TABLE

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INTRODUCTION

Industrialization and Social Change in Appalachia: A Look at the Static Image

WE AMERICANS have faith in progress. Throughout most of our history we have assumed that the present is better than the past and that the future will be better still. This reassuring notion is periodically bolstered by statistical evidence of rising production and other measures of improvement in our standard of life. Progress, we believe, is occurring, and the future holds yet unrealized possibilities. For the historian, this faith in the inevitability of progress presents a problem. Since historians necessarily understand the past from the perspective of the present, our unconscious assumptions about the progressive present cast a shadow of contemporary condescension across our view of the received heritage. Our confident belief in progress leads us to depreciate the value of the past or to consider history as merely the ideological defense of the present.

Since the late nineteenth century, our idea of progress has become intertwined with the concept of modernity. We have come to believe that progress means technological development, industrial expansion, and growth in material wealth. Modernization has become synonymous with progress, and we tend to measure the improvement of any nation, society, or region in terms of its modernization. "Backward" and impoverished areas like Appalachia and the Third World are thought to exist because of a lack of modernization. The forces of growth and development appear to have passed by these regions. They seem to have been set off by history or geographic isolation from the rest of our progressive world.

The belief that time and geography somehow set the southern mountains off from the rest of the American experience has been part of our understanding of Appalachia for almost a hundred years. As early as the 1870s, writers for the new monthly magazines which flourished after the Civil War had begun to develop and exploit a literary image of the region. Initially drawn to the mountains in

search of the interesting and the picturesque, local color writers such as Mary Noailles Murfree, James Lane Allen, John Fox, Jr., and others were quick to turn the quaint and simple lives of the mountaineers into grist for the literary mill. Between 1870 and 1890, over two hundred travel accounts and short stories were published in which the mountain people emerged as a rude, backward, romantic, and sometimes violent race who had quietly lived for generations in isolation from the mainstream of American life.[1]

Implicit in this literary image was a sense of otherness that not only marked the region as "a strange land inhabited by a peculiar people" but defined that strangeness in terms of the process of American historical growth. To the urban middle-class readers of *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's*, and *Atlantic*, the apparent persistence of pioneer-like conditions in the mountains seemed to reflect not merely the normal patterns of rural life but "an earlier phase of American development preserved, like a mammoth in ice."[2] Because metaphor was more interesting than reality, the Appalachian present came to be linked with the American past, and eventually the analogy was accepted as fact. By the turn of the century, according to historian Henry David Shapiro, the idea that Appalachia was "a discrete ethnic and cultural unit within but not of America" had become a popular convention.[3] For Americans of the progressive period who had witnessed the passing of the western frontier, Appalachia became "the frontier we have left within," and the mountaineers were "our contemporary ancestors."[4]

Succeeding generations have periodically rediscovered and reinterpreted the region in the context of their own day, but the static image has remained the standard perception of mountain life. In 1913, for example, Horace Kephart found "our Southern highlanders . . . still thinking essentially the same thoughts, still living in much

1. See Henry David Shapiro, "A Strange Land and Peculiar People: The Discovery of Appalachia, 1870–1920" (Ph.D. diss. Rutgers Univ., 1966), 250ff., Cratis Dearl Williams, "The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction" (Ph.D. diss., New York Univ., 1961), 1605ff.
2. Henry David Shapiro, "Introduction" to John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (Lexington, Ky., 1969), xxvi.
3. Shapiro, "A Strange Land and Peculiar People," v. See also Henry D. Shapiro's *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness—1870–1920* (Chapel Hill, 1978).
4. Woodrow Wilson, "Our Last Frontier," *Berea Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (May 1899), 5; William Goodell Frost, "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains," *Atlantic Monthly* 83 (March 1899), 311.

the same fashion as did their ancestors in the days of Daniel Boone. The progress of mankind from his age to this," he claimed, "is no heritage of theirs."[5] James Watt Raine traveled the "land of saddlebags" in 1924 and again in 1942, and a decade later North Callahan made a similar journey into what he believed was the "happy" but "static society" of the Smoky Mountains country.[6] With the outbreak of the War on Poverty in the 1960s, the mountaineers became simply "Yesterday's People"—part of that "other America" of which Michael Harrington wrote.[7] More recently, the rise of the new ethnicity and the counterculture movement have brought attention to the mountain people as just plain "down home folk," and a flourishing minor industry has developed to fabricate such oddities as dulcimers, quilts, log cabins, and "Hillbilly Chicken." Of late, we have also seen the introduction of courses in Appalachian studies and the proliferation of symposia aimed at diagnosing the "unique" qualities of mountain life. But this revival of interest has done little to alter our traditional views. According to one leading student of the region, Appalachia can still be seen "as a vanishing frontier and its people as frontiersmen, suspended and isolated, while the rest of the country moves across the twentieth century."[8] Marooned on an island of hills, the mountaineer has seemed shut off from the forces that have shaped the modern world. He has lived, we are told, in a land "where time stood still."[9]

Arnold Toynbee may have offered the most callous assertion of this view when he suggested that the mountain people of the South were little better than barbarians. "They have relapsed into illiteracy and witchcraft," he wrote. "They suffer from poverty, squalor, and ill health. They are the American counterparts of the latter-day white barbarians of the Old World—Rifis, Albanians, Kurds, Pathans, and

5. *Our Southern Highlanders* (New York, 1913), 211.
6. Raine, *The Land of Saddle-Bags: A Study of the Mountain People of Appalachia* (New York, 1924) and *Saddlebag Folk: The Way of Life in the Kentucky Mountains* (Evanston, 1942); Callahan, *Smoky Mountain Country* (Boston, 1952), 74.
7. Jack E. Weller, *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia* (Lexington, Ky., 1965); Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York, 1962).
8. Cratis Dearl Williams, "Heritage of Appalachia," address to the Southern Appalachian Regional Conference (13 May 1974), reprinted in *The Future of Appalachia* (Boone, N.C., 1975), 128.
9. Bruce and Nancy Roberts, *Where Time Stood Still: A Portrait of Appalachia* (New York, 1970).

Hairy Ainus." But whereas these latter seemed to be the belated survivals of an ancient barbarism, "the Appalachians," Toynbee argued, "present the melancholy spectacle of a people who have acquired civilization and then lost it."[10]

Cast in the static role, mountain people have thus rarely appeared as conscious actors on the stage of American history, and almost never on center stage. They are acknowledged to exist somewhere in the background, as subjects to be acted upon, but not as people participating in the historical drama itself. As a result, our efforts to explain and deal with the social problems of the region have focused not on economic and political realities in the area as they evolved over time, but on the supposed inadequacies of a pathological culture that is seen to have equipped mountain people poorly for life in the modern industrial world. Having overlooked elements of movement and change that have tied the mountains to the rest of the American experience, we have blamed the mountaineers for their own distress, rather than the forces which have caused it.[11]

Blaming the victim, of course, is not a uniquely American phenomenon. Rather, it is a misreading that takes international form. French intellectuals talk about the Alps and Spanish intellectuals talk about the Pyrenees in much the same simple if condescending way as urban Americans talk about Appalachia.[12] Indeed, all over the world, the terms applied to rural people by urban people have implied either contempt and condescension, or—and this is the opposite side of the same attitude—a romantic admiration for the simple, hardy virtues of rural life.[13] Since the southern mountains were among the most rural areas of eastern America, the Appalachian people have suffered exceedingly from this type of urban provincialism.

Ironically, it was during the same years that the static image was emerging as the dominant literary view that a revolution was shaking

10. *A Study of History*, II (New York, 1947), 312.

11. See Dwight Billings, "Culture and Poverty in Appalachia: A Theoretical Discussion and Empirical Analysis," *Social Forces* 53 (Dec. 1974), 315–23; Stephen L. Fisher, "Folk Culture or Folk Tale: Prevailing Assumptions About the Appalachian Personality," in J.W. Williamson, ed., *An Appalachian Symposium: Essays Written in Honor of Cratis D. Williams* (Boone, N.C., 1977), 14–25; David S. Walls, "Internal Colony or Internal Periphery? A Critique of Current Models and An Alternative Formulation," in Helen M. Lewis, *et al.*, eds., *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (Boone, N.C., 1978), 319–50.

12. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York, 1972), 74–76.

13. Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture* (New York, 1960), 38.

the very foundations of the mountain social order. In Appalachia, as in the rest of the country, the decades from 1880 to 1930 were years of transition and change. What had been in 1860 only the quiet backcountry of the Old South became by the turn of the century a new frontier for expanding industrial capitalism. The coming of railroads, the buildings of towns and villages, and the general expansion of industrial employment greatly altered the traditional patterns of mountain life and called forth certain adjustments, responses, and defenses on the part of the mountaineers. This transformation varied in scope and speed, but by the end of the 1920s, few residents of the region were left untouched by the industrial age.

The effects of this transition were great. Mountain agriculture, for example, went into serious decline. While the size of the average mountain farm was about 187 acres in the 1880s, by 1930 the average Appalachian farm contained only 76 acres, and in some counties the average was as low as 47 acres.[14] This decline occurred throughout the region but was most pronounced in the coal fields and other areas of intense economic growth. Significantly, while the total number of farms increased during these years, the total amount of land in farms actually decreased almost 20 percent as a result of the purchase of farm properties by timber and mining companies and for inclusion in national forests and parks.[15]

Farm productivity and income also changed. While farm production had been the major (and usually the sole) source of income in 1880, by 1930 most mountain farms had become part-time units of production, and the major source of income had shifted to nonagricultural employment—mining, logging, textiles, and other forms of public work.[16] In Knott County, Kentucky, for example, the income per farm from farming in 1930 averaged only $215, while the income per farm from nonfarm enterprises averaged over $342.[17] In 1880,

14. U.S. Department of Interior, Census Office, *The Tenth Census: 1880, Agricultural Statistics*, III; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Agriculture: The Southern States*, II, Pt. 2.

15. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians*, Miscellaneous Publication No. 205 (Washington, D.C., 1935), 16; Lewis Cecil Gray, "Economic Conditions and Tendencies in the Southern Appalachians As Indicated by the Cooperative Survey," *Mountain Life and Work* 9, no. 2 (July 1933), 9.

16. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Economic and Social Conditions*, 3, 16.

17. Gray, "Economic Conditions in the Southern Appalachians," 10. See also W.D. Nicholls, "A Research Approach to the Problems of Appalachia," *Mountain*

the mountains had been a major producer of swine in the South, but by 1930 swine production in the region had declined to only 39 percent of its former level.[18] Such data suggest that the traditional image of the preindustrial mountain farm must be altered, and that the small, marginal farm usually associated with the stereotyped picture of Appalachia was in fact a product of modernization—that is, a more recent development not associated with the purported isolation of the region.

Along with the decline of agriculture came subtle changes in demographic relationships as well. Whereas mountain society in the 1880s had been characterized by a diffuse pattern of open country agricultural settlements located primarily in the fertile valleys and plateaus, by the turn of the century the population had begun to shift into nonagricultural areas and to concentrate around centers of industrial growth. Between 1900 and 1930, the urban population of the region increased fourfold and the rural nonfarm population almost twofold, while the farm population itself increased by only 5 percent.[19] A few of the burgeoning urban centers were destined to be temporary communities, such as the big timber towns of Sunburst and Ravensford in the Great Smoky Mountains, but most were permanent settlements that had a lasting impact upon mountain life. It is important to point out, moreover, that the majority of these new industrial communities were company towns. In fact, over six hundred company towns were constructed in the southern mountains during this period, and in the coal fields they outnumbered independent incorporated towns more than five to one.[20]

This rising urban population provided a base for the emergence of a more modern political system in the mountains, one increasingly dominated by corporate interests and business-minded politicians.

Life and Work 7, no. 10 (Jan. 1932), 5–8, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Economic and Social Conditions*, 41–57.

18. U.S. Department of Interior, Census Office, *The Tenth Census: 1880, Agricultural Statistics*, III; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Agriculture: The Southern States*, II Pt. 2.

19. Gray, "Economic Conditions in the Southern Appalachians," 8; U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Economic and Social Conditions*, 120–21.

