**Internal Colonialism: Roots of Poverty in Appalachia**

Kavish Gandhi

AP United States History D Block

Bedar

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In Owsley County, Kentucky, most households have neither running water nor electricity. The poverty rate is 36%, the median income is $19,624, the lowest in the nation, and over half of residents do not have a high school diploma.[[1]](#footnote-1) Owsley County’s living conditions, in essence, are comparable to those of a Third-World country, a disturbing concept in a developed nation like the United States. Yet Owsley County is just one example of extreme poverty in Appalachia, a region of the United States in which almost a third of counties are classified as ‘high-poverty.’[[2]](#footnote-2) This entrenched poverty, demonstrated by low income and high unemployment rates, first came to national attention during the Great Depression when the bloated industries that had formed in the late 19th century, especially coal, began to collapse. To make matters worse, the New Deal, like many subsequent federal and regional programs, failed miserably in Appalachia. Political leaders frequently addressed the wrong problems because of a misguided perception that Appalachia’s poverty resulted from its cultural “backwardness” and isolation from the rest of modern America. What are the real roots of poverty in Appalachia? First of all, industrialization itself, largely funded by absentee investors, created dependency in Appalachia, as much of the profits flowed out of the region and local development was negligible. Furthermore, this effect was worsened by the collapse of the subsistence farming economy that had sustained the region prior to industrialization. Finally, the transition to dependency was hastened by the local elite of Appalachia, who pursued their own interests rather than those of the community and thereby choked off local economic development. In general, Appalachia’s poverty in modern times stems from the devastating effects of ‘growth without development’ under absentee-driven industrialization that was worsened by both the stagnating preindustrial subsistence economy and the unequal sociopolitical structure.

The first step to understanding Appalachia is defining what it is and how it came to be. The region’s cultural origins are based on the so-called “mountain people,” who were seen as a distinct people from the rest of America; over time, this cultural construct evolved into an official designation. Geographically, Appalachia spans the area in the Appalachian Mountains between the Allegheny and Cumberland Plateaus and the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountain Ranges.[[3]](#footnote-3) Officially, Appalachia constitutes 406 counties in 13 states, mostly in West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Georgia.[[4]](#footnote-4) The region was originally home to the Iroquois and Cherokee.[[5]](#footnote-5) Then, from the late 1600’s to the late 1700’s, European colonists began to settle in Appalachia, especially into what would become Kentucky and Tennessee, engaging in conflicts with the Native Americans living there until a group of treaties opened up the area at the end of the American Revolution.[[6]](#footnote-6) Preindustrial life consisted of small communities of subsistence farmers scattered throughout mountain hollows. These farmers were, by and large, self-sufficient and cash-poor, participating in a barter-borrow economy based on kinship networks.[[7]](#footnote-7) However, there was still *some* industry, especially in the valleys, where salt and iron industries were prominent before the Civil War.[[8]](#footnote-8) Nonetheless, in general, preindustrial Appalachia was characterized by arduous subsistence farming without much profit. Then, in the late 19th century, industrialization entered the region: with the advent of better transportation, especially railroads, outside investors began to infiltrate Appalachia to gain access to its rich timber and coal reserves. Timber was the first to be exploited, but, over time, coal became the primary resource through which outside investors asserted their control, establishing restrictive company towns, manipulating local politics to ensure maximum profit, and employing Appalachian farmers for less-than-living wages. There were some benefits from industrialization: farmers gained employment and Appalachia became more integrated into national markets.[[9]](#footnote-9) However, with the Great Depression decimating the region’s predominant industries, Appalachia began to fall into poverty, and, despite several wartime booms, by 1965, one-third of Appalachia was in poverty.[[10]](#footnote-10) In sum, Appalachia’s story is one of the frontier, of subsistence farming, of industrialization, and, above all, of poverty.

In order to explain Appalachia’s rampant poverty, many outside the region have employed the “culture of poverty” theory, which blames the mountain culture, which they see as backwards, for Appalachia’s poverty. During industrialization, this belief was particularly prevalent; highly publicized feuds between Appalachian families like the Hatfields and McCoys promoted stereotypes of mountaineers as savage alcoholics with excessively large families. More sympathetic critics labeled residents as individualistic, rugged, but, ultimately, ‘other.’ As Ronald Eller, Appalachian scholar and author of *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, said, there developed a conception that “marooned on an island of hills, the mountaineer [was] shut off from the forces that have shaped the modern world.”[[11]](#footnote-11) William Gooddell Frost expressed a similar sentiment in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900, contending that, in the mountains, “we discover a new kind of isolation…: the mountain people are our contemporary ancestors.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Even well-meaning reformers fell into this mindset; Rupert Vance of the University of North Carolina, for example, asserted, “To change the mountains is to change the mountain personality.”[[13]](#footnote-13) This attitude was often used to excuse industrial exploitation in Appalachia: outside investors, who grew rich off of Appalachia, justified their actions by claiming that they were uplifting an uncivilized people.[[14]](#footnote-14) These stereotypes also distorted the goals of federal relief programs, which often concentrated their money on trying to alter the ‘mountain culture.’ However, for the most part, these stereotypes were exaggerated; Appalachia may have reflected some pioneer ideals in its subsistence farming economy, but, as will be described in detail later, was not isolated from the world – rather, it had several capitalist industries before the advent of industrialization and was partly connected to national markets – and many of the stories of lawlessness and feuding attributed to the mountaineers were simply not true.[[15]](#footnote-15) This raises the question: if the culture and isolation of Appalachia did not cause its poverty, what did? One of the most prominent opposing theories is the internal colonialism theory, supported by the premier Appalachian scholar, Ronald Eller, which proposes that the exploitation of Appalachia by absentee investors through industrialization created dependency and poverty.[[16]](#footnote-16) To evaluate this theory, it is necessary to examine the major forces of industrialization, namely railroads, land acquisition, timber, and coal, and to assess their impacts on Appalachia.

