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FROM CABIN TO CAMP: SOUTHERN MOUNTAINEERS AND THE COAL TOWN OF STONEGA, VIRGINIA

University of Delaware (Winterthur Program) M.A. 1984

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FROM CABIN TO CAMP:
SOUTHERN MOUNTAINEERS AND THE COAL TOWN
OF STONEGA, VIRGINIA

By

Dean Andrew Herrin

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

August 1984
FROM CABIN TO CAMP:
SOUTHERN MOUNTAINEERS AND THE COAL TOWN
OF STONEGA, VIRGINIA

By
Dean Andrew Herrin

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INTRODUCTION

In 1899, William Goodell Frost wrote an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled, "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains," in which he identified the simple agrarian life of Appalachian mountaineers with that of America's earliest pioneers. The self-sufficient hillside farmers of the Southern uplands, Frost wrote, were not mere symbols of America's heroic past, but were in fact true rugged individualists, "our pioneer ancestors." Frost was not the first to write about traditional mountain culture. Local-color magazine writers had written similar articles and stories about Appalachia since the early 1870s. Implicit in this literature was an observation that somehow, Appalachian society had been left untouched by the industrialization and "progress" that had so altered American life in the nineteenth century.¹

While Appalachia was being "mined" for literary inspiration in the late nineteenth century, a small group of industrialists and capitalists were developing and exploiting the region's rich natural resources, principally
bituminous coal and timber. By the 1920s, much of Appalachia's landscape had changed drastically from the image described by Frost and his local-color colleagues. Logging operations and coal mines dotted both the hillsides and the valleys of the region, and settlements built by the companies to house their laborers were scattered throughout Appalachia. The United States Coal Commission, created and empowered by Congress in 1922 to gather data on the coal industry and thereby "aid Congress in framing legislation," found that a large majority of bituminous coal mine workers in the United States lived in company-controlled communities. Before coal companies moved into Appalachia, the majority of those who would later become mine workers lived in isolated hollows and coves. By the 1920s, the Coal Commission found that 78.8 per cent of all mine workers in West Virginia lived in company towns, while the figure for both Kentucky and southwest Virginia was 64.4 per cent.²

Government census statistics at the same time showed that as coal companies and railroads purchased more and more land in Appalachia, and as mountaineers adjusted to wide-scale industrial invasion, the size of traditional upland farms changed dramatically. The size of the average Appalachian farm in the 1880s was 187 acres; by the 1930s, the average size fell to 76 acres, and the total acreage in farms in Appalachia had decreased some 20 per cent.³
A new way of life emerged in Appalachia in the late nineteenth century. In 1890, James Lane Allen felt the winds of change in the mountains, and observed the response of the native mountaineers. In an article for *Harper's Magazine*, "Mountain Passes of the Cumberlands," Allen explained that most natives of the mountains did one of three things when faced with the agents of industrialization: they moved to the piedmont sections of surrounding states to continue farming; they retreated further into the mountains, away from the encroaching tide of capitalists; or, they moved into the new communities and camps that sprang up alongside such emergent industrialization. Stonega, Virginia, was one such coal camp, and this study will explore the physical and cultural transition of native mountaineers to that town. A complex set of relationships and mutual obligations existed between Stonega's employers and employees, and between the workers themselves, that ensured both the relatively smooth daily operation of the town, and the establishment of a basic industrial work ethic on the part of the miners.

Life certainly changed for Stonega's residents when they entered the coal camp, but several features of the camp were remarkably similar to features found in their traditional environment. Cultural traditions were preserved and employed by Stonega's miners to maintain a sense
of integrity and identity with their pasts, and, as Herbert Gutman has suggested, as "resources" used to adapt to new industrial conditions. These "resources," embodying a traditional value system, were also instrumental at times in the native mountaineers resistance to the new industrial routines of the company-controlled community. The history and economic development of the region are the subject of discussion in Chapter I, while the subtle interplay of the town's physical environment and the community culture it fostered will be discussed in Chapters II and III.

In The Little Community, Robert Redfield explored the abstract ideal of "community" in relation to people who were relatively unaffected by any industrialization process. Redfield listed four characteristics of such a community: 1) distinctiveness; 2) smallness; 3) homogeneity; and 4) self-sufficiency. Before the industrialization of the mountain region, Appalachian natives lived in communities very much like the idealistic enclaves described by Redfield. Other populations that later entered the coal camps, mainly European immigrants and southern Blacks, also had lived in "little communities" at one time, since the majority had lived in homogeneous, agrarian-based communities before becoming miners. Despite Redfield's contention that the "frontier" communities found in mining camps did not meet his definition of community since these
camps were usually composed of a heterogeneous population, miners in Stonega actively sought and established different types and levels of "little communities." The formation of these communities was mediated by the interplay of several factors, such as the physical structure of Stonega, the pervasive influence of the coal company on the town and the workplace, and the miners' own mental images of community, as shaped by past experience.

The desire of the miners to establish a familiar sense of community was one indication of their determination to preserve past cultural attitudes and values. In his study of West Virginia miners, David Corbin states:

The company town quickly and ruthlessly destroyed old cultures and stimulated the development of a new one. The nature of the company town focused the workers' discontent, not on each other nor on a racial or ethnic group, but upon the employer - the coal operator - enabling the miners to develop that sense of group oppression necessary for class feeling and behavior.

Similarly, in his study of the English working class in the nineteenth century, E. P. Thompson maintains that the transition of workers from preindustrial settings to the factory system entailed "a severe restructuring of working habits - new disciplines, new incentives, and a new human nature upon which these incentives could bite.
effectively..." The evidence from Stonega, however, indicates that the particular order of industrialization which occurred in the Virginia mountains was not so all-encompassing, nor were "preindustrial" people quite as culturally pliable as we might think.

In his article, "Culture, History, and Artifact," Steven M. Beckow discusses a definition of "culture" which has bearing on the relative permanence or pliability of traditional culture in Stonega.

Culture, whether considered as a continuum or a class of phenomena, may be seen as an organization of ideas, manifest in act and artifact (though consisting of neither), by means of which man experiences his world and takes purposive action... Men create two products with culture: cultural behavior and artifacts. Culture is neither act nor artifacts, but we can discover information about culture by working back from the acts and artifacts which are available for our scrutiny.

The mining town of Stonega, imposed upon the land, was an artifact that had profound implications for the cultural behavior and the quality of life of its residents. Fortunately, through a wide range of resources -- corporate records, physical structures, oral interviews, court and government records, newspaper accounts, photographs, and maps -- Stonega can be studied in light of both "acts and artifacts."
Figure 1. Stonega, Virginia, c. 1919. The section known as "Hunk Town" is to the left of the stream; "Quality Row" is to the right. (Photograph, Courtesy Carl Collins, Appalachia, Virginia)
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


3 The definition of the word "traditional" is problematic, but it is used here to refer to an activity that was several generations old by the late nineteenth century, and was perceived by Appalachian natives as something their fathers and grandfathers did for a living. For a discussion of the historical development of the word "tradition," see Raymond Williams, Keywords — A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 268-269.


7 See page 86.


Stonega is located in Wise County, Virginia, in the heart of the Appalachian Mountain region (Figure 2). This is a land of gently rolling hills, of ridges, hollows, and coves, of winding streams and narrow valley floors. As Americans pushed westward in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Appalachians were an obstacle to be overcome, to be skirted or simply traversed. The inaccessibility and isolation of the mountain valleys, the extensive forests, and the lack of level ground dissuaded these early travelers from staking homesteads in the mountains. Mountain acreage could not even be given away. After the Revolutionary War, many veterans were given land grants in the mountains for their service in the Continental Army, but few actually settled on their land.¹

There were others, however, for whom the isolation of the mountains was not a drawback. The history of the Scots-Irish and Germans in America had been one of pushing away from the English coastal settlements, of isolating themselves in western lands. As the nineteenth century
opened, these two groups came down the Valley of Virginia from Pennsylvania, and up from the Carolina Piedmont, to settle in the mountains. The valleys were indeed inaccessible and isolated, but almost all had rich bottomland suitable for farming. The forests were dense, but they were full of native hardwoods which easily afforded enough timber for the construction of houses and settlements. Game, fruit, and berries were plentiful, and the mountain streams were full of fish. Within a generation, these first settlers established a subsistence agriculture. Supplemented by hunting, their way of life was uninterrupted until the Civil War and the subsequent arrival of both the railroads and the coal and logging companies.²

The earliest houses built by these pioneers were one-room cabins made of hewn logs notched together and chinked with clay and small pieces of wood. A typical house measured from about fifteen to twenty feet per side. Roofs were made of riven oak boards, often weighted down with poles or stones in lieu of nails. Floors in the cabins were made of strips of split poplar or oak, called puncheon floors. The chimney was built of fieldstone, clay and sticks, and provided a shallow firebox for the interior, which threw more heat into the room. Cabin doors
were often hung on wooden hinges or leather straps, and almost always left open to provide light, as many early cabins did not have windows.  

The interior of the cabin usually consisted of one large room with a loft above, and often a "shed room" added to the back. Most family activity was centered around the fireplace, which provided light, heat, and a place to cook. Even as late as the 1930s, single pen houses were being built in Appalachia. In his study of a Kentucky mountain community, Charles Martin quotes the builder of a single pen house:

... at the time of this nobody around here was making too much money and if we had one room - that was about 15 foot square - that was all we needed. You put your bed in there, put your table in there, put your chairs and things. You had someplace to eat and that was all you needed.

As families grew, or when owners simply wanted more space, additions were made to enlarge the single-pen cabin. The proliferation of local sawmills in the second half of the nineteenth century made frame additions and frame houses about as numerous as log cabins, especially in the valley communities. The resulting house forms were usually derivatives of the single-pen type, with new pens added to the sides or above. The predominant plan
consisted of a house two stories tall, two rooms lengthwise, and one room deep, known to cultural geographers and folklorists as the "I-house".  

Most of the early furniture in mountain homes was handmade, either by each individual mountaineer, or by one man in the community who set up operation as a chairmaker or carpenter. Furniture commonly consisted of tables, cupboards, chairs bottomed with white oak splints, and beds with "ticks" filled with straw or feathers. A historian of Wise County claims that in order to save space in the little log cabins, tables were hinged to the walls with leather straps so that when not in use, they could be let down against the wall. Almost every home also had pieces of furniture related to making cloth - a loom and a spinning wheel. Increasingly after the 1840s, iron cook stoves, washtubs, kettles, and other manufactured goods began to appear in mountain homes. 

