

BEYOND WIZZARDS AND GOAT GLANDS:
CREATING APPALACHIAN FOLK MEDICINE AND APPALACHIANNES IN WESTERN
NORTH CAROLINA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

BEYOND WIZZARDS AND GOAT GLANDS: CREATING APPALACHIAN FOLK MEDICINE AND APPALACHIANNES IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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This study examines the role folk medicine has played in the creation of Appalachia. By investigating folk medicine and folk healing in Jackson County, North Carolina, it becomes evident that different periods of history have rendered different constructions of the mountaineer in western North Carolina and southern Appalachia as a whole. Although the tradition of folk healing is not unique to southern Appalachia, over time it has become a valuable component of Appalachian culture. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries color writers recorded medicinal practices of stagnant people frozen in a time that preceded industrialization and modernity in America. Beginning in the 1920s, and through the 1960s, Appalachian residents became hearty, self-sufficient people revered by a society dramatically altered by the effects of the Great Depression. The maintenance of folk healing supported this, but eventually the glorified image of a resourceful group of people gave way to an image of people resigned to a culture of poverty in the 1960s. However, following the tumultuous socio-political climate of the 1960s, participants in the back-to-the-land movement revered and revived Appalachian traditions like folk healing in the last few decades of the twentieth century. Folk healing remained an important symbol of Appalachian identity into the twentieth-first century, as can be seen in reality television and other contemporary media. Drawing parallels between the representations of Appalachianness and medicinal practices in Jackson County and western North Carolina

throughout the twentieth century reflects a similar understanding of Appalachianess and Appalachian traditions as removed from a broader American society. However, looking at the perceptions of healing practices in different eras also displays an American society constantly in flux.

INTRODUCTION

My interest in the local history of medicinal remedies in Jackson County was piqued in 2014 when working on an exhibit that featured the contents of early twentieth-century doctor's bags at the Mountain Heritage Center at Western Carolina University. Delicate jars of poison, chloroform, and iodine were juxtaposed with rusty tins of "genuine pure aspirin" and a baffling set of brass knuckles. The exhibit highlighted Dr. William Madison and Dr. Daisy McGuire, a doctor and dentist respectively, both locals to the area. Madison and McGuire practiced in the 1920s and both kept a jar of the locally produced Wizzard Ointment in their doctor's bags. Where did this mysterious salve come from? The jar reads "made in Sylva, North Carolina," but initially I could not find any information about the medicine or the manufacturer, that is, until I talked to Head of Special Collections at Western Carolina University, George Frizzell. As Frizzell confirmed, the aged jar of ointment held not only a cure-all but also a connection to a larger trend in the United States in the early twentieth century: mysterious concoctions given charismatic names. As such, this jar also connected the region to a larger nation-wide shift from medicine as home remedy to a commodity in an industrialized society.

Jackson County is a rural community in the southwestern corridor of western North Carolina situated in multiple mountain ranges that once made it seem isolated from the outside world. In many ways Jackson County serves as the quintessential Appalachian case study to examine the prevalence of home remedies and the influence of popular medicine in southern Appalachia. Many residents have lived on or near the same properties as their ancestors, and the county is home to a sizeable public institution—Western Carolina University—that was founded at the end of the nineteenth century by Robert Lee Madison, whose son became a doctor who

worked in the area. Western Carolina University’s Hunter Library’s Special Collections and the Mountain Heritage Center, which houses a vast number of objects, books, and interviews relevant to the area, have had a profound impact on the preservation of local history. And importantly, Jackson County was the birthplace of one of the most notorious and fascinating “quacks” of the twentieth century—Dr. John Brinkley, and the curiously enticing Wizzard Ointment manufactured in downtown Sylva, North Carolina in the 1920s. In addition to the locally manufactured Wizzard Ointment, numerous interviews and local histories found in area archives, and newspapers reveal much about local folk practices. For this reason, Jackson County is a viable location to delve into specific parts of cultural practices such as folk medicine and medical practices.

The story of medicine in western North Carolina is both regionally idiosyncratic and part of a grander narrative in the evolution of medicine in America. However, too few scholarly texts focus on smaller areas in North Carolina specifically and the ways in which medical practices reflect change. While some focus on scientific developments and changes in medical practices, they do not emphasize the experiential accounts of locals, but instead spotlight the formally educated healthcare professionals and the rise of “western medicine.” The significance of place and creation of place through writing and cultural influence further explains the constructions of Appalachia, Appalachianness and Appalachian folk medicine as representative of rural experience.¹

¹ Appalachianness suggests a distinct cultural identity based on stereotypical practices and beliefs associated with Appalachia and its residents. The creation of Appalachianness requires characteristics accepted and understood as unique to the region, even if that assertion is inaccurate. For more information concerning the ways in which scholars have used the concept of Appalachianness to explain and evaluate cultural phenomena see Emily Satterwhite, *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction Since 1878* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2011).

Using medicine as an entry point to analyze and define the social and cultural history of southern Appalachia, this thesis will contribute a new way to assess cultural change in a geographically small area of southern Appalachia. Analyzing medicinal and socio-cultural changes resulting from industrialization during the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century reveals a world adjusting to new circumstances. It was a period undergoing rapid changes in the maintenance of health and healing practices while also restructuring the interactions between Appalachian residents and the outsider's role in creating and perpetuating stereotypes of Appalachian people.

Folk healing and folk medicine include a number of practices used for health maintenance. In this thesis, folk medicine and folk healing include practices that exist outside of western medicine: the use of herbs and plants as medicine, superstitions, and faith healing.

Importantly, Anthony Cavender asserted,

folk medicine is generally thought of as traditional healing knowledge of a particular social group that is transmitted orally from one generation to the next. This definition, which evolved out of studies of European peasant societies in the nineteenth century, conceives of folk medicine as a body of largely archaic, outmoded knowledge retained among illiterate peoples. It is inappropriate for understanding folk medicine in general and southern Appalachia in particular, despite the region's inaccurate portrayal in the past as having a peasant subculture.²

Folk medicine and health care have played important roles in how residents and outsiders portray southern Appalachia. "Appalachia" has fostered a number of stereotypes, many of which have relied heavily on the disparate notion of poverty after industrialization. In twentieth century America, a signifier of prosperity has been access to health care. Examining social geography, the construction of health and identity, society, and place contributes a nuanced

² Anthony Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 31-32.

understanding of Appalachian representations, and the experiences of residents and non-resident visitors to the region of western North Carolina.

Tracing the origins of folk healing and herbal medicinal knowledge in southern Appalachia proves tricky only because many of the practices rely on oral histories, and with the advent of modern medicine the necessity for these practices has waned. However, throughout the twentieth century such practices have been retained through different means and partially because of the interest in Appalachia as a site of cultural significance. On the one hand the introduction of industrialization and outside influence threatened the preservation of traditional practices, but on the other hand the interest of the outsider, along with a general necessity for folk medicine, perpetuated the seemingly outmoded folk healing present in southern Appalachia.

The evolution of accepted medical history in the latter part of the nineteenth century was revolutionary. Anthropologist Anthony Cavender states “from around 1880-1910 a remarkable transformation occurred. Of greatest importance was the ascendancy of the germ theory of disease, which displaced prevailing miasmatic and atmospheric theories and lingering concepts of humoral pathology.”³ Cavender performed extensive interviews with southern Appalachian residents in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina and traced the changes and continuity in folk medicine and pluralistic medicinal practices. Cavender’s conclusions have greatly influenced the choices made in this thesis. While his study aims to fully flesh out the realities of folk medical practice over the last century or so, the connotations of these medical practices as a way to reflect upon specific communities in Appalachia on a grander scale is begging to be explored further. Although this is an interdisciplinary inquiry into the role folk medicine played in the construction of Appalachia as a distinct cultural phenomenon, the emphasis is on historical

³ Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*, 8.

trends in western North Carolina, and Jackson County, North Carolina, specifically, which is how this work diverges from Cavender's.

