

Past and Present Perspectives - Early Craftsmen in Appalachia (2, 90 min. blocks)

Articles:

Past - "Early Craftsmen" by Roddy Moore (Winter 1970 edition)

Present - "The Craft Revival in Appalachia, 1896-1937" by Anna Jariello (2003 edition)

SOLs:

History - VUS.3

English - 9.5, 9.8, 10.1, 10.5, 11.5, 12.5

Objectives:

- Students will compare and contrast the craftsmanship and craft revival in Appalachia between the 18th century and the late 19th to early 20th century.
- Students will analyze the historical and cultural significance of craftsmanship in Appalachia.

Materials:

- Copies of the two articles ("Early Craftsmen" by Roddy Moore from 1970 and "The Craft Revival in Appalachia, 1896-1937" by Anna Jariello from 2003)
- Projector or whiteboard
- Internet access for research

Day 1: Early Craftsmen in Appalachia (18th-19th Century)

Introduction (10 minutes):

1. Begin the lesson by discussing the importance of craftsmanship and handmade goods in history and culture.
2. Show some image examples of crafts from the early Appalachian settlers' period from our collection to engage students.

Reading and Discussion (30 minutes):

1. Distribute copies of the 1970 article "Early Craftsmen" to the students.
2. In pairs or small groups, have students read and discuss the article, focusing on the various crafts mentioned and the importance of craftsmanship in early Appalachia. Students can take notes on the article using the graphic organizer below.
3. Encourage students to take notes or highlight key information.

Assignment (40 minutes):

Assign students to research and choose a specific craft mentioned in the article (e.g., blacksmithing, pottery, gunsmithing). Students will answer questions about the craft using the research handout provided.

Group Discussion (10 minutes):

1. Facilitate a whole-class discussion where each group or individual shares their findings.
2. Discuss the skills, trades, and apprenticeships highlighted in the article and their role in the region's development.

Day 2: Craft Revival in Appalachia (Late 19th-20th Century)**Recap (5 minutes):**

1. Begin by reviewing the key points from the previous class, focusing on early Appalachian craftsmanship.

Reading and Discussion (30 minutes):

1. Distribute copies of "The Craft Revival in Appalachia, 1896-1937" by Anna Jariello
2. Instruct students to read the article and identify the factors driving the craft revival during the late 19th and early 20th centuries by filling out the guided notes handout.

Group Discussion (15 minutes):

1. Conduct a group discussion on the impact of the craft revival, including its connection to social and cultural changes in the United States.
2. Highlight the role of figures like John Ruskin, William Morris, and Doris Ulmann in this revival.

Comparative Analysis Essay (35 minutes):

1. Have students reflect on the key differences and similarities between the early craftsmanship (from Day 1) and the craft revival discussed in today's article in the form of an essay.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

1. Summarize the importance of craftsmanship in Appalachia, both in the past and during the craft revival, in preserving cultural heritage and addressing societal concerns.

Assessment:

Evaluate students based on their participation in discussions, completion of the assignments, and the quality of their essays or reflections.

Options for Differentiation:

- For students who struggle with reading comprehension, provide a simplified version of the article with key information highlighted.
- Pair students with a partner who can provide additional support or guidance during the group activities.
- Offer graphic organizers or templates to help students organize their thoughts during the elaboration phase.

Extension Activities:

- Craft Showcase: Show students a variety of crafts from both the 18th century and the late 19th to early 20th century in Appalachia. Ask them to quickly identify key differences and similarities between the craftsmanship of the two time periods.
- Picture Analysis: Display two pictures depicting craftsmanship in Appalachia from the 18th century and the late 19th to early 20th century. In pairs, students have to quickly compare and contrast the images, noting any changes in techniques or styles.
- Quick Research: Provide students with a list of craft techniques commonly used in Appalachia during the 18th century and the late 19th to early 20th century. In small groups, students have a few minutes to research and jot down any differences or similarities they find.
- Craftsmanship Timeline: Give students a timeline with key events and developments related to craftsmanship in Appalachia between the 18th century and the late 19th to early 20th century.

- Essay Reflection: Assign students a short essay or reflection on how the craft revival contributed to the identity of Appalachian America.

“Early Craftsmen” by Roddy Moore Reading Guide

Guiding Questions	Notes
What types of crafts were considered essential for self-sufficiency in early Botetourt County?	
Why were apprenticeships necessary for certain crafts like gunsmithing and pottery?	
How did the long Kentucky rifle contribute to the frontiersman's way of life?	
Who were some notable gunsmiths in Botetourt County during the 18th and 19th centuries?	
What evidence exists of the skilled craftsmanship of potters, silversmiths, and cabinet makers in Botetourt County?	