Mountain homes were almost all self-sufficient farms before the discovery of coal. Corn was the staple crop, with the raising of livestock usually the only commercial activity. All members of the family helped to tend the farm and the garden, which provided most of the food supply. The family was the basic economic and social unit in the mountains, and each member was expected to
contribute towards its well-being. Of the few items that the farm could not supply, such as sugar, coffee, and manufactured goods, these were brought into the mountains by peddlers from larger commercial towns on the fringes of the mountains.

The family was the primary social and economic unit, but the surrounding community provided support in a number of ways. Most settlements consisted of a cluster of houses situated in a hollow along the valley floor. Neighbors shared much of the farm work, such as helping to clear ground, or raise a house or barn. Many of the women participated in quilting parties and apple cuttings. Other opportunities for mountaineers to share in a sense of community were provided by hunting parties, county "court" days, and the local church.

Since the Appalachian economy was based on self-sufficient, family-based farms, few economic distinctions were created between members of the community. One mountaineer recalled that "... everybody lived alike, you know, that was the thing about it. Nobody, even if somebody had a little more money, they didn't show it." The lack of money, and the cultural imperative to not "show it" even if one did have more money, prevented any formation of class distinctions based solely on economic
indices. Social distinctions did exist in the mountain communities, but one's status depended not so much on economic considerations as on such variables as sex, kin, age, or personality traits.14

Yet at the same time that late nineteenth-century mountaineers were living in self-sufficient isolation, they were being "discovered" by writers who were eager to provide the readers of such magazines as Cosmopolitan, Harper's, and Atlantic with a vision of America that many feared was being quickly eradicated by post-Civil War industrial growth. The "rustic" nature of Appalachia, and its apparent lack of "modernization," were romanticized by Americans who were experiencing the disruptions of industrialization. Between 1870 and 1890, over 200 stories and sketches were published about the nature of mountain life. How had American progress so completely bypassed these people, readers asked? The transformation of the simple life of the Appalachian mountaineer into a symbol of a glorified, conflict-free American past proved too tempting for many writers to ignore. The highlanders were labeled America's "contemporary ancestors."15 While most Americans therefore viewed Appalachia from the literary perspective of a "strange land inhabited by a peculiar people," there was a growing minority that had discovered
another aspect of late nineteenth-century Appalachia: almost unlimited economic potential from natural resources. 16

Ironically, at the same time local-color writers were portraying Appalachia as a remarkable survival of preindustrial America, the natural resources of Appalachia were providing the fuel for the corporate engines that were transforming the face of America. The rich resources of Appalachia, particularly coal, had been known to travelers and explorers since the 1740s, but a market for these resources did not exist until over a century later, when new visions of an industrial society began challenging an essentially agrarian reality. The rate of growth of the coal market after 1870 was phenomenal. By 1885, coal had replaced wood as the chief source of energy in the United States. Between 1870 and 1900, the output of coal doubled in England and Belgium, tripled in France, quadrupled in Germany, and increased eightfold in the United States. In 1910, coal provided seventy-five per cent of the energy used in America. 17

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, bituminous coal replaced anthracite coal as the most important coal energy source. Bituminous coal, found mainly in the Appalachian region and in the Midwestern
states of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, was not as clean a coal as the anthracite found in Pennsylvania, but as transportation facilities stretched westward, bituminous coal became cheaper to mine than anthracite. Bituminous coal production doubled every decade in the last half of the nineteenth century.  

During this period, approximately fifty million acres of bituminous coal land existed in the southern regions of the Appalachian Mountains, a resource that southern journalists, businessmen, and politicians hoped would lift a new industrial South from the devastation of the Civil War. Leading spokesmen for the New South, especially newspaper editors in Louisville, Richmond and Atlanta, enthusiastically supported the development of the Appalachian South, and their support paved the way for the influx of railroads and Northern capitalists. Attracting a railroad was one of the first objectives of the promoters. In 1870, only one railroad operated in the central Appalachian area of West Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, and Southwestern Virginia. By 1900, four major railroads had run lines into the region. By 1930, only a few counties in Appalachia did not have access to a railroad. Hundreds of mines were opened in Appalachia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Land companies and railroads sold leases eagerly, hoping to develop their property. An
investor could open a small mine for as little as $20,000 - $30,000. The returns were enormous. After the 1893 financial panic, the coal industry boomed until Appalachian mines provided almost 80.0 per cent of the national production. By the turn of the century, Appalachian coal was supplying the East Coast as well as overseas markets, and had even captured a part of the Great Lakes market, an area which had previously been supplied exclusively by northern mines. The lack of effective unionization in the Appalachian fields in the nineteenth century and the less expensive extractive operations needed for bituminous mines enabled the southern operators to sell their coal at a cheaper rate than their northern counterparts. 19

General John Daniel Imboden, a former Confederate officer, was one of the first promoters of the Wise County coal fields. As early as 1872, Imboden had urged the Virginia Legislature to aid the development of coal mining in Virginia. In 1880, realizing the future potential of the coal resources of Wise County, he bought 47,000 acres of mineral land in the county, and with his son, a one-sixth interest in an additional 100,000 acres. Throughout the next decade, Imboden lobbied in southern capitals for coal interests, and encouraged northern investors to Wise County. Imboden was successful in attracting two large
coal companies to Wise County in the 1880s: the Virginia Coal and Iron Company, based in Pennsylvania, and the Virginia Iron, Coal and Coke Company, from New York.20

Coal operations began in Wise County in 1891 when the Norfolk and Western, the Louisville and Nashville, and the South Atlantic and Ohio railroads all built extensions to the county's coal fields. Nine new mines opened that year in the county, and the first shipment of coal was made in 1892 by the Virginia, Tennessee, and Carolina Steel and Iron Company. Wise County coal became known for its fine coking quality, rivaling the famous Connellsville coke of Pennsylvania. The county became the leading producer of coal in Virginia, increasing its production twenty times over between 1892 and 1902. By the latter year, Wise County's production totalled 2.4 million tons, and was three times that of any other county in Virginia. A Wise County pamphlet of 1910 mentioned thirty-three coal mining plants in operation in the county for that year, employing 8,500 men. By 1920, the county was producing 50 per cent of the state's coal and employing half of the state's miners.21

When coal companies first came to Wise County, the way of life of the native mountaineer was disrupted. Agents for the coal investors, called "mineral men", roamed
the countryside looking for coal outcroppings. Unsuspecting mountaineers sold their rights to the coal cheaply, from twenty-five cents to three dollars an acre. Often the agent would use a "broad form" deed, in which only the minerals beneath the ground passed hands. The mountaineer still owned the surface rights, but since the deed also allowed the coal operator to obtain the minerals below ground in whatever fashion he chose, the mountaineer had in essence forfeited his right to the land. Most land sales were made voluntarily, but for those natives who refused to sell, agents often used confusing legal methods to trick the mountaineer off his land. The confused legal status of many Appalachian deeds, dating as far back as the land grants given to Revolutionary War veterans, enabled many agents to cheat mountaineers of their land. 22

In his history of the Virginia Coal and Iron Company, the company that built Stonega, Edwin J. Prescott wrote of the "resentful spirit" of the native mountaineers in Wise County towards the company. As the Virginia Coal and Iron Company purchased land and mineral rights in the 1880s, some natives assumed a hostile attitude, as they felt the company was dealing unfairly with them. Since many of the land deeds in Wise County overlapped, and since boundaries were often unknown and unchecked, many of the native mountaineers had "squatted" on their land, and had
not obtained legal deeds. As coal companies purchased the original deeds, many of which were questionable, squatters were dispossessed of their land. From 1887 to 1890, local squatters battled in the courts against the Virginia Coal and Iron Company and other large land purchasers, claiming that the companies' surveys were not located properly. One squatter learned well from the coal agents, and filed forged title papers to keep his land.23

In an 1894 report to the company, a Virginia Coal and Iron Company official reviewed the company's land purchases in Wise County and recalled a suit brought against the company by a local squatter. The company did not want to argue the case in the local Wise County courts, "where the juries might be prejudiced against the Company." A "dummy" company was incorporated in Pennsylvania, which in turn brought the suit in a federal court, since the case now involved an out-of-state firm.24

As coal agents bought more and more land, and as mountaineers left their farms to enter coal camps, farming in Wise County, and in all of Appalachia, declined. From 1880 to 1920, the total number of farms in Wise County did not vary greatly, but the average size of each farm decreased from 213 acres in 1880 to 68 acres in 1920, and the total farm acreage decreased from 243,654 acres to
72,877 acres (Figure 3). By 1928, the four largest coal companies in Wise County owned more than two-thirds of the land in the county; less than a third of those working in the central Appalachian area in 1930 were farmers. Non-agricultural jobs in the mines, in logging camps, and in southern textile mills provided the major source of income. Many of those mountaineers who did stay on their old land became tenant farmers. The percentage of tenant farms to all farms in Wise County increased from 14.8 per cent in 1880 to 29.9 per cent in 1900 (Figure 3).25

Much of the farm land in Wise County was converted into sites for coal company towns, as it was often the only level ground in the region. Since the mines of Appalachia were usually located deep in the mountains, away from any towns or cross-roads settlements, camps had to be constructed to house the company's labor force. Company towns had existed in America since the development of Lowell, Massachusetts in the 1820s, but the coal industry housed its employees in coal towns during the period from 1880-1930 on an unprecedented scale. In this period, over one hundred mining towns were built in southern West Virginia alone. Over 500 mining towns were built in all of Appalachia during this period, and they outnumbered independent incorporated towns more than five to one. Coal
Figure 3: Farm Land in Wise County, Virginia (1880-1920)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of farms</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>1,731</td>
<td>1,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms operated by tenants*</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage tenant farms are of total</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total acres in farm land</td>
<td>243,654</td>
<td>154,619</td>
<td>118,270</td>
<td>122,874</td>
<td>72,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total acres in improved farm land</td>
<td>40,602</td>
<td>39,906</td>
<td>43,196</td>
<td>51,398</td>
<td>35,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average size of farms (acres)</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*on cash and/or share basis

companies in Wise County began building company towns in the early 1890s, and by 1910, thirty-three plants were in operation.\textsuperscript{26}