20. U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of the United States Coal Commission*, Sen. Doc. 195, 68th Cong. 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C., 1925), Table 14, p. 1467; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, II and III.

Where the traditional political order had relied largely on kinship, personal contacts, and a broad-based party structure, after the turn of the century the level of citizen participation declined, and the average farmer or laborer became isolated from the political process. As early as the 1890s, industrialists such as Stephen B. Elkins in West Virginia and H. Clay Evans in Tennessee had begun to gain control of the political organizations in the mountains and to turn the powers of state and local government toward the expansion of commerce and exploitation of the region's resources.[21] As a result, there emerged in Appalachia a constricted political system based upon an economic hierarchy—those who controlled the jobs also controlled the political system, and those who controlled the political system used their power to exploit the region's natural wealth for their own personal gain. This loss of local political control naturally distressed many mountain people and plunged the region into prolonged industrial violence and social strife.[22]

Behind this transition in political culture lay the integration of the region into the national economy and the subordination of local interests to those of outside corporations. Nowhere was this process more evident than in the concentration of large amounts of mountain land in the hands of absentee owners. Beginning in the 1870s, northern speculators and outside businessmen carved out huge domains in the rich timberlands and mineral regions of Appalachia. By 1910, outlanders controlled not only the best stands of hardwood timber and the thickest seams of coal but a large percentage of the surface land in the region as well. For example, in that portion of western North Carolina which later became the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, over 75 percent of the land came under the control of thirteen corporations, and one timber company alone owned over a third of the total acreage.[23] The situation was even worse in the coal fields. According to the West Virginia State Board

21. See John Alexander Williams, "The New Dominion and the Old: Antebellum and Statehood Politics as the Background of West Virginia's 'Bourbon Democracy,' " *West Virginia History* 33 (July 1972), 322; Gordon Bartlett McKinney, "Mountain Republicanism, 1876–1900" (Ph.D. diss. Northwestern Univ. 1971), 170.

22. See Gordon B. McKinney, "Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890's," in Williamson, ed., *An Appalachian Symposium*, 131–144.

23. Map, "North Carolina Portion of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Showing Individual Ownership," Western Carolina Univ., University Archives, Hunter Library.

of Agriculture in 1900, outside capitalists owned 90 percent of the coal in Mingo County, 90 percent of the coal in Wayne County, and 60 percent of that in Boone and McDowell counties.[24] Today, absentee corporations control more than half the total land area in the nine southernmost counties of the Mountain State.[25]

The immediate effect of this concentration of landholding was to dislodge a large part of the region's people from their ancestral homes. A few former landowners managed to remain on the land as sharecroppers or tenant farmers, and occasionally a family continued to live temporarily on the old homeplace, paying rent to absentee landlords.[26] But a great number of the displaced mountaineers migrated to the mill villages and mining towns, where they joined the ever-growing ranks of the new industrial working class. In the Cumberland Plateau, less than a third of those employed in 1930 remained in agriculture. The rest had moved to the mines or into service-related jobs.[27] Uprooted from their traditional way of life, some individuals were unable to reestablish permanent community ties, and they became wanderers drifting from mill to mill, from company house to company house, in search of higher pay or better living conditions. Most dreamed initially of returning to the land after a few years of public work, but the rising land values that accompanied industrial development soon pushed land ownership beyond the reach of the average miner or millhand.

Caught up in the social complex of the new industrial communities, many mountaineers found themselves unable to escape their condition of powerlessness and dependency. By coming to a coal mining town, the miner had exchanged the independence and somewhat precarious self-sufficiency of the family farm for subordination to the coal company and dependence upon a wage income. He lived in a company house, he worked in the company mine, and he purchased his groceries and other commodities from the company

24. West Virginia, State Board of Agriculture, *Fifth Biennial Report of the West Virginia State Board of Agriculture for the Years 1899 and 1900* (Charleston, W.Va., 1900), 371.

25. Tom D. Miller, "Absentees Dominate Land Ownership," in *Who Owns West Virginia?*, reprinted from the *Herald Adviser* and the *Herald-Dispatch* (Huntington, W.Va., 1974), 1–3.

26. James Lane Allen, "Mountain Passes of the Cumberlands," *Harper's Magazine* 81 (Sept. 1890), 575; Herbert Francis Sherwood, "Our New Racial Drama: Southern Mountaineers in the Textile Industry," *North American Review* 216 (Oct. 1922), 494; Campbell, *The Southern Highlander*, 87, 314.

27. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Economic and Social Conditions*, 3.

store. He sent his children to the company school and patronized the company doctor and the company church. The company deducted rent and school, medical, and other fees from his monthly wage, and, under the prevailing system of scrip, he occasionally ended the month without a cash income. He had no voice in community affairs or working conditions, and he was dependent upon the benevolence of the employer to maintain his rate of pay.

Socially, if not physically, the working-class mountaineer was more isolated in his new situation than he had been on the family farm, for industrialization introduced rigid class distinctions into the highland culture.[28] Traditional status distinctions had always existed, but there were few economic differences within the rural population. With the coming of the industrial age, however, the separation between employer and employee became all too apparent. In the company town, the miners lived in small dwellings in the hollow near the tipple, while mine superintendents often built palatial structures high on the hillside overlooking the town.[29] Surrounded by elegant trees and well-kept grounds, these homes clearly defined the operator's social rank. In some communities, the railroad track literally divided the town in two, separating the more substantial residences of the managing class from the miners' shacks. The social gap between the classes increased, moreover, as managers and professional personnel developed lifestyles and formal institutions different from those of the working class.

By 1930, most mountaineers, whether they remained on the farm or migrated to the mill villages, timber towns, or coal camps, had become socially integrated within the new industrial system and economically dependent upon it as well. To say the least, this dependence was not on their own terms—that is to say, it was a product not of mountain culture but of the same political and economic forces that were shaping the rest of the nation and the western world. The rise of industrial capitalism brought to Appalachia a period of rapid

28. See Edward E. Knipe and Helen M. Lewis, "The Impact of Coal Mining on the Traditional Mountain Subculture," in J. Kenneth Moreland, ed., *The Not So Solid South: Anthropological Studies In a Regional Subculture* (Athens, Ga., 1971), 28.

29. Mack H. Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historical Geography of Mining Settlements in the Pocahontas Coal Fields of Southern West Virginia, 1880 to 1930" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Tennessee, 1972), 87; R.G. Lyman, "Coal Mining at Holden, West Virginia," *Engineering and Mining Journal* 52 (15 Dec. 1906), 1171.

growth and social change which those who hold to the static image have chosen to ignore. The brief prosperity brought on by the bonanza of modernization broadened the mountaineer's economic horizon. It aroused aspirations, envies, and hopes. But the industrial wonders of the age promised more than they in fact delivered; for the profits taken from the rich natural resources of the region flowed out of the mountains, with little benefit to the mountain people themselves. For a relative handful of owners and managers, the new order yielded riches unimaginable a few decades before; for thousands of mountaineers, it brought a life of struggle, hardship, and despair. Considered from this perspective, the persistent poverty of Appalachia has not resulted from the lack of modernization. Rather, it has come from the particular kind of modernization that unfolded in the years from 1880 to 1930.

Arnold Toynbee blamed the social conditions of Appalachia on the barbaric culture of mountain people, but one native mountaineer found another kind of barbarism at work in the region. Writing in *The Hills Beyond*, Thomas Wolfe lamented the tragic changes that had come over his beloved homeland in the years after Reconstruction. "The great mountain slopes and forests of the section," he wrote,

> had been ruinously detimbered; the farm-soil on the hillsides had eroded and washed down; high up, upon the hills, one saw the raw scars of old mica pits, the dump heaps of deserted mines. . . . It was evident that a huge compulsive greed had been at work: the whole region had been sucked and gutted, milked dry, denuded of its rich primeval treasures; something blind and ruthless had been here, grasped, and gone. The blind scars on the hills, the denuded slopes, the empty mica pits were what was left. . . . Something had come into the wilderness, and left the barren land.[30]

This book attempts to describe the economic and social revolution that swept the mountains at the turn of the century, creating modern Appalachia. It is a study based on the premise that the socioeconomic conditions that have emerged in southern Appalachia are in fact a product of the modernization of American life. As used in this study, "modernization" refers not only to the transition from a traditional to a modern society but to a specific set of changes that have accom-

30. *The Hills Beyond* (New York, 1941), 236–37.

panied that transition in America since the late nineteenth century: the growth of urbanization and industrialization, the rise of corporate capitalism and the bureaucratic state, the development of a national market economy, the concentration of political and economic power, and a weakening of cooperative life and work in local communities and family life. It is within this context of modernization, I believe, that one must turn for an understanding of the paradox of Appalachia—a rich land inhabited by a poor people.

Historians and social scientists have long studied the phenomenon of modernization, but their efforts have generally concentrated on urban industrial centers. Little attention has been focused on the surrounding rural areas or on the impact of modernization on peripheral communities that provide labor and resources to the modernizing core. While the modernization of Appalachia was part and parcel of the modernization of America and was spurred by a small group of indigenous elites, the transformation of Appalachia was brought about by the diffusion of change from the developing industrial centers outside the mountains. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that modernization, as an urban industrial process, begins in core areas and spreads outward, extending employment opportunities into the outlying or peripheral areas but essentially using those areas to the core's advantage. Thus, a peripheral area like Appalachia may experience short-term growth without development and suffer the long-term consequences of dependency, inadequate social services, absentee ownership, and a colonial economy.[31]

It is important to note, moreover, that modernization does not affect all areas of the periphery with equal intensity. In Appalachia, industrialism altered some communities more dramatically than others, and throughout the region many aspects of the traditional or premodern culture remained intact long after they had disappeared in the rest of the country. The coal miner in West Virginia experienced the impact of modernization in a manner quite different from the hillside farmer in North Carolina, and some residents of southwest Virginia witnessed the arrival of the machine age more than thirty years before their neighbors in eastern Kentucky. But by the eve of the Great Depression, all were bound together by their common loss of autonomy and by their common relationship to the new order.

31. See Eugene A. Conti, Jr., "The Cultural Role of Local Elites in the Kentucky Mountains," *Appalachian Journal* 7, no. 1–2 (Autumn-Winter 1979–80), 51–68.

This larger, shared impact of modernization in the mountains is examined in the pages which follow. The communities and experiences I have selected reflect the basic issues confronting the whole region. The focus of this study is the patterns of economic and social change that made miners and millhands out of mountaineers. These patterns are most clear in the coal mining towns and lumber mill camps of the region, but they also underlay the experience of the mica pits, paper mills, and textile towns.[32]

The story of the transformation of Appalachia is more than an historical quest for the roots of poverty and powerlessness in one American subregion, since that quest challenges the very assumptions of progress upon which our contemporary society is built. The failure of modernization in the mountains raises the fundamental questions of our time—questions of power, greed, growth, self-determination, and cultural survival. In the answers to those questions lie our fragile hopes for the future. We in America must be driven to search for those answers for, as the mountaineers have learned, progress may not be inevitable.

32. The migration of thousands of mountaineers to the cotton mill districts of the piedmont South is an important chapter in the modernization of the mountains. But because the cotton mills lay largely outside the mountains and because their story is similar to that of the coal mining towns, it will not be examined in detail here.

MINERS, MILLHANDS, AND MOUNTAINEERS

CHAPTER ONE

ON THE EVE OF A REMARKABLE DEVELOPMENT

Generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption. While we have land to labour then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a workbench or twirling a distaff.

–Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia

FEW AREAS of the United States in the late nineteenth century more closely exemplified Thomas Jefferson's vision of a democratic society than did the agricultural communities of the southern Appalachians.[1] Long after the death of Jefferson and long after the nation as a whole had turned down the Hamiltonian path toward industrialism, the southern Appalachian Mountains remained a land of small farms and scattered open-country villages. Although traditional patterns of agricultural life persisted in other parts of the nation—in the rural South, the Midwest, and the more remote sections of the Northeast—nowhere did the self-sufficient family farm so dominate the culture and social system as it did in the Appalachian South. Indeed, by the late 1880s and the 1890s, urban scholars and journalists had come to view the mountains as one of the last great strongholds of rural frontier life. "Appalachian America," wrote William Goodell Frost in 1899, was "one of God's grand divisions," an anachronism

1. For the purpose of this study, southern Appalachia is defined as that portion of the Appalachian mountains that lies south of the New River in Virginia and West Virginia. Unless otherwise stated, the region includes 112 counties in southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, southwestern Virginia, eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, and north Georgia. For a history of similar events in northern West Virginia, see John Alexander Williams, *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry* (Morgantown, W.Va., 1976).

of people who seemed "to be living to all intents and purposes in the conditions of the colonial times."[2]

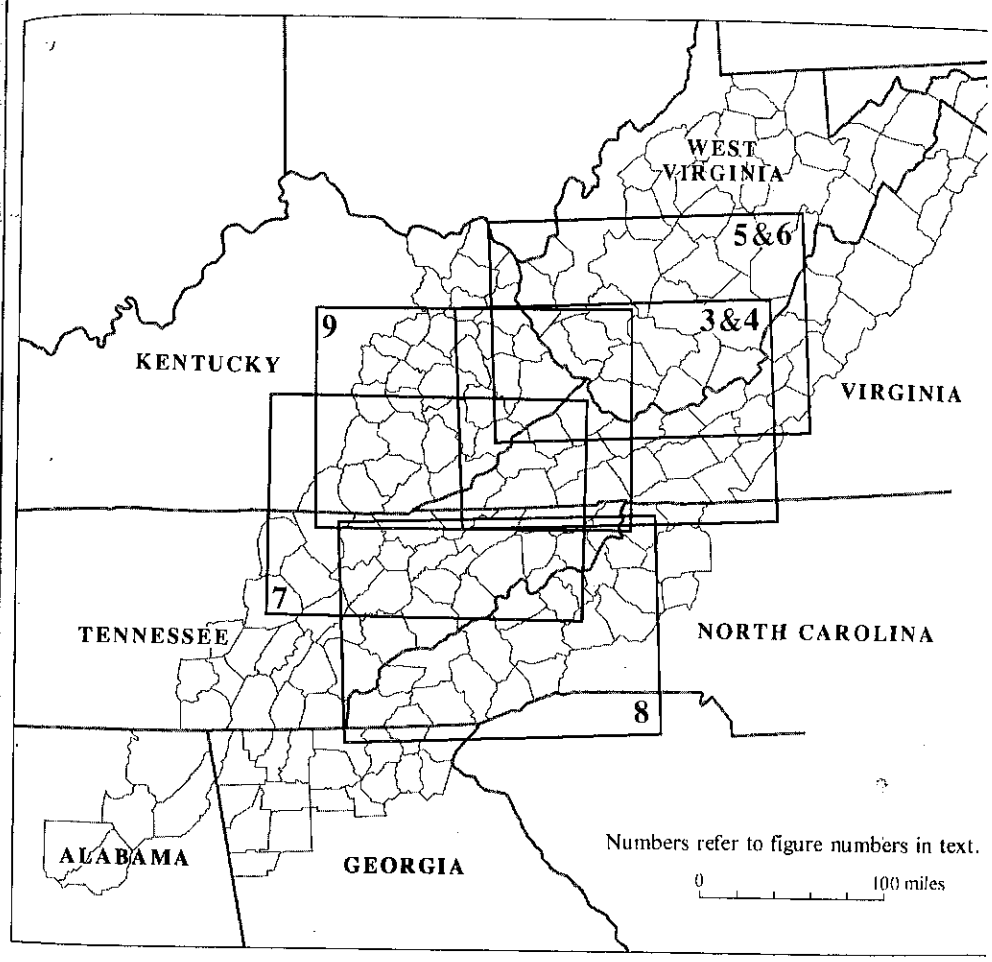
It had been Jefferson's dream that America might remain a society in which land ownership was widely diffused and in which agrarian rather than mercantile or manufacturing interests would be dominant. Even before his death in 1826, however, that dream had begun to fade. Aggressive territorial expansion and the growth of manufacturing, banking, and transportation enterprises were rapidly moving the nation toward a nonagrarian economy. On the eve of the Civil War, over two-fifths of the American population had left agricultural pursuits for employment in the industrial and service sectors of the economy, and in the decades following the war, the growth of industrialization, urbanization, and railroad construction reached unparalleled proportions. By 1880, nonfarm production accounted for almost 75 percent of the gross national product. Within a century after Jefferson's death, the majority of Americans would reside not on the family farm, but in teeming urban centers.[3]

The southern mountain country was relatively untouched by the early phases of American industrialization. Small quantities of coal were mined and marketed in parts of western Virginia as early as the 1790s. Gold, copper, and lead mines were opened after the turn of the century in parts of northern Georgia, western North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee, and in the Great Kanawha Valley a major saline industry had developed by the 1830s. But these and other nonagrarian enterprises had relatively little impact upon the economy and lifestyles of the mountain people. The limitations of terrain, a restrictive transportation network, and the relative absence of slavery served to limit the growth of commercial agriculture in the region and to facilitate the survival of traditional cultural patterns and a family-based economy and social system.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, there was little in Appalachia to attract capitalist development. The region's natural wealth of timber, coal, and other mineral resources was remote and inaccessible to the mercantile centers of the South and Northeast, and until technological change and industrial growth created a demand for these resources, they were to remain a potential rather than an

2. "Our Contemporary Ancestors," 311. See also Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind*.

3. Harold G. Vatter, *The Drive to Industrial Maturity: The U.S. Economy, 1860 to 1914* (Westport, Conn., 1975), 3, 172.



1. Index Map of the Appalachian South

actual source of wealth. Only as the national economy entered a new stage of expansion in the years following the Civil War did the natural wealth of Appalachia begin to attract outside capital. The sudden imposition of industrial capitalism at that time brought dramatic changes to this most rural area of American life. By the third decade of the twentieth century, the Jeffersonian dream in Appalachia had

become a nightmare of exploitation, corruption, and social tragedy. While the southern mountains remained a predominantly rural area, changes in land ownership, economy, and the political system had left the region's people dependent, impoverished, and powerless within a new and alien social order.

PREINDUSTRIAL APPALACHIA

Appalachia on the eve of industrialization was a land of scattered, loosely integrated, and self-sufficient island communities. Separated from each other by a sea of ridges, mountain communities had developed since their founding as separate social systems living largely unto themselves. Communication among these settlements was sparse, and except for major upheavals such as the Civil War, interaction with the rest of the nation was limited. Social institutions in the region were still oriented toward local community life rather than the concerns of the larger society, allowing each mountain community to maintain a certain autonomy and inner stability in politics, economy, and social life.

Structurally, if not culturally, mountain communities of the 1880s resembled other relatively remote, open-country American neighborhoods. Isolation, which became a prominent theme in most descriptive accounts of Appalachia in the late nineteenth century, was not unique to the southern mountains. Indeed, it was a feature common to much of rural America, especially the South and Midwest, where the absence of good roads, river, and water transportation made communications difficult.[4] Rutted and muddy highways, widely scattered villages, and homes separated by miles of wilderness characterized the majority of American farm communities until well into the twentieth century.[5]

In Appalachia, the rugged terrain and the insulation of the moun-

4. Abraham Berglund, George T. Starnes, and Frank T. DeVyver, *Labor in the Industrial South: A Survey of Wages and Living Conditions in Three Major Industries of the New Industries of the New Industrial South* (Charlottesville, Va., 1930), 18.

5. Walter A. Terpenning, *Village and Open Country Neighborhoods* (New York, 1931), 45. For a vivid description of an open-country rural farm community in Michigan in the late 1880s that is strikingly similar to descriptions of life in the southern mountains at that time, see pp. 42–108. Cf. Charles Dudley Warner, "On Horseback," *Atlantic Monthly* 56 (July–Oct. 1885), 88–100, 194–207, 388–98, 540–54.

tains themselves made communications especially difficult, but the region was never entirely cut off from contact with the outside world. Trade with nearby valley communities, seasonal work out of the mountains, postal delivery of letters and periodicals (supported by a high rate of literacy), and regular penetration of remote communities by peddlers and politicians kept mountain residents informed of issues and events in the larger society. Such contacts brought new ideas, new technologies, and new items of material culture into the mountains, where they were sifted into the prevailing culture.[6] Significantly, however, outside contacts during the preindustrial period occurred on the highlander's own terms and had only marginal influence on the quality and direction of mountain life. The relative seclusion of mountain neighborhoods from the changes that were sweeping life in urban America provided a sense of security and continuity which sustained a regional culture based upon strong relationships to the land and to family and kinship groups.

Perhaps more than in other rural areas, the land itself shaped the development of culture and social patterns in the mountains. Each community occupied a distinct cove, hollow, or valley and was separated from its neighbors by a rim of mountains or ridges. Land ownership usually terminated at the ridge top, reinforcing the community's identity and independence, but the hillsides were generally considered to be public land open for use by all members of the community. Economic and social activities were largely self-contained within these geographic bowls, with individual households relying upon themselves or their neighbors for both the necessities and pleasures of life. The land was such a dominant factor in mountain culture that neighborhoods often drew their names from the creeks or branches that penetrated the settlement (Spring Creek community, Walker's Branch community, East Fork community) and that further divided the larger community into numerous subcommunities.

Analysis of premodern demographic patterns in the southern mountains indicates that in Appalachia, as in other rural areas, settlement and land-use patterns varied according to terrain, social conditions, and type of economy. The mountain landscape favored the establishment of five forms of settlements—gap, cove, hollow,

6. See Gene Wilhelm, Jr., "Appalachian Isolation: Fact or Fiction?" in J.W. Williamson, ed., *An Appalachian Symposium* (Boone, N.C., 1977), 77–90.

ridge, and meadow communities—but cove and hollow settlements predominated throughout the region.[7] The natural protection, arable soil, good water, and abundant timber of the coves and hollows were ideal for the support of the cultural traditions and simple agricultural technology of the Scotch-Irish and German pioneers who settled the mountains. The earliest pioneers chose the fertile lands near the mouth of the hollow, while their descendants and later arrivals settled farther upstream toward the headwall. In the Cumberland Plateau of eastern Kentucky and the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia, this type of settlement formed a linear pattern of homesteads strung out along the narrow hollow floor. By the late nineteenth century, population growth and agricultural expansion in these plateau counties had begun to force some hollow families onto the less desirable slopes and ridge lands, where they struggled to eke out a living on arid and rocky soil. Ridge settlements were less common in the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountain country of North Carolina, Georgia, and eastern Tennessee, where the predominance of larger coves permitted oval patterns of settlement around the foot of the slopes, leaving the interior basin open for cultivation and expansion.[8]

Both cove and hollow settlement types favored the dispersal of farms along the bottomland, but this dispersal did not mean the isolation of mountain homesteads. Appalachian pioneers, like pioneers on other frontiers, generally migrated into the region in family or community groups and settled in small clusters of two or three homesteads separated from each other by as little as one-half mile.[9] These loose clusters of farms allowed mountain settlers to maintain a certain level of independence while retaining social contacts and community life. Later generations added to these clusters, creating kin-related groups, but a concentration of more than a handful of households was rare. Even commercial settlements that developed at the mouths of hollows or gaps remained small, seldom containing more than a store, a mill, a church, and a school. Larger towns, usually county seats, were even more widely scattered and were slow to gain the size and social importance of their counterparts in the low country.

7. Gene Wilhelm, Jr., "Folk Settlements in the Blue Ridge Mountains," *Appalachian Journal* 5, no. 2 (Winter 1978), 207, 240.
8. *Ibid.*, 219–20, 234–35.
9. *Ibid.*

This diffusion of settlement and the land ownership patterns that evolved in the mountains during the nineteenth century served to minimize the establishment of organized communities and formal social institutions. Politics and religion were the two major opportunities for mountain residents to engage in organized community life, but these institutions were themselves organized along kinship lines. Local political factions divided according to kin groups, and local churches developed as communions of extended family units. Both institutions reflected the importance of personal relationships and local autonomy in their operation and structure. Tied by rather tenuous bonds to the larger society (as was evident during the Civil War), the mountain population reflected the values and social patterns characterizing most premodern rural communities.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The absense of highly structured communities and formal social institutions contributed to the evolution of a comparatively open and democratic social order in the mountains. Not until late in the nineteenth century did significant economic differences begin to create conscious class distinctions among mountain residents. Unlike the rest of the South, where the emergence of commercial agriculture spawned a highly stratified social system based on black slavery (and later on tenancy and sharecropping), the self-sufficient, family-based economy of the southern mountains served to inhibit the growth of a rigid social hierarchy.