“The Craft Revival in Appalachia, 1896-1937” by Anna Jariello Reading Guide

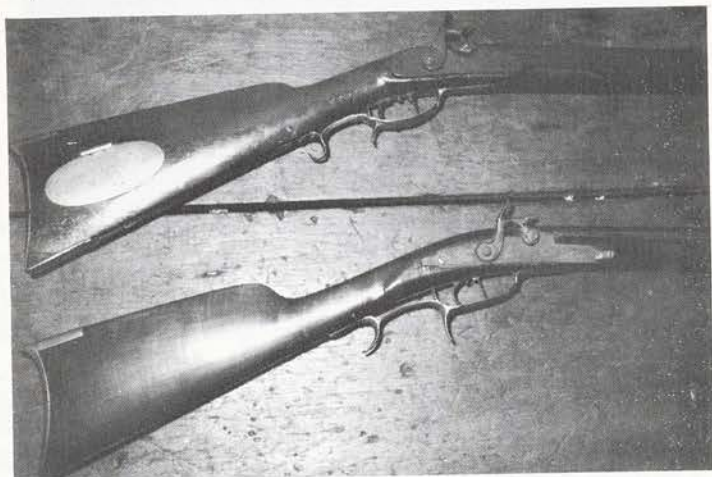
Guiding Questions	Notes
How does the article describe the reaction against new technologies and industrial processes in the craft revival movement?	
What role did Doris Ulmann play in the craft revival movement in Appalachia?	
How did craft schools and settlements contribute to the preservation and promotion of traditional craftsmanship in Appalachia?	
Why was there a widespread revival of weaving in the Appalachian region during this period?	
In what ways did the craft revival movement contribute to the identity of the Appalachian region?	

Craft Research - “Early Craftsmen” by Roddy Moore

Research Questions	Notes/Answers	Source: Where did you find this information?
What are the primary raw materials required for the chosen craft?		
How did the chosen craft evolve over time and what technological advancements influenced its development?		
What social and economic factors influenced the popularity and demand for the chosen craft?		
How did the mastery of the chosen craft contribute to social status and specialization during the time period discussed in the article?		
Are there any notable artisans or practitioners associated with the chosen craft mentioned in the article? If so, what were their contributions and impact on the craft's development?		

Fincastle, you see, does not need to be "restored", as Colonial Williamsburg did. But before the bulldozers move any closer, as they are moving everywhere, its integrity must be saved for future generations of Americans.

Early Craftsmen



Rifles made by John Sites (top) and by John Painter (bottom)

BY RODDY MOORE

Early settlers of Botetourt County were almost entirely self-sufficient in such domestic arts as those of the blacksmith, cooper, cobbler, weaver, tailor and distiller.

However, several of the ancient crafts—the gunsmith, potter, silversmith and cabinet maker—required apprenticeship. These specialists produced an assortment of utilitarian objects much needed by the hard-working farmers who were ill-equipped to create them at home.

The long Kentucky rifle was the frontiersman's principal possession. With it, he protected himself and his family from the Indians who did not care to give up their land to white settlers. With his Kentucky rifle, the frontiersman killed the game which provided three-fourths or even all of the meat for his table as well as skins to sell or to trade for commodities he could not produce himself.

Botetourt County had a large number of skilled gunsmiths who produced quality rifles in both the 18th and 19th century. In the 18th century, Andrew Telford, Francis Graham, Robert Rowland, Alexander Simpson, George Wilson, William McFerran and George Peterman were making and repairing rifles in this area. The best known gunsmiths were John Sites and John Painter. Sites operated a shop in Fincastle from 1808 until he left for Missouri in 1834. Painter had a



"Potter Pete" Obenchain and wife, Matilda Shank Obenchain

shop at Haymakertown from the 1830s until his death in 1900.

Among the letters in the Roanoke Historical Society's collection of Preston papers is one written by David Rowland of the Botetourt gunsmith family on March 2, 1810. He wrote: "I perceive by a Notice of the Executive of Virginia—that the time for receiving proposals for making Gun carriages will expire on the 10th of this month—my father is very anxious that I should enter into a contract—to furnish a number of carriages—I am willing to undertake to make the whole number that will be wanted or any other not less than twenty and obligate myself to furnish three every month."

The best known potter of this region undoubtedly was "Potter Pete" Obenchain, who was born in Botetourt County in 1822. His occupation was listed as potter in the U. S. Census of 1850 and 1860.



Obenchain pottery, signed "Matthew Obenchain" on bottom



Desk signed by George Sawyers and Thomas Murphey in 1747

His shop on Mill Creek was wiped out by the flood of 1877, according to tradition. The only known signed piece of Obenchain pottery existing today is a red glazed, redware jardiniere, signed Matthew Obenchain, 1867 on the bottom.

Other potters known to have worked in Botetourt were Jesse Hinkle, Joel Noftsinger and Robert Fulwiler, who are believed to have apprenticed under and later worked with Peter Obenchain, the Trout pottery in Troutville and the Sprinkle pottery. Unfortunately, many local potters left their products unmarked so identifiable specimens of their craftsmanship are difficult to obtain.

As frontier settlements developed into towns and cities, the people replaced the primitive creations of the earlier period with far more elaborate household objects. By the middle of the 18th century, silversmiths, clockmakers, jewelers, cabinet makers and other highly skilled craftsmen had started to move into the county.