Industrialization in Appalachia occurred from around 1880 to 1930, transforming what had been a region of scattered subsistence farms into a center of industrial capitalism, dominated by outside Northern investors. The first step in this process was the acquisition of land by outside investors and the installation of railroads. Appalachia was home to huge reserves of natural resources, most prominently coal and timber, and, as Charles Dudley Warner said, “it [became] a race for the prize.”[[17]](#footnote-17) This industrial spirit emerged especially after the Civil War, when new Southern leaders began to become more receptive to the idea of Northern industrial development. Indeed, many states began to advertise their wealth in resources, most prominently West Virginia, which emphasized its fertile farmland, wealth of timber and coal, and beautiful vistas, calling itself the “Switzerland of America.”[[18]](#footnote-18) Private investors began to rapidly acquire land and mineral rights, frequently assisted by the corrupt local elite. For example, George Carter, originally an iron manufacturer and one of Appalachia’s elite, amassed almost 300,000 acres of land from trusting neighbors, eventually, along with other local speculators, transferring much of this land to Northern financiers.[[19]](#footnote-19) To make matters worse, outside corporations often used their political clout to manipulate local politics and thwart lawsuits against them for fraudulently acquiring land. The end result was the acquisition of most of the valuable land in Appalachia by outside investors, followed immediately by the rapid influx of railroads. In 1870, only one railroad existed in Appalachia, but by 1900 four major railroads had penetrated the region and by 1930 only a few counties lacked railroad access. Appalachia was now connected to – and owned by – the outside world. And, as Eller asserted, “As the resources [land] of the mountains flowed wantonly out of the region, so did any hope for the independence and prosperity of the mountain people.”[[20]](#footnote-20) With the advent of railroads and the transfer of much of its land to Northern investors, Appalachia took its first step on the road to dependency.

With the railroads in place, the lumber industry expanded rapidly from around 1890 to 1920, destroying some of the most diverse forests in the nation, rendering unproductive some of Appalachia’s most fertile agricultural regions, and precipitating the movement of mountaineers to the new, rapidly expanding industries. The first phase of lumbering was relatively innocuous, with mountain residents selectively cutting small portions of the forest for supplemental income.[[21]](#footnote-21) However, because of the economic inefficiencies of small-scale lumbering and the uncertainty of supply, large lumber companies began to systematically cut the woods with organized operations of mountain laborers. Lumbering quickly became the fulltime employment of thousands of farmers. By 1900, lumber was a huge industry in the region, operated by mammoth corporations like the William Ritter Lumber Company, which, established in 1890, acquired acreage with over two billion board feet of timber by 1913.[[22]](#footnote-22) By 1909, annual production from Appalachia achieved 4 million board feet, or 40% of national production.[[23]](#footnote-23) In 1910, machine logging was introduced, and production increased even more, exacting a devastating toll on Appalachian forests.[[24]](#footnote-24) By World War I, when the logging companies began to leave, the forests of Appalachia had suffered irreparable damage: the widely-practiced clearcutting not only destroyed much of the valuable timber but also caused frequent fires and erosion of mountain topsoils that destroyed their agricultural capability. As the Reverend A.E. Brown of Appalachia remarked,

When I first started my work in these mountains, 30 years ago, when the forests were untouched, the mountains were full of sparkling brooks… today, many of the mountain streams are dry throughout the summer and fall, while in the winter, the waters descend in torrents and do vast damage, rendering worthless the bottom lands which used to be the most desirable for farming purposes.[[25]](#footnote-25)

In addition, in response to the forests’ destruction, much of the remaining forest was acquired in large-scale federal conservation efforts, further depriving Appalachians of their longheld farmland.[[26]](#footnote-26) The combination of this loss of previously-held farmland and the growing infertility of the existing farmland forced more and more families to move to the newly established coal mining towns, leaving behind a devastated forest.[[27]](#footnote-27)

With farming no longer a viable economic option, so-called King Coal began to dominate the Appalachian economy, exploiting its rich reserves, creating closed company towns that limited the diversification of industry, and leaving Appalachia severely impoverished. Coal was one of the most important resources of the early industrial era, and Appalachian coalfields, being some of the largest in America, were inevitably exploited. Journalists like Richard Edmonds described Appalachia as “the richest [bank of resources] on Earth, more feasible of financial development than anything on the American continent,” and, by 1930, Appalachian coal accounted for 80% of national production.[[28]](#footnote-28) An example of the industry’s explosive growth can be seen in West Virginia, which, after shipping just 40,000 tons of coal in 1898, shipped over 6 million tons by 1913: 23% of the entire market.[[29]](#footnote-29) One resident of a town dramatically changed by the advent of coal commented that his home no longer “seem[ed] like the same country… [with] so many new towns, people, and coal companies.”[[30]](#footnote-30)This growth was partly due to the competitive advantage coal companies in Appalachia enjoyed because they could provide lower wages for mountaineers, who also had some supplemental income from farming.[[31]](#footnote-31) The mountains also had the advantage of an extensive freight structure, which allowed more mines to be created. As a result, by the mid-to-late 1910’s, Appalachia was a center of coal production.

As coal mining consolidated its hold on the region, company towns began to play a huge role in Appalachian life. Over time, coal companies owned and controlled all aspects of the miners’ lives, from their stores and houses to their churches and schools, with residents playing little to no role in the administration of these towns. As Eller put it, “It was a most atypical town, one that strictly limited personal and social liberty and left its residents powerless to control their own destinies.”[[32]](#footnote-32) In an assessment by the U.S Coal commission, it was determined that “living conditions in the mining camps of the southern mountains were among the worst in the nation.”[[33]](#footnote-33) The houses were just shanties, toilets and running water were rare, and disease was rampant, most prominently typhoid and hookworm.[[34]](#footnote-34) Furthermore, social life was limited to scattered sports and gambling events, and schooling for children was inadequate and uniformly poor.[[35]](#footnote-35) The only major store was owned by the company, and many coal producers used the fact that they had a monopoly to ramp up prices whenever there was a decline in coal profits.[[36]](#footnote-36) As a result, the wages, already meager compared to the rest of the nation, were often returned to the coal companies in exchange for these town “amenities.” The end result of the controlling environment of the company town was that the mountaineer not only suffered inhumane conditions but also became economically dependent.

In addition, the company town restricted local economic and political development of Appalachia, rather than promoting it. As Eller stated,

By monopolizing almost every aspect of community life, company towns effectively blocked the growth of local retail enterprises and diversified or supporting industries that might have accompanied coal mining. Since the profits from mining went to nonresident owners, the only benefit that might have accrued to the region itself was the miners’ wages. But, under the closed company town system, these too flowed largely out of the mountains.[[37]](#footnote-37)

To maintain this economic control, coal operatives often manipulated politics to ensure profit and prevent any legislation detrimental to mining: throughout Appalachia, vote-buying, coercion, and corruption became common. Only coal men were elected to local legislatures, and sheriffs were often handpicked by coal operators to defend the mines against strikes.[[38]](#footnote-38)The domination of politics by mining interests is demonstrated by the fact that the money leaving Appalachia that profited outside interests was never taxed, despite the desperate need for revenue. Instead, the states drew revenue largely from increases in the sales tax, which further impoverished the miners.[[39]](#footnote-39) In general, the coal barons’ dominance of the economic and political affairs of the Appalachian community thwarted the growth of local industry and left the mountaineers they employed powerless and impoverished.