Other books have also documented the practices of Appalachian folk practices, including both herbal remedies and superstitions that contribute to health maintenance and well-being that existed outside of the confines of modern medical practices. Historian Kay K. Moss asserts, "oral sharing of medical fact and lore was important at all social and economic levels."⁴ However, Moss refers to a time before the industrialization of the United States, focusing on the diaries and journals of early Americans both confirming the preservation of traditions that travelled through space and time and the social and cultural significance of these practices. Anthony Cavender also documented many medicinal practices and superstitions through numerous interviews with people from southern Appalachia between the late 1960s and the early 2000s. *Foxfire* similarly provides a valuable source of orally conveyed healing remedies, superstitions, and folk customs.

Perceptions of healing and medicine have changed in the scholarship over time. Like southern Appalachian cultures, medicinal practices are neither linear nor static. As a result, writing about and researching medicine and healing requires complex explanations. Often this means examining both the cultural landscapes and the contemporary social and economic climates. This can be precarious as the idea of culture itself is nebulous, but it should be stressed that constructions of culture serve the purpose of explaining why medicinal practices manifest the way that they do.⁵ The creation of Appalachian folk medicine is a result of the construction

⁴ Kay K. Moss, *Southern Folk Medicine, 1750-1820* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 7.

⁵ Because culture is such a nebulous concept, for the purposes of this discussion the concept of culture is defined as a composite of social norms, economics, beliefs, practices and rituals constructed by insiders and outsiders, all of these things being susceptible to constant change. Using culture in this context helps to chart changes over time.

of a singular Appalachian stereotype, and therefore the medical practices are a component of the creation story of the Appalachia of myth and construction.

Medical practices in the United States have an identifiable point of transition, from agrarian to industrialized society in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. All manners of socio-cultural aspects of life experienced radical changes. Scientific developments unleashed a fury of redefinitions of everyday life and acceptable ideas or even preferable practices when considering health. They show the complexity of “tradition” and “modernity” which exist as intellectual and applied opposites, but are not mutually exclusive.⁶ In Jackson County these trends manifested themselves in ways that illuminate preconceptions about Appalachian people.

Perhaps the fact that this study focuses on Jackson County gives the impression that Jackson County serves as a special case in the instance of medicine and superstitious continuity. This is both right and wrong. Contrary to the cultural creation of a monolithic Appalachian experience, looking at Jackson County assists in illuminating the commonalities over a broader Appalachian landscape and the nuances of this area. Jackson County is unique in that the community has actively worked to preserve Appalachian traditions and history in several ways, most of which began towards the end of the twentieth century. Multiple factors work together to show the ways in which ruralism, health and constructed identity, and the use of memory converge to form a complex cultural system of health and healing knowledge that shaped social experience.

⁶ For more information about the effects of new medical practices on folk healing see Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*; Sandra Barney, *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Dary, *Frontier Medicine: From the Atlantic to the Pacific, 1492-1941* (New York: Alfred A Knopf Press, 2008).

Folk medicine is not a distinctly southern Appalachian phenomenon, yet in a number of written sources throughout the twentieth century, traditional medicinal practices that predate modern medicine are often prominently used as examples of an Appalachian culture. Today, perhaps it is possible to visualize the facets of folk healing—herbal medicines, superstitions, and even ritual practices—that confound many modern people. To understand the processes that cultivated folk medicine as a symbol of Appalachia it is necessary to define the ways in which the idea of Appalachia as a distinct entity developed. There are three particular periods in which shifts occurred: 1870-1920, 1920-1960s, and 1970s to present.⁷ In each period similar ideas about Appalachia as “primitive,” poverty ridden, and superstitious are evident; however, the ways in which these notions were presented vary. The significance of these periods is the result of previous scholars’ assessments in the creation of a distinct Appalachia, and because of the ways in which Jackson County developed. By examining these eras and trends in Jackson County, North Carolina, this thesis will redefine the ways in which historians imagine cultural changes and reflect the importance of health practices both to the individual and to the larger community.

Why is it important to use medicine and healing practices to view changes in time and people’s perceptions of southern Appalachia as a region? This investigation will confront not just Appalachian stereotypes, but the ways in which language and socio-cultural practices create stereotypes. The voices of outsiders, not the residents themselves, who wrote about Appalachia

⁷ For more information about how scholars have defined different time periods in Appalachia see Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); McNeil, W.K., ed. *Appalachian Images In Folk and Popular Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1995); Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).

at the turn of the century documented the mysterious Appalachian people, “the other.”⁸ This thesis also addresses the ways in which the maintenance of health within one area reflects how continuity and change have affected specific places, as well as how small communities affect the perceptions of continuity and change. This thesis will place western North Carolina via Jackson County medicinal practices within a larger American narrative that created Appalachia as a cultural entity. The intent is to save a vital piece of local history as well as buttress previous scholarship that promotes a broader medicinal narrative, one that immortalizes the voices of the people in small or rural communities in western North Carolina and southern Appalachia.

Chapter one demonstrates the ways in which external socio-cultural trends and popular publications made folk medicine one of the most significant indicators of rural space and southern Appalachian culture. Chapter two explains the multifaceted world of medicine in Jackson County between the 1920s-1960s, and shows how the emphasis on the construction of Appalachia shifted from the place itself to the people and their distinct folk medicine practices retained despite the changing cultural landscape. This occurred in writings and publications about Appalachian culture. However, despite the changes in medical services and the continuation of neo-color writing, the use of folk medicine in Jackson County helped residents

⁸ For information concerning the concept of the “other” see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Said demonstrates the way in which western scholars have historically imposed their Eurocentric viewpoints upon the dissemination of ideas about the Orient. Said establishes the framework that develops the notion of the Orient through the eyes of the British, French, and American. He argues that attempting to know such a thing through a colonial meeting, to convey an understanding of a generalized idea, “is to dominate it, to have authority over it.” This, in a sense, isolates it and “others” it, and Said addresses the detriment to which such a concept that is supposedly academic and intellectual in its scope imposes on dominant cultures and the cultural invasion they inflict on others. Within the context of Appalachian cultures, othering refers to the ways in which outsiders, specifically middle class white society, defined the region and its people using the same processes in which the western scholars that Said refers to use. They claim to “know” the people and the area as a result of their outsider observances and interactions, and therefore they claim authority.

retain the knowledge, a sense of community, and power over their lives, which shows the ways in which depictions of Appalachians as a poor helpless people was part of the construction of Appalachia. Chapter 3 shows the transition from folk healing as necessity to a nostalgic interest in Appalachian culture presented in print, media, and performance. Unlike representations of Appalachian folk and folk medicine in the early and mid-twentieth-century in which writing and preservation kept a sympathetic tone towards an alien people removed from modern American society, the late twentieth and early twenty-first-centuries shifted the representations of Appalachia as an integrated piece of a larger American society.

CHAPTER 1
MILK SICK AND SUPERSTITIOUS: THE CREATION OF RURAL SPACE
THROUGH APPALACHIAN FOLK MEDICINE

On February 9, 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote, “I warn my countrymen that the great recent progress made in city life is not a full measure of our civilization; for our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness, and the completeness, as well as the prosperity, of life in the country. The men and women on the farms stand for what is fundamentally best and most needed in our American life.”⁹ His opening remarks served as a special message to the Senate and the House in the Report of the Country Life Commission. Its intended purpose was to address the needs of rural communities throughout the United States, and one of the most important topics was access to healthcare in rural areas.