One of the earliest silversmiths here was John Welch, who moved into Fincastle during the latter part of the 18th century. He started his apprenticeship to the trades of silversmith and clockmaker in 1806 and by 1817 had become a journeyman and had taken Charles Aunspaugh as apprentice. In 1821, Welch advertised for another apprentice and in August, 1822, Aunspaugh informed the public he was setting up a clock and watch shop across the mountain at Liberty in Bedford County.

One of the few pieces of signed and dated 18th century Virginia furniture is a desk bearing the names of the makers, George Sawyers and Thomas Murphey, and the date, 1797. They lived and worked in the Sweet Springs area of what was then Botetourt County. The

style and lines of this Chippendale desk show that it was made by a highly skilled craftsman, rather than a country carpenter.

The handmade objects remaining today prove that there were skilled craftsmen living and working in Botetourt in the last two centuries. These products and the work of many of her craftsmen, unknown or long forgotten, make up a rich store of Botetourt County cultural history.

Garden Week in Botetourt

An added attraction during the Botetourt Bicentennial is the anticipated visit of scores of appreciative people to four notable Botetourt homes, with side trips to Fincastle landmarks, during Virginia's Historic Garden Week, April 24-25.

Doors will be opened to the public at Mrs. Garland Hopkins' Garland Orchards; Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Tyack's home; Oakland, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Muse, and Santillane, home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert D. Stoner. Buses will bring visitors from Roanoke and other points to see Botetourt in the spring.

The Hopkins country home near old Daleville, dates to 1790, although it was expanded in 1938. Its English boxwood is about 150 years old. The home is furnished with portraits, prints, rugs and antique furniture, some pieces from the county and others from Eastern Virginia. The Tyack home is built around a log cabin, about 150 years old.

Nearby they will see the Muse home, an early 19th century farmhouse remodeled in 1947. It has a number of antiques and reproductions. Santillane, just west of Fincastle, is a spacious mansion seated in a grove of old oaks where it was constructed by Col. George Hancock, a soldier of the Revolution and the first Congressman representing Botetourt.

Also open for the Garden Club tour are the Presbyterian, Methodist and Episcopal churches, the Courthouse and Historical Museum, all in the county seat, and Tinker Mill, a restaurant in the Daleville mill built in 1847.

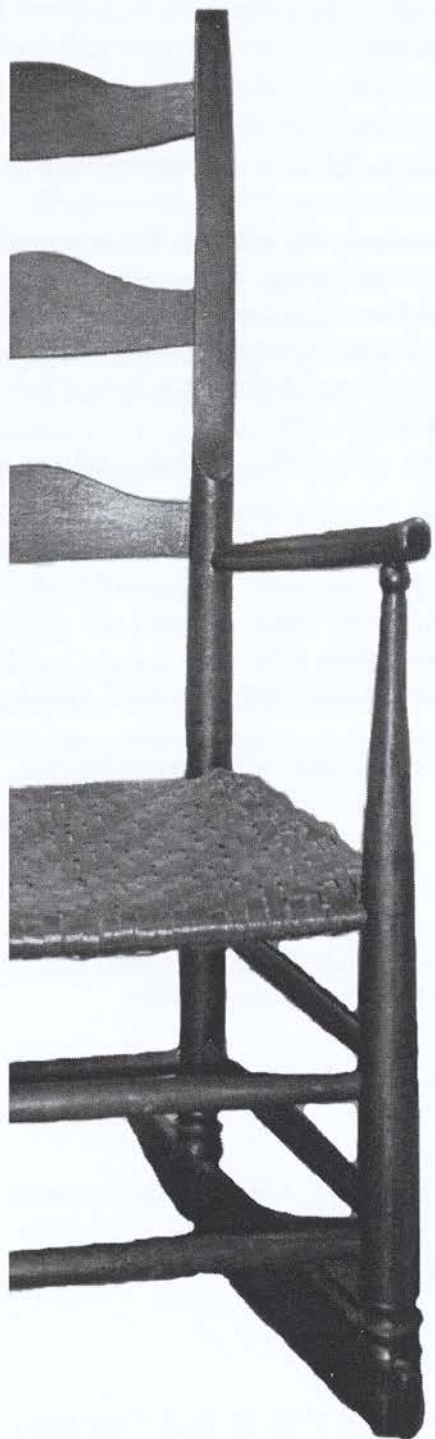
"Town of Fincastle" To Be Reprinted

Arrangements have been made to reprint Miss Frances Niederer's book, "The Town of Fincastle, Virginia." The architectural history has been out of print for some time after two printings.

Steps also are being planned for a reprinting of R. D. Stoner's "A Seed-Bed of the Republic," a valuable, comprehensive history of Botetourt County.

The Craft Revival in Appalachia: 1896-1937

by Anna Fariello



Movers & Makers: Doris Ulmann's Portrait of the Craft Revival in Appalachia was shown at the History Museum and Historical Society of Western Virginia from August 1, 2003 until February 1, 2004. The exhibition was supported by grants from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the Virginia Commission for the Arts. This essay is an excerpt from a forty-page catalog that includes guest essays by Richard Kurin, Director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and Jean Haskell, Co-editor of the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, as well as a number of Doris Ulmann photographs, and a complete checklist of the exhibition. The catalog is available from the History Museum gift shop.