To make matters worse, in the mid 1920’s, not only were Appalachian residents economically dependent but also trapped in a coal system about to go bust. Europe, which had been desperate for coal after World War I, began to produce again.Many small companies, starting in 1927, went bankrupt, beginning what would become the Great Depression.[[40]](#footnote-40) Coal’s decline in Appalachia was accelerated further by the elimination of the region’s advantage in freight rates, the increased use of oil as fuel (instead of coal), and the increased mechanization of coal mining, all contributing to the depression and the increased unemployment of the miners.[[41]](#footnote-41) This decline of the coal industry devastated Appalachia economically, leaving it impoverished for decades to come.

In the end, industrialization was no boon to the mountains; rather, Appalachia’s poverty can be directly traced to its ‘modernization.’ As described earlier, agriculture, which made up much of the preindustrial economy of Appalachia, was devastated by industrialization; while in 1880 the average mountain farm was about 200 acres, by 1930, this average had fallen to 76 acres and some counties averaged as low as 46 acres.[[42]](#footnote-42) With the advent of industrialization, moreover, a new political system emerged that was dominated by corporate interests, who also controlled most of the productive land in Appalachia. For example, in western North Carolina, over 75% of the land was controlled by just 13 corporations, and they maintained this control by forcing mountaineers to vote for coal operatives or be fired.[[43]](#footnote-43) The mountaineer, thus, was deprived of the independence and self-sufficiency of the family farm and became a part of the new, dependent, destitute working class. Furthermore, absentee land ownership and the company towns, as mentioned earlier, actually hindered the growth of other industries. Thus, Appalachia saw few of the benefits associated with modernization, with surveys in coal districts showing that “one farm home in twenty had running water, one in fifty an inside toilet, [and] one in twenty-five electricity….”[[44]](#footnote-44) As Eller put it,

By 1930, ‘progress’ had been at work in the mountains for over four decades, transforming a ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’ society into an integral part of the modern world. The ascendancy of coal had brought sudden and dramatic changes to the land and the people of the hills – changes that would not disappear with the passing of the old king himself. The mountaineers had partaken of progress, but for most, the profits had somehow failed to accrue.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Clearly, modernization, not the lack thereof, was the cause of Appalachia’s poverty.

However, though industrialization devastated Appalachia, this very destruction was precipitated by the decline of its preindustrial subsistence farming economy, which made it particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of industrialization. A typical preindustrial Appalachian community consisted of scattered subsistence farms in mountain hollows, with the local elite living in the more fertile valleys, which had access to rivers and thus trade.[[46]](#footnote-46) Most social and economic connections were through kinship networks, and the close-knit families were highly valued. Life was centered around the family farm, with the typical farm around 200 acres.[[47]](#footnote-47) Commercial farms, which brought the overall average size to 476 acres, were often owned by the local elite; by comparison, Midwestern farms averaged just 129 acres.[[48]](#footnote-48) With a long growing season and plenty of water, these farms were able to produce a diverse array of crops, most prominently corn and wheat, while also providing wild berries and game.[[49]](#footnote-49) Furthermore, because of the limitations imposed by the mountain topography, most of the work was done by hand, thus necessitating larger families. There was some commercial activity on farms, including hog production, which reached a quarter million head in 1880, and selective logging, which was used for supplemental income.[[50]](#footnote-50) However, most of this money was spent on buying tools for the farm, and thus subsistence households tended to be cash-poor. It was a tough life to be sure, full of arduous labor, but Appalachia’s subsistence farming in the early-to-mid 1800’s did prosper with a sort of economic autonomy that had also pervaded the entire United States in the century prior.[[51]](#footnote-51)

However, in the period from 1840 to 1880, everything changed for the subsistence farmer. As historian Paul Salstrom wrote in his seminal work, *Appalachia’s Path to Dependency*, “As of 1840, Southern Appalachia figured to be one of the most self-sufficient regions of the United States. By 1940, it had become one of the country’s least self-sufficient regions.”[[52]](#footnote-52) What caused this rapid change? In the mid-1860’s, as mentioned earlier, Appalachia had been just as productive as other farming regions, with farmers in Kentucky averaging just 20% less corn production than their Midwestern counterparts, the leading grain producers, and surpassing Northern farmers by 340%.[[53]](#footnote-53) However, Appalachian subsistence farmers consistently could not obtain capital for commercialization, both because state governments ignored Appalachian farmers, lending no capital for improvement, and because federal banking policy after the Civil War limited dissemination of local currency, thus cutting off additional sources of capital.By contrast, Midwestern farmers continued to obtain capital for specialization and mechanization to speed up production, and, with the Homestead Act of 1862, expanded their land holdings significantly.[[54]](#footnote-54) Any commercialization in Appalachia was quickly stifled by both this increased competition and lack of capital. Furthermore, rampant population expansion due to increasingly large families in Appalachia during the 19th century also contributed to the decline of its farms. In the Midwest, commercial farmers normally had smaller families in order to preserve capital for their children and hired labor instead, but the scarcity of cash and difficulty in hiring nonfamily labor in Appalachia stymied this possibility.[[55]](#footnote-55)The effect of this population growth was disastrous; families continued to subdivide their land between their brethren, causing the values of landholdings and average production to diminish significantly.[[56]](#footnote-56) This continued subdivision also forced farmers to recultivate fields *before* reforestation, thus diminishing soil fertility and increasing erosion. As a result of these factors, by 1880, farm size had shrunk dramatically, with the values of such farms less than half of those of their predecessors.[[57]](#footnote-57) In one county in Kentucky, over 30% of farms began to produce below a subsistence level.[[58]](#footnote-58)This decline was not a peculiar phenomenon in Appalachia; the same had occurred previously in many other regions with subsistence farming, including New England. However, extensive kinship networks in Appalachia, along with relative market isolation, prolonged this epoch of subsistence farming.[[59]](#footnote-59) And, unfortunately, the weakening of subsistence farming coincided with the arrival of outside industrialists into Appalachia, finding a farming population in desperate need of capital and part-time jobs to supplement their increasingly meager farming income. AsAppalachian scholars Dwight Billings and Kathleen Blee wrote in *The Road to Poverty*,

The failure of Appalachia’s subsistence economy to sustain an expanding population contributed to the destructive contours of modern Appalachia, including the predominance of exploitation and poverty. Limits on agricultural capacity contributed to the development of an underemployed labor pool that could be utilized cheaply in railroad, timber, and mining industries, whereas noncommoditized agricultural production, by setting limits on indigenous capital accumulation, contributed to dependence on outside capital for the development of the region’s natural resources.[[60]](#footnote-60)

In the end, the decline of subsistence farming in Appalachia due to rapid population growth, lack of capital, and Midwestern competition, made the region vulnerable to the negative effects of industrialization and contributed to Appalachia’s poverty.

