APPALACHIAN OUTREACH

The Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University has produced a series of multi-media programs that deal with particular aspects of Appalachian history and culture. These presentations are part of the Archives outreach efforts designed to serve the central southern Appalachian region (including eastern Tennessee, eastern Kentucky, southwest Virginia, western North Carolina, and southern West Virginia). Showings of the programs may be sponsored locally by public libraries, civic and community groups, religious and historical organizations, and educational institutions.

The Appalachian Outreach programs all address the general theme of the transformation of Southern Appalachia since the turn of the century, and how the changes have affected the lives of mountain people. The programs draw upon the photographic, oral history, manuscript, artifact, and book collections of the Archives. With partial funding by a grant from the Museums and Historical Organizations Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities' Public Programs Division, the Archives has prepared study guides and other learning materials to accompany the programs. These materials facilitate the use of the Appalachian Outreach programs for a full learning experience. Due to user demand, most of the support materials have been designed for use in the secondary school classroom, but most of the suggested themes and activities are adaptable for use with out-of-school adults and/or college and university level students.

The Archives of Appalachia: A General Statement of Purpose

East Tennessee State University established the Archives of Appalachia in 1978 as the research wing of a considerably expanded program in Appalachian Studies. The primary aim of the Archives of Appalachia is to collect and preserve manuscript materials pertaining to the economic, political, and cultural development of the southern Appalachian United States. In particular, the Archives seeks the papers of those persons and organizations active at the grassroots local level. Thus the Archives hopes to attract the records of regional labor organizations, businesses, craft cooperatives, artist colonies and guilds, and self-help societies. In addition, we seek the papers of private individuals--both leaders and rank-and-file--who have participated in some uniquely Appalachian activity.

Materials that go into the Archives range widely. Personal collections often include private correspondence, diaries, notebooks, photographs, pamphlets and books. Organizational contributions include similar materials as well as ledger books, computer records, memoranda, and official files. In this audio-visual age, the Archives does not restrict itself to paper records. Beyond photographs, the Archives also has and continues to seek tape recordings (oral histories), video-tapes, and movies relating to our collecting theme. While the Archives itself does not collect printed matter, its sub-department, Special Collections (i.e. rare books), does seek books, pamphlets, newspapers, and maps of Appalachia, as well as rare Appalachian imprints.

Examples of holdings at the Archives of Appalachia include: the Washington County, Tennessee, Court House Records, 1777-1950; the papers of the East Tennessee Education Association; and the Model Valley Development Corporation. We also have the private papers of B. Carroll Reece, LeRoy Reeves, and Samuel C. Williams. But our task continues. Only through the efforts of concerned citizens can we ever hope to succeed in preserving our regional heritage. We are sincere in our purpose, and hope that many in the greater Appalachian community will assist us in our task.

The services of the Archives are many. First and foremost, the Archives of Appalachia provides scholars and their students with a center for study of Appalachian subjects and topics. Our reading room is open from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. We also print a quarterly newsletter which is free upon request and that will keep the reader informed of our activities. The Archives Director also teaches courses through the University in Archival Administration and is available for special talks on the subject. In short, the Archives of Appalachia is here to serve the entire community.

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LONG STEEL RAIL: SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN RAILROADS

Script

The age of steam power and the long steel rail have left an indelible impression on us all - young and old. The railroad evokes images associated with the geographical and economic expansion of our country, especially in the West. But nowhere has the railroad had a greater influence than in the rugged Southern Appalachians.

The original settlers of the area that includes Eastern Kentucky, Southwest Virginia, Eastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina labored in isolation. There were no roads to speak of and water travel was largely restricted to canoes and small boats. Travelers brought news and gossip, and sometimes even mail to the settlers of the Appalachian wilderness. When the American Revolution erupted in the East, the Overmountainmen recognized that the outcome of the struggle would affect their own destiny. They kept in touch with events in the East, and participated in the war when the opportunity presented itself. In fact, one of the crucial battles of the War, the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7, 1780, was fought and won by these supposedly isolated backwoodsmen.

The people of Southern Appalachia were as active in the economy of the new nation as they were in its political struggles. The mountains were rich in natural resources. Fur trapping soon gave way to animal husbandry and farming. As early as the 1780's, lumbering and mining emerged as important industries. In fact, the iron mines of Embreeville, Tennessee, and Cranberry, North Carolina, provided the bullets for the colonist fighting at King's Mountain.