Movers & Makers: Doris Ulmann's Portrait of the Craft Revival in Appalachia was the result of research into a revival that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in southwestern Virginia, western North Carolina, and the eastern portions of Kentucky and Tennessee. Curator Anna Fariello, a former Smithsonian research fellow, used materials and documents in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Archives of American Art, the Smithsonian American History Museum, and regional craft schools to piece together the broad story of craftsmen and revival advocates.

Lenders to the exhibition included Berea College in Kentucky and the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina. Fariello also selected work from local collectors and the History Museum's own collection to augment the exhibition. Objects on display from the History Museum's collection included a loom and spinning wheel, a face jug and presentation clay pot, a quilt made from feed sack material, and a zither. Twenty-four of the artist's photographs were selected to create a collective portrait of the revival, defining the movement's scope and revealing its motivation.

Anna Fariello owns Curatorial InSight, a consulting firm providing research, development and curatorial services to non-profits and private collectors. She wrote the article "What do we Leave Behind?" for Volume Fifteen, Number One, of the History Museum and Historical Society Journal in 2002.

A revival of craft—or *handicraft* as it was called at the time—swept over the Appalachian mountain region at the end of the 19th century and well into the 20th. The revival was part of a renewed worldwide interest in things made by hand. In the middle of the 19th century, while the English Industrial Revolution was in full swing, people began to notice that the objects made by new technologies—cast iron in place of wrought or hammered iron, for example—were inferior to those made by traditional methods. Another concern was design; new technologies allowed things to be produced rapidly with little thought to their function. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the division of labor, sweatshop conditions, and exploitation of children that characterized much of the industrial environment robbed workers of the pleasure of their work.

John Ruskin, a professor at Oxford College in England, began to address these concerns in his writing and lectures. Within his lifetime, his books were read worldwide and translated into several languages. Ruskin's writing was so often quoted that his words appear like stock phrases in revival literature; *head and hand*, *dignity of labor*, and *arts and crafts* are common to the period. William Morris, a fellow Englishman and follower of Ruskin, would likewise become a household name through his decidedly political writing. His essay "Useful Work vs. Useless Toil" was an indictment of those who profited from the labor of others. Ruskin and Morris, whose names often appear conjoined, were unceasing advocates for good design and craftsmanship. William Morris died in 1896, the year in which the first American Arts and Crafts Societies were formed. In Appalachia, that same year was punctuated by events that would shape the region as Berea College would begin to hold its annual Homespun Fairs, promoting the idea that *home-spun* and *hand-made* were worthy of interest and study.

Like many who orchestrated the Appalachian craft revival, Doris Ulmann (1882-1934) was born outside the region to a family of means. The daughter of a prominent Jewish textile industrialist and raised in New York City's fashionable Upper West Side, Ulmann attended Columbia University and the Clarence White School of Photography. She was among the founding members of the Pictorial Photographers of America, a group that attempted to make pictures that were expressive, artistic, and beautiful. Through her interest in the Ethical Culture Society, which advocated that cultural difference can contribute to a democratic society, Ulmann began looking at her photographic subjects not as individuals, but as more universal cultural *types*. Ulmann's earliest subjects were those who shared her world; she invited well-known writers to sit for her in her Manhattan apartment.

You select your own chair...[and pose] with or without pipe, cigarette, ukulele, or volume of the Encyclopedia...Ulmann would say that these things are offered to "draw you out." She studies your hands as you pass her a plate of cakes, observes which leg you cross over the other...tells you a funny story to make you laugh, and another not so funny to see if you are easily reduced to tears.¹

In Virginia Ulmann photographed authors Ellen Glasgow (who asked that she destroy the pictures) and Sherwood Anderson in rural Troutdale. But more and more, she photographed what she called *vanishing types*. An early series was made of esoteric religious sects: Shakers and Mennonites in Pennsylvania and Dunkards (German Baptists) in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. In the late 1920s Ulmann traveled to rural Kentucky where she photographed mountain families and to coastal South Carolina where she turned her camera on the African American Gullah people.

Although she worked on the cusp of the modern age, Ulmann's photographic method belonged to the 19th rather than the 20th century. She used a heavy 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" view camera that required a cumbersome setup. Using a soft-focus lens, Ulmann used no light meter. Instead, she removed the lens cap to allow light to reach the film. Exposures were made on glass plates, producing full-sized photographic impressions that were then printed on platinum paper. Although expensive, platinum allowed for a subtle range of grays, resulting in a wide tonal palette. During her lifetime Doris Ulmann



*Virginia basketmaker
(name, dates unknown)
Possibly Mrs. James H. Jones,
Wytheville, Va.
Doris Ulmann portrait,
c. 1933-34
Collection of
Berea College Art Department*

created portrait portfolios of medical doctors (1919 and 1922), editors (1925), and African Americans in the volume *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1933). For the most part, her Appalachian portraits were published posthumously with many printed from some of the 10,000 glass plates left at her death in 1934. In 1937 fifty-eight of Ulmann's Appalachian images were published in *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, a survey of the craft revival in Appalachia.