There were too few mountaineers to work all the mines, however, so coal companies were forced to augment local workers with laborers imported from outside the region. The total population of Wise County increased 872 per cent from 1870 to 1920, from 4,785 in 1870 to 46,499 in 1920 (Figure 4). The foreign-born and Black populations of Wise County also increased greatly during this period, together comprising 12 per cent of the population by 1900. All of Appalachia experienced a phenomenal growth during this period as the coal industry attracted more and more people. In 1933, Lewis Cecil Gray found that the population of Appalachia had increased 56 per cent from 1900 to 1933.\textsuperscript{27}

The establishment of the coal camps and the rise in the population of Appalachia were welcomed by many observers of the mountain region, especially the church missionaries who had followed the coal companies into the area. Samuel Tyndale Wilson, in his mission-study text of 1906, \textit{The Southern Mountaineers}, admitted that:

\begin{quote}
The industrial invasion will introduce much evil, but it will, in part at least, prepare the way for better things. It will break up the isolation. Shiftlessness will
\end{quote}
Figure 4: Population of Wise County, Virginia (1870-1920)

(Total number and percentage of total of each group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,785</td>
<td>7,772</td>
<td>9,345</td>
<td>19,653</td>
<td>34,162</td>
<td>46,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native-Born White</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-Born</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%

disappear if the rewards of labor are forthcoming. The days of no trade and no money are passing away. The mountaineer sees it, dreads it, and will profit by it. 28

After the turn of the century, when new waves of violence erupted in Appalachia from feuding kin groups and from the traffic of illegal liquor, the idea of Appalachia as an idealized symbol of America's past became less and less credible. A barter economy now represented "poverty"; the independent spirit of the mountaineer now qualified as deliberately anti-social behavior. Appalachia was redefined as a "land of violence and lawlessness." 29

Arnold Toynbee was perhaps the severest critic of Appalachia, calling the mountaineers "barbarians" who "present the melancholy spectacle of a people who have acquired civilization and then lost it." 30 Similarly, the sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross wrote in *The New Republic* in 1924:

> In the mountains between Pennsylvania and Georgia are pocketed three million old-line Americans who illustrate the social effects of isolation as vividly as Albania or the Caucasus. 31

Since Appalachian mountaineers had previously been defined as "our contemporary ancestors," the denigration of the region's population produced a tension between Appalachia's "present" and most people's image of America's "past." Appalachia's development was viewed after the turn
of the century as of America's past, but somehow divergent. Shapiro has identified two reasons for this divergence: first, as descendents of Scottish, Scots-Irish, and German settlers, the violence of the mountaineers was given a European origin; and second, environmental factors had led first to isolation and then to the principal problem of a lack of "community" in the mountains. 32 "Lack of good roads has caused an undue isolation, has prevented cooperative activity and the realization of the ideals of a modern community life ....", wrote one journalist. Another suggested that an "over-developed individualism" had resulted because "there is no cohesive community life .. .".33

When viewed as a problem of the lack of "community," Appalachia presented not so much a tension between America's past and present, but between America's urban and rural areas. John Campbell, a researcher for the Russell Sage Foundation, thought Appalachia's problems were "only a question of intensified rural conditions." Actually, one of Appalachia's problems was a form of urban provincialism that affects most rural, isolated areas. Roland Barthes has shown how those who live in the Alps and in the Pyrenees are treated much the same as Appalachian mountaineers have been treated by "outsiders" since the 1870s.34
Reformers offered several solutions to the perceived lack of community in Appalachia. Campbell viewed education as the panacea, while others felt that removal to urban centers would develop the proper sense of community in the mountaineers. Still others advocated economic development:

A parallel tendency justified the economic exploitation of the natural and human resources of Appalachia because of the benefits which would necessarily accrue to the mountain people from the introduction of roads and railroads, mines, mills, factories, schools, and churches, and courts of law.

This study of one coal mining town, Stonega, Virginia, will investigate what "benefits" accrued to the mountain people and what type of community developed as a result of one kind of economic development.
NOTES

CHAPTER I


5 Martin, "Hollybush," p. 91.

6 Eller, Miners, pp. 26-27.

The "I-house" received its name from Fred Kniffen in 1936 when his fieldwork revealed that this type of house was most widely distributed in the states of Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. Even though the term is widely accepted by those studying houses of folk origin, it is not a very precise term. See Montell, Kentucky Folk, p. 32; and Fred Kniffen, "Louisiana House Types," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 26 (December 1936), p. 185.

Eller, Miners, p. 24; Eaton, Handicrafts, p. 55; and Addington, Wise County, pp. 1-47.

Eller, Miners, pp. 16-19, 28.


Hollyfield, Schooldays, pp. 114-116; Addington, Wise County, p. 38; and Eller, Miners, pp. 35-36.

Martin, "Hollybush," p. 49.

Eller, Miners, p. 10.

Shapiro, "Appalachia and the Idea of America," p. 45. The roots of modern American folklore studies can be traced to this period, when folklorists such as Cecil Sharpe and Maude Karpeles traveled throughout Appalachia in search of "pure" English traditions.

Ibid., pp. 44-45; and Eller, Miners, pp. xv-xvi.

Eller, Miners, p. 44; and Thomas, "Coal Country," pp. 2-6.

Thomas, "Coal Country," pp. 4-5.

Eller, Miners, pp. 41-46, 65, 129-130.

Ibid., pp. 49, 75.


25U. S., Department of Interior, Census Office, Agriculture, Tenth (1880) - Fourteenth (1920) Census (Washington: Government Printing Office); Kennedy, Wise County, pp. 94-95; and Eller, Miners, p. xxii.


33 Ibid., p. 51.

34 Ibid., p. 51; and Eller, *Miners*, p. xviii.


36 *Idem*, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, p. 158.
CHAPTER II
STONEGA: THE STRUCTURE

Stonega is located in the northwest portion of Wise County, along the banks of the Callahan Creek. The Virginia Coal and Iron Company began constructing Stonega in 1890, but it was not until 1896 that full operations began. The town was built section by section, year by year, imposing on the environment an industrial and residential complex previously unimagined by the native mountaineers. The physical environment of Stonega was an important factor that determined the quality of life for its residents, and the community relationships that developed.

The Virginia Coal and Iron Company was founded in 1882 by a syndicate of coal and coke men from the Connellsville, Pennsylvania coal region. Edward K. Hyndman and Judge John Leisenring were two of the men who had been encouraged by General John Daniel Imboden to develop the Wise County coal fields. After Imboden was hired by the Connellsville syndicate as its attorney and land agent, it quickly acquired 67,000 acres of coal lands in Wise County,
paying as little as thirty-five cents for some acres. The land agents for the company followed the general pattern for acquiring land, often just purchasing the mineral rights from the unsuspecting mountaineer and leaving the native with the surface rights. The suits brought by "squatters," who protested their dispossession of land, have previously been mentioned.¹

After spending several years acquiring land, the Virginia Coal and Iron Company was finally prepared in August of 1890 to begin operations at their most promising site, Pioneer. (Pioneer was later renamed Stonega, derived from Big STONE GAP.) From the beginning, the Virginia Coal and Iron Company used the major portion of the coal it mined for coking purposes. The local area newspaper, the Big Stone Gap Post, reported in its August 29, 1890, issue that the first coke ovens had been fired up on Saturday, August 23rd. The Post also reported:

With great difficulty, a sawmill has been hauled over the miserable road and is now in operation sawing boards for the buildings. Sixty houses . . . are to be constructed at once for the operatives.²

Activity at Stonega came to a halt in March 1891 when the company failed to reach an agreement with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad about haulage responsibilities and rates. The company was further hindered by a suit that seriously threatened the company's
land holdings, and by the 1893 financial depression. The Virginia Coal and Iron Company did not resume operations at Stonega until 1895, after the successful settlement of the land suit and the controversy with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. In the Autumn of 1895, a Birmingham, Alabama, firm was contracted to build 500 coke ovens at Stonega. By November of 1896, the town consisted of over 100 houses, a company store, offices, stables, and other mine buildings. In a full front page article, the Big Stone Gap Post of November 19, 1896, hailed the development of Stonega:

The country roundabout already feels the influence of these monthly pay-rolls and sees the benefit to the whole section that will follow a large development of this property.

Throughout the period under study, the Post was eager to encourage the economic development of Wise County, especially by coal companies. Stonega was referred to as "an infant Pittsburgh," a name applied to many southern coal boom towns of the 1890s. In October of 1897, the Post reveled in Stonega's growth:

Two years ago, along the banks of Callahan creek . . . was a gloomy wilderness . . . The advent of the railroad, breaking the stillness of this grand and wild mountain district, was not more wonderful to the ordinary native than the sudden springing into existence of Stonega.
Stonega by this time had 1,200 residents, and boasted of a school house, a church, a large store, a post office, and telegraph and telephone offices. The Post was particularly impressed that no intoxicating drinks were sold in town. "The town is peaceful, quiet, and well regulated." The Virginia Coal and Iron Company was considering building a first-class wagon road to Appalachia, five miles away, a town that had been built in the early 1890s as a terminus for the Louisville and Nashville, and South Atlantic and Ohio railroads. At the time, only a spur railroad line from Appalachia, and a very rough wagon road made Stonega accessible.

As Stonega continued to grow, the Virginia Coal and Iron Company was reorganized in 1902. The Stonega Coke and Coal Company was created to oversee the operating functions of the Pennsylvania-based company, and the original company became the land-owning organization. In 1902 and 1903, two more company towns, Oska and Roda, were built in Wise County, and by 1923, Stonega Coke and Coal Company operated nine mining collieries. The town of Stonega, however, remained the center of operations, and thus is the community for which the most records still exist.
In a 1914 publication of the United States Bureau of Mines, *Houses for Mining Towns*, Joseph White wrote that "... one of the most important factors in obtaining an economical sanitary house is a well-selected town site." Because of the mountainous terrain of Appalachia, most coal camps in the region were situated in narrow valleys along creeks next to steep mountain slopes. The Virginia Coal and Iron Company built Stonega on a roughly linear plan, following the path of Callahan Creek (Figure 5). The community stretched for two miles, and while the basic layout was linear, clusters of houses were built in rows in certain sections, and other houses were built in small hollows that extended from the creek at right angles.