Most mountaineers owned their own land and occupied and cultivated that land with the manpower provided by their own families. While slavery existed in almost every mountain county before the Civil War and prospered among a few wealthy families in the larger valley communities, the "peculiar institution" never influenced Appalachian culture and society as it did that of the lowland South. In fact, settlements of free blacks thrived in some areas of Appalachia both before and after the war, and their descendants came to have much in common culturally and economically with their white neighbors.[10] Mountain farmers shared a common interest in the land, and its cultivation demanded little technology or capital. The posses-

10. See William Lynwood Montell, *The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study In Oral History* (Knoxville, 1970); Carter G. Woodson, "Freedom and Slavery in Appalachian America," *Journal of Negro History* 1 (April 1916).

sion of a milk cow, a few wandering hogs, some chickens, and a horse or mule was adequate to meet most of the family's needs. "With the help of kin and neighbors, even the poorest man was able to play his part in the hollow settlement."[11]

Status (rather than class) distinctions, therefore, were the more important social divisions in traditional mountain society. These distinctions were functions not of economics (wealth, land ownership, or access to natural resources), but of the value system of the community itself. In remote mountain neighborhoods where economic differences were minimal, measures of social prestige and privilege were based on personality characteristics or such traits as sex, age, and family group. The rural social order was divided not into upper, middle, and lower classes, but into respectable and nonrespectable groups, and each local community determined its own criteria for respectability. This status system, of course, tended to break down in the villages and county seat towns, where class distinctions (and thus class consciousness) were more noticeable.

In the rural areas of Appalachia, the lack of overt class consciousness was reflected in the emergence of strong egalitarian attitudes and beliefs. "The mountain farm family," wrote one observer of rural life, "recognizes no social classes either in the community or out." There were people with whom individuals did not care to associate, she added, "but each family feels itself as good as the best people in the state."[12] Most social events where a large crowd might be present, such as singings and workings, were commonly attended by all who wished to come, regardless of social or moral status.[13] "I'm as good as you are" and "I'm as good as he is" were stock expressions recorded in almost every account of premodern mountain life. As one author romantically phrased it, "A virile sturdy manhood, in the midst of a rugged environment, where the struggle for existence has been so difficult—all these things have fostered within the mountaineer's breast an intense spirit of freedom and independence, common to the dwellers of all highland regions."[14]

Whether or not the spirit of freedom and independence is characteristic of all mountain people, there seems to have emerged in

11. Wilhelm, "Folk Settlements," 239.
12. Nora Miller, *The Girl in the Rural Family* (Chapel Hill, 1935), 24.
13. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander*, 130–31.
14. W.R. Thomas, *Life Among the Hills and Mountains of Kentucky* (Louisville, Ky., 1926), 87.

Appalachia a system of cultural beliefs that preserved what Herbert G. Gutman has called "a vision of Old America—a belief in America as a land of promise and independence" where men could "be their own rulers" and where "no one should or could become their masters."[15] The relative isolation of Appalachian communities from the centralizing forces of the larger society sustained this democratic dream in the mountains long after the passing of the frontier, and the leveling tendencies of the mountain economy made the idea of equality appear to be as much reality as value. Not until the end of the nineteenth century, when industrialization began to bring overt class consciousness to the region, did this democratic ethos begin to conflict with the mountaineer's perceptions of social reality. This conflict between the traditional mountain culture and the industrial social structure created profound and unresolved tensions within the social order.

The dominance of a democratic ethos, however, did not mean the absence of a class structure in nineteenth-century Appalachia. While status consciousness helped to shape the values and beliefs of mountain neighborhoods, especially at the local level, class distinctions did exist in the larger community, county, and region. Like other areas of the upland South, the southern mountain country contained a minority of wealthier, landed families whose economic power and political influence set them off as an elite group. Usually the first to arrive on the land, such families had acquired large land holdings (often as Revolutionary War grants) and by 1830 had emerged as a resident ruling class.[16] More noticeable in the larger valleys and county seat towns, these wealthier families provided the political leadership in the mountains and often controlled local commercial enterprises. Their descendants, having access to resources and educational opportunities in the flatlands, became merchants, teachers, and lawyers, many often specializing in land litigation and speculation.

Although the planter-lawyer-merchant class provided the most visible political leadership, these mountain elites did not acquire the power or influence of their counterparts in the rest of the South. The prevalence of small-scale agriculture limited the number and wealth

15. *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York, 1977), 50–52.
16. Williams, "The New Dominion and the Old," 383.

of mountain elites and placed greater social power in the larger yeoman-farmer class. In matters of state and national politics, small farmers usually deferred to the leadership of the elites, but this leadership was as much a function of the status system as of wealth. Kinship ties, personality characteristics, and oratorical abilities were primary qualifications for leadership in a political system that emphasized oral voting and face-to-face communications. This premodern political culture provided important dialogue between politicians and their public and reserved considerable power over local matters for the yeoman-farmer majority.[17]

Nevertheless, their political influence, access to resources, and contacts with the outside placed mountain elites in a strategic position to benefit from economic change. As intermediaries between the local culture and the larger society, they came to play an important role in the industrialization of the mountains—purchasing land and mineral rights from local people for resale to outsiders, advertising and promoting the development of mountain resources, and encouraging the construction of railroads and other transportation networks. Many, like John Caldwell Calhoun Mayo of eastern Kentucky and George L. Carter of southwest Virginia, acquired large fortunes as a result of their promotional activities, but they also saw their position in the traditional social order displaced as economic change created a new industrial ruling class.

TRANSPORTATION

If anything distinguished the mountain elite from less prosperous neighbors, it was access to good bottomland and to communication and transportation networks. Travel was always difficult in the mountains, as it was throughout rural America, and proximity to transportation arteries facilitated one's entrance into commerce. Prior to the coming of railroads in the late nineteenth century, travel was either by foot, horse, or boat, and those who lived closest to primary turnpikes and streams had a clear economic advantage over those who lived in more remote areas.

17. Williams, "The New Dominion and the Old," 338; McKinney, "Mountain Republicanism, 1876–1900," 182–83.

The heart of the transportation and communication system in the mountains was a network of trails and dirt roads connecting each community with the larger villages and towns and in turn with the nearest marketing centers of the low country. The earliest white settlers found the mountain landscape already interlaced with big game and Indian trails, and the settlers quickly turned these ancient paths into major and minor roads. Continued use gradually widened the narrow roadways, which usually ran along the banks of creeks and rivers and frequently crossed the watercourse as it wound toward the headwaters of another stream. Such roads were usually steep and often muddy and impassable in the winter and spring, but they served the limited needs of early settlers and provided for the emergence of a mature, self-sufficient mountain economy.[18]

The primitive quality of mountain roads seems not to have set the region off from other areas of the United States until the mid-nineteenth century. Poor roads were a fact of life for most rural, open-country neighborhoods, especially in the South, and Appalachia was no exception. After 1830, the construction of railroads and macadam turnpikes began to bring improved transportation facilities to some American communities, but the transportation revolution did not affect most rural roads until the twentieth century. Antebellum investors, public and private, were reluctant to risk money on transportation improvements in the mountains because of the high cost of construction and the limited potential for commerce. Internal improvement projects before the Civil War, therefore, tended to be concentrated in the nonmountainous portions of the southern states, leaving the mountain counties to make do with traditional transportation patterns.[19] On the eve of the Civil War, only one major railroad (the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad) penetrated Appalachia, and it ran down the valley of southwest Virginia, having only marginal impact upon the interior mountain counties.[20] Thus, while technological change and industrial growth expanded

18. See Wilhelm, "Appalachian Isolation," 78–83.

19. Mary Verhoeff, *The Kentucky Mountains, Transportation and Commerce, 1750–1911: A Study in the Economic History of a Coal Field*, Filson Club Publication No. 26, vol. 1 (Louisville, Ky., 1911), 52–53.

20. See John Ford Stover, *The Railroads of the South, 1865–1900: A Study in Finance and Control* (Chapel Hill, 1955). Northern Appalachia, especially Pennsylvania, western Maryland, and northern West Virginia, was penetrated by several major railroads in the years before the Civil War, the most notable of which was the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad through northern West Virginia.

transportation facilities in other areas of the nation, there matured in Appalachia a traditional transportation network that met the needs primarily of local and regional, rather than national, markets.

The matrix of trails and roads connecting backcountry communities was part of a regional market system that reached full development in the major turnpikes and "stock roads" that ran throughout the region. Major arteries such as the Kanawha Turnpike in southern West Virginia, the Owingsville and Big Sandy Turnpike in eastern Kentucky, the Wilderness Road serving southwest Virginia and southern Kentucky, and the Buncombe Turnpike in western North Carolina provided a fairly constant stream of traffic eastward and westward that sustained a limited regional commerce and kept the mountains in touch with the low country. Each year, drivers herded thousands of head of cattle, sheep, hogs, chickens, and turkeys over these main stock roads, destined for sale on the great tobacco and cotton plantations of the South. Through the small mountain town of Asheville, North Carolina, for example, there passed annually from 140,000 to 160,000 hogs traveling from farms in Tennessee and Kentucky to markets in South Carolina and Georgia.[21]

The heavy traffic on these turnpikes constituted an important market for local mountain farmers. Not only did the farmers sell their surplus livestock to the passing drivers, but they commonly raised corn and produce to feed the animals and human travelers as they passed through. Along the road, local merchants established stockades or "stands" where the animals could be fed and watered and where travelers could find overnight accommodations. These wayside facilities developed into local trade centers where farmers exchanged corn and other products for retail goods. As late as the 1880s, such establishments provided connections for the mail service and for stagecoach lines, as well as serving as the hub of commercial life for surrounding communities.

Many of these retail establishments were located at points where stock roads paralleled or crossed major streams, and after the Civil War their proprietors began increasingly to use water transportation to supplement the land trade. The larger mountain rivers west of the Blue Ridge, such as the Kanawha, Big Sandy, and Cumberland, were navigable for short distances by steamboats and for many miles

21. F.A. Sondley, *A History of Buncombe County, North Carolina* (Asheville, N.C., 1930), 619.

into their headwaters by small flatbottomed boats called "batteaus." The Big Sandy River between eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia, for example, was navigable by large steamboats for about one hundred miles and by shallow-draft steamboats for an additional hundred miles up the Levisa Fork and about ninety miles up the Tug Fork.[22] In the late nineteenth century, traffic along the river was very heavy, including at least six steamboats that transported goods and people from Catlettsburg on the Ohio River to Pikeville in the interior.[23] From commercial centers such as Pikeville, goods were then shipped overland by wagon or on push boats, which were poled upstream and rafted downstream, going from settlement to settlement. Until the coming of railroads, navigation by batteau and other craft was an important means of commerce for remote mountain communities; provisions such as refined sugar, spices, tools, and arms and ammunition were brought in by boats that took out agricultural products.

Rivers and streams, as well as roads and turnpikes, also provided a means for the movement and migration of mountain people within and out of the Appalachian region. From the earliest settlement, there was considerable movement of some mountain families within the region, from farm to farm and from one hollow to another. Squatters and small landowners often traded farms or cleared new land in the next valley or on the other side of the mountain. The relative ease with which a young highland family moved its few material possessions and the independent, loosely structured nature of mountain communities facilitated such movement as long as there was open land available.[24] "Allured by rumors from the West," large numbers of mountain families joined the great westward migration of the mid-nineteenth century, settling in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Nebraska. Many of these outmigrants remained in the West, but a few always returned home "from love of the mountains."[25] This process of outmigration and periodic return of relatives

22. Jean Thomas, *Big Sandy* (New York, 1940), 5–6.

23. Ernest Willis Gibson, "The Economic History of Boyd County, Kentucky" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Kentucky, 1929), 36.