In the 1920s Ulmann was asked, first by the Southern Woman's Educational Alliance of Richmond and later by author Allen Eaton, to photograph Appalachian craftsmen. She worked in eastern Kentucky, southwestern Virginia, and western North Carolina. The photographer ventured out from her Park Avenue apartment in a large Lincoln driven by a German chauffeur. With equipment in the trunk and map in hand, they often left on extended photographic tours at midnight. She sometimes processed photographic plates in hotel bathrooms, renting out an extra room for that purpose.

Most of the photographs in *Movers & Makers: Doris Ulmann's Portrait of the Craft Revival in Appalachia* were made in the last two years of the artist's life. With frail health exacerbated by chain smoking and a poor diet, 1933 and 1934 were spent on the road, punctuated by shorter and shorter stays in Manhattan where she would develop pictures, recoup and repack, before heading out again. *On about the 10th of April (1934) the 7th Ulmann Niles Folk Lore Photographic Expedition will set out. With cars and trailers and cameras and notebooks*, wrote assistant John Jacob Niles.² Ulmann approached her portraiture of craft makers and movement leaders in much the same way. She posed each with some tangible symbol of the sitter's role. Revival movement leaders were often posed with books, makers with the tools of their trade. Many such *movers* recorded their lives in published memoirs detailing their activities and work. In contrast, most *makers'* written records are few; some names are known, but many are not. Instead, they left a wealth of physical records in the form of baskets, coverlets, and carvings.

The Appalachian Craft Revival took place at the intersection of four key states, covering the mountain counties of North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. From the late 1900s into the early 20th century, an entire community of *mountain workers* criss-crossed geographic lines, working together to bring the handmade products of Appalachia to national markets. The question of *why* Appalachia might first be asked as *What Appalachia?* because the concept of Appalachia as a distinct region of the United States had not yet been born.

It was at a teachers convention in 1895 that Berea College president, William Goodell Frost (1854-1938) announced *the discovery of a new world...Have you ever heard of Appalachian America?* he asked. Using the term *Appalachian America* in his frequent fundraising speeches, Frost defined the geographic entity as *a new grand division...a mountainous backyard...extending from the line of Pennsylvania to the iron hills of Birmingham*.³ Curiously, Frost's geography coincides closely with the official definition of Appalachia used by the U.S. Appalachian Regional Commission today. During their first summer in Kentucky, William and Eleanor Marsh Frost traveled through the counties surrounding Berea College to meet local families. They were soon impressed with the handwork they saw, in particular, the woven coverlets made by local women. The Frosts acquired several to display during college fundraising activities and to sell to supporters directly. But the coverlet came to serve a broader, less tangible, purpose. Symbolically, it was evidence that the Appalachian people—maligned in sensationalized press accounts and popular novels built on stereotypes—were capable of reform through education and direction. Berea College developed twin programs. In its on-campus Fireside Industries program students worked to offset their tuition; off campus, the college began a program of outsourcing weaving to local women. Both approaches became models for others that would follow in their wake.

Missionaries had been in the region early in the 19th century, and by the 1890s, they would be joined by other secular, philanthropic, and educational groups doing *mountain work*. Such work came to



Doris Ulmann

Young carver (name, dates unknown), Brasstown, N.C.;
Identified as both Quenton Clayton and Quinton Donaldson (c. 1923, unknown)
Doris Ulmann portrait, 1923
Collection of John C. Campbell Folk School

target education, since rural communities had few, if any, schools. Where schools were operational, the school year seldom went beyond a few months. A 1921 publication lists almost 200 such schools in the region, only fourteen of which are listed as independent of a religious denomination. Close to one third of the denominational schools were Presbyterian.⁴ In 1897 the Women's Home Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church began to discuss *mountain work* in their publications, urging the establishment of manual training and industrial schools in their section of Virginia. In the coal counties further southwest, a Handicraft Guild was established by the Protestant Episcopal Church. Nearby, in the Banner community of Coeburn just over the county line in Wise County, Doris Ulmann made a picture study of a wood carver. While Ulmann usually made portraits, her image of Nicodemus Demon Adams focused on the craftsman's work, showing only his hands.

One type of independent school was the settlement which, in America, was a type of college outreach or service-learning program. Nationwide, the growth of settlement schools was exponential. In the last decade of the 19th century, there were six settlements in America; by 1910 there were 400. Settlement schools were independent of organized religion and, for the most part, were independent of one another. The settlement movement in America grew from a number of diverse influences that coalesced at the turn of the 20th century. Its prototype was the English Toynbee Hall, established in 1884, as a fraternity of college students who lived and worked in London's slums to show their solidarity with the working class.

From the point of view of the mountain student, there was little difference between a *mission* school and a *settlement* school. The difference between the two lay in their management and intention. While the overt purpose of a mission school was to teach, its implied intention was to add to its denominational rolls. Likewise, settlement schools attempted a conversion of sorts by introducing middle-class values to the poor. Paradoxically, settlement schools sometimes taught things like table setting to those who had little or nothing with which to fill a table. Settlements were not completely divorced from religious interpretation; on the contrary, their work was based on the Social Gospel, a movement that applied religious theory to social activism.