Before operations began at Stonega in August of 1890, the Virginia Coal and Iron Company transported a sawmill to the site to provide lumber for mine structures and workers' houses. On Callahan Creek, the company had not only purchased the mineral rights to the coal underneath the ground, but they also owned the many acres of trees above ground. The first houses to be constructed in Stonega were built in Possum Trot Hollow. Forty houses were constructed before operations were suspended until 1895.
Figure 5. Stonega, Virginia (Map: Stonega Coke and Coal Company Insurance Map [c. 1910], Westmoreland Collection).
After the company resumed operations, house construction proceeded rapidly. A Big Stone Gap building contractor, Robert L. Brown, was hired to build the houses. An advertisement of Brown's in the Big Stone Gap Post of July 3, 1897, indicates that he, at least, thought himself a capable house builder:

... Call on me for all kinds of inside finish, such as yellow pine flooring, ceiling, moulding, casing, corner and plinth blocks, sashes, doors, blinds, and any thing needed in building a house.11

The advertisement also shows that Brown was capitalizing on the mining activity taking place in Wise County, as it ended with: "Special attention given to Tipple, Trestle, Mine and Railroad Work."

Inventories were taken in 1919 and 1924 of all of Stonega's dwellings for tax purposes. The number of houses in Stonega was listed, and the age and condition of the houses were noted.12 From these inventories, most of the houses in Stonega appear to have been built in the 1897-1898 period. By the beginning of 1900, 363 houses had been built, and all were occupied.13 The style and construction of the miners' houses at Stonega were both simple and minimal. Most of the houses were "box" houses, constructed by erecting frames and then nailing vertical boards directly to the frame without using studs.14 Thin strips of
wood, "battens," were nailed to the boards to cover the cracks between boards. "Board and batten" construction was a cheap method of construction, and seems to have been practiced by most coal companies. The Coal Commission found that as late as 1923, board and batten construction still accounted for over 25 per cent of the 71,000 company-owned family dwellings it investigated.15

Five principal house types were built in Stonega: the two-story double-pen house; the two-story, four-room "Quality Row" house; the one-story, four-room "Midway" house; two-room shacks; and large three-story, fourteen to sixteen-room structures for upper-level employees. Almost all of the houses built in Stonega were semi-detached houses, intended to accommodate two families.16

**Two-Story Double-Pen Houses**

The most common type of house built in Stonega was the two-story, double-pen type, found in almost all sections of the community (Figures 1, 6, 7). This house was two stories high and one room deep, with an additional "shed" at the rear and a porch attached to the front. Always built as a double dwelling, each family had the use of at least three, and sometimes four rooms. The ground floor room measured fourteen by fifteen feet, and contained two windows and a front door (Figure 8). The "shed" room,
used as the kitchen if there was no other addition, measured ten by twelve feet. Many of these double-pen houses had additions built onto the side of the "shed" room (Figure 1). These additions were actually one-room shacks, with a porch facing the front of the house, and sometimes a porch on the rear as well. They usually functioned as the kitchen, and the dimensions of the interior were the same as those of the shed. Stairs led from the shed room to the second floor, which consisted of one large room, and a garret.

The exterior finish of the double-pen house was always board-and-batten, and was often painted red, or some other color that would not show dirt. The interior finish was ceiled -- three inch planks nailed directly to the walls, floors and ceilings. There were no open fireplaces in these houses; coal stoves provided heat. Chimneys were built in the middle of the house and served both sections of the double house. When built in 1898, the two-story double-pen house cost $500 each to construct. The only exact rental fee known is for 1915, when each half rented for five dollars. Surviving blank rental forms show that houses were rented on a monthly basis, and that the company only had to give a five-day notice before terminating a lease (See Appendix A).
Figure 6. Two-Story, Double-Pen Houses in Stonega, c. 1915 (Photograph, National Archives).
Figure 7. Elevation of two-story, double-pen house
(Drawing: Author, fieldwork, November, 1983).
Figure 8. Floorplan of two-story, double-pen house
(Drawing: Author, fieldwork, November, 1983).
"Quality Row" House

The two-story, four-room "Quality Row" houses were the largest and most well constructed house type in Stonega, other than those houses built in the "Park" section for upper-level employees (Figures 9 and 10). Most of these four-room houses were built in 1898, in the sections of town known as "Quality Row" and "Avondale." Built as double dwellings, each section contained two ground floor rooms, a rear addition, and a front porch (Figure 11). Variations existed mainly in porches, the placement of doors between rooms, and additions. All two-story, four-room houses had fireplaces in the front rooms, upstairs and down, and coal stoves elsewhere. The second floor contained two rooms in each section, the dimensions of which were the same as for the bottom two rooms - roughly 14 by 16 feet for the front room, and 12 by 16 feet for the back room. These houses were often finished on the outside with horizontal weatherboards. "Quality Row" houses rented for $7 a side in 1915.18

"Midway" Houses

In 1910, twenty-one houses were built at Midway, a short distance south of the camp, to house the workers of the company's carpentry shop (Figures 12 and 13). These houses were one-story double houses with two rooms to each side, and a front and back porch (Figure 14). What these
Figure 9. Houses on "Quality Row" c. 1915 (Photograph, Courtesy Hagley Museum and Library).
Figure 10. Elevation of "Quality Row" house (Drawing: Author, after Stonega Coke and Coal Company architectural drawing, 1909, Westmoreland Coal Company, Big Stone Gap, Virginia).
Figure 11. Floorplan of "Quality Row" house (Drawing: Author, after Stonega Coke and Coal Company architectural drawing, 1909, Westmoreland Coal Company, Big Stone Gap, Virginia).

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houses lacked in size they made up for in conveniences, as rent included open fire places, running water, plastered walls, and electric lights. Rent in 1915 was $7 a side. Mining employees eventually joined the carpenters at Midway, and these houses proved very popular.19

Shacks

Shacks were first mentioned in Stonega in the 1917 annual report, when it was claimed that there was a demand at all of the company's plants for inexpensive rental housing. The company's response was to build forty two-room "shacks" in Stonega in 1917. Each room was 14 by 14 feet, and ceiled inside by wallboard nailed directly to the weatherboarding. The shacks were built mainly in Possum Trot, and were intended to house Black labor. These houses were so identified with Black workers that one former resident of Stonega only remembered them as "colored people-shacks."20

Park Houses

At the opposite end of the housing scale were the large houses built in the "Park" for company officials (Figure 15). The President of Stonega Coke and Coal Company, Daniel Wentz, wrote in a letter in 1915 that, "The 'Park' houses at Stonega were built for general employees of the Company, such as Chief Engineer, Manager of Stores, Railroad Superintendent, etc."21
Figure 13. Elevation of "Midway" house (Drawing: Author, after Stonega Coke and Coal Company architectural drawing, 1920, Westmoreland Coal Company, Big Stone Gap, Virginia).
Figure 14. Floorplan of "Midway" house (Drawing: Author, after Stonega Coke and Coal Company architectural drawing, 1920, Westmoreland Coal Company, Big Stone Gap, Virginia).
The author of the annual report for 1900 complained that not enough of the "better class of dwelling houses" existed in the "pleasanter part of the town," and when the Stonega Coke and Coal Company's office personnel moved from Big Stone Gap to Stonega in 1904, new houses had to be built for them. These houses were three-story, fourteen- to sixteen-room double houses with indoor plumbing, plastered walls, electric lights, open fireplaces with mantels and tiles, and a masonry foundation. In 1915, they rented for $15 per side.\textsuperscript{22}

The antecedents of the houses built in Stonega are to be found in Pennsylvania, but there are striking similarities to traditional mountain housing. In his study of the Pocahontas coal field of West Virginia, Mack Gillenwater found that the particular house styles built in the coal camps usually reflected the ideas and experiences the coal operator brought with him to the field. A similar situation existed in Stonega. John K. Taggert was brought to Stonega from Connellsville, Pennsylvania, in 1890 by the Virginia Coal and Iron Company to become general superintendent of the camp. According to Prescott, Taggert planned the earliest houses that were built in Stonega. Almost all of the domestic structures built in Stonega were semi-detached (double) dwellings, for two families. Double dwellings had first been built in the anthracite fields of
Figure 15. Superintendent's house in the "Park" section of Stonega (Photograph: Author).
eastern Pennsylvania between 1860 and 1870, and had quickly been adopted in the newer bituminous regions around Connellsville. By the time Taggert moved to Stonega, the dominant house style in the Pennsylvania coal fields was the double dwelling. Gillenwater refers to semi-detached, two-story, four-room houses, such as the ones on "Quality Row," as "a widely accepted dwelling in the Bituminous Region of western Pennsylvania, specifically in the Connellsville Coal Region of Fayette and Westmoreland counties, Pennsylvania."

The most common house type in Stonega, however, and the one in which most mining employees lived, was the two-story double-pen. Store clerks, carpenters, railroad men, and other company employees usually occupied the large houses on Quality Row and in Avondale. Appalachian natives, upon entering Stonega, may not have found much dissimilarity between the housing in the camp and their traditional mountain housing. Many had lived in one-room log cabins with a loft and a shed addition, a floorplan very similar to that of each half of the Stonega two-story double-pens. The Stonega double-pen also resembled an "I-house," which was found throughout the Southern Mountains by the 1890s, and is today the most commonly found folk house in the region. The Stonega houses broadly fit the two-story high, two-rooms lengthwise, and one-room deep
criteria of I-houses, but the two front doors and central chimney give these houses more the appearance of two-story "saddlebag" houses. Saddlebag houses were common house types found in the region in the late nineteenth century, and consisted of two equal-size pens on either side of a central chimney, each with a front door leading to the outside. Most saddlebag houses were one or one-and-a-half story in height, although two-story structures were built. Montell and Morse describe an adaptation of the traditional saddlebag house in Kentucky, which they refer to as a "tenant house" type. These houses are so named because of their wide-spread acceptance throughout Southern states as a dwelling for tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Tenant houses are similar to saddlebag houses, except they are framed and contain stove flues instead of fireplaces, much like the double-pen houses in Stonega.