24. Marion Pearsall, "Some Frontier Origins of Southern Appalachian Culture," *Kentucky Folklore Record 8* (1962), 43; Campbell, *The Southern Highlander*, 133; James Lane Allen, "Through Cumberland Gap on Horseback," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 73 (June 1886), 58.

25. See Allen, "Through Cumberland Gap," 62; Marion V. Rambo, "The Submerged Tenth Among the Southern Mountaineers," *Methodist Review* 87 (July

served as a further means of communication between the mountains and the outside world.

Most mountain families, therefore, were not isolated in the fullest sense of the word. Traditional patterns of land and water transportation provided opportunities for contact and trade with other communities and with the rest of the nation, but travel was always difficult and usually time-consuming. Mountaineers commonly walked for miles over rugged terrain to a store or mill and then returned the same day. Packing "a lazy man's load" of a bushel of corn on each shoulder to a mill ten to fifteen miles away was a weekly experience for many mountain folk.[26] Such difficulties in transportation naturally limited the participation of mountain farmers in the national market economy and served to reinforce the vitality of the self-sufficient family farm.

ECONOMY

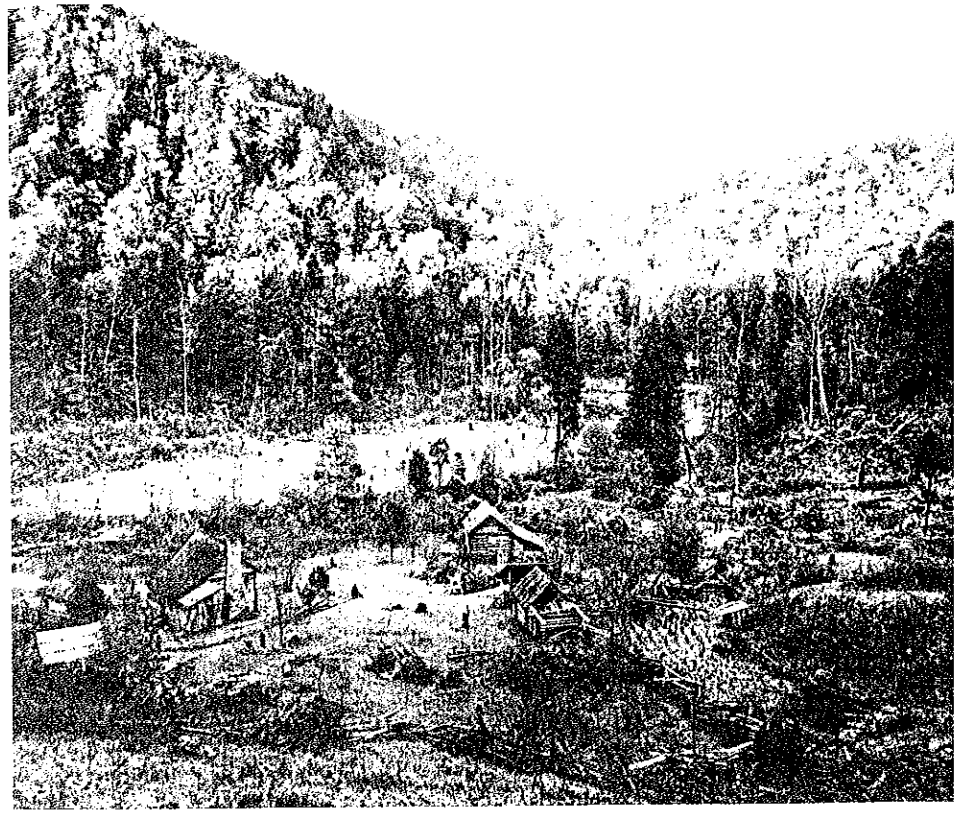
The backbone of the preindustrial Appalachian economy was the family farm. Each mountain homestead functioned as a nearly self-contained economic unit, depending upon the land and the energy of a single family to provide food, clothing, shelter, and the other necessities of life. Unlike agrarian sections of the Midwest and nonmountain South that had moved steadily toward dependence on a single cash crop, mountain family farms remained essentially diversified and independent, producing primarily for their own use. By 1880, Appalachia contained a greater concentration of noncommercial family farms than any other area of the nation.

The typical mountain farm of the preindustrial period consisted of a disparate mixture of bottomland and rugged mountainside. The average farm in 1880 contained about 187 acres, of which about 25 percent was cultivated, about 20 percent in cleared pasture, and the remainder in virgin forest.[27] Dotted by numerous springs and crossed by at least one creek or branch, the highland farm was blessed with

1905), 556; Williams, "The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction," 161; Bina Lorina Morris-Orr, "Life of Bina Lorina Morris-Orr," MS No. 111, Emory and Henry College, 1–4; Maristan Chapman, "The Mountain Man," *Century* 117 (Feb. 1929), 511.

26. Horace Kephart, "Journals," vol. 1, University Archives, Hunter Library, Western Carolina Univ.

27. U.S. Department of Interior, Census Office, *The Tenth Census: 1880, Agricultural Statistics*, III.



Mountain Farm, Hurricane Fork, Washington County, Tennessee. Courtesy of the Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

excellent water, a mild climate, and a long growing season seldom threatened by early frost. Corn was the staple crop, occupying about 50 percent of the acreage under cultivation, but oats and wheat were also harvested, as well as hay, sorghum, rye, potatoes, buckwheat, and other crops. Every farm had its vegetable garden, beehive, and apple orchard, and often a variety of pear, plum, cherry, or other fruit trees. Wild blackberries and huckleberries were abundant, as well as rabbits, squirrels, quail, and other wild game. By the late nineteenth century, large portions of the mountain hillsides had been cleared (usually by burning or girdling the trees) for raising cattle, sheep,

mules, and fowl. But the greatest proportion of the farm, including the "public land" that surrounded it, remained in woodland, and it was here that the family hogs grazed throughout much of the year.[28]

Such farms offered full support and sustenance for mountain families, which often numbered from eight to twelve individuals, including children, parents, and occasionally a grandparent or other relative. Large families were an economic necessity as well as a social boon on remote mountain farms, since they lightened the load of farm operation. In the years following the Civil War, Appalachian farms supported one of the highest birth rates of any area of the country—a fact contributing significantly to the steady rise of population in the region.[29] The family work unit, with the aid of a horse or a pair of mules, provided all the labor necessary to sustain a simple and comfortable life. As one observer noted, "An intelligent and industrious family, no matter how isolated, [could] raise most of its 'living.' "[30]

The daily operation of the farm centered on the growing of all of the vegetables that the family used: corn, beans, and potatoes for the table, field corn for fattening the hogs, hay for feeding the livestock, and small grains such as oats and wheat for flour. Planting, cultivating, and harvesting were done by hand, since simple tools and traditional agricultural techniques proved most practical on the mountainous terrain. "All of the wheat, all the heavy grains were cut with a cradle which required the help of a lot of people . . . and most of the grass for hay was cut with a scythe and harvested in that way . . . raked, and stacked."[31]

The kitchen garden was the mainstay of the food supply, and mountain gardens were often quite large. "Usually they were worked by the wife or the women folks in the family with the help of the men

28. For descriptions of preindustrial mountain agriculture, see Raine, *The Land of Saddle-Bags* 230; Allen "Through Cumberland Gap," 50–59; Warner, "On Horseback," 88–100; Judge Watson, "The Economic and Cultural Development of Eastern Kentucky from 1900 to the Present" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana Univ., 1963), 8–9; Bureau of Agricultural and Labor Statistics of the State of Kentucky, *Biennial Reports*, vols. 1–9 (Frankfort, Ky., 1876–1892).

29. Edward Alsworth Ross, "Pocketed Americans," *New Republic* 37 (9 Jan. 1924), 171. See also Hal Seth Baron, "A Case for Appalachian Demographic History," *Appalachian Journal* 4 (Spring-Summer 1977), 211–12.

30. Raine, *The Land of Saddle-Bags*, 230.

31. Dr. C.C. Hatfield, Saltville, Va., n.d., interview, transcript by Jeane Seay (Emory and Henry Oral History Project, File 25, Emory and Henry College, Emory, Va.), 35–36.

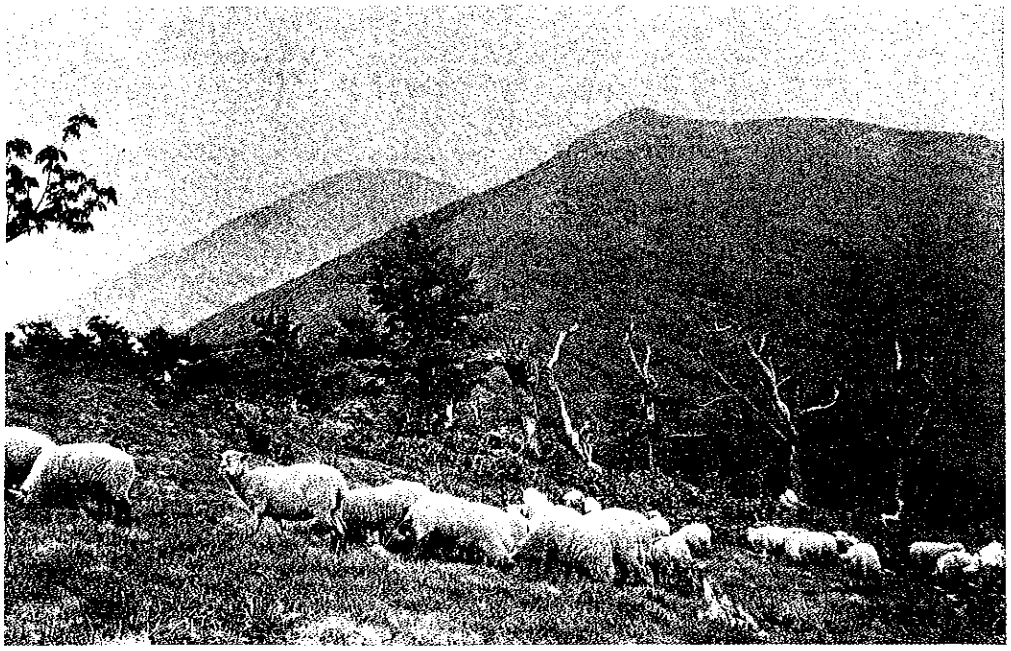
for the heavier work such as cultivating with the horse."[32] Plowing was accomplished by use of a single-horse bull tongue or hillside turning plow, and early cultivation consisted of simply plowing between the rows. There was not a wide variety of vegetables in the garden, but there was a large quantity of them, with corn being the most plentiful crop. Over the years, mountain farmers devised unique methods for utilizing limited garden space and for the efficient use of manpower. Green beans, pumpkins, melons, squash, and other vegetables were often planted in with the corn and allowed to grow under or on the cornstalks. Since the corn was worked by hand, "you could very well plant other crops in the corn, especially beans."[33] Thinning and hoeing the garden in late spring was an activity in which the whole family often took part.

Along with the garden crops, the self-sufficient mountain farm also maintained a variety of livestock that provided food, clothing, and other household needs. No farm was without two or three milk cows, a flock of hens, several mules or work oxen, and a drove of shoat pigs. Sheep raised on the rocky hillsides afforded wool that was carded, dyed, spun, and woven into cloth or knit into stockings or carpets for the floor. Geese were kept both to control insects around the house and for their down, which was plucked annually and made into bed ticks and pillows. Even the pack of dogs that commonly "lounged around the cabin door" had its function. More than just pets, dogs were used for hunting as well as for protection and for regulation of rabbits, groundhogs, and other field pests. Before the passage of "progressive" fish and game laws, year-round hunting in the surrounding forests was an important supplement to the family food supply, and a good hunting dog was as vital to the livelihood of the farm as the family milk cow.

The raising of livestock was also the principal commercial enterprise in the mountains before industrialization, and it provided mountain farmers with the means of acquiring the few goods that could not be raised or produced on the farm. According to historian Frank L. Owsley, some of the best grazing land in the South was to be found in the mountains, where the mast from chestnut, oak, and other nut-bearing trees was abundant. "In fact," wrote Owsley, "more cattle,

32. *Ibid.*, 36.