In America the settlement movement was primarily a women's movement. As such, it was influenced by the current place of women in society, especially college-educated women. Up through the late 19th century, higher education for women was limited by issues of propriety. While future settlement leader Jane Addams was attending Rockford College, for example, women were not allowed to speak in public; their own commencement speeches were read by men.⁵ After graduation, women found themselves closed out of many professional occupations. Some of the more adventurous among them struck out on their own, leaving the comforts of their upbringing to *settle* among poorer peoples, and making professionally rewarding work for themselves. In 1899 Jane Addams founded Hull House, a Chicago settlement that came to serve as a training ground for others that followed in its wake. Hull House provided amenities to the local community, including reading circles and mother's clubs, as well as political advocacy for child labor regulation, equal rights legislation, and suffrage. A Labor Museum exhibited handwork and craft instruction was provided in metalwork, pottery, weaving, and wood carving.

In period writing, there is mention of a social settlement established in Appalachia as early as 1894, but the settlement with a more lasting impact on the region was the Hindman Settlement School in eastern Kentucky. In 1900, with support from the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Katherine Pettit and May Stone pitched a tent village on a high bluff above the town of Hindman and called it *Camp Industrial*. Sixty-seven people came for morning cooking classes and more than one hundred, including thirty-five boys, for afternoon sewing. So successful was their settlement camp that, at the end of the summer, nearly 350 people showed up to bid the women good-bye. Hindman, like Berea



*Fireside Industries students (names, dates unknown)
Berea College unknown photographer, c. 1900; Collection of Berea College Archive*

College, not only taught crafts on its campus, but also served as a broker for local craftsmen, providing an outlet for local basket makers, weavers, chair and broom makers. Throughout Appalachia, as mission, settlement, and independent schools were established, handcraft was added to their curricula. Craft instruction served multiple purposes: as a focus for preservation and extension of local culture; as a means of enhancing economic opportunity; and as a training method aimed at building discipline and character development.

Of all the craft processes promoted during the revival, weaving was the most widespread. Upon seeing a local coverlet for the first time, several mountain workers recorded a similar response. The beauty of the coverlet as a material form and visual pattern immediately impressed them. Some became collectors and some were inspired to learn how a coverlet was made. Their interest resulted in more developed educational, commercial, and charitable programs in which mountain weaving played a central role.

Weaving was a traditional skill found in most American households until the end of the 18th century.

One of the first home industries to become fully industrialized, in the North, mill towns grew into huge textile production centers, like Lowell, Massachusetts. In the South, mills were established where there were enough people to provide a sufficient labor force, which meant their location favored the lowlands rather than the mountains. Factory-made coverlets were produced on wide industrial looms and woven in a single piece. Typically, home looms were only forty-four inches wide, so to make a full bed cover, a weaver had to piece two lengths together, creating a seam down the middle of the coverlet. Before the revival, especially among families whose coverlets were made primarily for warmth, matching the central seam was not an issue. During the revival, however, having the coverlet *hit the seam* was considered a sign of good craftsmanship.

In Appalachia, the differences between cottage and commercial production centers were not distinct. Cottage industries were established at educational institutions, like Berea's Fireside Industries and the many African American industrial institutes throughout the South. Craft programs were part of settlement schools, like Hindman and Pine Mountain in Kentucky and the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School in Tennessee; and at mission-affiliated programs, like Allanstand Cottage Industries and the Penland School of Handicrafts in North Carolina; St. John's-in-the-Mountains, the Blue Ridge Industrial School and the Bear Mountain Mission in Virginia. Independent schools, like the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina and the Tallula Falls Industrial School and Berry School in Georgia, embraced handwork as well.

Coverlets were also produced commercially in small-scale shops. Commercial production centers included individualized shops selling in-home piecework, at the Spinning Wheel and Biltmore Industries in North Carolina, Matheny Weavers in Kentucky, Shuttle-Crafters in Tennessee, the Weavers of Rabun in Georgia, and Rosemont Industries in Virginia. Not restricted to women and girls, Berea's Mountain Weaver Boys was a program that produced high quality cloth for men's ware, rather than traditional Appalachian-style textiles. A few commercial weaving operations, such as Churchill Weavers, were partially automated, but many processes remained essentially hand operations.

On the practical side, weaving was popular during the revival because it was so easily transportable. Other handmade objects—pottery and metalwork, in particular—were breakable and heavy. Baskets, although bulky, were lightweight and their materials were inexpensive and abundant. Woodcarving was encouraged, but favored a small-scale. Carving programs were established at two schools in particular: at the Pleasant Hill Academy in Tennessee and the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina. Both basket making and woodcarving were produced by Cherokee craftsmen on the fringe of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In recognition of the importance of their cultural traditions, the Cherokee began holding annual craft celebrations. As tourism in the park grew, their work increasingly was marketed to park visitors.