The image of the Appalachian mountaineer is inextricably linked to the country folk of which Roosevelt wrote about. Anthony Harkins described the ways in which the image of the rural mountaineer, the hillbilly in particular, became a stock character, one that assisted in the creation of Appalachianess. The hillbilly has been depicted as backwards, violent, comedic, and a relic from another time. Jackson County in the late nineteenth century serves as an example with which to view the ways in which writers have depicted Appalachian people, and the ways in

⁹ Country Life Commission, *Report of the Country Life Commission: Special Message From the President of the United States Transmitting the Report of the Country Life Commission*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 9. The Country Life Commission was created as a way to modernize residents of rural areas in the United States as part of the Progressive agenda. L.H. Bailey contemporaneously wrote that it was a way in which “to even up society as between country and city; for it is generally understood that country life has not reached as high development within its sphere as city life has reached within its sphere.” For more information regarding the Country Life Commission and the Country Life Movement in the United States see L.H. Bailey, *The Country-Life Movement in the United States* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1911); Julie von Lester, “The Agrarian Myth as Narrative in Agricultural Policymaking” (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 2007).

which folk healing became a symbol of mountain populations. However, the broad generalizations made about people living in rural Appalachia did not become hillbillies without the actions and behaviors that writers of mass produced texts presented as unique to the area.

The image of the hillbilly that formed at the turn of the century was a result of tension between tradition and modernity. Historian Anthony Harkins proposed “because the hillbilly image/identity has always been a site of contending attitudes toward modernity, it has occupied a mythical status far more than a concrete geographic locale,” while historian Jane S. Becker asserted that to study this mythical character must be done “within the complicated contexts of developing regional economics, societies, and cultures, however.”¹⁰ Therefore, the image of the mountaineer was not something that existed so much as he was created through writings, the creation of rural space, and the introduction of industrial capitalism. These influenced not only the creation of Appalachia but also the ways in which traditional practices such as folk medicine became an important component of Appalachian identity.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the role of folk healing as an indicator of Appalachia did not exist. It was in the right place at the right time to become part of a larger cultural phenomenon that involved the creation of a mountain folk resulting from industrialization. Jane S. Becker asserted “the fascination with traditional ways expressed middle-class Americans’ ambivalence toward industrialism, which might offer material comforts but denied the human values they perceived in “simpler” cultures and in their country’s past. Tradition and its bearers, the folk, served as critical lenses through which to view industrial

¹⁰ Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly*, 5; Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 7-8.

America.”¹¹ The creation of Appalachia over time affected the ways in which folk healing and folk medicine became intrinsically associated with rural—and specifically isolated— areas of Appalachia. Therefore, defining physical space and its inhabitants as a distinctly rural product in writing and language influenced the role of folk healing and medicine in places like Jackson County, North Carolina. Looking at the development of Jackson County, North Carolina as an example of rural Appalachia helps to understand the ways in which isolated people and folk medicine practices became a beacon of American fortitude and a symbol of rural landscapes.

Historian Sandra Barney asserted that folk medicine practices were continually used by people in rural areas into the twentieth century because of the lack of educated physicians.¹² Isolation was a component in the continuation of a medicinal culture that retained certain aspects of oral tradition passed down in the face of modernization, and folk medicine began to indicate rural space. But why did the isolated rural area of southern Appalachia become a place estranged from elsewhere?

The earliest period of Jackson County history set the stage for the perpetuation of traditional folk medicine practices and beliefs in Appalachia. The creation of rural space in the nineteenth century by writers and its association with isolated areas translated to much of Appalachia. The language used to depict wilderness, farmland, and rurality translated to the ways in which folk medicine and herbal healing were written about and understood. Much of Jackson County remained considerably isolated until a few decades in the twentieth century.

Areas that were early tourist destinations in Jackson County brought in lots of non-natives to the area, but in the nineteenth century roads were poor and places like Cashiers

¹¹ Becker, *Selling Traditions*, 16.

¹² Sandra Barney, *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 15.

remained isolated, making the trip quite a journey.¹³ Before the arrival of reliable roads in the 1910s, Jackson County remained a place where “the roads were muddy. When we first moved to Whittier my Dad had a team of horses and he’d go over and pull cars out of the mud holes when it rained, did it all the time,” said resident Mrs. Battle.¹⁴ Harriet Echols, a resident of the mountains of north Georgia explained why this was such a challenge: “People, y’know, didn’t have a chance of runnin’ after doctors back in these mountain areas. They weren’t close, and where I was raised, it was twelve miles *by horseback* to th’ nearest doctor. They got cut and it was too bad. They used the turpentine and sugar or kerosene oil as an application to kill infection.”¹⁵ Jackson County could not simply be travelled through to get to the southern part where Cashiers is located. Instead, the trip required circumventing much of the county and as Jackson County resident Jane Nardy stated,

My ancestors came from Surry County on the Virginia border, but they had to go through South Carolina and come back up, and we do have, I do have some old letters that were written by my great grandmother to her, this would be in the late 1800s, to her mother in Georgia, and they were talking about coming up from South Carolina, and the ice, and how it took them two or three days to get from like, Walhalla area up to Cashiers because the ice was so bad and they’d have to stop and just camp out.”¹⁶

Despite the isolation and use of folk medicine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a push in southern Appalachia for more access to scientific medicine due to

¹³ Jane Nardy, interview by Suzanne McDowell, Sara Madison, and Doris Higdon, May 29, 1996, tape, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

¹⁴ John Battle, interview by Michael Kline, May 13, 1988, tape, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

¹⁵ Eliot Wigginton, ed., *The Foxfire Book* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1968), 230.

¹⁶ Jane Nardy, interview by Suzanne McDowell, Sara Madison, and Doris Higdon, May 29, 1996, tape, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

the efficacy of modern medicine.¹⁷ Many people believed “that improvements in medicine could deliver to rural Appalachian people benefits that previously had been denied them by isolation, poverty, and the absence of trained physicians.”¹⁸ The changing model for healthcare and the declining faith in the humoral system no longer relied on empirical evidence, but rather on scientific “fact.” Between 1885 and 1925 the number of mountain doctors with educations from medical schools drastically increased.¹⁹ The rapid adoption of newer medical practices coincided with the overwhelming spread of industrial capitalism in Appalachia, as well as the rest of the country.²⁰ However, writers who reached broad audiences illustrated an Appalachia that remained a world away from industrialization and modernity.

Once the core of Cherokee territory, Jackson County was established in 1851, pieced together from parts of Macon and Haywood Counties.²¹ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Jackson County transitioned from mainly farmland to an economy that relied heavily on the mining and logging industries.²² Despite the documented practices evident in and around

¹⁷ For example, the agenda of the Country Life Commission included the use of modern medicine in rural areas as a way to advance the health of residents in rural areas. Sandra Lee Barney wrote that the number of mountain doctors increased greatly between 1885 to 1925.

¹⁸ Barney, *Authorized to Heal*, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 42.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 16.

²¹ J.D. McRorie, “Formation of the County and Towns,” in *The History of Jackson County*, ed. Max R. Williams (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 1987), 101.