Whether any particular Appalachian miner had actually lived in an I-house, or in a "saddlebag" or "tenant" house, before coming to Stonega is not known, but the prevalence of these house forms in the Southern mountains in the nineteenth century would suggest that many had indeed lived in these types, while still others would have been familiar with the form. As will be discussed in the next chapter, many Stonega miners had been tenant farmers before moving to the coal camp, and it is likely
that they were familiar with the tenant house type as described by Montell and Morse. Living in the two-story double dwelling in Stonega perhaps required little cultural adjustment on the part of the Appalachian native. The close proximity of the houses, and the monotonous sameness of the board-and-batten style throughout the camp probably did require some cultural adjustment, but not as much as one might think. A Wise County educator, who had lived in local log cabins as a boy, wrote in his memoirs of a group of houses of the 1880s:

The house to which we now moved was also a log one of the old style. In fact, there was not a house on the creek but what was of the same style.

The cultural imperative to fit into the local community, and to not "show it" even if one had more money, made variability of house forms rare.

Most houses at Stonega did not have indoor plumbing. Outhouses were built behind the houses and, as with most structures in Stonega, they served two families. Other structures in the typical miner's yard included a coal house where deliveries were made for coal stoves, and a smokehouse, used by the miner's wife to cure meats. These were also built for two families. A Bureau of Mines sanitation inspection report from 1916 stated that many
miner's yards had sheds in the rear used as wash houses by the men for changing from their work clothes before entering the house. The Stonega Coke and Coal Company did not build a common wash house for the miners until the 1920s. The wife of the miner fought an uphill battle in maintaining a clean home environment in the midst of coal dust, smoke, ash, and other by-products of a dirty industry. If the miner's wife could not control the amount of pollution in the air surrounding the town, the presence of wash houses indicate that at least an attempt was made to control the domestic environment, and to restrict the occupation's intrusion into the home sphere.

The property lots varied according to house type. Quality Row houses had lots of 35 feet by 100 feet, whereas double-pen houses usually had lots of only 35 feet by 55 feet. Almost all lots in Stonega were bounded by fences. Gillenwater has suggested that fences served two functions in mining camps: 1) fences gave miners a sense of owning particular property and establishing a boundary of control (even though the boundary was shared by another family); and 2) fences assigned a definite space to each dwelling, which fixed responsibilities of upkeep and care of the property on each miner. Typical yard lots are visible in Figures 1 and 12.
Boundaries existed in Stonega not only between houses, but between sections of the camp itself. The boundaries were usually drawn by racial and ethnic divisions. The Immigration Commission, created by Congress in 1908 to investigate the living conditions of immigrants in American industry, reported that mining camps in Wise County were segregated:

All companies employing any considerable number of different races have their employees colonized by races, principally because of the desire of the employees themselves for segregation.

Whether the coal company named the various sections of Stonega is unknown, but the names are indicative of the social ordering in the camp. Black laborers were housed in Red Row, Slavetown, Creek Row, Smokey Row, and Possum Trot, locations near the coke ovens. Immigrants, mostly Hungarians and Poles, lived in Hunk Town. The rest of the camp was made up of native white Americans, some from the Appalachian region and others brought to Stonega from nearby states. They lived in such areas as Quality Row, Avondale, and Church Hill. Employees may have preferred living in segregated parts of the camp, as the Immigration Commission reported, but the coal company most clearly maintained this segregation in the assignment of houses.
In a letter describing the condition of vacant houses in two other Stonega Coke and Coal Company camps, a company official ranked them in the following order:

1) For First-Class Americans
2) For Low-Class Americans
3) For Foreigners
4) For First-Class Colored Labor
5) For Low-Class Colored Labor

The condition of the houses in the camp varied over the years and with the observer. When the houses were first built in the 1890s, the Big Stone Gap Post claimed the houses were "comfortable and convenient," and "much above the average of mining towns." James Taylor Adams, an author from Wise County, worked in the Wise County mines from 1905 to 1930, and he remembered the various camps in the county in a different light:

Row of ramshackle shacks, stinking privies, propped up tipples and batteries of coke ovens were called 'camps.' and 'camps' they were!

Investigators for the Immigration Commission claimed that immigrants in the various camps in Wise County, and to some degree Blacks and native white miners, cared little about the appearance and upkeep of the houses. Rent was the primary consideration, according to the Commission.
Sanitation and repair of the houses was the responsibility of the company. Each year, the company authorized the superintendents of each camp to spend a certain percentage of their rent receipts for upkeep. Only scattered statistics are available, but for 1912, the Stonega superintendent spent 100 per cent of the rent receipts for sanitation and house repair. The company also held an annual "Spring clean-up" to "whitewash all fences and outbuildings." But houses were difficult to keep clean, as the coke oven ash and the train smoke coated the houses daily with dirt. One resident remarked that the side of the houses were always dirty.

In 1916, a sanitation report on Stonega by Joseph White, of the Bureau of Mines, criticized the company for not collecting garbage and waste regularly. The miners were also criticized: "Within the yards themselves, even where trash receptables were provided, tin cans, rubbish and trash of all kinds were recklessly strewn about." White, noticing that some privies were located above houses on the hillsides, and that runoff might seep into the houses, recommended the company construct sanitary privies. He also suggested the construction of a miners' wash and change house and the employment of a "visiting nurse," a welfare worker.
By 1919, the houses in Stonega were beginning to show their age. In the tax inventory of dwellings for that year, of 278 houses, only two were listed in good condition. The remaining 276 were either in fair or bad condition. The 1924 inventory listed 82 per cent of the 278 houses tabulated as belonging in the "cheaply built" category.43

Interiors

Interior space in the company houses in Stonega was often modified to fit established patterns of behavior. The Appalachian mountain cabin often consisted of only one room, a loft and a shed addition. Beds were placed in both the loft and the main room.44 In his study of a Kentucky mountain community, Charles Martin quotes one mountaineer who said:

We didn't have any living room. All the beds, just as many as could get in a room were in that room. You know, nobody had a separate room. We just grew up together ... 45

Rooms in the houses at Stonega were treated in much the same way. Most families put beds in every room but the kitchen, either because of the size of the family, or in order to accommodate lodgers. Keeping lodgers was one way the family could earn extra money. In 1908, the Immigration Commission reported on immigrants' homes in the
Wise County coal camps: "In many houses beds will be found in every room but the kitchen, and in a few instances they were found in that room." The number of beds in a house was, of course, a function of how many people lived in the house, and one former resident of Stonega remembered that "just about everybody kept boarders." A worker who came to Stonega in 1916 reported that there was no regular boarding house in town, and that he paid four dollars a week to a family who took in boarders. Even in the larger Quality Row and Avondale houses, the room that was built as a dining room was often used as a bedroom. The dining room was seldom used as such, since most eating took place in the kitchen.

The kitchen was an important room in both traditional mountain houses and in coal camp houses. Emma Bell Miles, in *The Spirit of the Mountains*, wrote in 1905 about the kitchen in the mountain home: "For to those who are true home-lovers, home lies mostly in the kitchen and back yard." Joseph H. White, in *Houses for Mining Towns*, a 1914 Bureau of Mines publication, expressed the same sentiment. The kitchen, he argued, should be the largest and most pleasant room in the miner's house.

It is the center of all home activities. The miner's wife spends a large part of her life in the kitchen; it is used as the family dining room; the children play there and around the back door. Neighbors are
entertained in the kitchen. In the absence of a washhouse, it is used as a bathroom. On cold winter nights the family circle is around the kitchen stove. These remarks apply notably to the smaller houses, in which the living room is often converted into a bedroom.

The use of interior space in houses in Stonega may have been traditional to Appalachian natives, but the range of home furnishings that the miner could buy to place in his home was a new experience. Before the coming of the coal companies, peddlers had walked the mountains, selling goods to families. Any store-bought goods had to be brought in over the rough roads from distant trading centers. At Stonega, the company store sold a wide range of commodities brought in by rail from such distant cities as Louisville and Cincinnati, while still other stores sprang up in the region to cater specifically to the mining camps.

In 1895, the Virginia Coal and Iron Company commissioned the Goodloe Brothers, local merchants from Big Stone Gap, to operate a store in Stonega for the company. In 1897, the Big Stone Gap Post favorably compared the store to a nearby commercial center: "Goods of all kinds, including groceries and family supplies are sold to the employees about as cheap as can be purchased in Bristol." Three months later, the Post reported that the storeroom was too small for its "immense patronage," and so was being
enlarged. By buying in large quantities, the Stonega store was able to sell goods cheaply. The store managers bought most of their stock from urban dealers located in cities close to the lines of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, such as Louisville, Cincinnati, Chattanooga, and Bristol, Tennessee. Surviving store inventories demonstrate both the variety of goods the store sold, and the remarkable volume of its business (See Appendix B). In addition to a wide range of goods, the Stonega store also operated a bakery, a slaughterhouse, a millinery and ladies' dress department, and, after 1915, an ice cream and candy parlor. By 1915, the Stonega Coke and Coal Company operated eleven commissaries in all, including two in Stonega.

Other stores in the area attempted to compete with the Stonega store. Two miles south of Stonega was a small cross-roads settlement called Preacher that consisted almost totally of small retail stores that catered to the coal camps. Most of Preacher burned in 1907, and the Stonega Coke and Coal Company bought the majority of its land, in part to keep other stores from locating there. An advertisement for a Big Stone Gap merchandise store appeared in the Post in December of 1900 in which part of the advertisement read: "Goods delivered Free to Stonega and Looney Creek."
Despite its purchase of Preacher's lands in order to monopolize the local market, a company brochure for 1921 claimed that the Stonega Coke and Coal Company did not coerce its miners to buy from the company store, but permitted free competition. Former residents of Stonega recalled buying goods from local merchants as well as from mail-order houses. The Stonega Coke and Coal Company's attitude about store competition had not always been so relaxed, however. In 1902, a local store, the Chicago House Furnishing Company, brought suit against the Stonega Coke and Coal Company in the local Wise County courts, claiming that the store's agents had sold Stonega miners furniture and other goods on the installment plan, and that when the agents attempted to enter the property of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company to collect money towards the installments, they were harassed and prevented by the company from going to the miners' homes. In its defense, the Stonega Coke and Coal Company claimed that labor agents from other coal companies had recently disguised themselves as furniture peddlers, and had entered the camp to try and lure away workers. The company also claimed that since Stonega was their property, they had a right to prevent anyone they objected to from entering the grounds. The company also asserted that it had the right to discharge workers who allowed agents of the Chicago House Furnishing
Company to enter their homes, since the company considered these agents objectionable. The case was eventually settled in favor of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company.\textsuperscript{61}

