

## THE REVIVAL OF REGIONALISM: A CONFERENCE POST-MORTEM

I recently attended a national conference on "Regionalism in America" sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The group which met at Ole Miss consisted of twenty teams of three persons each, selected from over 100 applicant institutions, and around fifteen assorted consultants and observers (plus another forty international visitors who dropped in to watch and respond). NEH's objective was to test the idea that a number of colleges and universities are now interested in programs of regional studies and need advice and help in developing curricula, setting up administrative structures, learning how to use local and national resources, and the rest of it. The strength of the response surprised some of the NEH staff.

Some interesting questions began to develop there in Oxford which we might well ponder. For example, how should we interpret the current strong interest in Appalachian regional studies in view of this incredible wave of national (even international) interest in regional studies generally? I heard folks proposing programs of California studies, New York borough studies, northeast Pennsylvania studies, and studies of a lot of places I never really thought of as places. Are we part of what the demographers call a "secular trend" of identification with place? What's happening? And is there anything unique about Appalachian regional studies?

A second question arose when one of the international visitors warned that regionalism would lead to sectionalism, thence to divisiveness and conflict. In his opinion, these were not the times to fool around with innocent-seeming romantic celebrations of ethnic, religious, or regional separateness. I think he was worried about the Middle East, which was his home, and that he was afraid that the U.S. would start to fall apart leaving no hope for the world. Well, since we had come all that distance to regionalize, we found many good reasons why he was unjustified in his fears, but the question he raised haunted a number of conversations in the next days.

A third question was more purely academic: Is there any intellectual validity in the concept of region? The root of the issue is the old question, What is a region? Few people were satisfied that Odum and his generation had settled the matter for good; it was argued that Odum assumed a lot and didn't prove much. At the same time, no one in the current wave of regionalism had even seriously raised the question, let alone answered it. A wild and steamy discussion went on among maybe forty people late into the night, but I drew off with Jim Goode to talk about Appalachian art, building log cabins, and such, and I never heard whether the matter was resolved. It's doubtful.

I leave these questions with you and will quit before this note turns into a lecture. The issues raised in the NEH meeting on regionalism have been raised recently in other places. They are important matters for us, and I hope you will give them some thought. I hope our conversations at the spring meeting and in our other encounters will give us chances to share our thoughts.

Meanwhile, NEH is being flooded with grant proposals for the establishment of regional studies programs which some people think have questionable intellectual bases and could lead to civil war. Now, I suggest we form an alliance with the Southern Studies and Great Plains people because I've heard that the Northwest Studies and California people may get together with the Southwest Studies folks . . .

John Stephenson  
Chairman

## A CALL FOR PAPERS

### Fourth Annual Appalachian Studies Conference

March 20-22, 1981  
Blue Ridge Assembly  
Black Mountain, North Carolina

This year the program committee of ASC has decided not to establish a particular theme. There will be twelve sessions with at least two papers at each session. The committee welcomes suggestions for individual papers and/or for entire sessions. Any matter related to Appalachian Studies will be considered appropriate. The committee has decided that sessions will be held on women and work, minorities, folklore and education. Ideas for papers on these topics are especially encouraged. It would assist the committee in making final decisions if you send an abstract of your paper with your suggestions. All ideas and abstracts should be sent as soon as possible. No material will be accepted after October 30. Your suggestions should be sent to the Program Committee Chairperson:

Clifford R. Lovin  
Mountain Heritage Center  
Western Carolina University  
Cullowhee, NC 28723  
(704) 227-7129



## APPALSHOP NEWS

Appalshop Films has received partial funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to research seven films on the history of the Appalachian Region and to develop a script for the pilot.

1. The pilot will deal with the history of images of Appalachia in the consciousness of America and in the minds of mountain people in particular. This film will be directed by Herb E. Smith.

The other topics which will be researched are:

2. The history of ethnic groups in the Appalachian Region: Blacks, Indians, southern Europeans, etc. Filmmaker: Elizabeth Barret.
3. The history of mountain peoples' efforts to resist exploitation, to organize, and to fight for their rights. Filmmaker: Mimi Pickering.
4. The effects of religion as a driving force in the history of the region. Filmmaker: Frances Morton.
5. How different land use patterns have developed, from hunting and small farming to stripmining and tourism. Filmmaker: C. Martin Newell.
6. The history of Appalachian economic conditions, especially the evolution of outside ownership and single industry development. Filmmaker: Herb E. Smith.
7. How the region's forests, rivers, and mountains have been influenced by social economics and political change. Filmmaker: Scott Faulkner.

Each of these films will focus on a recent event in which the topic of the film is brought to the forefront and will show the history of the development of the present situation.

The research and development will be coordinated and directed by Helen Lewis with help from a panel of other noted Appalachian scholars: Wilma Dykeman, writer and historian, Newport, Tennessee; Ron Eller, historian, Mars Hill College; Archie Green, folklorist, University of Texas; James Still, writer and poet, Hindman, Kentucky; David Walls, sociologist, University of Kentucky; Cratis Williams, literary historian, Appalachian State University; and Peter Wood, historian, Duke University.