²² For further research concerning industries in Jackson County see John L. Bell, “Economic Activities,” in *The History of Jackson County*, ed. Max R. Williams (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 1987); John L. Bell, “Economic Developments,” in *The History of Jackson County*, ed. Max R. Williams (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 1987); Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982). The Western North Carolina

Jackson County, the cultural and physical landscape went through changes at the end of the nineteenth century. The presence of railroads that pierced the mountains and manufacturing companies that sprang up in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries combat the oft accepted notion of southern Appalachian isolation which purportedly caused a cultural vacuum. John L. Bell wrote, “manufacturing in factories started in the 1890s after the railroad made it possible to ship products from distant markets. Early manufacturing was located in the county to be near raw materials like wood and clay, but later manufacturing, especially textiles, located in the county to exploit cheap, unskilled labor.”²³ What distinguished WNC from other areas was the type of industry that dominated. While coal mining is practiced in much of southern Appalachia, Jackson County proved to hold valuable minerals and timber. The majority of minerals in the county were located in Webster, between Sylva and Balsam Gap, Toxaway mountain, and north of Cashiers where kaolin, mica, and copper were successfully mined.²⁴

Despite this phenomenon of modernity that touched most of western North Carolina, contemporary writers asserted that Appalachia and its residents were cut off from the rest of the country, requiring self-sufficient livelihoods. The practices that supported the sense of rural isolation in Appalachia included folk healing and home healthcare.

That modern medicine was a symbol of urbanization is significant. The rural landscape of Jackson County had few people who identified themselves as physicians or healthcare professionals in the late nineteenth century. Most of the information known about doctors in the

Railroad reached Asheville in 1880 and that decade witnessed the expansion of railroads throughout the region which helped increase industry in the area.

²³ John L. Bell, “Economic Activities,” in *The History of Jackson County*, ed. Max R. Williams (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 1987),163.

²⁴ James H. Horton, “Physical and Natural Aspects,” in *The History of Jackson County*, ed. Max R. Williams (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 1987), 4.

nineteenth century derives from the United States census, of which Jackson County appeared for the first time in 1860. Until the 1900 census, the number of self-proclaimed doctors in each census remained in the single digits, and they were located in various places around Jackson County. There were some in Qualla and Deep Creek, but predominately Webster which was the county seat until 1913 and described as “a little street of wooden houses, which seemed mutely protesting against being pushed off into a ravine,” and where “the country [was] grand and imposing.”²⁵ With the evident lack of doctors and healthcare providers, many residents of Jackson County had no choice but to use traditional folk medicine methods, contrasting the association of modern medicine with capitalist industrialization.

In the grand scheme of the creation of rural space in America, Appalachia is not just rural. Appalachia is *the* rural with its added element of geographic isolation. That Jackson County was isolated in its early days is not up for debate. The aspect of isolation that is so important is the way in which isolated, rural areas like Jackson County in Appalachia and the residents therein became the subject of many romantic stories, travel writings, and general evaluative treatises.

The definition of “rural” first appeared in the census in 1874, the same year writer Edward King, one of the first people to write about Jackson County in a popular publication, described Jackson County as a place where

The black mold is more than two feet in depth, and the most precipitous mountain sides are grazing pastures, from which thousands of fat cattle are annually driven down to the seaboard markets. In the ranges, too, where the winter grass grows luxuriantly from November until May, great numbers of horses and mules are

²⁵ Edward King, “The Great South: Among the Mountains of Western North Carolina,” *Scribner’s Monthly Magazine*,” March, 1874, 492.

raised. Fruit grows with Eden-like luxuriance; the apple is superb, and on the thermal belt in all this section the fruit crop never fails.²⁶

It was the wholesome and attractive place that Roosevelt spoke of that needed outside intervention from the progressive middle class. As American Studies expert Julie von Lester suggested, “The Commission of Country Life...was a conservative group of scholars, writers, businessmen...living in the city yet still believing in the ‘agrarian myth’ of the farmer as bulwark of republican moral virtues.”²⁷ According to the Progressive agenda at the turn of the century, the romantic landscapes were at once Eden-like and a peripheral moral necessity to urban life. Southern Appalachia was a place in which the tension between the rural and urban spaces would be tested, and as a result a region with characteristics that challenged the notion of modernity.

Color writers in particular, and others who documented and recorded the practices and tendencies of residents in Appalachia, exoticized both the region and people. In his seminal *Appalachia on Our Minds: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*, historian Henry Shapiro Folk proposed that Appalachia entered American consciousness as a direct result of the influence of Appalachian fiction and color writing. The rural space of Appalachia, and Jackson County, “were presented as typical scenes and events which anyone visiting the area might observe, the persons typical of those whom

²⁶ Edward King, *The Great South; A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1875), 492; Thomas C. Ricketts, Karen D. Johnson-Webb, and Patricia Taylor, *Definitions of Rural: a Handbook for Health Policy Makers and Researchers*, Federal Office of Rural Healthy Policy, 1998, 3. The term rural referred to the population of a county removed from cities with 8,000 or more inhabitants.

²⁷ Julie von Lester, “The Agrarian Myth as Narrative in Agricultural Policymaking” (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 2007), 37.

anyone might meet.”²⁸ The inclusion of folk healing depicted a piece of rural culture that stood in opposition to modernity and new medical practices, and therefore became a symbol of the anti-modern traditionalist, the Appalachian mountaineer.

New modes of thinking questioned the practicality and limitations of traditional folk healing, and so did the attitudes of some people as reflected in color writing. Historian Henry Shapiro suggested local color writing was “the work of a generation of writers whose dialect tales and sketches describing little known or forgotten aspects of American life dominated literary production in the United States during the 1870s and 1880s.”²⁹ Many writers in the late nineteenth century viewed Appalachia as the last great rural frontier.³⁰ Historian Deborah Vansau McCauley’s assertion is that, as Appalachia became a distinct region around 1850, so too did the idea of isolation as a contributing factor to its specific characteristics.³¹ In 1901, John Fox, Jr., a contributor to the nationally distributed *Scribner’s Magazine*—a magazine whose audience was often middle to upper middle class—recounted his experience after visiting Appalachia.³² He concluded that southern mountaineers had been partitioned off from the signs of progress, trapped in a static state of isolationism.³³

²⁸ Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Minds: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁰ Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: The University of Knoxville Press, 1982), 3.

³¹ Deborah Vansau McCauley *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 43.

³² Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 2. Although Peterson suggests that most Americans were not regular magazine

Many scholars have asserted that stereotypical depictions of Appalachia first developed in the 1870s by local color writers who sought out regional peculiarities to interest an increasingly urban and middle class audience.³⁴ In fact, it has been suggested that the image of the Appalachian healer, a “yarb” doctor, resulted from such writings.³⁵ The creation of Appalachia, suggested historian Ronald L. Lewis, stemmed from the travel accounts of outsiders. He wrote, “Appalachia is a region without a formal history. Born in the fertile minds of late-nineteenth-century local color writers, ‘Appalachia’ was invented in the caricatures and atmospheric landscapes of the escapist fiction they penned to entertain the emergent urban middle class.”³⁶ In addition, these caricatures were framed by the idea that residents of the rural communities in Appalachia were the opposite of urbane.

readers in the late nineteenth century, they appealed to the sophisticated reader. However, with the rise of industrialization sales of magazines of all kinds increased.

³³ John Fox Jr., “The Southern Mountaineer,” in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, ed. W.K. McNeil (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 124.

³⁴ This is proposed by several authors before this writer. To read more about the ways in which color writers influenced American culture and society in Appalachia see Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Becker traces the ways in which “traditional” crafts from Appalachia shaped the creation of Appalachia during the years of the Depression; McNeil, W.K., ed. *Appalachian Images In Folk and Popular Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1995); Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

³⁵ Anthony Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), , 148. “Yarb” is a word for herb. Yarb doctors were people in a community that were considered knowledgeable about yarbs, or herbs for medicinal uses.