While most settlers provided for themselves through farming and home industries, they also established networks of trade with down-river communities and even distant markets for their timber, livestock, and minerals. Still the mountains stood as a formidable barrier to trade and economic development. By contrast, the commercial and industrial potential of the Northeast and the Midwest developed rapidly during the first half of the nineteenth century. But as these centers of economic activity grew, they needed the coal and timber of Appalachia. To bring these materials to where they were needed, entrepreneurs turned to the railroad.

As railroads pierced the mountainous terrain of the Appalachians, they transformed the appearance of the region and the lifestyles of its inhabitants. Isolated hamlets became railway boom towns. Distant hill tops became resort centers, lodges, and hotels. Formerly inaccessible mineral deposits and virgin forests were now open to exploitation. While the railroads did bring in many outsiders to build and manage these new operations, they also drew upon an abundant local work force. Many a mountain farmer became a logger, railroad laborer, or coal miner. The long steel rail brought goods from the nation's industrial centers and carried the natural resources of the Appalachians to distant markets.

Here in East Tennessee there are still many people who remember the heyday of railroading in the southern mountains and can tell us how the long steel rail brought Appalachia closer to the commercial and cultural life of America as a whole. But the story of the coming of the railroads to the East Tennessee are begins more than a century ago.

The first railroad to reach East Tennessee came by way of Atlanta in the early 1850's. The next line connected Chattanooga with Knoxville via Cleveland Tennessee. These tracks became part of the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railroad which reached Bristol Tennessee in 1856, and then went on to Petersburg and Richmond. During the Civil War, this rail line served as a vital military link - and indeed the only one - between Atlanta, the arsenal of the Confederacy, and Richmond, its capitol. After the War between the States, other railroads linked East Tennessee with the industrial Midwest through Knoxville and Cincinnati. This network eventually became what is today the Southern Railway System.

In 1879, local railroad development commenced in upper East Tennessee itself with the founding of the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina railroad. With its main offices in Johnson City, Tennessee, the ET and WNC extended eastward to Elizabethton and Hampton, and through the Doe River gorge to Cranberry, North Carolina. This line provided an outlet for the rich iron ore deposits of the Cranberry area. Hundreds of thousands of tons of iron ore traveled on the ET and WNC to the Cranberry Furnace in Johnson City.

"The same company owned the mines at Cranberry, the ET and WNC railroad, and the Cranberry Furnace Company and the headquarters was located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The furnace was located on East Fairview Avenue below what is now the Empire Furniture Company and the railroad was built to bring ore from Cranberry to Johnson City."

Later the ET and WNC - also affectionately known as the "Tweetsie" - carried timber and tourists as well. The guests of the popular 166-room Cloudland Hotel, so-called because of its lofty location atop Roan Mountain, arrived by way of the ET and WNC. The ballroom of the Cloudland was constructed directly over the Tennessee/ North Carolina state line so that one could dance away the evening in both states without leaving the dance floor.

The name "Tweetsie" suggests a toy-like quality, and indeed the ET&WNC was a small railroad both in terms of the length of its lines and the size of its train crews.

The ET and WNC used narrow gauge tracks in constructing its lines. Its rail ties were set three feet apart instead of the standard gauge width of 4 feet 8½ inches. In spite of its miniscule size, the Tweetsie achieved a number of major engineering successes including the crossing of Linville Gap at an altitude of 4,100 feet above sea level, the highest point ever reached by a train in the eastern United States. The ET and WNC also promoted the growth of industry in East Tennessee and Western North Carolina.

Tweetsie traffic declined with the depletion of the iron ore deposits and timber along the line. The building of highways in the 1920's and 30's also hurt its freight and passenger business. In 1950 the Tweetsie abandoned its track east of Elizabethton, Tennessee. But thanks to the addition in 1918 of a third rail widening the line to standard gauge, the tracks between Johnson City and Elizabethton are still used as an industrial switching line. The steam powered "Tweetsie" also survives as a popular tourist attraction at Blowing Rock, North Carolina.

The ET and WNC was one of many lines built in East Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Eastern Kentucky and Western North Carolina following the Civil War. It was mainly coal, iron, and timber that

attracted the builders and promoters of these roads. The lure of these untapped natural resources and the burgeoning demands of Mid-western industries and Southern seaboard businesses made it easy for railroad builders to find financial backers. For example, the American Association, and English financial group, financed the construction of the Knoxville, Cumberland Gap and Louisville Railroad which eventually became part of the Southern Railway System with Appalachian headquarters located in Knoxville.

