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Introduction

Symposium, as defined by *The Random House College Dictionary*, has three general meanings. First, it is a meeting or conference for the discussion of some topic, especially a meeting at which several speakers discuss a topic before an audience. Second, it is a collection of opinions expressed or articles contributed by several persons on a given subject or topic. Third, it may be a party, usually following a dinner, for drinking and conversation. The Greek word for symposium actually means drinking together.

The introduction to this volume will focus on the first and second meanings of symposium, since a short discourse could not do justice to the third meaning. The nature of the collection of papers and restrictions on page length forbid a detailed introduction of each contribution to this volume; therefore, this attempt will be brief and will center around three major sections: first, background information on the nature of the conference which resulted in this symposium; second, a brief description of the organization of the volume; third, acknowledgments to those persons who contributed in time, effort, and resources to make the conference and this volume possible.

The Conference

The idea of *An Appalachian Symposium* came from the desire of a number of people at Appalachian State University to honor the retirement of a unique and unusual scholar, folklorist, teacher, and administrator who has devoted his life to writing and talking about Appalachia and to teaching and administration at Appalachian State University. It was believed that the uniqueness of this individual necessitated an honor atypical of the routine ceremonies used to pay tribute to one's long service. From this desire came the idea of An Appalachian Symposium in honor of Cratis D. Williams.

Although the planning of the event was carried out independent of his expertise and wisdom, the nature of the symposium came to reflect the diversity of the personality and interests of Dr. Williams. He has an interest in old and new approaches to research in Appalachia and is concerned about putting the people of Appalachia into context with other Americans. He has devoted much of his writing to the personality traits of

the people of Appalachia, has an interest in the literary tradition of the region, and is a living symbol of the oral tradition. Therefore, a symposium on a singular topic was impossible. Thus, the conference inevitably reflects the diverse background and interests of the person it honored and this volume must accept the appropriate label of *Festschrift*. It is indeed a collection of articles and essays contributed by many authors in honor of a colleague.

The papers submitted to the conference, the participants, and the geographic distribution of those attending the conference reflect the esteem of Dr. Williams plus his diverse interests. A total of eleven states were represented on the program and attendees from thirteen states were present.

Organization of the *Festschrift*

The conference was originally organized around four major topics: Appalachia in Context, The Appalachian Personality, Literary Traditions and Folklore, and The Oral Arts. Presentations at the conference were selected from among many proposals submitted to the editorial committee. Placement of the papers into the various categories was a difficult task and some papers worthy of presentation did not fit the designated categories; therefore, an additional topic, "Openings and Caveats," was added.

Readers of this collection will be able to argue that some papers are not cast according to topic. Do not be dismayed. There was not complete consensus among members of the editorial committee on the placement of papers under a particular topic. At the same time, most papers are representative of the general themes. Also, the reader will find that some papers under a particular topic may include contradictory descriptions and explanations. This is inevitable in a *Festschrift* built around general topics rather than a specific problem. (Two papers which were presented at the conference do not appear in this collection because they have already been published elsewhere: M. Thomas Inge, "The Appalachian Backgrounds of Billy De Beck's Snuffy Smith," *Appalachian Journal*, 4 [1977], 120-132; Charles W. Joyner, "Dulcimer Making in Western North Carolina: Creativity in a Traditional Mountain Craft," in *Material Culture in the South*, ed. Charles G. Zug, III, special issue, *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 39 [1975], 341-62.)

Openings and Caveats

One of the major controversies in Appalachian research and scholarship has been the numerous descriptions of people in Appalachia and the dearth of observation or hard data to validate these descriptions. The articles in this section are relevant to this issue. Ronald Eller focuses on the

use of oral history as a research tool, some of the problems incurred in its present use, and some new directions that may be taken to provide data on a changing Appalachia. Such data could be used by today's researchers to interpret the present nature of the region and could serve as vital information for the researchers of tomorrow to analyze the past.

Alan Crain's paper relates to the issue of conflicting reports on the people and the region. His thesis is that the background and assumptions of the observer-writer—the "side" taken by the writer, the audience to whom he is speaking, and where he comes from—must be known and clearly stated if we are to evaluate his or her assumptions.

Steve Fisher's "Folk Culture or Folk Tale" also focuses on the contradictory assumptions about the nature of Appalachia's people. He summarizes and evaluates the numerous criticisms of the Appalachian subculture model and concludes that the model should not be discarded. On the other hand, writers and researchers must exercise caution when discussing Appalachia as a subculture. Since many of the observations are undocumented, the model should be given serious scrutiny in order to judge its validity. Scholars are challenged to utilize other models which may offer different strategies for change to explain the conditions of the region.

Appalachia in Context

The landmark work that faced the issue of what is Appalachia and what is the nature of its people was John C. Campbell's *The Southern Highlander* which was published in 1921. It served as the major source of information on the region until *The Southern Appalachian Region*, edited by Thomas R. Ford, appeared in 1962, about the same time that *The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction*, the mammoth dissertation by Cratis Williams, was completed.

