society. Visitors are welcome to stop by and conduct research at the facilities. A few fortunate people might discover Dr. Thomas Walker or Daniel Boone on their family tree.

Shelter was vital to the existence of the early settlers. Pioneer Village in Red Fox provides an opportunity to experience one of the area's first houses. The former home of the Johnson family was built in 1796 and is considered to be the oldest log cabin in Kentucky. The two-story structure currently houses a thriving crafts center. The Dillon-Asher cabin, located on the grounds of the Red Bird Mission School, is another example of early architecture. The two-story cabin, built in 1799, is available for tours.

Soon after arriving, the settlers began forming religious congregations. Churches, an important part of pioneer life, filled both the spiritual and social needs of their members. Although congregations were small, the members often built remarkable structures. Examples of the first churches can be viewed throughout the Elk Country Corridor and include Old Indian Bottom Church in Blackey, Buckhorn Log Cathedral in Buckhorn and Wooton Presbyterian Church, Central Presbyterian Church and St. Christopher's Chapel located near Hyden.

Although some farms prospered in the region, most of the land proved too rugged. The arrival of the coal and lumber industries brought much-needed jobs to the region. The history of these industries and their impact on the lives of residents can be explored at several museums including David A. Zeeger Coal Railroad Museum, Breathitt Co. Museum, C.B. Caudill Store & History Center, and Bobby Davis Museum and Park.

The pioneer men and women filled their days caring for children, working in the fields or the lumber and mining industries, tending farm animals, preparing food and making clothes. There was little time to secure an education or to provide health care for their children. Schools were started by women from outside the region including Hindman Settlement School, Alice Lloyd College and Frontier Nursing Service, the oldest school of nurse/midwifery in the nation. Church missionary groups opened other schools

including Red Bird Mission School and Oneida Baptist Institute. Tours of the region's historic schools are available.

Elk County Corridor's heritage offerings include, but are not limited to:

Dillon-Asher Cabin (606-598-3155), one of the oldest structures in Clay County, was built in 1799 by the keeper of Kentucky's first toll road. Located on the grounds of Red Bird Hospital, the cabin is preserved by the Red Bird Mission School. Tours are available.

Pioneer Village (606-642-3570), housed in the former home of the Johnson family, is considered to be the oldest log building in Kentucky. Located on Highway 15 in Red Fox, the historic structure now houses a thriving craft cooperative consisting of over 200 Eastern Kentucky craftspeople.

Bobby Davis Museum and Park (606-439-4325), located on Walnut Street in Hazard, features a collection of local memorabilia including a photography collection that traces the progress of Perry County from the turn of the century through World War II. Displays highlight the coal and lumber industries, the arrival of the railroad in the early 1900s, historical floods, and other major events.

C.B. Caudill Store & History Center (606-633-7962), located on Rt. 7 in Blackey, was founded as a general store in 1933. Local residents came by to chat with neighbors while stocking up on supplies for the week. Today, Caudill Store provides a glimpse of an era when general stores played a vital role in the community. The store is stocked with hundreds of unsolicited donations from people including Indian marbles, hornets' nests, cricket cages and coal miners' hats.

David A. Zegeer Coal Railroad Museum (606-832-4676) demonstrates the history of a Consolidated Coal Company town. The museum is located in the former Bethlehem Steel depot on Hwy. 805 in downtown Jenkins.

Frontier Nursing Service (606-672-2317), located on School St. in Hyden, is America's oldest school for nurse/mid-wifery. Founded in 1925, the facility is a National Historic Landmark. St. Christopher's Chapel, located at the old hospital in Hyden, features a 15th century Flemish stained glass window. The Wendover House, a log home built in 1925 for the founder, is also on campus. Tours are available.

Hindman Settlement School (606-785-5475), founded in 1902 under the auspices of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Club, was the first rural settlement school in the United States. At a time when there were no public schools in the area, the Settlement School provided education for the youth of Southeastern Kentucky. Today, with the ready availability of public education, Hindman Settlement School focuses on community service and providing an education to students with learning disabilities. It continues its

tradition of mountain literature by hosting the Writers, Workshop annually on the first weekend in August. Tours of the school are available.

Breathitt County Museum (606-666-4159) located in downtown Jackson, features an photograph collection of life in the Kentucky mountains. Other exhibits include the logging and coal industries, local military and home life.