However, while Appalachia’s poverty and dependency can be explained by the deleterious consequences of industrialization, made possible by the vulnerability of its subsistence farming economy, industrialization’s impact was also worsened by Appalachia’s unequal preindustrial sociopolitical structure. Appalachia was not, as Eller and many historians have claimed, “a stable and idyllic society before Mr. Peabody’s coal train began to haul it away.”[[61]](#footnote-61) Inequality in the region existed and can be traced to, despite the dominance of subsistence farming, preindustrial commercial and capitalist development: sociologist Wilma Dunaway estimates that, by 1860, there were approximately 6,000 industrial enterprises in Appalachia, most prominently saltmaking, iron, and livestock.[[62]](#footnote-62) Such development in early Appalachia created, as historian Elizabeth Perkins wrote in the *Journal of American History*, “a remarkably sophisticated international pattern of consumption… even on the rude frontier of eighteenth-century Kentucky.”[[63]](#footnote-63) Indeed, François Michaux, author of “Travels to the West of the Alleghany Mountains,” determined in 1802 that “seven tenths of the manufactured articles consumed… are imported from England.”[[64]](#footnote-64)In this capitalist environment, inequality necessarily flourished, with merchant incomes booming.[[65]](#footnote-65) Furthermore, those with knowledge of the legal tangle of land speculation – often the wealthy – were often able to procure most of the land. For example in Clay County, Kentucky, in 1816, just six residents owned 41% of the land: this large gap in land ownership also characterized Appalachia as a whole.[[66]](#footnote-66) An entrepreneurial “frontier elite” was created, and they quickly became the political and economic leaders of early Appalachian society, using kinship networks to consolidate their power and calling for extensive speculation and commercial enterprise in various light manufacturing industries.[[67]](#footnote-67)

This economic inequality produced by early capitalist development created a distinct sociopolitical structure in 19th century Appalachia. The first step in this process was the involvement of the local elite in local courts and government; courts, in particular, were important in preserving land and property, and local governments were important in funding the internal improvements necessary to support the elite’s capitalist enterprises.[[68]](#footnote-68) Thus, officials tended to be the enterprising capitalists, often the wealthier members of their communities. Early manufacturers similarly dominated county courts, with the average magistrate on the court in Clay County owning property worth $8136 compared to the meager county average of $1090.[[69]](#footnote-69) These elite then would frequently use state and county funds to push economic initiatives beneficial to their interests. These officials were also often corrupt, using their public office directly for private gain and at times even selling offices at auction.[[70]](#footnote-70) Curiously, contrary to the stereotype that the feudists in Appalachia were lawless and ignorant, the major feudists were actually the mountain elite, often well-educated litigators, whose disputes destroyed the local government’s potential to pursue economic development in the community. As Billings and Blee put it, “political factionalism and the violence it fostered in antebellum Clay County [and Appalachia in general] did not result from lawlessness, nor from the prolongation of frontier individualism as many would later claim, but from elite competition.”[[71]](#footnote-71) These politicians, often utilizing kinship networks and patronage to buy the votes of various residents, used government as the battleground for their factional disputes. Appalachian governments, thus, did not have the “embedded autonomy,” or separation between government and powerful members of society, that Peter Evans, reputed scholar of economic development, deems necessary for effective governance.[[72]](#footnote-72) This subordination of economic development to the private interests of the elite therefore stifled growth in Appalachia. The elite, the only ones with capital, did not generate employment within the region, as they, as Billings and Blee wrote, **“**did not invest these resources [their capital] in the diversified industries or local infrastructure that might generate sustained economic development. Rather, some invested their fortunes outside of the county [Appalachia] in areas such as the Bluegrass.”[[73]](#footnote-73) And, to make matters worse, the local elite often furthered the appropriation of Appalachian land by outside corporations and thereby advanced the industrialists’ agenda. For example, Kentucky Governor John Brown intervened multiple times on behalf of corporations, including the New York and Kentucky Land Company, serving as an example of how many of the local elite assisted outside corporations.[[74]](#footnote-74) Overall, an unequal preindustrial sociopolitical structure resulted from capitalist enterprises in Appalachia and created a distinct local elite, whose subordination of Appalachia’s interests to their own private interests prevented economic development and whose willing participation in the industrialization of the region exacerbated its poverty. In conclusion, the roots of Appalachia’s poverty lie not in the intrinsic backwardness and isolation of its people, but rather in the devastation caused by industrialization in a region particularly vulnerable to its destructive economic forces because of its weak preindustrial subsistence economy and unequal sociopolitical structure. This conception of Appalachia as an internal colony provides a counterexample to the view of poverty as a consequence of the poor’s own destructive impulses. Appalachia, as a case study of some of the worst rural poverty in America today, demonstrates that, in fact, poverty is often intrinsically linked to external, often corporate, and internal influences – in Appalachia’s case, these were the outside investors in industrialization and the local elite that helped perpetuate the cycle of poverty. When considering poverty, then, we should focus on structural and systemic factors, rather than individual ‘failings’ in the poor; as seen in Appalachia, the underlying system is often where the true roots of poverty lie.

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Bibliography

Addington, Luther F.. *The Story of Wise County, Virginia*. Wise County, Virginia: Overmountain Press, 1956. Print.

**Evaluation:** I used this source sparingly as a description of how many of the elite of the area used industrialization as an opportunity to better their own economic situation. Specifically, from this source, I learned of George L. Carter, who was one of the largest such land-buyers. It is worth noting that, in addition to buying up so much land, he helped organize some of the railroad systems that helped the industrialists penetrate Appalachia.

Allen, James Lee. “Through the Cumberland Gap on Horseback.” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* (June 1886): 50-66. *Cornell University Library*. Web. 3 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** This primary source appeared in *Harper’s* in 1886 and described Allen’s travels through the mountains, illustrating how Kentucky and its development was seen as the development of two separate worlds. Allen’s bias is apparent in his writing, and I can see why people outside of the region would have been convinced by such writing, though sensationalistic. Notably, it had romantic, beautiful language to describe the Bluegrass communities, and, to say the least, harsher language to describe the mountain people.

"Appalachia." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Ed. William A. Darity, Jr. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 149-152. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.

**Evaluation:** This source was the first that I read and was mostly used for information about Appalachia in general. It was extremely useful in giving me a broad overview of almost everything that happened in the region, from its Native American roots to its original European settlement to industrialization to the War on Poverty. Furthermore, it gave me a general sense of the culture of the region – with the picture of the typical, rugged, dangerous, backwards frontiersman – along with the major industries of the region, namely coal, textiles, and lumber.