33. *Ibid.*, 36. See also Watson, "Economic and Cultural Development of Eastern Kentucky," 9.



Sheep Grazing on a High Mountain Pasture in Western North Carolina. Courtesy of the Appalachian Collection, Mars Hill College.

swine, and sheep per capita were raised in the Appalachians, the Cumberland Plateau, and the Ozarks than in the bluegrass basins of Kentucky and Tennessee."[34] Livestock was commonly turned out into the woodland or driven over the ridge to pastures or high grassy balds. Split-rail fences enclosed the garden and other field crops, allowing the livestock to run wild on the hillsides. A traveler in eastern Kentucky in 1889 reported that the hillsides were "full of sheep . . . draught mules and beef, milk cattle, and steers." These were driven in the fall "over the breaks to Virginia and down into the Bluegrass country, finding ready markets." Large flocks of turkeys were also collected each autumn, "300 to 500 in a gang," and driven

34. *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Chicago, 1965), 45. See also Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, II (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), 876, 884.

to flatland markets where they brought from three to five cents per pound.[35]

While cattle, sheep, and other livestock were grazed in large numbers, hogs were most important to the preindustrial mountain economy, "for the hardwood growth produced immense crops of chestnuts, acorns, walnuts, and hickory nuts, and in the rich, narrow valleys excellent corn could be grown."[36] Hogs were allowed to fatten on the mast in the forest until late fall, when they were brought in and fed on corn for several weeks to harden the flesh. Half a dozen hogs were then slaughtered and placed in the smokehouse for the family's needs, and the rest were traded or sold to passing drovers. The annual production of hogs in the mountain counties of southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, southwest Virginia, western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and northeast Georgia reached almost one and a quarter million head in1880, before the sawmills cut the timber and eliminated the woodlands as pasture for hog productions.[37] Prior to the coming of the timber industry and the purchase of woodlands by private corporations, the southern Appalachian Mountains were one of the major hog-producing areas of the United States.

In addition to raising hogs and other livestock, mountain farmers supplemented their income by occasionally cutting timber and gathering roots and herbs. Beginning in the late antebellum period, local farmers cut selected trees from the banks of the larger rivers and floated the timber to sawmills downstream. This small-scale logging provided off-season work and an opportunity to trade at the mercantile centers, but until late in the century it returned only a meager income to most farmers. Some families with larger numbers of males in the household operated small sawmills for homes and outbuildings. Occasionally, an individual specialized in making chairs, splitting shingles for roofing and siding, or cutting fence posts and traded these items to neighbors for similar goods or services.

For many mountain families, however, a more important activity was the gathering of medicinal herbs and roots, especially ginseng, from the forests. During the late summer, before the crops were harvested, families spent much of their "lay-by" time collecting

35. Goldsmith Bernard West, "A Revolution: Capital Pouring into Eastern Kentucky," *Manufacturers' Record* 16 (10 Aug. 1889), 24.

36. Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South*, 46.

37. Based upon analysis of 112 counties. U.S. Department of Interior, Census Office, *The Tenth Census: 1880, Agricultural Statistics*, III.

ginseng, yellow-root, witch hazel, sassafras, galax, golden-seal, and bloodroot. Most local merchants were willing to accept these plant products in exchange for store commodities. After drying and packaging the plants, the merchants then shipped them to redistribution centers in Philadelphia, New York, and Cincinnati. Between 1880 and 1900, the price paid by merchants for a pound of ginseng ranged from two to five dollars.[38] One Logan County, West Virginia, merchant advertised in 1890 that "a pound of seng will get you a good pair of boots or a fine suit of clothes, and the girls can find some of the cheapest dress goods ever sold."[39]

Mountain residents seldom received cash for their surplus livestock, roots and herbs, or other commercial products. Like other parts of rural America in the late nineteenth century, the mountains were lacking in legal tender money, and barter became almost the sole means of exchange. Even after the resumption of specie payments in 1878, the problem of inadequate money supply continued to be felt in the region. The scarcity of banking facilities contributed to the difficulty. Some banks were established in county seat towns before the Civil War, but the war destroyed most of these banks, and they never reopened.[40] Until industrialization brought a boom in bank formation after the turn of the century, the buying and selling of goods was conducted on a product-for-product basis. The center of this barter economy was the local merchant, who exchanged retail commodities for surplus agricultural products and extended credit. Other businesses, including the hundreds of neighborhood mills in the region, operated on a similar basis, providing services in exchange for part of the product itself. This form of commerce reinforced the autonomy of the local market system and provided mountain communities with considerable freedom from the fluctuations of the national cash economy.

38. Ellen Churchill Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains: A Study in Anthropogeography," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 42, no. 8 (1910), 580.

39. Logan County *Banner*, 14 Aug. 1890, quoted in Edwin Albert Cubby, "The Transformation of the Tug and Guyandot Valleys: Economic Development and Social Change in West Virginia, 1888–1921" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse Univ., 1962), 129.

40. See Hugh Asher Howard, "Chapters in the Economic History of Knox County, Kentucky" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Kentucky, 1937), 116–17; Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains," 580–81.

MATERIAL CULTURE

The independence and self-sufficiency of the mountain homestead was evident not only in the economic system but in the material culture and social life of the region as well. From the earliest settlement, mountain residents relied almost entirely upon abundant timber, stone, and other natural resources for the construction of homes, barns, tools, furniture, and farm implements, and upon the fellowship of neighbors and kin for most social activities. Everything about the mountain homestead reflected a society that had adapted to and harmonized with its surroundings by making effective use of local resources and by altering traditional cultural patterns to fit new physical conditions. Within this environment emerged a regional culture with strong attachments to the land and a profound sense of place. The land, the homestead, one's kin, and one's neighbors formed the matrix for the daily lives of most mountaineers and the context from which they would confront the social patterns of the new industrial age.

Perhaps no other aspect of Appalachian culture reflected this accommodation to environment more than the mountain homestead itself. The hand-hewn log cabin, which with the help of local color writers became the very symbol of traditional mountain life, exemplified utility, simplicity, and permanence. Such cabins were not the only type of housing in the Appalachian region, but, as in most remote rural areas of the eastern United States, the log structure was the predominant building type until late in the nineteenth century. While timber was abundant on every mountain homestead, the long distances to sawmills made the construction of frame structures impractical outside of the villages and valley communities before the 1880s and 1890s. In the most sequestered hollows and coves of the region, log cabins continued to be built well into the twentieth century.

Most Appalachian log cabins were constructed of shaped pine timbers, notched at the ends and carefully mortised. The space between adjoining logs was commonly chinked with split pieces of wood trimmed and driven into the cracks and then daubed with mud or a limestone and rock mixture. Split white oak shingles covered the roof, and the floor consisted of shaved chestnut slabs (puncheons), trimmed smooth on top and fitted together on rough-hewn sills. Windows were absent in most early log homes, although they became

popular after the Civil War, as did porches extending along the front and sometimes the back of the cabin, adding "a picturesque effect to the whole" structure.[41] Most chimneys were built of native stone cemented with clay, but the poorer cabins often had "stick chimneys" made of laths daubed with clay and tilted away from the cabin in case of fire. Built entirely by hand with simple tools and natural materials, the mountain log cabin was a plain but usually sturdy and durable structure. "It was the kind of a house," wrote Emma Belle Miles, "that a tornado might roll over and over in one piece and leave about as solid as before."[42]

Most early cabins consisted of one large room, with a loft above and often a "shed room" added to the back for additional space. The single open room served as kitchen, bedroom, and living area for the entire family and occasionally for a traveler or guest. Later, if the family prospered, another room might be built adjacent to the original structure, forming a double or "dog-trot" cabin with a covered entry or porch between. This open-room type of construction limited privacy, but it strengthened family unity and provided for simple and efficient heating in the winter. During the summer months, when the thick-walled cabin could be uncomfortably warm, the family spent most of the daylight hours out-of-doors—in the fields, on the porch, or under the shade of surrounding trees.

Interior design was equally simple. Closets were few, if not totally absent, in mountain cabins, and clothes along with the rest of the family's possessions were hung on pegs in the walls. Initially, furniture was handmade, consisting of tables, chairs, cupboards, and rope beds. But increasingly after the 1840s, iron cook stoves, washtubs, kettles, and other manufactured goods became commonplace. Travelers in the 1880s and 1890s even reported "discovering" pianos, organs, and fine carpets in some mountain cabins miles away from the nearest railroad, and one outlander was astonished to find "live gold fish in a glass tank" at a mountain residence in what he called "the most isolated spot this side of the Rockies."[43] More common, however, were the basic necessities of a self-sufficient life: the small flax wheel, the larger spinning wheel, the hand loom, and their products, the colorful mountain quilts and coverlets which adorned the walls, chairs, and beds.

41. Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains," 569.
42. *The Spirit of the Mountains* (New York, 1905), 77.
43. John Fox, Jr., *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron* (New York, 1906), 160–63.

A Mountain Cabin, Madison County, North Carolina. Courtesy of the Appalachian Collection, Mars Hill College.

The location of the cabin was as important to the mountain family as the structure itself. Building under a sheltered north slope rather than on the ridge top protected the house from winter winds and facilitated access to water and roads. Good water was a commodity valued by mountain farmers, and the site chosen for the cabin was usually as near as possible to a spring. In open-country mountain settlements, houses were seldom constructed within sight of each other but, instead, were spread out, each in its own separate hollow or cove. Solitude and privacy were such dominant cultural values that they fostered dispersed settlement patterns and the continual penetration of the deeper mountain wilderness long after the passing of the

frontier. As one mountain woman recalled, "We who live so far apart that we rarely see more of one another than the blue smoke of each other's chimneys are never at ease without the feel of the forest on every side—room to breathe, to expand, to develop, as well as to hunt and to wander at will. The nature of the mountaineer demands that he have solitude for the unhampered growth of his personality, wing-room for his eagle heart."[44]

Sequestered as they were, mountain residents nevertheless took considerable pride in the neatness and comfort of the homestead. Far from being dreary or monotonous, the mountain home had its flower garden, daffodils, lilies, dahlias, and sunflowers, and in the spring nature provided a floral mosaic of dogwood, redbud, flag-lilies, larkspur, devil-in-the-bush, and hundreds of other wildflowers. Boxwoods, grown from sprigs carried from England by the earliest pioneers, could be found around every cabin door, and, although the yard was usually bare of grass, it would be "swept smooth and pretty" throughout most of the year. Journalists who traveled through the mountains found a certain charm in this tranquil setting that influenced their romantic descriptions of highland life.[45]

All mountain homes, however, were not cabins, although this fact was generally overlooked by the local-color writers. One- and two-story frame houses began to be constructed in the more established valley communities as early as the 1830s, and they became popular throughout the region after the Civil War. Sometimes built over existing one-room log cabins, frame houses were made increasingly feasible by the construction of neighborhood sawmills. By the 1880s, frame structures were almost as numerous as log cabins in many areas of the mountains.[46]

The larger frame houses were similar to farm dwellings constructed throughout the South during this period, consisting of from four to twelve rooms stacked on two levels, with a stairwell in the

44. Miles, *The Spirit of the Mountains*, 19–20; Campbell, *The Southern Highlander*, 87.

45. See Charles Egbert Craddock (Mary Noailles Murfree), *In the Tennessee Mountains* (Boston, 1892), 17–18; Muriel Earley Sheppard, *Cabins in the Laurel* (Chapel Hill, 1935), 1–2; Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains," 517; Campbell, *The Southern Highlander*, 72, 123.