Money alone did not make the railroads of the region. It took people and lots of them. To cut through the rugged terrain, railway companies blasted tunnels through rock, built numerous trestles and bridges and laid thousands of miles of track. Prior to the First World War, nearly all of this work was done by hand.

"They had to--all--practically all this grading ... that would be a railroad bed for to lay the rails was done by hand drills and, well, they had a few steam drills in that--those days ... -but most of it was one man set and turned the steel while two men maybe three men drove the steel and made the holes and then they would dynamite, put in and the rocks blown out and they the crew came behind and smoothed it up and laid the ties--the cross ties--down; then the rails were nailed or spiked on to that. In lining tracks the man that lines the track, his calls are always 'Joint ahead, center back,' you know, in other words they pull the joint up to where they's at and then he comes back to the center and sets the center up; which, the call from the man lining the track is 'joint ahead, center back,' so."

"In the old days when they first began to build railroads, you know, had no modern equipment. They built 'em with pick and shovel and they drilled the rocks by hand. I mean, four men would hit that steam and they'd finally punch a hole in the rock. And the way they moved the dirt--they had mules and they would be maybe a crew worked here and then there'd be a crew three miles down the road and three or four miles up the road but, anyhow, what I was a-gettin' to is that they always had a fellow they called the walking boss. The reason they called him the walking boss, he would walk from one crew of work hands to the other one and give the orders. And then-- now this is the old song that you used to hear the work hands sing, you know." (Song)

The building of the Clinchfield Railroad, headquartered in Erwin, Tennessee, illustrates the challenging engineering problems and grueling human effort involved in the construction of railroads in the Southern Appalachians. Begun in 1886 as the Charleston, Cincinnati and Chicago Railroad, the company completed over a hundred miles of track in the Carolinas before establishing a northern office in Johnson City, Tennessee.

The 3-C's line then began construction both north and south of the city reaching the Watauga River and Erwin respectively before going bankrupt in the railway depression of 1893. In 1902 George L. Carter acquired the railroad and completed construction in 1908 on what is now the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railroad.

" Clinchfield railroad traverses some of the most rugged, mountainous country in the Eastern United States. In its line from eastern Kentucky, our northern terminal, to our southern terminal in South Carolina, we cross four destinct mountain ranges. This route is a route that other railroads had purposely avoided--and built around it. Where the developers of the Clinchfield had purposely built through it in an effort to seek a short direct transportation route from the Ohio Valley into the South Atlantic sea board. The Clinch-field is an engineering master piece even by today's engineering

standards... the road bed widths, the capacities that the bridges were designed to, the dimensions that the tunnels were constructed to--even considered exceptional by today's standards. As a result of it, the Clinchfield has not had to go back as many railroads have done to enlarge their tunnels or strenghten their bridges in order to be able to carry modern day equipment and traffic. The Clinchfield has 55 tunnels in the course of its line--the longest of which is approximately seventy-nine hundred feet long, cuts through the sandy Ridge Mountain over in south west Virginia. There are some 72 bridges--the longest of which is 1300 ft. long and approximately 22 ft. high. The Clinchfield railroad was directly responsible for the development of the south west Virginia coal fields resulting in the heavy tonnage from the coalfields being carried into southeastern markets. Also there's a considerable heavy tonnage of manufactured goods moving from the industrial midwest-Great Lakes area into the southeast, and Flordia phosphates moving into the midwest and to the Ohio Valley area."

Much of the credit for these remarkable engineering achievements goes to Mr. W.C. Hatton who served as George L. Carter's chief engineer on some to the most difficult stretches of the Clinchfield line and who later assisted Fred Johnson in the planning of Kingsport, Tennessee.

"My father's name was William Carey Hatton and he came here with the Carter construction company in 1905 to build the--they were working on the Blue Ridge Mountain area. He was the resident engineer that built the tunnels and the bridges on the Clinchfield railroad during that period. And apparently, this had been attempted before--years before--and hadn't been accomplished...And his work was so satisfactory that they asked him to come back and build the Elkhorn extension on the northern end. And so he worked up there and built I guess it was 32 tunnels. He worked here until he finished that end of the railroad, and then left on other work. Before he left here though, he went to Kingsport and laid out the pattern of the city area there."