Arnett, Douglass. *Eastern Kentucky: The Politics of Dependency and Underdevelopment*. Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 1978. Print.

**Evaluation:** This dissertation on underdevelopment in Appalachia and how the local elite helped perpetuate it was interesting in the context of the modern day. I used it in my brief examination of the War on Poverty and the reasons it failed in the context of the local elite. The corrupt nature of these politicians, as described by Arnett, really astonished me.

Aron, Stephen. *How the West Was Lost.* Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, Mar. 1999. Print.

**Evaluation:** This book did not contain much on Appalachia itself, but did discuss the growth of Lexington and Kentucky. I had been meaning to talk about how Appalachia was never really separate from the rest of the settlers even from the beginning. This book provided some data concerning the capitalist system in Lexington whose success I then went on to connect with Appalachia, so was very useful for that analysis. It also briefly discussed the development of the mountains.

Barnum, Donald T.. *The Negro in the Bituminous Coal Industry*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970. Print.

**Evaluation:** I did not end up using this book in my paper, but I had been reading much about coal miners in Appalachia and this was another source that provided information on that topic. Specifically, many of the workers in coal mines were former black slaves recruited from the South (along with immigrants from Europe). Barnum described here the awful conditions these blacks endured along with the racism in coalfields that often prevented even the hardest working black worker from advancing. It did not end up having enough relevance to make it into my paper, but it was a source that informed my thinking about the coal fields.

Beebe, Gilbert Wheeler. *Contraception and Fertility in the Southern Appalachians*. Baltimore: William & Wilkins, 1942. Print.

**Evaluation:** This book had more to do with health in Appalachia, but it did open my eyes to just how bad conditions were in the mountains. In particular, I found some harrowing statistics about plumbing and running water at family farms in Appalachia. I used this information to help inform my understanding of conditions both in coal mines and in Appalachian farms and to emphasize just how little Appalachia received from industrialization.

Billings, Dwight B., and Katherine M. Blee. *The Road to Poverty: The Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.

**Evaluation:** One of the two major books I read, this source gave a compelling case for the roots of poverty in Appalachia not only being based in industrialization, or the internal colonialism that Eller proposes, but also in preindustrial Appalachian society. The authors discuss in great depth the role of the political elite in the region’s poverty and reveal that, in actuality, mountain society was not as equal as it seemed to be to outside investors. They do not really mention the economics, for which I had to go to Salstrom, but they do make the interesting point that Appalachia’s subsistence farming economy was in a downward spiral by the end of the 19th century and was not one that could have been sustained, industrialization or no industrialization: something that Salstrom stressed even more, though in a different manner. I also used this book to develop my theory of Appalachia’s preindustrial society along with Salstrom’s, and combined it with Eller’s to make a complete portrait of Appalachia before World War II.

Dix, Keith. *Work Relations in the Coal Industry: The Hand Loading Era, 1880-1930*. Morgantown, West Virginia: Institute of Labor Studies, 1977. Print.

**Evaluation:** As with many of my sources, I used this source as background reading on the interrelations between coal miners. Specifically, I read about the time period before industrialization, which discussed the interplay between blacks, native Appalachians, and immigrants. I also used the section that described the transition to more mechanized mining to emphasize how this decreased employment in my discussion of the eventual fall of coal.

Drake, Richard B.. *A History of Appalachia*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011. Print.

**Evaluation:** Though Drake is biased at times against Appalachia, falling into the trap of blaming the victim, he provided me some nice alternative summaries of industrial and preindustrial Appalachia. Thus, I used him to supplement *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers* and *The Road to Poverty* and their appraisals of the situation in preindustrial and industrial Appalachia. I also used some of his statistics at the end of the book about persistent poverty in Appalachia.

Dunaway, Wilma. *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996. Print.

**Evaluation:** This book discussed capitalism in Appalachia and dismissed previous stereotypes about a solely subsistence economy. It was chock-full of interesting statistics and was useful in undermining Eller’s claim not only that marginalized farming was a product of industrialization but also that, essentially, before the railroad came in, Appalachia was not simply an idyllic subsistence farming community. I specifically used this source for its statistics on the various capitalist enterprises in preindustrial Appalachia, as she had conducted extensive research on the matter.

Eller, Ronald D.. *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982. Print.

**Evaluation:** This was the second of the two major books I read, helping me complete the story of Appalachia pre-World War II by giving insight into the rapid industrialization of Appalachia, some of its roots, and how it destroyed the environment, economy, and livelihood of the area. Salstrom does refute some of Eller’s points convincingly, as Eller does make some incorrect assumptions about Appalachia pre-industrialization (that it was, to be brief and general, an idyllic place with complete self-sufficiency and no problems whatsoever) but the majority of Eller’s book is compelling and gave me a great description of the mentality of Appalachian industrial workers of the time along with that of the industrial coal barons and the growth of the coal and timber industries.

Eller, Ronald D.. *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945*. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2008. Print.

**Evaluation:** This was one of the more important books that I looked at: it was a pretty definitive evaluation of Appalachia from 1945 to the modern day, discussing the rationale that many Americans gave for their manufactured view of Appalachia and the paradoxical ‘growth without development.’ Questioning many traditional viewpoints on the matter, Eller gave me insight both into why programs put forward to fix Appalachia’s problems failed and why people thought these programs would work, sparing neither the Appalachian population (especially leaders, who willingly went along with this) nor outside forces. He analyzed almost every issue and controversy that I could imagine (post 1945), and though the focus of my paper was before this era, it helped give me a sense of the struggles, especially with government programs, that Appalachia faced.

Evans, Peter. *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. Print.

**Evaluation:** I found this book through my study of *The Road to Poverty*, and it discussed in general the ideal state of a government. Evans claims that, for a government to properly function and promote economic development, it needs what he calls embedded autonomy. In other words, the important figures of the area, while still having a stake in the government, still need to be at least loosely separated from it so that their private interests do not subordinate the communal good. Appalachia, on the other hand, was the exact opposite of this, and I used this point to emphasize how the local elite actually undermined Appalachia’s growth through its preindustrial period.

Fones-Wolf, Ken. *Glass Towns: Industry, Labor and Political Economy in Appalachia, 1890-1930s*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. Print.