One of the ways in which coal companies exerted control over miners was by use of the "scrip" system, in which miners were given so much credit at the company store instead of actual cash for their work. This system tended to keep workers indebted to the company, as the credit system was easy to abuse. The credit system also plowed payroll money back into the company's coffers. The Stonega Coke and Coal Company reported that for 1915, a remarkable 52.9 per cent of all payroll earnings for that year had been expended in the company stores.\textsuperscript{62}

Since company store records do not show what individual miners bought from the store, it is difficult to know exactly how interiors of houses looked prior to 1920. But the range of commodities available in the camp to miners and their families was broad, and whether they were able to purchase them or not, the coal camp residents saw them every day they entered the company store. The availability of so many consumer goods was one reason why many of the Appalachian natives were initially drawn to the mining camps. The Immigration Commission reported that the homes of American whites in the Wise County camps in 1908

\textsuperscript{61}This case was Stonega Coke v. Sink, 228 Ky. 455, 126 S.W.2d 967 (1939).

had "more furniture which is of a better quality" than that found in the homes of immigrant and black workers. The homes of immigrant and black workers were "very poorly furnished, both with regard to quality and quantity." The Commission reasoned that this disparity existed because immigrants and blacks, more so than native whites, considered their homes only as temporary shelters.63 One possible explanation is that many immigrants and Black workers did not move their families to Stonega, and intended to stay only long enough to earn a certain amount of money. The population census of Wise County for 1900 shows that males made up only 53 per cent of the native white population, while the percentages for the immigrant and Black populations were 80 and 65 per cent, respectively.64

In the transition from an agricultural environment to an industrial setting, the Appalachian mountaineer and his family encountered new situations marked by the synthesis of elements reflective of traditional culture and other elements radically different. The dominant house in the Stonega camp, the two-story double-pen, was familiar to the Appalachian native, but the existence of compartmentalized space in the larger houses, such as the "dining room," was not. The mountaineer adapted to the new environment by utilizing the space in a traditional way,
mainly for sleeping. Eating still took place in the kitchen, where the food was prepared. The company store, and its range of previously unavailable consumer goods, also presented a new cultural context to the mountaineer-native. It appears that the miners in Stonega easily adapted themselves to the acquisition of goods. Other physical aspects of the camp reflected and enforced certain relationships. The larger houses in Avondale, the Park, and on Quality Row, and the name "Quality Row" itself, were indicative of the different layers of social standing in Stonega. The structure of the camp reflected not only social stratification, but ethnic and racial divisions as well, as strict boundaries separated such sections as "Hunk Town," "Possum Trot," and "Church Hill." Structure was one medium through which various types and levels of "community" were established and maintained by both the company and the miners.
NOTES

CHAPTER II

1 Eller, Miners, p. 76; and Prescott, Story, pp. 12, 28, 43.

2 Big Stone Gap (Virginia) Post, 29 August 1890.


4 Post, 14 July 1895; 3 October 1895.

5 Post, 19 November 1896.

6 Post, 10 June 1897; 7 October 1897.

7 Post, 7 October 1897.

8 "Historical Files: Historical Sketches," Westmoreland, Acc. 1765, Ser. II, Box 540.


10 Interview with William F. Shupe, Powell Valley, Virginia, 21 July 1983; Prescott, Story, p. 57; Post, 29 August 1890; and "Annual Report to the Stockholders (1895)," Westmoreland, Acc. 1764, Ser. I, Box 3.

11 Post, 3 July 1897.


Interview with William F. Shupe.


The names of the housetypes are taken from references in company papers and from interviews with residents of Stonega.


D. B. Sayers to E. Drennen, 26 July 1915, Westmoreland; and Interview with Josephine Adams and Jeanette Willis Bishop, Bristol, Virginia, 17 July 1983.


Stonega Coke and Coal Company, Annual Report, 1917, Westmoreland, Acc. 1765, Ser. II, Box 211, pp. 25-26, 39; and Transcript No. 24, Interview with Joseph Tony, Big Stone Gap, Virginia (December 1972), Oral History Collection, Emory and Henry College, Emory, Virginia.


"Virginia Coal and Iron Company: Annual Report of Operating Department (1900 and 1901)," Westmoreland, Acc. 1764, Ser. I, Box 4; D. B. Sayers to E. Drennen, 26 July 1915, Westmoreland; and Post, 21 January 1904.

Gillenwater, "Cultural," pp. 10, 146-150; and Prescott, Story, pp. 53-55.


29 Hollyfield, Schooldays, p. 90.


33 Immigration Commission, "Bituminous," p. 211.


35 Post, 7 October 1897.


38 "Statement Showing Per Cent of Repairs and Sanitation to Gross Rent Receipts," Westmoreland, Acc. 1765, Ser. II, Box 385.


Interview with Josephine Adams and Jeanette Willis Bishop; Interview with Rosco Livingston, Stonega, Virginia, 20 July 1983; Interview with Elizabeth Callahan, Appalachia, Virginia, 19 July 1983; Post, 24 July 1902; and A. H. Reeder to D. B. Wentz, 22 June 1907, Westmoreland, Acc. 1765, Ser. II, Box 416, Virginia File No. 9: "Small Fox at Stonega and Osaka 1904-1911."

U. S., Department of Justice, "Memorandum [Jim Thompson]," dated October 26, 1915, Straight Numerical File 182363, Record Group 60, National Archives.

Interview with William F. Shupe; Interview with Josephine Adams and Jeanette Willis Bishop; and Interview with Mary Estep, Stonega, Virginia, 16 November 1983, 19 January 1984.

Miles, *Spirit of the Mountains*, p. 35.


"Lease: VC & I Co. to Goodloe Bros., December 1, 1895, re Stonega Store," Westmoreland, Acc. 1764, Ser. I, Box 14.

Post, 7 October 1897.

Post, 20 January 1898.

Post, 15 September 1898, 22 March 1900, 4 April 1901; and Stonega Coke and Coal Company, Store Vouchers, 1897-1899, Penn Virginia Resources, Duffield, Virginia.

Stonega Coke and Coal Company, Annual Report, 1915, Westmoreland, Acc. 1765, Ser. II, Box 211, p. 4; and Post, 12 April 1898, 22 September 1898.
75


58 Post, 7 August 1907.

59 Post, 13 December 1900.

60 Stonega Coke and Coal Company, 1921 Brochure, Harry Meadors Coal Museum, Big Stone Gap, Virginia, p. 29; Interview with Mary Estep; and Interview with Elizabeth Callahan.

61 Wise County Court Records, File No. 2285, Wise County Courthouse, Wise, Virginia.


63 Immigration Commission, "Bituminous," p. 230. In the records of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company, a letter from 1913 stated that the Franklin Fire Insurance Company of Philadelphia had insured the "household furniture" of a "large number" of Stonega's employees. Evidence such as this, as well as the volume of the Stonega store's business, indicates that Stonega's miners, including the Appalachian natives, did participate in acquiring new consumer goods. See Harry Austin to D. B. Sayers, 19 January 1913, Westmoreland, Acc. 1765, Ser. II, Box 485, Engineer's File: "Franklin Fire Insurance Co. 1913."


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The word "community" is difficult to define precisely. In his analysis of the historical development of "community," Raymond Williams finds that the word came increasingly to represent in the nineteenth century more direct, more total, and therefore more significant relationships than those found in the more formal and abstract divisions of "state" or "society." In Stonega, residents of the camp established various levels of "community" that functioned to preserve the image, if not the total reality, of "significant relationships."

Stonega's "community" was influenced by the coal company, eager to instill in the miners an industrial work ethic, and by the miners themselves, equally anxious to preserve traditional patterns of communal life.

The largest community was the ethnic and racially mixed laboring force. When the Virginia Coal and Iron Company first began operations at Stonega in 1890, their labor demands were few enough to be met by the Appalachian natives in the region. Some mountaineers were attracted by
the wages and consumer goods of the camps, while others were forced into the camps to feed families after their farmland had been acquired by the company. As the mining and coking operations increased at Stonega, and as other mines opened in the region, the native population was unable to provide the necessary number of workers. The 1917 annual report for the company claimed that since the establishment of the coal industry in the Stonega area, the shortage of labor had been the most serious problem facing the coal operators. The company also felt the native worker had been unreliable and unsuited to work in the mining camps.

It has, therefore, been apparent for years that the only method of improving the quality of our labor was by importing labor of a better class and educating those in our employ and their children.

Large numbers of men were brought into the Stonega area "on transportation" between 1895 and 1920. Annual reports from 1899 to 1902 show that men were brought from the surrounding Appalachian areas of Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, West Virginia, and other parts of Virginia, as well as from Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Georgia, and South Carolina, principally by rail. In 1899, 1,000 men were imported to Stonega, while in 1900, the figure rose to 1,377.
Annual reports for Stonega's early years exist only for 1899 to 1902, but each report mentions the severe labor shortage in the area. Besides importing men into the region, the company also asked miners already working in Stonega to provide names of friends and relatives who might come to Stonega, and mine officials made special trips to their old working grounds of Pennsylvania to bring back laborers. Appalachian natives who were felt to be influential with mountaineers were asked to recruit workers from the hills.