The construction of lines like the Clinchfield had a tremendous impact on area industries. Until the Federal road building program of the 1930's, the region's few highways were still largely unsuitable for industrial purposes. By the turn of this century, resources along waterways were played out and the rivers of the region themselves were not particularly suited for heavy commercial traffic. The coming of the railroads changed this situation dramatically. The lines opened up vast regions of timber and coal and also encouraged manufacturers to relocate in the Appalachian where labor was cheap and raw materials plentiful. Furniture, hardwood flooring, metal finishing, and even pottery enterprises developed along rail routes.

"The old Johnson City foundry and machine work started in Johnson City in 1883. And it was probably started to furnish repairs for the ET and WNC railroad. The company furnished much material for the ET and WNC and also for the Clinchfield Railroad Company. In about 1906 or 7, the company was moved from Ash Street to its present location, and located on land that was owned by Clinchfield railroad company, and for years the patterns house--storage house of the Clinchfield Railroad Company was located here at the plant of the Johnson City foundry; and all of its castings were made here until the railroad purchased diesel engines and then the warehouse was purchased by the Johnson City foundry."

"We are manufacturers of hard wood flooring, particularly parquet and plank flooring. The firm was established in 1898 on Buffalo Street and then a short time later moved to our present location on East Walnut Street. And the reason for the location at this point was to have rail facilities, and we have--in the early days we had a log yard and the logs used to come in by rail and that is what we call our back track. And our front track was for our finished product. The railroad was really the lifeblood--the company couldn't have existed, it couldn't have been founded--there wasn't any way without the railroad service because we're dependent on lumber and the only way we could get it back in those days was by rail--and then also servicing the customers by rail."

The railroads of East Tennessee did more than bring industry into the region and take coal, iron and timber out. They turned sleepy little hamlets like Erwin into bustling business centers.

"The impact of the railroad on Erwin was very strong. I would say it was largely responsible for the actual establishment of Erwin as a town at that time. It wasn't--until the railroad came there wasn't much in Erwin except a church or two and a store or two--a few things like that."

The railroads not only brought in industrialists to exploit the region's natural and human resources, but also tourists who were captivated by the green vistas and fresh breezes of resorts like Roan Mountain, Unaka Springs and Altapass. Some mountaineers prospered from the new employment and commercial opportunities stimulated by the railroads, but the lives of others were devastated as the result of the all-too-frequent accidents and wrecks; "Dear Mr. Claim Agent: your railroad ran over my bull at the two twenty mile post Wednesday. He are not dead but might as well be, and I want your section boss to come by and make report on him so he can get paid for. It tear out a piece of skin a foot square behind his navel. He are totally unqualified to be a bull and he are maimed up too bad to be a steer and he are too tough for beef. So I want you to report him dead and pay for him. Yours truly Simon Green P.S. He were a red bull but he stands around looking mighty blue since your train hit him."

While this particular incident may well have been fictitious, trains and railroad construction did cause many injuries and deaths. Despite the dangers surrounding their building and operation, the people of the mountains greeted the railroads with excitement and anticipation.

"Every Saturday was a big day for us. We used to plan to go to Johnson City. Our family would all get together and that would be the excursion for the week. And we would go over there and shop and during the day we would go over on the passenger train from Erwin to Johnson City. And this was really the only time that we went shopping at all. And that was going to the big city. And we would spend the day over there and come back in the evening on the same train. And I think there were only two kinds of passenger trains on the Clinchfield--that people really miss that as much as anything because in those days we didn't have automobiles like we do now. And that was about the only transportation we had and that was the only big city that we could get to."

The railroad companies themselves recruited managers from outside the region as well as locals. While at the outset this may have resulted in the development of migrant communities, over time the

railway people came to play an important role in community life and were accepted by the more long standing residents.

"My father came here in 1922 as chief engineer of the railroad and my mother was a yankee from Pennsylvania and for her this was the end of the world. I don't think she was accepted too much in the Erwin area because she was rather abrupt and outspoken and people around here were not used to too many yankees and so it took a good many years for her to become accepted and to really fit into the community, but I think that she did. My father died in '29 so they hadn't been here very long and her family and others who were close to her tried very hard to get her to go back to Pennsylvania. But by that time she was so embedded in this community that she wouldn't leave and she stayed here although she had no relatives, no kin, no nobody. She stayed here until she died."

The Tweetsie, the Southern Lines, and the Clinchfield have all contributed and continue to contribute to the development of the Southern Appalachians. Their initial impact was primarily economic. But as railway people and services became imbedded in the fabric of these mountain communities, the roads took on a much larger role in the lives of mountain people. Their impact is felt to this day.

LONG STEEL RAIL

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