

## GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEW ESSAY

### READING THE APPALACHIAN LANDSCAPE

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THE UPLAND SOUTH: The Making of an American Folk Region and Landscape. By TERRY G. JORDAN-BYCHKOV. xiv and 120 pp.; maps, ills., bibliog., index. Santa Fe, N. Mex.: Center for American Places, 2003. \$30.00 (cloth), ISBN 1930066082.

APPALACHIAN FOLKWAYS. By JOHN B. REHDER. x and 353 pp.; maps, ills., bibliog., index. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 0810878799.

EXTRACTING APPALACHIA: Images of the Consolidation Coal Company, 1910–1945. By GEOFFREY L. BUCKLEY. xxii and 215 pp.; maps, ills., bibliog., index. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004. \$46.95 (cloth), ISBN 0821415557; \$22.95 (paper), ISBN 0821415565.

THE NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOUTHERN CULTURE. Vol. 2: GEOGRAPHY. Edited by RICHARD PILLSBURY. xviii and 224 pp.; maps, ills., bibliog., index. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 0807830135; \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 080785619.

The books reviewed in this essay explore greater Appalachia's cultural landscape and regional identity. Discussion of the regional cultural landscape begins with the late Terry Jordan-Bychkov. In *The Upland South*, a short, attractively designed work, Jordan-Bychkov distills a lifetime of reflection on his subject and his method. "Reading the landscape has long remained a leading methodology for cultural geographers and with good reason. People reveal a great deal about themselves in their greater artifacts—houses, barns, town plans, graveyards, church structures, fences, and the like. People often lie, if unintentionally, but their artifacts, if correctly read and interpreted, invariably tell the truth" (p. 22). "Ethnogenesis," the swirl of diffusion and assimilation that adapts ethnic lifeways to ecosystems and culminates in regionally definitive landscapes, is the truth that Jordan-Bychkov is after.

With the confidence to be concise, Jordan-Bychkov carefully chooses five "greater artifacts" as diagnostic of the Upland South: half-dovetail notching in log construction, dogtrot houses, tranverse-crib barns, courthouse squares centering the county-seat gridiron, and gravesheds. Each manifests an organizing element of cultural life: shelter, making a living from the land, political organization, and spirituality. Each also embodies ethnogenesis through diffusion, retention, modification, and innovation. Where they co-occur, the diagnostics map "a distinctive culture and way of

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