³⁶ Ronald L. Lewis, “Beyond Isolation and Homogeneity: Diversity and the History of Appalachia,” *Back Talk from Appalachia, Back Talk From Appalachia: Confronting Stereotype*, ed. Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 21.

In the 1870s the mountain terrain of western North Carolina garnered great interest from Edward King, who wrote a descriptive article in the popular publication *Scribner's Monthly* in March, 1874. His floral language described the ruggedness and beauty: "The country here and henceforward was of the wildest and most romantic character."³⁷ He recorded his journey in a way that exoticized the sparsely populated areas of western North Carolina, journeying through the Balsam Range and onto Waynesville in Haywood County, but also capturing the difficulties in travelling through the area before the construction of additional roads linked many of the mountain enclaves to one another.

Writers who described mountain folk culture and isolated residents as naïve further propagated cultural disparities between the writers and their intended readership and the people of which they wrote. Henry Shapiro proposed "the history of American literature between 1870 and 1890 is very much the history of the new magazines—*Lippincot's*, *Scribner's*, *The Century*, *Appleton's*, *The Living Age*, *The American Review of Reviews*, and the prototype of these genteel magazines designed for a mass, middle-class audience, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*." The stories and essays within the pages of these mass marketed magazines, therefore, found their way into the homes of many people. Will Wallace Harney's essay, "A Strange Land and a Peculiar People," written in 1873, gave away his impression of people in the Cumberland Mountains in Kentucky in the title. Harney's accounts of the physical stature, language, and economic standing indicate that he viewed people in southern Appalachia as an "other." His reaction to the use of planting by the moon, which he clearly looked down upon, is that "by shooting arrows all

³⁷Edward King, "The Great South: Among the Mountains of Western North Carolina," 520.

day, even a blind man may hit the mark sometimes.”³⁸ His descriptions, printed in the popular magazine *Lippincott’s Magazine*, presented an image of a people removed from the civilized places in which one might read *Lippincott’s*, thus creating a divide between the peculiar superstitious people and the reader. In 1930, writer Mary French Caldwell, too, emphasized a stagnant, isolated quality pervasive in many Appalachian homes. She found the people superstitious, adhering to planting practices by the light or the dark of the moon, for example.³⁹

Another phenomenon that contributed to the interest in Appalachia as an isolated place was the back-to-the-land movement. Dona Brown suggested

as early as the late nineteenth century, books with back-to-the-land themes were appearing sporadically; at the beginning of the twentieth, the trickle became a flood. The writers responsible for this outpouring came from a wide variety of ideological backgrounds: they were anarchists, socialists, and progressives; promoters of the arts and crafts, the ‘simple life,’ or the single tax. Yet they were responding to a common set of pressing social concerns. The immediate trigger was a series of financial crises: a panic in 1893 had brought on a severe depression that lasted years. A short period of recovery was interrupted by another panic in 1907.⁴⁰

The back-to-the-land movement was a direct result of modernity and capitalism and idealized the mythic Appalachia of which color writers devoted much of their attention.

³⁸ Will Wallace Harney, “A Strange Land and a Peculiar People,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* XII (31), 1873, 432.

³⁹ Mary French Caldwell, “Change Comes to the Appalachian Mountaineer,” in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, ed. W.K. McNeil (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 222.

⁴⁰ Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 3.

In the early twentieth century literature that described the medicinal experiences and practices of folk healing supported the creation of the rural geography, making the connections between medicine and place. In the early twentieth century, Horace Kephart became known for his writings about his experiences in the Smoky Mountains. Kephart was born in Pennsylvania and grew up in Iowa, and later married and had six children. He left his family and moved to the Hazel Creek area of the Smokies, west of Jackson County, which he remarked were “mysterious realm...I could find in no library a guide to that region.”⁴¹ Kephart’s intention confirmed the perception of the Appalachian frontier still untamed and prime for exploration. His writing serves as an important reflection on people of the region during the period of early industrialization in Appalachia. Kephart described the people he met in western North Carolina as “hill folk” who “remain a rugged and hardy people in spite of unsanitary conditions,” suggesting that he considered their health and stock an important part of his view of them.⁴² He described the people and natural landscapes throughout *Our Southern Highlanders*, first published in 1913, as a world removed, a world that still promised the pioneering life.

Kephart presented the areas he wrote about in *Our Southern Highlanders* in a way that confirms the contrasts between rural areas and urban areas. His subjects collected herbs and roots to sell. However, the arrival of synthetic drugs compromised the profitability of herbs. He wrote:

In times of scarcity many of our people took to the woods and gathered commoner medicinal roots, such as bloodroot and wild ginger (there are scores of others growing wild in great profusion), but made only a pittance at it, as synthetic drugs have mostly taken the place of herbal simples in modern medicine. Women and children did better in the days before Christmas by

⁴¹ Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlander* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1913), 13.

⁴² *Ibid*, 229-230.

gathering galax, “hemlock”, and mistletoe, selling to the dealers at the railroad, who ship them North for holiday decorations.⁴³

Looking to documents written about Appalachian experience and folkways helps explain the ways in which folk medicine became an indicator of a unique Appalachia. Visitors to the area such as Kephart and John C. Campbell noted folk healing practices that they viewed as particular to the region, and therefore significant to document. For instance, Kephart wrote that

Some of the ailments common in the mountains were new to me. For instance, “dew pizen,” presumably the poison of some weed, which, dissolved in dew, enters the blood through a scratch or abrasion. As a woman described it, ‘Dew pizen comes like a risin’, and laws a marcy how it does hurt! I stove a briar in my heal wunst, and then had to hunt cow every morning in the dew.... A more mysterious disease is “milk sick,” which prevails in certain restricted districts, chiefly where the cattle graze in rich and deeply shaded coves. If not properly treated it is fatal both to the cow and to any human being who drinks her fresh milk or eats her butter. It is not transmitted by sour milk or by buttermilk. There is a characteristic fetor of the breath. It is said that milk from an infected cow will not foam and that silver is turned black by it. Mountaineers are divided in opinion as to whether this disease is of vegetable or of mineral origin; some think it is an efflorescence from gas that settles on plants..... I have not found this malady mentioned in any treatise on medicine; yet it has been known from our earliest frontier times. Abraham Lincoln’s mother died of it.⁴⁴

The stories and accounts of maladies, “mysterious diseases,” and medicines given by people from outside the area, such as the one Kephart wrote about, have had much to do with the creation of broader cultural perceptions of the region. In many ways, the literature written about Jackson County and the surrounding areas in the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century has echoed a similar tone of separation between Appalachian natives and those traveling through or transplanted there. The physical geography of the region has always proven to be a major contribution to the outsider’s

⁴³ Ibid, 224.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 229.

understanding and the way they interact with the space. The idea of the rural overlaps with the notion of the frontier in that both are sparsely populated, but the difference is that rural areas are often inhabited and “tamed.”

Kephart’s reaction to encounters with medicinal practices in the Great Smokies resemble those of other writers in the area. Examining the ways in which Kephart, Campbell, and Bell recorded their observations is similar to the ways in which anthropologist James Mooney recorded Cherokee myths and medicinal practices from a source of interest from an outsider, an observer. In *Myths of the Cherokees*, Mooney described Cherokees as “having far advanced along the white man’s road,” and yet “far away from the main-traveled road of modern progress, the Cherokee priest still treasures the legends and repeats the mystic rituals handed down from his ancestors.”⁴⁵ Their information and evaluations of their interactions with the people they wrote about—the Cherokee and the Euro-American residents of rural Appalachia— convey the ways in which people living outside of the region would have been made aware of the practices they documented, isolated and removed from modernity, maintaining traditional practices that fascinated the observers.