The consensus of the humanists and filmmakers who have planned this series is that to produce the most thoughtful and dynamic series commonly accepted divisions of labor should be reconsidered. Instead of the filmmakers waiting for the humanists and scriptwriters to hand them the material to shoot, the filmmakers will be actively involved in researching and writing their films with advice, direction, and help from the humanists. Thus the research and

development will be a continuation of the planning phase efforts of the filmmakers and humanists working together to design a series which will present a large body of complex humanities knowledge in a way which interests a large adult public.

In order to assure that the films include all parts of the region and make use of the resources which are available in the region's libraries, archives, historical societies' files and museums, we plan to visit Appalachian Studies programs throughout the region. The group will include the six filmmakers, two researchers, Maxine Kenny and Don Baker, and project director Helen Lewis. In exchange for assistance in bringing together resource persons to talk with the group, they can provide some programs for classes or community as a film showing and discussion by the filmmakers.

In addition to locating archival materials, the group would like to find out how local historians view their part of the region, what they think were the most important incidents in their history. Also, they wish to gain some understanding of what the current problems and issues are about which people are now concerned and actively dealing with.

## NEWSLETTER

APPALINK will be published three times a year. The deadline for the next issue is January 15. Send announcements of upcoming events and other items to Anne Campbell, Appalachian Studies Librarian, King Library, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506.

### MEMBERSHIP

If you did not attend the Johnson City meeting but would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please complete the following and return it to Polly Cheek, P.O. Box 502, Mars Hill, North Carolina 28754.

NAME/AGENCY \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

I am enclosing dues of \$4.00 for the 1981-82 fiscal year (to March 1, 1982).

## AN APPALACHIAN EXPERIENCE

The following programs are part of "An Appalachian Experience," Fall Series.

Title:           The Making of Appalachia  
Date:           September 18  
                  Ron Eller

Title:           Appalachian Writers  
Date:           September 25  
                  Wilma Dykeman, Jeff Daniel Marion

Title:           Growing Up in Appalachia  
Date:           October 2  
                  Rose Center Forum

Title:           Country Music and Bluegrass  
Date:           October 9  
                  The Museum of Appalachia Band

Title:           The Industrialization of the Hills  
Date:           October 16  
                  Ron Eller

Title:           Folk Speech and Song  
Date:           October 16  
                  Cratis Williams

Title:           Regional Crafts  
Date:           October 30  
                  Marguerite Carson

This Thursday evening series will be held at historic Rose Center in Morristown, Tennessee, next to the courthouse, from 7:00 p.m. to about 8:30 p.m.

For more information, you may want to contact Rose Center at P.O. Box 1976, Morristown, TN 37814, phone (615) 581-4330, or An Appalachian Experience at P.O. Box 3066, Oak Ridge, TN 37830, phone (615) 482-1075.

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The Celebration of Traditional Music will be held from October 30 to November 2. The festival will feature old-time traditional music, instrumental workshops, and a symposium on early recording companies that featured Appalachian music, led by Dr. Charles Wolfe of East Tennessee State University. A special instrumental workshop will be led by Mike Seeger. Some of the persons invited are Bradley Kincaid, Betty Smith, John Masters, Wade and Julia Mainer, Dee and Delta Hicks, and the Dutch Cove Old-Time String Band. Anyone wishing further information may contact Loyal Jones, Director, Appalachian Center at Berea College, C.P.O. 2336, Berea, KY or (606) 986-9341, extension 513.

## WEATHERFORD HAMMOND MOUNTAIN COLLECTION

Updated lists of Appalachian fiction and poetry in Berea's Mountain Collection have been completed and will be available in November. Some 200 titles have been added to these lists which were compiled by Mr. Al Perrin.

### ANNOUNCING . . .

A complete name and subject index to the APPALACHIAN JOURNAL (Volumes 1-7 [1972-1980]). Including an index to AN APPALACHIAN SYMPOSIUM IN HONOR OF CRATIS WILLIAMS. Over 8000 items. To be published as Volume 7, No. 4 (Summer 1980) of the APPALACHIAN JOURNAL. Single copies \$2.50. Regular subscribers will receive this Index as part of their subscription. For further information, contact the APPALACHIAN JOURNAL, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608.

### MEETING OF APPALACHIAN LIBRARIANS, BIBLIOGRAPHERS & ARCHIVISTS

Date: November 6-7, 1980  
Place: Morrow Library, Marshall University  
Huntington, West Virginia

The 1980 meeting at Marshall University will feature several topics of interest. Continuing our discussions of two years ago in Lexington on "Appalachian Sources: A Cooperative Approach," we will focus on various aspects of publications concerning Appalachia. There will be panel discussions on reprints, rare and not-so-rare books, and a talk on journals. Jim Comstock, editor and publisher of the WEST VIRGINIA HILLBILLY, will be the guest speaker at Thursday evening's dinner.

Registration fee for the meeting is \$8.00, students \$3.00. The dinner Thursday evening is \$8.00. To register, please complete and return the following form by November 1 to Lesle Brown, Special Collections, Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV 25701.



Meeting of Appalachian Librarians, Bibliographers, and Archivists.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

INSTITUTION \_\_\_\_\_

Registration \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Student Registration \$3.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPALACHIAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

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