46. Hariette Wood, "The Kentucky Mountaineers: A Study of Four Counties of Southeastern Kentucky" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of North Carolina, 1930), 32; Thomas, *Life Among the Hills*, 1–2; H. Paul Douglass, *Christian Reconstruction in the South* (Boston, 1909), 315.

middle and rock chimneys on either side. Each room had its own fireplace and its own door opening onto long double porches, which ran the length of the house in front and occasionally in back. The exterior of the house was covered with unpainted lapboard siding, and the interior floors were made of finished lumber. The interior walls of these mountain farm houses were usually panelled with milled chestnut, pine, or other boards and decorated with photographs, tintypes, or prints from magazines. Furnishings, even in the wealthier houses, continued to be primarily handmade until after the turn of the century, although in the larger homes the pieces were more lavish and diverse.[47]

Those who could not afford to build the double-frame house, however, increasingly constructed smaller "box houses" consisting of two to four rooms on a single level. Built of undressed planks set up vertically with "weather strips" covering the cracks between the boards, the frame box house was similar in many ways to the traditional log cabin. One or two fireplaces provided the heat for the structure, and a room was usually set off in the back for a kitchen. The ever-present porch extended across the front of the house, giving the dwelling a cabinlike atmosphere. The box house became the prevailing house type in the region near the turn of the century, after the coming of the timber industry made lumber more readily available.[48]

Although they were not the lavish windowed and screened houses that had begun to emerge in urban America in the late nineteenth century, most mountain houses were sturdy, warm, and comfortable. Above all, they fitted the value system of the mountain people themselves. In a region where most living took place out-of-doors, the cabin served primarily as an eating and sleeping place, a place of shelter and security. The close relationship to the land that evolved as a major cultural trait among mountain people was reflected in the construction and environment of the house as it was in no other aspect of their material culture. The cabin helped to shape and strengthen that basic unit of social life—the family. The coming of industrialization, with its introduction of a new material culture and an urban form

47. Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains," 571; Wood, "The Kentucky Mountaineers," 32; Leonard W. Brinksman, "Home Manufacturers as an Indication of an Emerging Appalachian Subculture, 1840–1870," *West Georgia College Studies in the Social Sciences* 12 (June 1973), 50–58.

48. Wood, "The Kentucky Mountaineers," 32.

of life in the company towns, brought dramatic changes in the living patterns of many mountaineers and resulted in adaptations and adjustments in the family and the traditional culture.

FAMILISM

In preindustrial Appalachia, as in most traditional rural societies, the family was the central organizing force of social life. Not only was the family the basic economic unit within the self-sufficient agricultural setting, but kinship set the matrix within which politics and government, as well as organizations for religion, education, and sociability, developed. The influence of the family and kin groups was felt in almost every aspect of mountain life. For the mountaineer, the collective welfare of the family was a primary value, and "individual needs were subordinated to the needs of the family."[49]

The importance of familism in the social order did not mean that the Appalachian family was an extended family unit. Contrary to the popular image of the region, which would have a dominant patriarch "sternly ruling over a large household of adult offspring and their spouses and children," the basic kin group in the mountains was the nuclear family.[50] Like those in other areas of the nation, most Appalachian households consisted of a husband, a wife, and their dependent children. Only occasionally would this nuclear unit include a grandparent, a single aunt, or other relative. What made the mountain family pattern distinctive, however, was the emphasis placed upon maintaining close ties with an extended network of kin. The nuclear family, while functioning as a separate unit, was in fact enmeshed in a larger network of kin relationships that formed the substance of community life.[51]

Next to the basic function of reproduction, the primary responsibil-

49. Harry K. Schwarzweller, "Social Change and the Individual in Rural Appalachia," in John D. Photiadis and Harry K. Schwarzweller, eds., *Change In Rural Appalachia: Implications for Action Programs* (Philadelphia, 1970), 54.

50. George L. Hicks, *Appalachian Valley* (New York, 1976), 35.

51. Hicks, *Appalachian Valley*, 35. See also John B. Stephenson, *Shiloh: A Mountain Community* (Lexington, Ky., 1968), 43–90; Elmora Messer Matthews, *Neighbor and Kin: Life in a Tennessee Ridge Community* (Nashville, 1965), 3–9; Harry K. Schwarzweller, James S. Brown, and J.J. Managalam, *Mountain Families in Transition: A Case Study of Appalachian Migration* (University Park, Pa., 1971), 23–44.

ity of the preindustrial family was economic, the procurement of the means of subsistence for family members. In the southern mountains, the family not only functioned as a self-contained economic unit, but it dominated the economic system itself. The mountain farm was a family enterprise, the family being the proprietor, laborer, and manager; the satisfaction of the needs of the family was the sole objective of running the farm. "The size of the holding, the kind of crops produced, the division of labor, were all dependent for the most part upon the size of the family and its consumption needs; and everything was organized in such a way that the family itself was able to satisfy all its needs in respect to food, beverages, clothing, shelter, and tools by the utilization of its own forces."[52]

As part of a working and consuming unit, therefore, family members were dependent upon each other for their well-being. The heavier work of clearing land and building houses was shared by every able member of the nuclear family and often by neighbors and kin on the basis of mutual aid. In the daily rhythms of farm life, each family member had his or her own well-defined role and responsibilities. Individuals were free to pursue their own needs and interests, but these were not allowed to displace the collective needs of the group. Obligations to the family came first, and this economic condition created intense family loyalties that not only insured the survival of the group, but also provided a strong feeling of security and belonging for individuals.

This close-knit family system also proved to be an effective means of education and socialization in the mountains, especially after Reconstruction, when the organized educational system deteriorated from neglect and discrimination by the state governments. In a society where occupational specialization was low and where social relationships were informal, personal, and spontaneous, the family provided both practical on-the-job training and experience in interpersonal relations. What formal education the mountain youth acquired in the nineteenth century usually occurred in the small community school, which was often taught by an aunt or an uncle and attended primarily by neighbors and kin. Opportunities for higher education were always available outside the mountains (and in some

52. Pitirim A. Sorokin, Carle C. Zimmerman, and Charles J. Galpin, *A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology* (Minneapolis, 1931), 124.

cases within), but with few exceptions only the wealthier families could afford such luxuries. For most mountaineers, education took place within the familiar setting of the family and community, and this type of education provided continuity for the culture, reinforcing traditional values and beliefs.[53]

Other social institutions functioned in a similar manner. Religion was organized around family and kinship units, with single families dominating the neighborhood church. These family churches maintained strict independence from mainline denominations and usually drew their ministers from the local congregations. Religious beliefs and practices varied from community to community and from church to church, and differences over doctrine and interpretation of the scriptures led to a proliferation of small churches throughout the region.[54] The mountain church, as an extension of the family, served as an important medium of social control, legitimizing and sustaining the mores of the community. In rural areas where law enforcement was sparse, the family and the family church were responsible for policing the wrongdoing of community members. Transgressions against the social mores left a mark not only upon the individual, but upon the larger family unit; consequently, the kin group functioned to control such transgressions. Thus, social order was maintained not so much through legal institutions and governmental agencies as through kinship and primary group relationships.

Politics, too, bore the influence of the family system, for the basic unit of political organization was the kin group. Family membership rather than economic class determined the voting patterns of mountain communities, and family patriarchs became the brokers of local political power. Office-seekers measured their support by the size of their family, neighbors, and kin, and officeholders considered the interests of family to be their most important political debt. Nepotism became a privilege, if not a right, of election and helped to cement the power of the family group. Such a system led to inefficiency, incompetence, and fragmentation of authority within local government, but it allowed for a high rate of political participation and a feeling of

53. See David H. Looff, *Appalachia's Children: The Challenge of Mental Health* (Lexington, Ky., 1971), 116; Stephenson, *Shiloh*, 54–55; U.S. Bureau of Education, *A Statistical Study of the Public Schools of the Southern Appalachian Mountains*, by Norman Frost, Bulletin No. 11 (Washington, D.C., 1915), 10–22.

54. See Elizabeth R. Hooker, *Religion in the Highlands* (New York, 1933); Earl D.C. Brewer, "Religion and the Churches," in Thomas R. Ford, ed., *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* (Lexington, Ky., 1967), 201–81.

local control.[55] Throughout most of the nineteenth century, moreover, the influence of government on the lives of individuals was marginal and much less overt than the power of the family group itself.

The strength and cohesiveness of the family, as reflected in religion, education, and the political system, was made possible by the interdependence of age and sex roles in the mountains. As in most traditional societies, roles and expectations for each family member were clearly defined, and, although they were beyond the control of the individual, they provided rights and privileges for individuals as well as obligations to the family group. Influence and authority, for example, grew with age for men and women, and older citizens were usually afforded considerable respect and esteem. Youth was a time of comparative freedom, although children were expected to do their share of the farm work and to contribute to the welfare of the family. Maturity, however, brought with it increased responsibilities and hard work, and it was during the mature years that sex roles were most clearly and unequally defined.

Mountain society was most certainly a patriarchal society. Adult white males held the greatest power, privilege, and freedom within the social order. Men controlled the political system, held most of the property, and made most of the final decisions in family matters. They were responsible for the heavy work around the farm—clearing land, plowing, planting, tending the livestock, and general construction—and they were the principal traders and negotiators with the outside world. They were free to travel, and they spent much of their time in the woods, hunting and fishing both for pleasure and necessity. In times of special need, women might assist in activities supposedly alloted to men, but men were expected almost never to do women's work. Interests outside the domestic realm were the primary responsibility of men, and they were trained from an early age to assume the obligations and rewards of the dominant role.

Women's roles were more clearly confined to the home, and this led many urban observers to consider the lives of mountain women to be narrow, dull, and oppressive. Women seldom traveled far from home, except during migrations of the entire family, and during their reproductive years, they were usually burdened with the respon-

55. See Robert M. Ireland, *Little Kingdoms: The Counties of Kentucky, 1850–1891* (Lexington, Ky., 1977).

sibilities of running a large household. In addition to the daily activities of cooking, cleaning, spinning, weaving material for clothes, knitting stockings, and making quilts and blankets, the mountain woman fed and milked the cows, slopped the hogs, fed the chickens, hoed the corn, carried water from the spring, washed clothes in an iron kettle in the side yard, and gathered and chopped wood for the fire and the stove. In her younger years, she often bore a child a year and was primarily responsible for the health and discipline of ten to fifteen children.[56] It is not surprising, therefore, that many mountain women looked prematurely old and that many died at an early age. "The woman," wrote Nora Miller, "lived a life of physical labor and drudgery. Her faith in a reward in the next world for sufferings and work well done on earth is about all the encouragement or incentive which she has for living."[57]

But the life of the mountain woman, though hard, was not without its rewards. In the preindustrial social setting, the woman was the most important figure in the basic social unit, the family. Her role and responsibilities within the domestic realm granted her significant authority over the household, respect in the community, and a strong sense of identity and personal gratification. The "men folk" were often away for weeks at a time working, trading, or hunting, and the women were left to run the family farm. Social gatherings such as church, dances, quilting bees, corn shuckings, and the like provided numerous opportunities for interaction with neighbors and kin and helped to develop a feeling of community and interdependence among the women of the settlement. Ties were strong and enduring, and life was meaningful within the limitations prescribed by the culture. There were few opportunities, however, for self-expression and recognition outside the family and kin group.

For men and women in the southern mountains, kinship defined the fabric of personal behavior and social life. It determined the interactions among people, shaped individual identities, and provided the arena for community affairs. In a region where formal social ties were few, familism served to a marked degree as the essence of the community itself.