**Evaluation:** This source opened my eyes to a subtle truth about Appalachia: that the coal, lumber, and textiles, industries that did not contribute to economic development in Appalachia, were not necessarily specifically to blame for all of its troubles. Reading many of the sources, I initially came to think as Appalachia’s problems as intrinsically linked to these industries, and many of the authors agreed with me. *Glass Towns*, by contrast, was a useful portrait of an alternative industry in West Virginia, glass, which would seem to be one that, being based in “value-added” manufacturing, would be resistant to the processes that limited economic development in light manufacturing industries. However, as Fones-Wolf shows, this is not the case: even this industry could not remain unaffected by the lack of development. This was useful to me in that it forced me to look outside these industries for an additional explanation for Appalachia’s problems and prompted me to examine the intrinsic problems that perpetuate the cycle of poverty and permeate every industry: the unequal sociopolitical structure that characterized Appalachia.

Frost, William Gooddell. “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains.” *The Atlantic Monthly* (Mar. 1899): 311-320. *Cornell University Library.* Web. 29 Dec. 2013.

**Evaluation:** This primary source helped open my eyes to the academic view of Appalachia at the time of industrialization: as a backwards people that needed to be uplifted by outside investors, thus justifying the horrific process of industrialization that ensued. I mostly used this source in my paper as a source of quotations that demonstrated the view of Appalachia at the time.

*A Handbook to Appalachia: an Introduction to the Region*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006. Print.

**Evaluation:** This source was just what it states: a guide to everything Appalachia. Whenever I needed details on a particular aspect of Appalachia while reading books like *Glass Town* and *Reformers to Radicals*, whether it be some aspect of culture – music, visual arts, religion, literature – healthcare, education, or something else, this book had it. That was pretty much the extent of what I used it for. It is worth noting that although in each section, the discussion was not as detailed as I might have liked, especially with the economy, it still served as a well-rounded general reference source on Appalachia that was vastly superior to some of my previous background encyclopedic sources.

Hunt, Edward E., Tryon, Frederick G., and Willitts, Joseph H.. *What the Coal Commission Found*. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1925. *Hathi Trust Digital Library*. Web. 18 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** This source was simply used for its statistics. It described the growth of coal over time, specifically through a semi-official document. I used it to stress just how much southern West Virginia’s coal industry grew over time, from less than 1% of the market to over 23% in just 15 years.

Ireland, Robert M.. *The County Courts in Antebellum Kentucky*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972. Print.

**Evaluation:** This source was extremely interesting and dismissed the archaic and stereotypical notion that county courts in Appalachia were lawless affairs essentially similar to taverns. Rather, Ireland traced a rather somber history of the corruption in these courts and the power they wielded. I specifically used his analysis of how political office was often used for private gain and even sold on the market.

Lane, David W.. *Civil War in West Virginia*. New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1921. *University of Michigan*. Web. 9 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** This fascinating discussion of company towns helped inform my understanding of just how controlling they were. Although I also was able to obtain more detailed information from Tams, Lane did describe how company stores were often used to offset any wage increases, and I specifically used his book to acknowledge exceptions to the rule of awful conditions, such as Widen, which had many modern amenities and housing that we today would not consider too bad, at least comparatively.

“Mary Breckinridge.” *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Vol. 31. Detroit: Gale, 2011. *U.S. History in Context.* Web. 30 Nov. 2013.

**Evaluation:** This source was used sparingly just for reference on Mary Breckinridge, a famous nurse that established the Frontier Nursing Service in Appalachia that helped bring valuable healthcare to the residents of the region. She is important because she is one of the few success stories of such programs in Appalachia, and thus her story is an interesting one to analyze. This source, truth be told, was simply used to get the basic facts about what she did and who she was after seeing her name three or four times.

Michaux, François André. “Travels to the West of the Alleghany Mountains.” *Early Western Travels* (1905): 117-306. *California Digital Library*. Web. 9 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** This source was a 200-page monstrosity describing Michaux’s travels through the Alleghany Mountains. I specifically used it to describe an outsider’s look at Kentucky and the frontier during its early years in order to emphasize that there really was capitalist development and integration into national and international markets. Michaux’s observations definitely reflected this, showing that 70 percent of products were actually imported from England. I had seen this source referenced in a book and again found it referenced in Perkins’s article, so I decided to find it online (and I did in the *California Digital Library*).

Perkins, Elizabeth. “The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky.” *Journal of American History* (1991): 486-510. *JStor.* Web. 9 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** This article painted an interesting picture of what Perkins calls the frontier myth, of a group of pioneer individualists, who were rugged and noble. She rejects, as Michaux does, the idea that Appalachia was solely defined by subsistence farming. Rather, she shows that there really did exist a capitalist market and pattern of consumption throughout the region even in, she remarks sardonically, “the rude frontier of eighteenth century Kentucky.” I specifically used this to supplement Michaux’s point about consumption and place it in a broader context.

Petsonk, Edward L., Cecile Rose, and Robert Cohen. "Coal Mine Dust Lung Disease: New Lessons from an Old Exposure." *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* 187.11 (2013): 1178-1185. *ATS Journals*. Web. 1 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** I used this source sparingly as a description of the lingering effect of coal mine dust on coal miners, especially in Appalachia, who are still suffering from the same condition that afflicted them years ago. This source or its implications was utilized in the introduction and first paragraph in the general description of Appalachia and its problems.

Salstrom, Paul. *Appalachia’s Path to Dependency: Rethinking a Region’s Economic History, 1730-1940.* Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1994. Print.

**Evaluation:** This often impassioned but mostly convincing resource gave me an insightful view by a reputed Appalachian historian of the economics of dependency, especially in Appalachia: he argues compellingly that the roots of Appalachia’s impoverishment lie not only in industrialization but also in its preindustrial subsistence-barter-and-borrow economy (its wasteful nature along with Appalachia’s inexorable population increase), worsened by federal acts in 1865 terminating state bank notes. He also makes a damning assessment of the New Deal as the final straw, eliminating any possibility of the supplemental subsistence economy from helping Appalachia gain any economic advantage through its wage-price stipulations (which of course were necessary to help these families make a living wage, he hastens to point out – he is not blaming the politicians behind it, just assessing its effects) while also destroying Appalachia’s small farms while helping build those in the Midwest. Salstrom, at times, is naïve in his assumptions, but his evaluation of Appalachia’s economic road to dependency is hard to argue with and served for me as a basis for my description of Appalachian preindustrial and industrial economics.

Shapiro, Henry D. "Appalachia." *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*. Ed. Mary Kupiec Cayton and Peter W. Williams. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001. *U.S. History in Context*. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.

**Evaluation:** This source was one of the first I read, and probably the most informative in giving me a sense of Appalachia’s culture and the widely varying theories on how to define it. Of course, one of the key elements of any history or discussion of Appalachia is the way in which its culture played a role, and this analysis of both the development and validity of historical descriptions of this culture helped me develop my own theory of Appalachia: probably the key insight that this reading provided was the fact that, in effect, outsiders really manufactured the culture of Appalachia, whether it be the original pioneer mythology or the folk society that came to characterize it in the 20th century.