There was still a labor shortage in the area in 1915, and increased activity at all coal mines due to the demands of World War I only exacerbated matters. Between 1915 and 1920, Stonega Coke and Coal Company imported a yearly average of 2,260 workers. Many of these men brought in from outside the area did not stay long in Stonega. The usual procedure was for the company to pay the travel expenses of the worker to the mines, and then take out so much every month from the worker's paycheck until the transportation costs had been reimbursed. Upon arriving in Stonega, some workers "escaped" from the camp and hired on with other local mine operations; thereby avoiding the transportation fee. Most of the coal companies in Wise County, including the Stonega Coke and Coal Company, were active in trying to lure workers away.
from one another.\textsuperscript{8} Others left because they did not like the work, or the area, or both. Transportation men who left the area in 1916 reported that they had to sneak away at night, as the company had guards who were watching them. For the period 1905 to 1915, 18.8 per cent of all men brought into the area on transportation left without working.\textsuperscript{9}

Many of the workers imported into the region were either recently-arrived immigrants, or southern Blacks. The annual report for 1900 listed a monthly average of 1,405 workers on the company's payroll for that year. Of these men, 49.5 per cent were native whites, 31.8 per cent were blacks, and 18.7 per cent were immigrants, mainly Hungarian.\textsuperscript{10}

The total number of employees working in the Stonega mines and coke yards remain difficult to tabulate, since company statistics do not always include those "tonnage" workers who were paid by the amount of coal they dug, similar to a piecework system. Reliable statistics for 1901 and 1902 show that the total number of men employed for each of those two years hovered around 2,000, even though the number varied greatly each month (Figure 16). Figures for 1908 and 1913 indicate a decline in the number of employees in Stonega, probably due to the
Figure 16: Number of Men Employed, Stonega, Virginia (1901-1902)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1902</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1286</td>
<td>2558</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>1357</td>
<td>1787</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1530</td>
<td>2351</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1795</td>
<td>2283</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>2116</td>
<td>1640</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>2220</td>
<td>1736</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>2404</td>
<td>1741</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>2524</td>
<td>1890</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>2498</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>2479</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>2560</td>
<td>2071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2070</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

increased production at other area Stonega Coke and Coal Company mines, such as Roda. In 1908, a total of 904 workers were employed in Stonega, and the number dropped to 758 by 1913. In 1915, the total population of Stonega was placed at 2,000.\textsuperscript{11}

In his study of miners in southern West Virginia, David Corbin emphasizes the overt class structure of coal camps. He refers to the better housing and site location of the mine officials' houses as a form of "theater," an obvious show of material wealth, and by extension, a display of real power. The proper social order, as defined by those in power, is secured and maintained in the camp not by daily exhibitions of force, but by a "continuing theatrical style," an idea first expressed by E. P. Thompson.\textsuperscript{12} Part of the "continuing theatrical style" in Stonega was the social separation of the company officials and office staff from the miners. Since the development of the Stonega field, the native population had been looked down upon by the intruders. When General John Daniel Imboden was first promoting the area in the 1880s, he commented once on how he had told a group of investors all about Wise County and,

\[\ldots\text{ how nice it was }\ldots\text{ and interested them so much that when our road is built they are coming out to see for themselves. They think it must be delightful to see and mingle with primitive people.}\textsuperscript{13}\]
Stonega Coke and Coal Company's annual report for 1917 referred to Wise County natives the company first encountered as being "at least two hundred years behind the civilization of the more densely populated sections of the United States." The Appalachian mountaineers were not simply culturally inferior; they were culturally deficient. A Stonega resident and office clerk who wrote a weekly news item for the Big Stone Gap Post, contributed the following in 1903:

We rise to remark that the only thing Stonega needs to make it the most desirable place on the globe, is for the cultured people who come here to reside, to disseminate their culture by using their talents in reaching out and helping those who have not been so highly favored . . .

Yet from news items in the Post during this period, most middle to upper-level employees apparently held their socials, dances and gatherings in Big Stone Gap, with persons of the same social level.

Stonega Coke and Coal Company was proud of the gestures made toward their workers, such as treats for the children and pay bonuses for the miners at Christmas. The annual report for 1916 commented with all due gravity that these gifts of monies, actually already withheld by other means, had "made the 1916 Christmas the happiest the employees of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company had ever
had."  Coal companies utilized these "social lubricants of gestures," as Corbin refers to them, to make the mechanisms of power move "more sweetly." Corporate paternalism, as practiced by the Stonega Coke and Coal Company during these years, required a sense of obligation from both the company and from the coal miners. In return for worker loyalty and labor, the company tried to create an environment comfortable for the miner and his family, within the limits imposed by the capitalistic nature of the company's enterprise, and the company's definition of "comfortable." Playgrounds, schools, churches, a theater, and library reading rooms were built for the camps, free house rent was given to twenty-year employees, and the sick and widowed were allowed to stay indefinitely in their homes. Company officials took great pride in their company towns. In a letter to the President of the company in 1914, the general superintendent of Stonega referred to the town as a "camp." The President, Daniel Wentz, replied:

I hope you will pardon the suggestion, but I think the General Superintendent of our Company in all correspondence, as well as other ways, should refer to our various towns as towns and not as 'camps.' The word 'camp' originated in connection with aggregation of tents and huts and I do not think that it is fair or proper to apply the expression to the well built towns the Stonega Company has for its employees."
In 1917, the company began to devote attention to "welfare work," employing "visiting nurses" to check on the sanitary conditions in the homes, to attend the sick, and to conduct cooking and sewing classes. Joseph White had found the company interested in welfare work a year earlier, noting that, "The present management is interested in this line of work and feels that the living conditions exert a silent influence in many directions." The company felt that industrial welfare practices prevented labor disturbances. In 1915, Coal Age, a magazine written for management, published "The Stonega Coal and Coke Company's Operations in Virginia," in which the company's history was called "the story of a 20-year old success." The value of the company's welfare work, the author claimed, had been "demonstrated by the entire absence of strikes and other disaffection." The company congratulated itself in 1917 on its relationship with its workers: "With regard to kindred feeling existing between employer and employee, we believe that the situation here is as good as in any coal field in the country . . . ." The workers themselves were not always viewed so favorably. The following complaint was voiced in the 1902 annual report: "... the insurmountable difficulty is to prevail upon the employees to work sufficient time to get the yield out of the plant equal to its capacity." Part of this
problem stemmed from the method of mining used in the early Stonega mines. Most miners were paid not by the hour, but by the amount of coal they loaded, a system incorporated from the coal pits of Great Britain. The shift usually began at seven in the morning, but the miner was free to come and go as he pleased. He bought his own tools and blasting powder, and he decided when he had loaded enough coal. The distances between working places in the mines, and the small number of supervisors meant that most miners worked all day without seeing a boss. In a sense, the miner sold the coal to the company. The editor of Coal Age described mining as late as 1921 as similar to a "cottage industry, only the cottage is a room in the mines." The system was very similar to the tenant-farmer system that most miners knew well:

The separate working places left to the miner at the face the direction of work. He became, not a regular employee, but a sort of sub-contractor who undertook to mine and load coal at so much per ton. It forced a close analogue to 'the tenant farmer system' upon the industry.

The comparison between tenant farming and mining methods is important, because it provided the miners with one more link to the past, which helped them adapt to the mining camps. The majority of Appalachian workers in the
that most of the first Appalachian miners were
sharecroppers.\textsuperscript{29} A third of all farms in Wise County were
tenant farms between 1890 and 1900, the period when many
natives came to Stonega (Figure 3). Many of the southern
blacks and immigrants imported to Stonega were also
familiar with tenant farming. In 1890, a majority of the
southern rural Black population were tenant farmers or
sharecroppers.\textsuperscript{30} The Immigration Commission surveyed 3,367
miners in 1908 in West Virginia, Virginia, and Alabama, and
found that 73.9 per cent had been farmers before coming to
the coal mines.\textsuperscript{31} An immigrant miner who had worked in
Wise County told how his family had been tenant farmers in
Austria-Hungary for "big-shot" landowners before they
migrated to America shortly after 1900.\textsuperscript{32}

There were other ways in which miners maintained
touch with their agricultural past. Many miners maintained
farms near Stonega, and would leave the mines periodically
throughout the year to tend to their crops.\textsuperscript{33} Many others
in the camp maintained gardens, and kept cows, chickens,
and hogs. The company, of course, became frustrated with
the seasonal work habits of the miners: "It is impossible
to maintain the discipline necessary to get the efficient
results desired and possible."\textsuperscript{34} The company began
mechanizing their mines after 1915, but it encountered
"prejudice against trying anything new" on the part of the
miners. Jerry Bruce Thomas has reported that the tonnage system of mining persisted in the coal industry long after machinery made it obsolete.

Work, and the dangers and hardships associated with it, provided a sense of solidarity for the miners, regardless of race or nationality:

The communities, to be sure, are usually made up of a great mixture of nationalities; but they are communities in which the talk in the pool room or on the log across from the company store is largely the talk of the one industry - communities, most of them, to which all the men come home black.

A song collected and recorded by A. P. Carter gives some idea of the feelings that sustained the bonds between workers. "Coal Miner's Blues" is a "graphic and moving statement of five or six decades of Wise County work lore compressed into a single rhythmic song."

Some blues are just blues, mine are the miner's blues.
My troubles are coming by threes and by twos.

Blues and more blues, it's that coal black blues.
Got coal in my hair, got coal in my shoes.

These blues are so blue, they are the coal black blues.
For my place will cave in, and my life I will lose.
You say they are blues,
these old miner's blues.
Now I must have sharpened
these picks that I use.

I'm out with these blues,
dirty coal black blues.
We'll lay off tomorrow
with the coal miner's blues.

When not working, men gathered at the company store, or on porches to talk or gamble. A former resident of Stonega remembered that miners were close. "They helped one another. The miners always helped one another." 39

The occasional inability of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company to instill its labor force with a particular industrial work ethic was also reflected in general coal camp life. By building and controlling the institutions of the town, such as the school, store, library, and churches, by restricting outside access to the camp, and by intruding into the workers' private lives through "welfare work," the company attempted to establish a form of cultural hegemony, to create a particular mind-set on the part of the camp's residents that would be directed towards achieving the company's goals: to turn a profit in the mining of coal and the manufacture of coke. 40 The company was often successful in convincing workers to equate their interests with those of the company. "We were just one big happy family" was said by more than one former resident of Stonega in interviews. In contrast to many ramshackle coal
camps of the era, Stonega was indeed a comfortable place in which to live. In an area of acute labor shortage, the Stonega Coke and Coal Company was always able to attract workers and, more significantly, to forestall the encroachments of the United Mine Workers until the 1920s, even though union activity took place after 1900 on either side of Wise County, in Kentucky and West Virginia. Some company officials were genuinely interested in the well-being of the miners and their families, and workers' interests were not necessarily different from those of the company. Raymond Williams points out, however, that the complex, encompassing nature of the hegemonic process often blurs reality and its image. This image, or false consciousness, may be accepted unconsciously as reality by both the dominant and subordinate groups, in this case the coal company and the miners.  