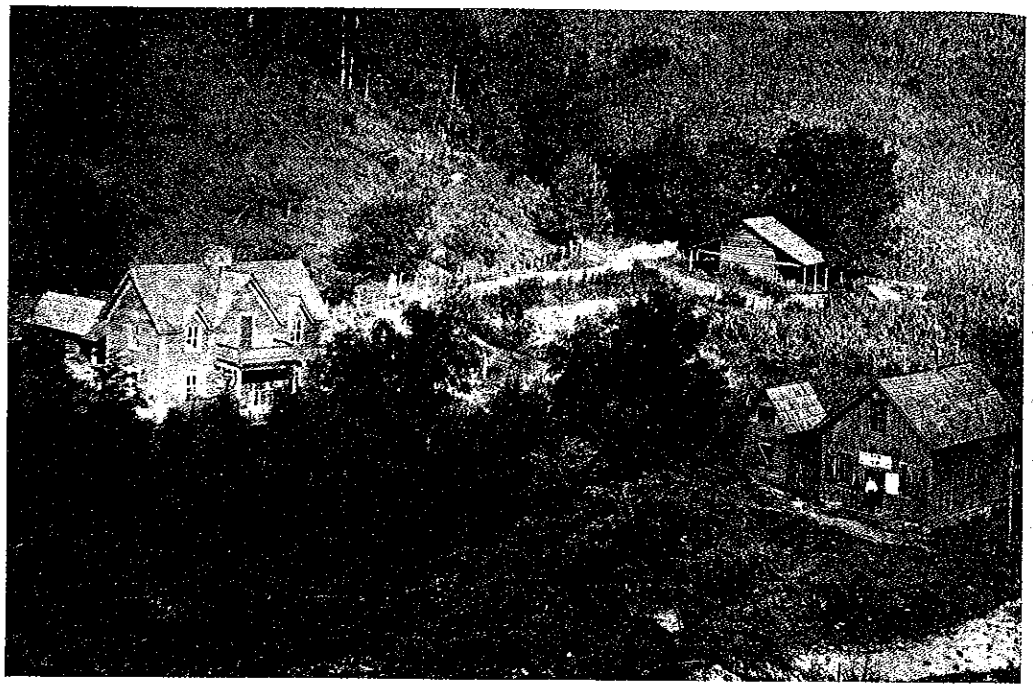
56. Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains," 568.
57. *The Girl in the Rural Family*, 22.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL LIFE

"There is no such thing as a community of mountaineers," wrote Emma Belle Miles. "They are knit together, man to man, as friends, but not as a body of men. A community, be it settlement or metropolis, must evolve on some kind of axis, and must be held together by a host of intermediate ties coming between the family and the State, and these are not found in the mountains."[58] The dearth of formal relationships and institutions tying mountain residents one to another and to the outside world has led many writers, like Emma Belle Miles, to argue the absence of community altogether in the southern mountains. The rugged terrain and long distances between settlements minimized opportunities for contact outside of the family and kin group and fostered the growth of the much-noted individualism of mountain people. But the scarcity of those types of formal relationships that gave structure to other American neighborhoods does not imply the absence of shared interests, common traditions, or a sense of community in the region. On the contrary, there existed in every mountain cove and hollow an informal network of communications and social activities that operated through the kinship system to provide fellowship, association, and community life.

No part of this informal network had greater influence on the social life of the region than the church. Although services were held infrequently (usually only once or twice a month), church worship, camp meetings, and revivals provided opportunities to visit with neighbors and kin and to share the latest gossip and news. Ministers, when not elected from among the local congregation, were usually circuit riders who served a number of churches and provided an additional avenue for communication among settlements. "Singings" and church services were often all-day affairs that included "dinner on the grounds" following the morning session. Families occasionally traveled up to twenty miles to attend services, and even farther for revivals or special meetings, spending the night with relatives or friends.[59] As one individual recalled, such occasions were cause for much excitement.

58. *The Spirit of the Mountains*, 71.
59. Rebecca Harding Davis, "By-Paths in the Mountains," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 61 (Sept. 1880), 533.



A Store and Merchant's Home, Sodom, North Carolina c 1885. Courtesy of the Appalachian Collection, Mars Hill College.

> When they would have church near our house, I remember as high as thirty or forty people staying and eating and spending the weekend. Mom would take the feather beds off the beds and put them on the floor, and people slept just any place. They were all over the floor. People did a lot of Sunday visiting with the neighbors. I remember almost every Sunday some family ate with us or we went and ate dinner with them. . . .[60]

Weddings, baptisms, reunions, and funerals also brought people together in the common bond of community. Funerals, for example,

60. Panny Hogg Day, Roxana, Ky., interviews by Ricky Day, 1971, Appalachia Oral History Project, Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes, Ky., transcript no. 155A, 7.

were great social events throughout the region. Services were often delayed for several months because of the weather or until an itinerate minister was available, but arrangements would be made some time in advance in order to assure a large gathering. In some localities, funeral meetings were scheduled on a regular basis in the fall and spring, and memorial services would be held for all who had died since the last occasion.[61] Families came from miles around to attend the services, staying with relatives or camping on the church grounds. Large funerals often lasted for several days and included the sermonizing of two or more preachers. Naturally, these gatherings were not ones of deep grief to many of those present. They came "in sober wise as the occasion benefited, but something too in the manner of a holiday when neighbor may visit with neighbor seldom seen and learn the news of the intervening years."[62]

Other opportunities for social intercourse occurred throughout the year, as the rhythms of farm life generated times of celebration and common work. As in most premodern communities, mountain families often gathered to share the heavier work of planting, harvesting, clearing "new ground," or raising cabins and barns. Community "workings" provided an occasion for companionship as well as a way of getting the work done, and they usually turned into major social events.

> They sent out word in the neighborhood and everybody would come. They'd pitch in, and cleared up maybe two or three acres of ground for planting crops in one day. It was called "new ground" . . . and everybody pitched in and cut down the trees. They called it "grubbing." It was a lot easier and nicer to work with a group and get it done than to just linger along by yourself trying to clear three or four acres of ground. . . . All the family would come. The women did the cooking, and I'm telling you it was really cooking.[63]

The harvesting of corn in the fall was an opportunity for a corn shuck or a dance, and the first frost brought the men and older boys together for a hunting party. Women gathered periodically for quilting bees and to assist each other in times of birth, illness, and death. Prior to the establishment of formal institutions of social welfare, the com-

61. Wood, "The Kentucky Mountaineers," 48.
62. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander*, 149.
63. Panny Hogg Day interview, 8–9.

munity worked together to help those with special needs, whether they were the sick, the aged, or the poor. "Helping out" was seen to be an integral responsibility of community life.

The shared responsibilities for work extended into the public as well as the private realm in the preindustrial community. The construction of schoolhouses and other public buildings were often community endeavors, with neighbors providing both labor and materials. Following an old colonial custom, public highways were maintained by the free labor of residents along the way. By law, every male between the ages of sixteen and fifty, "except ministers and the physically handicapped," was required to work the roads each year under an overseer appointed by the county. Each male worked from three to ten days a year, depending on the needs of the county, and was expected to provide his own tools. Failure to comply or to hire a substitute could result in a court fine. The custom proved to be "neither satisfactory nor efficient in the building or maintenance of roads" and was abandoned with the coming of industrialization, but for early mountain neighborhoods, it fostered a greater sense of community and provided another opportunity for social life.[64]

Community spirit and social interaction reached its height, however, in the fevered gatherings of court and election days. The circuit court met in county seat towns two or three times a year, usually in the spring, summer and fall, depending upon the state constitution, and attending court sessions was a major form of entertainment. Families from surrounding areas poured into the county seat towns to listen to the trials, to shop at local stores, to bargain with numerous pack peddlers, and to renew old acquaintances. Wagons often lined the streets into and out of town, and large crowds congregated on the courthouse steps. "During the session, the whole county is practically in town, men, women, and children. They camp there; they attend the trials; they take sides. . . ."[65] In the course of murder trials or other controversial cases, heated discussions occasionally broke out among the listeners, disrupting the trial and spilling the debate over into the town. Arguments between the kin of litigants sometimes ended in violence, assuring a docket for the next court session.

This holiday spirit continued on election days, when large crowds

64. Henry P. Scalf, *Kentucky's Last Frontier* (Pikeville, Ky., 1972), 366; Jim Byrd, Valle Crucis, N.C., interview, Laurel Shackelford and Bill Weinberg, eds., *Our Appalachia: An Oral History* (New York, 1977), 25.
65. Warner, "On Horseback," 99.

gathered to vote or to listen to campaigning politicians. Mountain elections commonly had a high rate of participation, with entire families turning out at the polls. Until the turn of the century, voting was done by voice rather than by secret ballot, and this practice encouraged people to linger at the polls observing the outcome of an election. Local politicians were always available, shaking hands, talking with family leaders, and providing entertainment for those present. This predominantly oral means of communication created a political network in which the transmission of ideas and information was a two-way process. "Unlike those on the receiving end of modern mass communications, listeners at the court day hustings and political entertainments could talk back."[66] Although deference preserved the political hegemony of local notables, it was a personal deference given to individuals who had long been part of the daily life of the community.

Campaign speeches, therefore, were judged primarily for their entertainment value. The ability to call constituents by name and to refer to their life experiences, to play the banjo or fiddle, and to harangue on favorite local issues were important assets on the political stump, and they helped to make election day festivities a prominent feature of community social life. Occasionally, issues were ignored altogether at the hustings, and campaigns degenerated into little more than name-calling and character assassination. But truly vital issues almost never arose in local politics, and national issues seldom attracted major concern.[67] Like other aspects of the mountain social system, politics was simple, informal, and personal. The expenditure of large amounts of money and the detailed explanation of issues were avoided in favor of face-to-face contacts, strong family ties, and long-established membership in the community itself.

By 1880, there had developed in Appalachia political, economic, and social patterns that combined societal traits common to most preindustrial rural communities with distinct cultural characteristics shaped by the long interaction of mountain people with their environment. Mountain culture and society had evolved in an atmosphere that encouraged self-sufficiency, traditionalism, and a certain independence from the larger society. Like other rural American com-

66. Williams, "The New Dominion and the Old," 338.
67. McKinney, "Mountain Republicanism, 1876–1900" 165. See also Williams, "The New Dominion and the Old," 390.

munities in the nineteenth century, mountain neighborhoods were slow to be affected by the centralizing forces of modernization. During the period from 1830 to 1880, when urban growth, commercial expansion, and improved transportation networks began increasingly to move the nation down the road toward a more unified, industrial state, Appalachia remained a peripheral area tied to a conventional way of life.

Two factors, land and family, were interwoven as the basic threads sustaining that fabric of life. For mountain residents, land held a special meaning that combined the diverse concepts of utility and stewardship. While land was something to be used and developed to meet one's needs, it was also the foundation of daily existence, giving form to personal identity, material culture, and economic life. As such, it defined the "place" in which one found security and self-worth. Family, on the other hand, as the central organizing unit of social life, brought substance and order to that sense of place. Strong family ties influenced almost every aspect of the social system, from the primary emphasis upon informal personal relationships to the pervasive egalitarian spirit of local affairs. Familism, rather than the accumulation of material wealth, was the predominant cultural value in the region, and it sustained a lifestyle that was simple, methodical, and tranquil.

This traditional mountain social system became increasingly anachronistic in the rapidly industrializing society of the late nineteenth century. As the forces of industrial capitalism reached out into the peripheral areas of American society, the natural wealth of Appalachia grew more and more attractive. And after 1880, the effort to tap these resources brought about dramatic changes in the mountain social order.

A MAGNIFICENT FIELD FOR CAPITALISTS

IN THE SUMMER of 1888, Charles Dudley Warner, a New York journalist and coauthor with Mark Twain of *The Gilded Age*, made a journey along the Wilderness Road from Pineville to Cumberland Gap in eastern Kentucky. As was the fashion with northern journalists who ventured into the southern backcountry in the late nineteenth century, Warner published an account of his travels the following spring in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*.[1] This was not Warner's first trip to the mountains, nor was this his first effort to describe the region which Will Wallace Harvey had labeled "A Strange Land and Peculiar People."[2] Four years earlier, after riding through the Blue Ridge country of southwest Virginia, east Tennessee, and western North Carolina, Warner had written a major travelogue entitled "On Horseback."[3] The latter had established its author as one of the leading figures in the new literary "discovery" of Appalachia. His journey into eastern Kentucky in 1888 promised to provide more of the same local-color material that had interested his urban middle-class readers.[4]

Leaving the railroad near Pineville, Warner and his party traveled the thirteen miles to Cumberland Gap by wagon and then, crossing into Virginia, rode horseback up the Powell River Valley to Big Stone Gap. The scenery along the way was much the same as that which Warner had found in the Blue Ridge. "The road had every variety of badness conceivable—loose stones, ledges of rock, boulders, sloughs, holes, mud, sand, deep fords." Settlements were few—only "occasional poor shanties" and "rugged little farms"—

1. "Comments on Kentucky," *Harper's* 78 (Dec. 1888–May 1889), 255–71.
2. *Lippincott's Magazine* 12 (Oct. 1873), 429–38.
3. *Atlantic Monthly* (July–Oct. 1885).
4. The best description and analysis of the literary discovery of Appalachia is to be found in Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind*, 1–58.