Appalachian folk healing is a syncretic practice that predates the formation of Jackson County. In *The Spirit of the Mountains*, published in 1905, Emma Bell Miles wrote that the formation of Appalachian folk medicine written about and perpetuated required shared knowledge about herbal medicines between Cherokees and Euro-Americans.⁴⁶ European settlers

⁴⁵ James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee* (Fairview: Historical Images Press, 1992), 11-12. For more information about the Cherokee cosmology, myths, and sacred formulas used for healing refer to James Mooney, *The Swimmer Manuscript: Cherokee Sacred Formulas and Medicinal Prescriptions*, ed. Frans M. Olbrechts, (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1932).

brought traditions from Europe with them.⁴⁷ In *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, originally published in 1921, John C. Campbell noted, “all dwellers in the remote Highlands are more or less familiar with the use of teas made from common herbs and roots, such as boneset, chamomile, sassafras, and pennyroyal.”⁴⁸ In addition, western North Carolina resident Beatrice Beddingfield believed her ancestors learned much of their knowledge of native plants both from Native Americans who lived in the area and through their own experimentation.⁴⁹ Even with the arrival of different medical practices in Jackson County, many people still relied on the use of “traditional” medicine. In response to why residents continued to use folk medicine, Swain County resident Emma Mosely stated “the people that knew the herbs, they would just try things and if it worked they didn’t need to go to the doctor. The Cherokee people know lots and lots of herbs, so my grandmother was half Cherokee, so that’s where she got to know so many herbs.”⁵⁰

That the Cherokee were familiar with local herbs and how to use them is important. Plants were always an integral part of medicinal culture and of great spiritual use. Sociologist Anthony

⁴⁶ Emma Bell Miles, *Spirit of the Mountains* (New York: James Pott & Company, 1905), 85.

⁴⁷ Richard B. Drake as cited in Deborah McCauley, *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 171. Drake outlined the demographics of early European settlers as German, the Scotch Irish, of which he deemed the most important group of European immigrants in southern Appalachia, and a broad category of “the English,” comprised mainly of Welsh, French, Dutch, and English.

⁴⁸ John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921), 205. For over a decade Campbell spent time in the mountains of North Carolina documenting practices and traditions of residents culminating in *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* which has become one of the most esteemed publications about mountain culture in the early twentieth century.

⁴⁹ Denise Layfield, “Curing What Ails You—Naturally,” *Times-News*, 1993, n.p.

⁵⁰ Emma Mosely, interview by Emily Lower, 6 October, 1998, transcript, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

Cavender suggests that the interrelationships and intermarriages between members of the Eastern band of Cherokee and non-Native settlers in Southern Appalachia, and the fact that there is a great deal more known about Cherokee medicinal practices than from other tribes, helps propagate the idea that valuable medicinal connections were made between the groups in western North Carolina.⁵¹ Exchanges of medicinal practices were solidified by the late nineteenth century, as indicated by Beddingfield. She asserted, “the Indians helped. They were here first, and so I think people just learned on their own and some by just listening to them. Anything the cattle would eat, they would eat. If a cow won’t eat it, don’t eat it.”⁵²

There is no stable definition for rural that exists outside of socio-cultural terms. These differences are very much the result of language that differentiates one thing from another, often creating tension or artificial dissimilarities to enforce “order.” This is evident in language—written, spoken, visual, suggested—used to describe southern Appalachians in stereotypical terms and medicinal habits that do not adhere to the culturally accepted way of doing things. A variety of texts framed Jackson County and the surrounding areas as similar to much of Appalachia and rural areas in general—isolated and primitive. Visitors to the region influenced outside perceptions by writing about people who were not given a voice, and placing them removed from the Progressive era dream of modernization. Thus modern medicine and the social connotations of embracing those practices became the social norm, dethroning the acceptability of rural pragmatism that included herbal and folk healing.

⁵¹ Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*, 47.

⁵² Beatrice Beddingfield, interview by Emily Lower, July 14, 1998, tape, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

However, healing practices and health both define and defy social constructions. Healthcare was an important issue in the development of the Appalachian region throughout much of the twentieth century. The common denominators— isolationism and poverty— supplied the necessary ammunition to outsiders who looked both for an innocent people uncorrupted by industrialization and those who need the help of outsiders from industrial society. However, many residents of Jackson County continued folk healing practices that required no outsider intervention

From previous literary sketches the socio-geographical composition of much of rural Appalachia has had tension resulting from nostalgia and industrialization, unpacking the historical baggage of the writing of outsiders during the late nineteenth into the twentieth centuries, as well as considering the voices of local residents. Ronald D. Eller wrote “the popular image of the mountaineer as backward, degenerate and uncivilized seemed to justify this attitude, placing power in the hands of those who seemed ‘best equipped’ to bring progress and civilization to the region.”⁵³ The attitude that Eller wrote about supported the concept that mountaineers were removed from modernity, and therefore in need of outside assistance. Medical practices that did not directly align with the new scientific medicine connote the stark contrast in the binary rural and urban. However tangible these fictive creations of tradition and change are, they are constructed and hinged together by social interpretation.

Because of the ways in which writers at the turn of the century wrote about Appalachia and the medical practices therein, a cultural understanding of Euro-American and Cherokee residents formed. Despite and because of the phenomenon of industrialization in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the region of southern Appalachia

⁵³ Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 114.

became significant in the popular mind because of its isolation and backwardness. One of the most evident examples of their backwardness—and their wholesomeness— was the way in which they held onto traditional folkways.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the cultural and physical terrain changed greatly. In America, the twentieth century was the time that healthcare became modernized and standardized while a larger number of people gained access to modern medical practices.⁵⁴ In Jackson County, the industrialization and the number of doctors during this time period would have made the use of folk medicine a necessity as well as convenient in the plant rich lands of Jackson County where European and Cherokee medicinal practices merged in its early history. As a result, folk medicine remained prevalent because of the immediate access to these traditional cures passed down from generation to generation and through oral tradition and printed word, and the documentation by contemporary writers.

By the beginning of the twentieth century there was not yet a whole or complete end-product in the construction of rural Appalachia as removed from the “progress made in city life.”⁵⁵ The perceptions of the physical and social geographies of Jackson County and the region of Appalachia took on this role through the performative behaviors of rural creation, including the continuation of folk medicine in everyday life. In 1961 Elizabeth Seeman, an author of

⁵⁴ For more information about the tension created between modern medicine and other forms of healing in American society during the transition from a predominately agrarian society to an industrial one see Sandra Barney, *Authorized to Heal: Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Elaine G. Breslaw, *Lotions, Potions Pills, and Magic: Health Care in Early America*, New York: New York University Press, 2011); Cavender, Anthony and Beck, Scott. “Generational Change, Folk Medicine, and Medical Self-Care in a Rural Appalachian Community.” *Human Organization* 54(2):129-142. 1994.

⁵⁵ Country Life Commission, *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 9.

Smoky Mountain folklore, published *In the Arms of the Mountain: An Intimate Journal of the Great Smokies*. Recalling her experience of leaving the city for a parcel of land around Erwin Tennessee in the early twentieth century, she mused, “for years I had had the idea shining in my mind of living in a wild, unspoiled place surrounded by the green of trees.”⁵⁶ This “wild, unspoiled place” was created from fragments of cultural artifacts designated as signifiers of rural Appalachia—mountain music, the creation of Appalachian craft and folk culture, the myth of isolation, the exploitation of poverty and self-sufficiency, and the resulting stagnation in the past in which the superstitious and herbal healing became a token of Appalachia.