Stealey III, John E.. *The Antebellum Kanawha Salt Business and Western Markets*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993. Print.

**Evaluation:** While Billings and Blee described Clay County, Stealey described Kanawha, one of the largest saltmaking centers in preindustrial Appalachia. His writing informed my understanding on how Appalachia and frontier Kentucky were most definitely not isolated from national markets. I specifically learned from (and initially used) an anecdote/example from his book of a group of salt manufacturers that operated a fleet of ships between two major trading posts to emphasize the above point in my paper.

Tams, William P.. *Smokeless Coal Fields of West Virginia*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1963. Print.

**Evaluation:** I used this, along with Lane, to help describe conditions and amenities in company towns. While I used Lane’s to mainly talk about Widen, this I used to talk in general about company towns and specific aspects of company towns, like schooling and social life. Tams, himself a coal baron, had valuable descriptions of the daily lives of miners that, though biased, helped inform my thinking both about the miners and operators.

Terry, Gail. *Family Empires: A Frontier Elite in Virginia and Kentucky, 1740-1815*. Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1992. Print.

**Evaluation:** This dissertation (of 662 pages!), which described the frontier elite in various states in Appalachia, helped open my eyes to both the corruption and clientelism (through patronage) facilitated by these people, who were thrust into power by the conditions of their capitalist development. Terry, in general, was not used for specific information in my paper but rather to inform my understanding on who these people were and how they came into power.

Thomas, Jerry Bruce. "Appalachia, Impact of the Great Depression on." *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression*. Ed. Robert S. McElvaine. Vol. 1. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004. 56-60. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.

**Evaluation:** This was one of the first sources I read, mostly because it had to do with the origins of poverty in Appalachia and the general cycle that kept industry and the economy of Appalachia from really developing, despite the best efforts of legislation such as that under the New Deal. It was particularly useful as a forerunner to my reading on the War on Poverty, and some of the same themes would resonate there. I generally used it both as a tool to help analyze the roots of poverty in the region, especially due to the coal and textiles industries, and as a reference for specifics from the period that helped me develop an alternative argument for poverty in Appalachia.

United States. Appalachian Regional Commission. *Economic Overview of Appalachia: 2011*. Washington: ARC, 2011. Web. 1 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** This was a brief source that gave me figures on Appalachian poverty in general. I especially used it for its figures on Central Appalachia, and used these figures or implications drawn from them in my introduction and first background paragraph. It was especially useful because of its colorful graphs that illustrated clearly the difference between Appalachia and the rest of the nation, though the report itself was biased in the lens of the ARC, which often has thought it has helped much of Appalachia while much of the money has gone to areas of ‘significant potential for growth’ rather than those that actually need it.

United States. U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Timber Growing and Logging Practice in the Southern Appalachian Region*. Technical Bulletin No. 250 by E.H. Frontingham.Washington, D.C.: Forest Service, 1931. Web. 5 Jan. 2014.

United States. U.S. Department of Commerce. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Agriculture, the Southern States*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1930. Web. 1 Jan. 2014

United States. U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor. *State & County Quickfacts: Owsley County, Kentucky.* Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 17 Dec. 2013. Web. 1 Jan. 2014.

United States. U.S Department of Labor. *The Welfare of Children in Bituminous Coal Mining Communities in West Virginia*. Washington, D.C.: Children’s Bureau, 1923. Web. 1. Jan. 2014.

United States. U.S. Department of Interior. *The Tenth Census: 1880, Agricultural Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: Census Office, 1880. Web. 1 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:**  I am evaluating all of these together since they are all governmental documents from which I obtained statistics. The first gave me statistics on the annual production of timber, which I used to emphasize just how large of an increase it was even in comparison to total national production. The second and fifth were agricultural censuses that gave me averages for the size of a mountain farm over the course of 50 years, allowing me to demonstrate just how marginalized the farmers became over the course of industrialization. Furthermore, the third was a brief source found online that gave me figures in one of the worst counties in Appalachia (Owsley), which I ended up using in the introduction to stress the extreme poverty in Appalachia, especially in those not classified by the ARC as with ‘significant potential for growth.’ It was part of the past U.S. Census. Finally, the fourth source, which I actually did not end up using for statistics, discussed conditions in bituminous coal mining towns in vivid detail. To be sure, it was brutal, and I specifically utilized its description of rampant disease and lack of sanitary equipment to emphasize my point about the awful conditions in company towns.

Warner, Charles D.. “Comments on Kentucky.” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* 78 (January 1889): 255-271. *Cornell University Library.* Web. 1 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** This article, which appeared in Harper’s in 1889, was an invaluable primary source from a colleague of Twain who shared a disdain for the so-called gilded age. It described the scenic vista of Kentucky and its rich natural resources, and concluded that it was really not surprising that outside industrialists were so greedily racing to buy up as much of it as possible. I used it to emphasize just how valuable Appalachia was to the outside world and also inform my understanding on what intellectuals outside of Appalachia who were not staunch industrialists thought of such incursions: and Warner, in the end, is not really sure.

Wecter, Dixon. *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1931*. New York: MacMillan, 1948. Print.

**Evaluation:** This book concerned the Great Depression in general, but did have some interesting statistics about Appalachia. In particular, I used it to emphasize just how little native workers received from industrialization, and how much corporations exploited their political control. Also, it served as a valuable trove of information that helped me understand better conditions and governmental issues during the Depression.

Weller, Jack E.. *Yesterday’s People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia.* Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965. Print.

**Evaluation:** This source, written in 1965, was used to illustrate the bias of many analysts of Appalachia. Weller, the author, and Vance, who wrote the introductory note in his book, are two of the more famous historians who harbor this attitude. The interesting thing is that they are not incredibly unreasonable; their assumptions are not too far off the truth, and they at times do make some good points. However, they blame much of the poverty in the mountains on the mountaineers themselves, rather than on the system around them, ignoring some of the overarching structural and economic inequalities made clear by life in the company town. I thus used this resource in order to point out how even many academics believe in this idea of the “other” when it comes to Appalachia, rather than digging deeper into the roots of its poverty.

Whitaker, Fess. *History of Corporal Fess Whitaker*. Louisville: Standard Printing Co., 1880. *Library of Congress*. Web. 19 Jan. 2014.

**Evaluation:** To be honest, this was an extremely boring source concerning the life of Fess Whitaker, who apparently “never spoke a word until [he] was nine years old.” However, at the same time, I had seen it referenced in other sources as a nice description of how residents of towns were affected by the advent of coal. I used Whitaker’s response specifically to emphasize just dramatic the growth in population and railroads was during this period.