Each of these works delineates the region and presents a wealth of information on its characteristics and the nature of its people. The Ford volume is distinguished by the fact that it was an extensive survey. In the words of Rupert Vance, the Ford study was undertaken to examine the status of the region and of the component elements that determine its position, and to suggest the next steps possible in the various sectors of the region's economy, in its public life and services, its social institutions, and its ideas and beliefs. One conclusion of the study: "contrary to widely held opinion, the people of the Region largely share the attitudes and aspirations of Americans elsewhere." Ford, in the chapter on "The Passing of Provincialism," concludes that of all the important implications that may be drawn from the survey of attitudes, values, and beliefs, the most important is that the old stereotypes that have so long guided social action

in the region no longer apply to the great majority of the residents.

This conclusion possibly updates the work of Campbell, who concluded that the uniqueness of the people of Appalachia is due to the region's rurality and that the traits of Appalachian people are similar to the traits of rural people in other regions of the United States. The major problem with Appalachia is that it is more rural than other parts of the country.

The works of Ford and Campbell may contradict the vivid descriptions in *The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction*. The contradiction has less to do with the traits of the people than with the uniqueness of these traits and the explanation of this uniqueness. To Williams, the mountaineer is indeed unique, and he attributes this uniqueness to the mountaineer's ancestry and to geographic isolation. The inconsistencies in the works of Campbell, Ford, Williams, and many other writers were the principal motivation for this section of the volume. The reader will find that the attempt to put Appalachia in context has resulted in a number of papers that reflect the images of the region and its people presented by Ford, Campbell, Williams, and others.

Wilma Dykeman's paper, which bears the title of this section, seeks to put Appalachia into an international, American, and Southern context and concludes that the region has provided an alternative: first, to the generally accepted image known as the Solid South; second, to the notion of an ever progressing, inevitably successful, invariably happy America; and third, to the shadowy threat/opportunity of an emerging Third World "out there," pressing ever more forcibly upon our consciousness and our conscience.

In the article "Appalachia and the Idea of America," Shapiro treats the tendency of Americans to regard Appalachia as a strange land inhabited by a peculiar people. He traces the development of this tendency by examining the images depicted by local color writers, the tendency to identify Appalachia with the American past, the ambiguity violence brought to this identification with the past, the attempt to solve this ambiguity by identifying the violent aspects of mountain life as European rather than American in origin, and an attempt to abandon the doctrine that Appalachia represented a survival of the past for the doctrine that the social and cultural patterns were determined by the environment, mainly the absence of community. Shapiro concludes that the conflict between Appalachia and America today is not a conflict between past and present but between rural and urban ways.

Walls' "On the Naming of Appalachia" traces several developments that have influenced the delineation of the region. First, he covers the geographic nomenclature from the time of de Soto to the Civil War.

Second, he describes the attempts between the Civil War and 1900 to identify Appalachia as a cultural region, mainly by the local color writers. Third, Walls discusses the delineation of the region as a social problem area by educators and social reformers during the late 1800's and the early 1900's and by the federal government in the 1930's. Finally, he describes how the federal government "renamed" Appalachia as a social and economic development problem in the 1960's.

Wilhelm's "Appalachian Isolation: Fact or Fiction?" questions the notion that the distinctiveness of the Appalachian culture is determined by geographic isolation. He offers evidence that for the Blue Ridge area there was continuous contact with people moving in and out of the region. Wilhelm concludes that the mountain folk have always made contact with the outside world on a voluntary basis, and they continue to do so. If they were not "of the world" it is not because they were ignorant of the outside ways of life, but because they had seen it, reflected upon it, and almost totally rejected it.

Sessions' "Appalachians and Non-Appalachians" reviews the many stereotypes of the people of Appalachia and concludes that with the changes now taking place in the region, these stereotypes will break down and America will find that mountaineers are, after all, much the same as other human beings.

The Appalachian Personality

The writings on Appalachia, fact and fiction, directly or indirectly set forth certain stereotypes of the mountaineer. These stereotypes range from a romantic description of the frontiersman's glorified traits, of which religiosity is one, to a maladjusted, culturally deprived creature oriented to violence and any number of other nonglorified traits. The papers in this section offer a sampling of some of the personality traits that go to make up many of the stereotypes of the region and its people.

David Loeff's "Assisting Appalachian Families" focuses on the poor of Appalachia. An emphasis is placed upon certain attributes of the poor that result in apathy and serve as personal barriers to public and private health care. Strengths of the Appalachian family are also discussed and suggestions are made on how these strengths may be utilized to further implement personalized services for these families.

John Opie's "A Sense of Place" accepts the thesis that the mountaineer's feeling of belonging to a place is a central feature that sets him apart from mass society. Opie seeks to illustrate how the mountaineer's close association with the land extends the American frontier experience into the present day and how this frontier-like existence is based upon a long history.

In the article, "Old-Time Baptists and Mainline Christianity," Loyal Jones reviews the criticisms of mountain religious beliefs, practices, and values and then presents excerpts from interviews to illustrate that many of the characteristics of old-time Baptists are basically 200 years old and can be traced to sound scriptural bases. His major conclusion is that the beliefs of the old-time Baptists are out of kilter with modern religious thought. At the same time, there is a quality of life among them that ought to be understood and appreciated, not criticized.