Jackson County resident Mary Jane Queen told a story about the limited interactions with doctors her family had while she was growing up, suggesting the use of folk medicine was adequate and often necessary. She recalled “my dad, well we, there was never a doctor in our home. When he, it was in 19 of 50 or somewhere. I don’t remember just exactly the year, but I was in the 19 of 50 someplace. He got this hemorrhage in his nose, his head, his nose was bleedin’. So they took him to the doctor and that was the first and only time he was tooked to the doctor.”⁵⁷

The concern and interest of middle class Americans cultivated the image of traditional medicinal practices as a product of the region. As Queen demonstrated, medicinal and home health options made doctors unnecessary in most instances. The ways in which early writers portrayed the region of southern Appalachia, and more specifically the area around Jackson County, North Carolina, gave the impression that mountain residents existed outside of civilized

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Seeman, *In the Arms of the Mountain: An Intimate Journal of the Great Smokies* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1961), 9.

⁵⁷ Mary Jane Queen, interview by audience, 1988, transcript, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

and modern society. That folk medicine was framed as the opposite of modern medicine, therefore progress and industrialization, meant that it was a relic. It was presented as the antithesis of all that was urban and progressive in the world. It was *the* rural memento that left the isolated people in Appalachia—Cherokees and other residents—in another world. However, the fact that modern medicine was not used in opposition to modern medicine complicated the connotation of folk medicine as a symbol of static, isolated, and ignorant people. Instead, folk medicine and modern medicine stood side by side.

Despite changes, the geographical areas and medicinal practices written about by Kephart, Bell, and others retained the quaintness and simplicity with which Roosevelt designated as “country” instead of urban. Folk medicine practices would continue in the face of modernity as indicated by Jackson County residents. Despite these changes, many writers depicted residents of the area as a special people whose practices were a significant indication of rural, isolated life. Issues that rural geographers have addressed in an attempt to understand the construction of rural and urban spaces in the psyche of societies resembles the ways in which writers, visitors, and residents defined “Appalachia.” When examining how writers described folk medicine in Jackson County at the turn of the century, it recalled the same tone that King used to describe Webster in 1874. It was at once hearty and simple, the rural idyll that existed before industrialization. Going into the woods to collect herbs for medicine was the nostalgic romanticism “most needed in our American life.”⁵⁸

American Studies professor Emily Satterwhite proposed “local-color fiction promoted simplified images of rural people everywhere, its consequences have been arguably, more

⁵⁸ Country Life Commission, *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 9.

reductive, more profound, and longer lasting for Appalachia than for any other region.”⁵⁹ The introduction of industry and capitalism into the region created a significant change in the landscape idealized by color writers and yet later writers like Horace Kephart sought out the rugged backwoods to escape modernity and practice back-to-the-land skills. Their observations of medicinal practices and superstitions highlighted that which many outsiders viewed as particularly telling of the ways in which residents of Appalachia lived contrary to modernity and industrialization. The mountaineers in literature had mysterious sicknesses like milk sickness, and continued superstitious practices despite advances in medical knowledge and industry.

⁵⁹ Emily Satterwhite, 18.

CHAPTER 2
COBWEBS AND WIZZARD OINTMENT: HOW TO AVOID GOING BROKE FROM
A DOCTOR'S VISIT IN JACKSON COUNTY

In Bryson City, just past the Jackson County line in Swain County, there is a sign hanging in a storefront window. It reads “Caution XXX Our Finest Down Home, Backwoods Brew fer gittin’ rowdy, necked, an’ likkered up. Also great fer rumatizzum, inflamashun, artheritis, or whatever ails ya’. Xelent varnish remover + paint thinner. Great medsin in case you git bit by a snake! An’ don’t be alightin’ up when usin’ this stuff!” It is a modern parody of the hillbilly stereotype complete with a picture of a one toothed bearded man in overalls with a jug marked with the ubiquitous triple x. The sign is a captivating piece of cultural construction that conjures imagined connotations of identity and place. This is the quintessential caricature of a southern Appalachian backwoodsman fostered, celebrated, and derided throughout the twentieth century.

Appalachia as a distinct cultural entity evolved in a way that perpetuated the image of the poverty stricken mountain person as a figure from the past, but in Jackson County folk healing remained a way to also maintain health and community. In the early to mid-twentieth century the poverty framed the image of the Appalachian hillbilly, albeit the image of the impoverished mountaineer changed from a people idealized for their simple and hearty way of life to people in need of outside intervention to improve their way of life. Historian Anthony Harkins proposed

This status of the “white other” generated concern and interest from religious, social, and political reformers throughout the twentieth century. To the mountain folk's would-be redeemers of the Progressive Era, their “hard shell” Protestantism and pioneer ancestry were both a ready explanation for their supposed

primitiveness and a potential salvation for a nation threatened by...the enervating forces of mass industrialization and bureaucracy.⁶⁰

The socio-cultural landscape of Jackson County reflected these images in the ways in which residents maintained their use of folk healing and medicine practices. They used these practices both as a way to circumvent medical costs as well as capitalize on healthcare. The physical and cultural geography of a rural area contributes to the depictions of Appalachia as the home of “Backwoods Brew” for the treatment of “rumatizzum, inflamashun, artheritis,” and other maladies. How do these constructions influence the perceptions and realities of the area? Moreover, how are the power dynamics of economics seen through medicinal practices?

In the biographical *The Misadventures of an Appalachian Doctor: Mountain Medicine in the 1930's* a young man, Maurice Kaufmann, M.D., from Louisville, Kentucky moved to Cumberland, Kentucky, a small town in Harlan County. His accounts of the people and experiences in this small pocket in southern Appalachia exemplify the constructed expectations of small town residents in places like Jackson County in southern Appalachia.⁶¹

Within his first days of opening his practice, Dr. Kaufmann came face to face with a patient who exemplified his expectations. This man “was very unkempt, and grimy and badly in need of a shave. His teeth, what was left of them, were tobacco stained. He was wearing torn denim trousers, a soiled, blue work shirt buttoned at the collar without a tie....I was intrigued by this man out of a storybook.”⁶² The intrigue of the urban doctor who relocated to a rural part of

⁶⁰ Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly*, 5; Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 7.

⁶¹ Maurice Kaufmann, *The Misadventures of an Appalachian Doctor: Mountain Medicine in the 1930s* (Maurice Kaufmann, 1982).

⁶² *Ibid*, 7.

Appalachia, and Mr. Holcombe's weariness of an outsider doctor shows the contrast of the urban with the rural, and the strange exchange of power and skepticism redolent of the romanticized image of insider and outsider experience in literature about southern Appalachia. Within the South, "hillbilly" still has an Appalachian and Ozark connotation (Appalachia has always served as the South's "South"), and the epithet of choice for comic or contemptible poor folks of the lowlands has been "trash."⁶³

John Shelton Reed wrote about Appalachia in *Southern Folk, Plain, and Fancy: Native White Social Types*. He argues that regional social types "play a conspicuous role in banter, humor, song, and story, social types identify real and important clusterings of characteristics and help people to make sense of the social world around them."⁶⁴ The usefulness of making grand sweeping statements like Reed's conception of white stereotypes in the South is helpful as a starting point to tease out more specific indicators of "Appalachia" through medicine.