Williams, John Alexander. *Appalachia: A History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. Print.

**Evaluation:** This source was used, like *A History of Appalachia*, to supplement my two major sources. It was specifically used to understand the very early history of Appalachia. In general, it helped provide an overview of what I already knew and also some alternative opinion on the matters at hand. I also obtained several key descriptions of the Appalachian timber and coal industries along with a brief depiction of subsistence farming from William’s book.

Williams, John Alexander. *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1976. Print.

**Evaluation:** Like the above source, this book was used to inform my understanding of Appalachia in general, specifically West Virginia. Though I did not end up discussing all of the book’s findings in my paper, I used it to learn more about the attitudes of coal barons during this time period. Finally, I specifically used this source in my paper to emphasize how many states, especially through their local elite, advertised their rich resources in such a manner that often attracted outside industrialists.

Bibliographic Essay

For me, exploring the real roots of poverty in Appalachia, instead of, as many do, attributing it tothe ignorance of its people, often dismissed as “those hillbillies,” was both a challenging and rewarding experience, and one in which I learned a lot about effectively using sources, writing with a purpose, and, of course, making concise previously verbose writing.

Why did I pick Appalachia? That’s a question that has been on my mind a lot lately, both as a gripe (“Why, oh why, did I pick Appalachia? There’s so much to talk about!”) and as astonishment (“How did I come up with this topic in the first place?”). Yet, what does not fade is my fascination with Appalachia, due to the many historical facets of it worth exploring. From comparisons of Appalachia to Japan to descriptions of some of the craziest feuds I have ever heard of (in one feud in Clay County between the Whites and the Garrards, the Baker family ended up switching sides 6 or 7 times over the course of just 20 years), it did not fail to interest me, and also allowed me to get my feet wet in economic and social scholarly analysis.

In terms of my thesis, probably the turning point in my research was my reading of Ronald Eller’s seminal work, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*. I had been reading a lot of general information about Appalachia, its poverty, and its feuds, helping me to dispel some of the common myths of ignorance and lawlessness, but I did not really know how to tie it together. Eller provided me with a compelling and complete portrait of the devastating effects that industrialization had on Appalachia. Though I would challenge many of Eller’s assumptions about preindustrial Appalachia later in the process, most prominently based on research done by Dwight Billings, Kathleen Blee, and Paul Salstrom along with my own garnering of primary sources, Eller’s internal colony theory really stood at and still stands at the forefront of my thinking about the effects of industrialization on Appalachia. There is a reason he is considered the premier Appalachian scholar, and I would recommend to anyone wanting an examination of Appalachia post-World War II (where I essentially end) his second book, *Uneven Ground*, which really illuminates how the local elite of Appalachia helped perpetuate poverty in the area and prevent federal relief programs like the War on Poverty from functioning (in some counties the Community Action Programs (CAPs) were so corrupt that they were dissolved). Recommended reading aside, I really think the large amount of research that I did was the key to the process, as reading many different authors with varied points of view, especially scholarly opinions, was what really helped me develop my own opinion. I also certainly benefited from the primary sources (Frost, Fox, Michaux, etc.): the key was to read, read, and read some more, and finally I was able to find the question I wanted to answer, in my case the roots of poverty in Appalachia.

The process of finding sources was not especially difficult for me, as there is no lack of scholarly work on Appalachia, both in journals and in books, many of which were directly available at the library. However, sifting through what was good and what was just propaganda, sensationalistic, or not well-researched was the tougher part. There was of course some sensationalistic stuff on the Hatfields and McCoys, but what was particularly disturbing was that perhaps 30% of the books I checked out from the library on Appalachia had misconceptions about the mountain culture, often relying on authors like William Gooddell Frost, who actually never visited Appalachia but instead relied on the writing of sensationalistic writers like John Fox, who barely visited the region himself. They certainly did not screen their primary sources.

In general, from choosing a topic to finding myriad sources with myriad different opinions to formulating a thesis to the long but rewarding haul of writing this essay, the whole process of this junior thesis was an extremely valuable experience for me, which, though it cost me many hours of sleep, was well-worth it and something that I will not soon forget.

1. United States, U.S. Department of Commerce and *Labor, “*State & County Quickfacts: Owsley County, Kentucky” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 17 Dec. 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. United States, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Overview of Appalachia: 2011 (Washington: ARC, 2011), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Appalachia,” International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 2008, Vol. 1, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Richard Straw, Appalachian History, in Grace T. Edwards (ed.), JoAnn A. Asbury (ed.), and Ricky L. Cox (ed.), A Handbook to Appalachia (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 67-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Richard B. Drake, A History of Appalachia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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8. Dwight B. Billings and Kathleen M. Blee, The Road to Poverty: The Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Shannon, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ronald D. Eller, Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), xvii. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. William Gooddell Frost, “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,” The Atlantic Monthly LXXXIII (Mar. 1899), 311-314. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Jack E. Weller, Yesterday’s People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “Appalachia,” 150-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For an in-depth discussion of this, see Billings and Blee, 70-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Charles D. Warner, “Comments on Kentucky,” Harper’s 78 (1889), 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. John A. Williams, West Virginia and the Captains of Industry (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1976), 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Luther F. Addington, The Story of Wise County, Virginia (Wise County: Overmountain Press, 1998), 223-227. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Eller, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. John Alexander Williams, Appalachia: A History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Eller, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. United States, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Timber Growing and Logging Practices in the Southern Appalachian Region, by E.H. Frontingham, Technical Bulletin No. 250 (Washington, D.C.: Forest Service, 1931), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Eller, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid., 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Drake, 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Shannon, 72-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Eller, 128, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Edward E. Hunt et al., *What the Coal Commission Found*, (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1925), 233. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Fess Whitaker, History of Corporal Fess Whitaker (Louisville: Standard Printing Co., 1880), 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Paul Salstrom, Appalachia’s Path to Dependency: Rethinking a Region’s Economic History, 1730-1940 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), 71-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Eller, 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid.,183. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. United States. U.S. Department of Labor, Children’s Bureau, *The Welfare of Children in Bituminous Coal Mining Communities in West Virginia*, Publication No. 117 (Washington, D.C., 1923), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. William P. Tams, Smokeless Coal Fields of West Virginia (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1963), 55-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Eller, 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Williams, Appalachia: A History, 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Dixon Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression (New York: MacMillan, 1948), 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Shannon, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Keith Dix, Work Relations in the Coal Industry: The Hand Loading Era*, 1880-1930* (Morgantown: Institute for Labor Studies, 1977), 20-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
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