McKinney's "Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890's" traces the development of the mountaineer stereotype of violence by examining a series of spectacular events that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and the theories put forth to explain these violent events. He concludes that the mountain people are inherently no more violent than any other group of Americans and that the feuds and riots in the region can be much more adequately explained by an unusual convergence of social forces than by speculations about some theoretical mass personality.

Literary Traditions and Folklore

The Appalachian region has a rich heritage of literature and folklore. The uniqueness of the region emphasized by the local colorists and the do-gooders, whether true or false, seems to have created a setting for writers within and without the region. In addition, the traditional beliefs, legends, and customs that make up the folklore have been a vital factor used to distinguish the region and have become subjects of much of the literature that has evolved from Appalachia or that has focused on it.

"The Observance of Old Christmas in Appalachia" by Chester Young traces the memory of Old Christmas which still lingers in the Southern Highlands, even though its observance is almost a relic of the past. He further concludes that changes in the region negate restoring the practice of the old custom. Yet the enduring values which the custom represents can be retained, cherished, and used by Appalachians to surmount hardships and to spend their lives in usefulness and contentment.

Robert Higgs' "Versions of Natural Man" is a literary analysis in which he relies upon the literature of the region to illustrate various versions of the natural man. His major conclusion is that the traits of character depicted by literature indicate that the Appalachian personality "contains multitudes," and among the throng are three types of natural man. He also concludes that the changes and the problems facing the region may necessitate the use of the traits of one of these as a prerequisite for the future of Appalachia.

“Bringing in the Sheaves” by Amos Abrams presents the Ray Collection of manuscript folk ballads and love poems that are a part of the folk heritage of Appalachia. The texts consist of social satire, temperance songs, and sentimental ballads, and represent the taste and preoccupations of one mountain family over the period of almost 100 years.

The Oral Arts

Every subculture in America probably has its oral tradition. Much attention has been focused on this tradition in Appalachia. Folk songs with origins in Europe have been passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. Story telling, especially in the form of Jack Tales, has been a tradition well documented. The survival of the language of the oral tradition has been of major interest to linguistic experts.

Jean Ritchie’s “Growing Up in a Singing Family” is a vivid illustration of the importance of singing to Appalachian families and of how learning the music of the region was a natural and inevitable process. Ritchie draws upon a rich family tradition, and she offers here for the first time in print three songs and one tale transmitted to her years ago by a member of her Kentucky family. In “The Gap in Oral Tradition” Betty Smith offers evidence that this natural and inevitable process of learning the music and lore of the region has been interrupted, particularly by radio and television. She sees the loss of a singing tradition as symptomatic of what has happened to the quality of life in the region and concludes that the children are the losers.

Joan Moser’s “Friday at Parhams’ ” is a description of an informal social gathering of a number of musicians and listeners. She concludes that such gatherings nourish a vital process of aural teaching, learning, and creating. Her article is an analysis of this process and the impact that it has on the arts and lives of the people involved.

In “The Southern Mountain Vocabulary in the Low Country of South Carolina and Georgia,” O’Cain and Hopkins compare the survival of the same words in the vocabulary of mountain and non-mountain counties. They conclude that virtually every word cited as a characteristic of the Southern mountains also shows up in the plantation country of South Carolina and Georgia. The authors further conclude that the presence of these words in areas other than the Southern mountains have their historical roots in England, migration routes in America, and the social structure.

Acknowledgments

Dozens of persons at Appalachian State University were influential in making the conference and the publication of this volume a reality. A

steering committee was chaired by Dr. John Thomas, the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. Members of the committee included Dr. Braxton Harris, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs; Mr. Ned Trivette, Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs; Mr. Robert Snead, Vice Chancellor of Development; Dr. James Jackson, Dean of the College of Continuing Education; Mr. Rogers Whitener, Director of Cultural Affairs; Mr. Borden Mace, Executive Director of the Appalachian Consortium; Dr. Jerry Williamson, Editor of the *Appalachian Journal*; and Dr. Louie Brown, Professor of Sociology. This committee provided guidance and moral support for a subcommittee charged with the responsibility of planning and initiating the conference, as well as financial resources necessary to make the conference and the publication of the papers a reality. Mr. Patrick Morgan, Director of the Oral History Project, deserves special recognition for his help in recording all the sessions, as does Miss Juanita Lewis, Assistant Editor of the *Appalachian Journal*, who helped prepare the papers for publication. Other individuals in the College of Continuing Education, the Center for Continuing Education, and the Oral History Project are too numerous to mention in spite of the major roles each played in planning and implementing the conference. Without the overwhelming response from writers and researchers, neither the conference nor the publication of the papers would have been possible. Without a doubt, the status and prestige of Cratis D. Williams, whom we honor with the conference and this volume, played an important role in the support received, both from the faculty and staff of Appalachian State University and from area scholars.

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