Whether a person believes and acts as he or she does because of an imposed false consciousness is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine. But resistance to the hegemonic process, to cultural imperialism, can be more readily determined. Besides maintaining a traditional work discipline, residents of Stonega resisted certain ideological aspects of camp life, often in subtle ways. Freedom of choice was protected by the miners, who patronized traveling salesmen and local
stores, even though the company went so far as to fire employees who allowed competing salesmen into their company homes. Traditional habits were maintained by the miners, who refused to drink piped water, preferring natural spring water, even though the company warned of a contaminated water supply and threatened to fire workers who continued to drink well water. Religious independence was claimed by the miners, as evidenced by the complaint of the coal company in 1904 that attendance was very poor in the church it had built and continued to support. Old customs of entertainment were still enjoyed by the miners, as they gambled and drank illegal whiskey and "layed off" work days after particularly boisterous weekends. Residents of Stonega did not completely reject the capitalistic and industrial ideology sponsored by the coal company, or most would not have been in the camp in the first place, but adjustment to camp life was eased somewhat by the maintenance of traditional patterns of life.

The different ethnic and racial communities in the coal camp also helped to support and sustain the families of Stonega. Native whites, immigrants, and Blacks all occupied separate sections of Stonega, and maintained tight-knit communities around these sections. Each group had its own church, its own fraternal orders, and its own customs. Fraternal organizations were particularly
reflective of both mutual support among the miners, and ethnic and racial separation, as five lodges were established for native white miners, two each for immigrant and Black workers, and one even for wives of white miners. Many Black miners in West Virginia belonged to one fraternal order or another. A Black state official reported that lodges were valuable for Black miners because,

they stand for a high degree of morality, for peace, law and order and progress. They teach industry and thrift . . . More than any other agency working among Negroes they have taught them the value of unity.

The fraternal orders of Stonega did not ensure solidarity among the various sections of the camp. In fact, the parent organization of one of the native white orders, the Junior Order United American Mechanics, emerged in the 1890s as the "undisputed leader" of anti-Catholic nativism. The company clerk who wrote Stonega's social news items for the Big Stone Gap Post delighted in mentioning customs of the immigrant population that he thought appropriately strange:

The Hungarian custom of throwing water on each other was observed here by that nationality on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Monday being the men's day, they deluged the women, and Tuesday being the women's day they immersed the men.
The company also took advantage of cultural traditions in order to attract workers. Bake ovens were built behind some houses in Stonega, so that the company could "get some Hungarian families to locate there . . .". The immigrant population in Stonega was able to maintain strong ties with the "old world." A Roman Catholic priest who served Stonega reported that at certain times of the year, such as First Holy Communion, Confirmation, or the consecration of a new church, one "would imagine to live for the time in a village of the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire." Yet at the same time, these immigrants were being acculturated into American life. The same priest complimented the "foreigners" on their flag raising during World War I, and claimed that they "bought liberty bonds until they had to borrow money to pay their regular bills."

Most buildings and events at Stonega were segregated into white and black sections, and many white Stonega residents recalled in interviews that "people knew their place." The different racial and ethnic groups at Stonega co-existed peacefully most of the time, but there were occasional outbreaks of violence. The Big Stone Gap Post for May, 1898, reported a fight in which "nearly all nationalities were represented." A more typical pattern
of interaction was described by a local priest, who related the trouble that Appalachian natives had with understanding the Roman Catholic faith of the immigrants:

It is their conviction that the Catholics believe neither in Christ nor in the Bible, that they worship the Virgin and adore pictures, that they are a mixture of Mormons, Jews and Mohammedans, and that it is safer not to fool with them.56

Traditional cultural patterns were not "quickly and ruthlessly destroyed" in Stonega. In fact, each group's preservation of past cultural behavior was one factor that created boundaries between racial and ethnic groups in Stonega, and was a principal reason why "class feeling and behavior" was only one of several relationships formed by the miner in Stonega.
NOTES

CHAPTER III

1 Williams, Keywords, pp. 65-66.

2 Kennedy, Wise County, pp. 14-15; Interview with Earl Houser; and Interview with Elizabeth Callahan.

3 Annual Report, 1917, Westmoreland, p. 3.

4 "Virginia Coal and Iron Company: Annual Report of Operating Department (1899 and 1900)," Westmoreland.

5 Post, 6 January 1898, 20 January 1898, 9 October 1902; and Immigration Commission, "Bituminous," p. 165.

6 A. H. Reeder to D. B. Wentz, 8 July 1907, Westmoreland, Acc. 1765, Ser. II, Box 416, Virginia File No. 9: "Small Pox at Stonega and Osaka 1904-1911."

7 Annual Reports, 1915-1920, Westmoreland.


10 "Virginia Coal and Iron Company: Annual Report of Operating Department (1900)," Westmoreland.


12 Corbin, Life, Work and Rebellion, p. 124.

13 Eller, Miners, p. 49.

15. Post, 24 December 1903.


28. Ibid., p. 55.


33 Post, 30 June 1904; and Annual Report, 1918, Westmoreland, p. 7.

34 "Annual Reports to the Stockholders (1902)," Westmoreland.


39 Transcript No. 24, Interview with Joseph Tony.


41 Ibid., p. 110.

42 Wise County Court Records, File No. 2285, Wise County Courthouse, Wise, Virginia.


45 Transcript No. 24, Interview with Joseph Tony.

46 Every hegemonic situation includes some degree of a "counter-hegemony." Williams, Marxism, p. 110.
47 Post, 8 June 1899, 9 October 1902, 30 July 1903, 6 August 1903.

48 Corbin, Life, Work and Rebellion, p. 75.


50 Post, 19 April 1900, 24 July 1902.


53 Ibid., p. 4.

54 Interview with Elizabeth Callahan.

55 Post, 26 May 1898.

CONCLUSION

The transition from an individual farmstead to a coal camp thrust the Appalachian mountaineer into a new industrial environment in Wise County, Virginia. The adjustment to these new surroundings was eased somewhat by the familiarity of physical forms in the camp, such as the double-pen house type, and by the retention of past cultural norms in both the miner's occupational and social life. In the camp, the miner belonged to various "communities" that further aided in the adjustment to an industrial setting. The miner was, at any one time, a member of a certain social and economic class, a work group, a church, a lodge hall, a family, and perhaps other groups as well. The miner's membership in these "communities," and his adaptation of past cultural values to the coal camp gave the miner a sense of security and self-identity in a new environment.

During the 1920s, as the coal industry slumped following the boom years of World War I, many Black and immigrant workers left the Wise County coal field for the
industrial cities of the North. The paternalistic attitude of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company changed also, as the union began to make progress in the area. Coal continued to be mined at Stonega for many years, but the heyday of the coal camp was over. The coal industry had an enormous effect on Wise County, but even by 1928, when coal companies continued to own most of the land in the county, traditional patterns of life were celebrated:

With the opening up of coal mines and the building of long batteries of coke ovens at several points in the county, many farmers deserted their domains and sought work where already thousands of men from all corners of the earth were congregating. Others, looking down across the years to come stayed with their little farms, plowing and hoeing while their neighbors closed up the house to seek high wages. Today the sons of this man, who deprived himself and family of the many enjoyments afforded by the wage of the worker, are the Lords of the Land in Wise County.

A century after the opening of the first coal mines in Wise County, however, the "Lords of the Land" are unmistakably the coal companies. They continue to dominate the economy and culture of the county. But the initial experiences of native mountaineers in one of the earliest coal camps, Stonega, reflected the synthesis of persistent patterns of traditional behavior and new industrial routines, a process of adjustment that is still occurring today.
NOTES

CONCLUSION

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Dissertations and Theses


Government Documents


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Interviews


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Manuscripts


Newspapers

Big Stone Gap (Virginia) Post
APPENDIX A

DWELLING HOUSE LEASE FORM

THIS AGREEMENT OF LEASE, made the.............. day of
................................. 190..., between the STONEGA COKE
& COAL COMPANY, hereinafter called "the lessor," party of
the first part, and ....................................
hereinafter called "the lessee," party of the second part,
WITNESSETH:

The lessor demises unto the lessee, for residence
purposes only, that certain dwelling house situated at its
........................ operation in Wise County, Virginia,
numbered ....... and so designated on the plans of the
property of the lessor, for the period of one month from
the ..... day of .............., 190..., and so on from
month to month, but nevertheless only so long as the
lessee shall be in the employee of the lessor and shall
perform his other covenants herein contained; provided,
however, that the lessor may terminate this lease at any
time by giving the lessees five days written notice of its
election so to do.

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The lessee covenants and agrees that he will pay the lessor monthly, for the use of the demised premises, the sum of $........ for each and every month he occupies the same, and he hereby authorizes the lessor to retain out of any moneys at any time due to him by them any sum that may be owing by him hereunder.

The lessee further covenants and agrees as follows, viz: that he will not assign this lease, or sub-let the demised property, or any portion thereof, without the written consent of the lessor; that he will keep the premises in good repair; that any improvements made by him upon said premises shall become the property of the lessor without any claim on his part therefor; that if this lease is terminated in any month by his voluntary act, he will pay the rent in full for such month, and that if the same is terminated by the act of the lessor, he will pay rent up to the time he surrenders possession of the premises; that whenever this lease is terminated, whether by his voluntary act or by the act of the lessor, he will promptly surrender quiet and peacable possession of said demised premises, and it shall be lawful for the lessor, or any person or persons by it so directed, to enter upon and dispossess him and take possession of said premises, using such force as may be necessary for that purpose, and for so doing this lease and agreement shall
be sufficient warrant, authority and justification; that should the lessor prefer to resort to the ordinary legal process to obtain possession of said premises, and should it bring any action or suit against the lessee for that purpose then, in that event, the lessee does hereby make, constitute and appoint ......................... his agent and attorney in fact, with full power and authority for him in his name to accept service of any summons or notice in such action or suit, and to confess judgment in favor of the lessor for a recovery of the said premises and the cost of such recovery; that the lessee waives his homestead and all other exemptions as to his obligations herein.

EXECUTED, WITNESSED AND DELIVERED the day and year herein first above written.

STONEGA COKE & COAL COMPANY,

By.........................

## APPENDIX B

### STONEGA STORE INVENTORIES (1899-1901)

**RETAIL MERCHANDISE**

(Percentage of Total Value)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1899</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1901</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>12.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensware</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hats and Caps</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millinery</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
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<td>Dry Goods</td>
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<td>Notions</td>
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<td>.3</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
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<td>Furniture</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<td>----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trunks</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpets</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Value: $15,395, $23,117, $27,477

**Source:** "Annual Statements (VC & I Co.): Store Dept.,” Westmoreland, Acc. 1764, Ser. I, Box 18.