When comparisons were made between hand made objects and the industrially produced products that appeared to be replacing them, preservationists held that *the handmade product [was] not a substitute [for store-bought products,] but an archetype*.⁶ As such, the coverlet was considered to be an icon of individual and original expression, a piece of pure American culture. Further, the knowledge and skills required for hand craft were considered to be a binding cultural force, one that provided continuity in a century marked by change. Textured and colorful, coverlets were exported from the region to urban centers in the East and Northeast. Ideas were exported as well; the coverlet became a tangible symbol of tradition, preservation, simplicity, nature, and morality. Thus, handwork was linked with character, using material culture to defend the inherent goodness of mountain people. The craftsman who made a coverlet was not only credited with skill, but also with desired personal characteristics. *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* (1925) expressed some of the ideas that made Appalachian weaving popular outside the region. A poetic passage explains how tradition was transmitted from one genera-

tion to the next. The oldest weaver recalled,

"My mother spun and wove it;"

And the middle aged:

"My grandmother wove it;"

And the young...[will] whisper:

*"This is my great grandmother's coverlet."*⁷

In spite of a proliferation of handicraft activity under the direction of mountain workers, some did not really understand the complexity of making simple objects. When William Frost attempted to order a large number of coverlets to sell to college patrons, a local weaver replied,

*President, in order to make so many kivers, we will have to raise more sheep, shear them, pick and wash the wool, card and spin it, then collect the bark and sich to color it. Then we will have to have the loom all set up, fix the warp and beam it, then get a draft and thread the warp for the pattern we want then tie up the loom. It will take nigh on to a year or more afore we can have that many kivers wove.*⁸

On the surface, Appalachian crafts were promoted and sold for a pragmatic reason: to put money into the pockets of people farming harsh mountain ground. But other, less direct, factors influenced the revival as well. At the end of the 19th century, America was undergoing a national identity crisis. Did America have a culture of its own? Would the growing influx of immigrants help in the formation of a national culture or would such growth dilute it? Craft revival leaders appeared to propose that the nation reconsider handwork. Here—in linsey-woolsey coverlets, in white oak baskets, in hand-carved animals, and patchwork quilts—we might, at last, find a true American style.

We are founded as a nation of farmers, wrote Theodore Roosevelt in defense of a rural national identity.⁹ By the turn of the century, the rural problem had become a national conversation, taking place in every part of the country, from the Midwest to New England to the American South. The out migration of farmers to urban factories was thought to threaten the very fabric of American life. Throughout the 19th century, the concrete differences emerging between rural and urban sections of the country widened the gulf between agricultural and industrial lifestyles. While electricity was changing the way urban America lived, rural America retained its ties to natural cycles of daylight and seasons. When the automobile was beginning to have an effect on transportation, it remained impractical for rough terrain and, more so, on land without roads. In 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt convened the Country Life Commission to examine solutions to making rural life attractive. While the Commission dealt with specific issues, some of which were controversial such as school consolidation, it also spawned a popular movement and nationwide interest in rural living. That movement was known as both *simple life* and *country life*. The former term came from a book of the same name published in 1901, the latter spawned a national organization and magazine.¹⁰

In 1933 the American Country Life Association held its annual national convention in Blacksburg, Virginia and, with it, was launched *Mountain Handicrafts*, the first-ever nationally circulating exhibition of Southern handicrafts. Allen Eaton (1878-1962) organized the exhibition. Eaton had developed a national reputation for his exhibitions and writing on handcraft; by 1917, he was creating exhibitions for the American Federation of Arts and the Russell Sage Foundation in New York City. When his exhibition *Arts and Crafts of the Homelands* traveled to Buffalo in 1919, 50,000 people came to see it. His book *Immigrant Gifts to American Life* focused on the contributions made by immigrants to the rich culture of American life. In 1926 Eaton was invited by Olive Dame Campbell, founder and director of the Campbell Folk School, to speak at the annual Conference of Southern Mountain Workers in Knoxville, Tennessee. From that initial introduction to craft revival leaders in 1926, Eaton developed lasting friendships and became a spokesman for regional handcraft.

In 1933 Eaton installed over 500 works of Appalachian handcraft in Virginia Polytechnic Institute's Memorial Gymnasium. Work submitted from Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia included weaving, quilts, hooked rugs, baskets, brooms, woodwork, and toys. The Cherokee nation was represented by baskets and beadwork and by more culturally specific forms, such as bows, arrows, gourd rattles, and racquetball sticks. Because ironwork was too heavy and pottery too fragile, they were not part of the exhibition. On view were fifty Doris Ulmann prints and 128 reproductions of paintings depicting scenes of rural life. Exhibition guests give some indication of the importance of the event, for among the dignitaries arriving in Blacksburg were the Secretary of Agriculture, the president of the American Federation of Arts, and the chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Eaton's opening remarks, on August 3rd, 1933, were later broadcast nationally on radio. Such an exhibition of regional arts was unprecedented and, in fact, an exhibition of Appalachian craft on this scale has not appeared on the national stage since that time.

Influenced by Ruskin and Morris, Eaton's interest in art was democratic, rather than rarified, a position he shared with the two earlier thinkers. They believed that art should, and could, become a *people's art* without sacrificing quality. All three endorsed education programs that would reach large numbers of people: design education for workers in industry, manual education for school children, and technical education for craft professionals. Moreover, if any nation embraced such educational efforts, then art would spill out into the everyday life of its citizens. Ruskin, Morris, and Eaton envisioned a world bathed in beauty, a world reformed. Going one step further, Eaton included the therapeutic value of art and art making, thus, contributing to the development of occupational therapy. But the repercussions of this approach were devastating for professional craftsmen. The typical *arts and crafts* object came to be associated almost exclusively with amateurism.

Not two weeks after Allen Eaton mounted the *Mountain Handicrafts* exhibition on the campus of Virginia Tech, the third annual White Top music festival was held less than 100 miles away, in what is now the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. At the first festival, one hundred contestants competed on a tented platform stage before an audience of 3,000 spectators. While Eaton didn't make it down to the festival from Blacksburg, the paths of Clem Douglas and Doris Ulmann crossed in Marion. Douglas was founder and director of the Spinning Wheel and one of the founders of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. Also attending the festival was its guest of honor, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt whose presence caused additional crowds, not to mention additional press. But Doris Ulmann never made it to the 5,500-foot summit and imagined, in a letter to Olive Campbell, that *the buzz of the reporters' typewriters* all but drowned out the mountain singing and playing.¹¹ The following spring, Ulmann had a second opportunity to meet Eleanor Roosevelt when she was invited to the White House after an exhibition of her work was installed at the Library of Congress.

In 1936 a conference was held in Marion in conjunction with the festival. Presenters included a representative from the Library of Congress who spoke on ballad preservation, and a government official from the Works Progress Administration who addressed the issue of women's handicrafts. Allen Eaton addressed the conference as well. The following year Eaton's survey of the craft revival *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, including fifty-eight of Doris Ulmann's photographs, was published. The opening sentence of Eaton's book is indicative of his philosophy.

*Every kind of work will be judged by two measurements: one by the product itself...the other by the effect of the work on the producer. When that time comes the handicrafts will be given a much more important place in our plan of living than they now have, for unquestionably they possess values which are not generally recognized.*¹²

He warned that to confine our estimate of handicrafts to market possibilities is to overlook their most important values. Eaton continued, debating the relationship of work to life and of the present to the

past.

During much of the revival, consideration of the object itself—in isolation from its maker—was rare. Craftwork was more often seen as evidence of skill or of particular character traits—such as patience and discipline—a tangible measurement of intangible values. Throughout the revival, the social, educational, traditional, and even therapeutic values of craft were elevated above its aesthetic value, a situation which contributed to the marginal place of contemporary craft in today's museums and universities. But in the region, craft making has persisted. Throughout the Appalachian mountains, a significant number of craft organizations continues to operate; enrollment in area craft schools is healthy.

Throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, second and third generation craftsmen have emerged. Edd Presnell started making dulcimers in 1936, just a year before Allen Eaton's survey appeared on the national stage. From his home in Banner Elk, North Carolina, he kept count of dulcimers he made since the mid 1950s. Within twenty-five years, Presnell was up over 1,000. Quoted in a 1977 exhibition catalog, Presnell expressed a sentiment common to craft makers.

*I'll tell you what. Lot of people these days don't know what they're working for.... We've been through every age: The Stone Age; The Iron Age; The Machine Age; The Atomic Age; and now the Space Age and the Computer Age put together, only to find ourselves smack in The Money Age.... You don't supposed to be a-doin' things just for money. Me, I work because I like to work.*¹³

NOTES

¹ Dale Warren, "Doris Ulmann: Photographer-in-Waiting," *Bookman* (October 1930), 131.

² John Jacob Niles to William Hutchins, March 11, 1933, Berea College Archive.

³ William Frost, "The American Mountaineers," *Berea Quarterly* (February 1900) 12.

⁴ Olive Dame Campbell, *Southern Highland Schools Maintained by Denominational and Independent Agencies* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921).

⁵ John Farrell, *Beloved Lady: A History of Jane Addams' Ideas on Reform and Peace* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967) 34.

⁶ Samuel McChord Crothers, "Our Contemporary Ancestors," *Berea Quarterly* (October 1906) 21.

⁷ Eliza Calvert Hall, *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1925) 18-19.

⁸ Anna Ernberg, (unpublished) *History of Fireside Industries, Berea College*, Berea College Archives. While this oft-quoted passage is usually attributed to William Frost, it appears in a typed draft by weaving teacher Anna Ernberg, Berea College Archive.

⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Exhibition of the Rural Arts* (Washington DC: Dept. of Agriculture, 1937) 20.

¹⁰ The book, *The Simple Life* by Charles Wagner, was published in 1901 and immediately drew national attention. A review was included in *The Craftsman*, itself originally subtitled *An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for the Simplification of Life*. *The Craftsman* devoted an entire issue to the concept of simplicity in August 1902.

¹¹ Doris Ulmann to Olive Dame Campbell, August 1933, John C. Campbell Folk School Archives.

¹² Allen Eaton, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1937) 21.

¹³ David Gaynes, *Artisans/Appalachia/USA* (Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1977) unpaginated.