There is an innate power dynamic between doctors and the communities they serve. The unspoken exchange between Dr. Kaufmann's and Mr. Holcombe's conversation confirms certain power dynamics that play out when, in this instance, a person used to urban customs entered into a rural space with preconceptions of hierarchical ways of living that are defined by the urban and rural binary modes of thinking. Dr. Kaufmann acknowledged the storybook qualities of the hillbilly. His description of Mr. Holcombe echoes the crude cartoon on the sign hanging in Bryson City meant to serve as a comical stereotype.

⁶³ John Shelton Reed, *Southern Folk, Plain and Fancy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 42.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

Long time Jackson County residents and outsiders who moved to the area created Appalachianess. As exhibited in writings from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Appalachia changed over time but also retained many traditions. Appalachia as an idea, not just a place, became something experienced through old folk ways like craft and music. The Appalachia created after the initial wave of early twentieth century construction of place can be defined and applied differently to residents and non-residents in Jackson County. Interviews of Jackson and Swain County residents Emma Mosely, Jean Lefler, Mary Jane Queen, Joe Deitz, and others who grew up in Jackson County in the twentieth century help construct an image of common healthcare practices and knowledge during the twentieth century. Examining long-time residents' medicinal practices illuminates the perceived language of rural experience.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Jackson County's population began to increase. The United States Census indicates a large population growth in Jackson County from 1900 to 1940. In 1900 the recorded population was 2,781, down almost 5,000 from 1880, but by 1940 the population was recorded at almost 20,000 people.⁶⁵ Sylva's first hospital was a temporary site formed during a smallpox epidemic in 1866.⁶⁶ The first permanent hospital, the Candler-Tidmarsh Hospital was built in 1925, predating the Haywood County Hospital in Waynesville by 2 years. The closest hospital prior to the Candler-Tidmarsh Hospital was Mission Hospital in Asheville, opened in 1885. However, according to the census there were private doctors interspersed throughout the area. In addition, according to the *Heritage of Jackson County* drugstores and medicinal options beyond home remedies were available.

⁶⁵ United States Federal Census, 1900-1940, <http://search.ancestryheritagequest.com/search/group/usfedcen>.

⁶⁶ Johnson Davis McRorie, *Knowing Jackson County...People, Places, and Earlier Days* (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 2000), 109.

In the earlier part of the twentieth century the Sylva Pharmacy, located downtown, “was the best meeting place in town” according to popular local opinion.⁶⁷ Hooper’s Pharmacy was also downtown and owned by successive pharmacists who were not local to the area. Home herbs and remedies were still the standard medicine “but when a cough turned to flu, the flu to pneumonia, other alternatives were sought.”⁶⁸ Jackson County residents who visited downtown Sylva in the early twentieth century had access to over-the-counter medicines and locally produced products like Wizzard Ointment and Bear’s Wild Cherry Tonic, a tonic made from a recipe collected by an employee of the manufacturer.⁶⁹ A local doctor, Dr. William Madison, son of Western Carolina University founder Robert Madison, and a local dentist, Dr. Daisy McGuire, both carried Wizzard Ointment, a salve made in downtown Sylva.⁷⁰ According to one of the men who operated the company, Mr. Coleman Hall, the recipe for Wizzard Ointment— “a splendid application for colds, pleurisy, pneumonia, cataracts, influenza, asthma, hay fever” — was made by a pharmacist working in Webster, North Carolina, Dr. W.C. Tompkins, though there is no one in the census who matches his description.

Such salves as the Wizzard Ointment were not a singular Sylva phenomenon, but in fact a significant part of medical and popular culture in America. Mary Calhoun asserts “traveling medicine shows were a colorful part of American life with...their wonderfully named

⁶⁷ Jackson County Genealogical Society, *The Heritage of Jackson County* (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing, 1992), 31.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 31.

⁶⁹ John L. Bell, “Economic Activities,” in *The History of Jackson County*, ed. Max R. Williams (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 1987), 149.

remedies.”⁷¹ She charts their popularity from 1850s-1940s, aligning with this study, and their prominence in predominantly rural areas. In the region of western North Carolina, John C. Campbell noticed “the prevalence of patent medicine advertisements in small isolated country stores suggests that, in places at least, these must be used to considerable degree.”⁷² Traveling medicine shows drew musicians, such as Jackson County native Harry Cagle.⁷³ Harry Cagle, a local Jackson County musician remarked that they were “a pretty big thing in those days. The pay was not big, but the fun was great.”⁷⁴ He also worked with a Dr. Davis who sold Indian Swamp Root Medicine.⁷⁵ The prevalence of capitalist medicine enterprises in the area shows the ways in which the role of medicine played in economy and capitalist exchanges. However, the

⁷¹ Mary Calhoun, *Medicine Show: Conning People and Making Them Like It* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976), 1.

⁷² John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921), 205.

⁷³ For further information concerning medicine shows please see Mary Calhoun, *Medicine Show: Conning People and Making Them Like It* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976). Framed around artifice, entertainment and capitalizing on a captive audience that wanted to believe in the divine power of healing, the American medicine shows featured musicians and variety acts, as well as patent medicines and mysterious curative potions. As is the case with the Indian Swamp Root medicine show that Harry Cagle performed with, the medicines sold at medicine shows were often advertised as exotic remedies that contained magical curative properties that, like Wizzard Ointment, could mend all kinds of ailments.

⁷⁴ Harry Cagle, interviewer unknown, June 10, 1986, tape, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

⁷⁵ Harry Cagle interview. Medicines labeled as Native American remedies became common products sold by medicine show pitchmen. For more information concerning medicine shows and the depiction of Native Americans as healers see Brooks McNamara, *Step Right Up* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1975); Mary Calhoun, *Medicine Show: Conning People and Making Them Like It* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976); Anderson, Ann. *Snake Oil, Hustlers and Hambones: The American Medicine Show* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2000).

early twentieth century is also when professional healthcare practitioners attacked what they saw as dubious and unprofessional practices.

In the 1920s the medical profession advanced both in scientific discoveries and training, and such practices not considered professional or practiced with a medical license—including folk medicine and popular medicine—became the affliction of the medical community.⁷⁶ For example, in the age of the quack backlash, the 1920s and 1930s, Jackson County born Dr. John Brinkley became a legend because of a goat gland experiment in which he used the sex glands of a goat to boost the energy and vigor of men and women alike, his first successful operation being in 1918.⁷⁷ Brinkley worked from Milford, Kansas, performing goat gland transplantations which, contemporary Sydney B. Flower explained, “Dr. Brinkley’s theory that ALL ENERGY IS SEX-ENERGY means exactly that a powerful brain equally with the beautiful face owes its strength and vigor exactly to the right functioning sex glands.”⁷⁸ Dr. Brinkley consequently lost his

⁷⁶ Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*, 28; Mary Calhoun, *Medicine Show: Conning People and Making Them Like It* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976) Mary Calhoun describes “patent” medicines, elixirs registered in the U.S. patent office, as “proprietary medicines that could be any mixture of herbs, spices or snake oil a person decided to manufacture as a curative. For more information concerning medicine and popular culture see James Harvey Young, “Patent Medicine Almanac,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 45 (3), 1962; James Harvey Young, *American Self Dosage: An Historical Perspective* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1974). Historian of medicine James Harvey Young published two articles in the early 1960s that serve as examples for the critical analysis of early American and nineteenth century popular medicine and healing beliefs; Thomas A. Horrocks, *Popular Print and Popular Medicine: Almanacs in Health and Advice in Early America*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2008). Horrocks used popular print as a means to understand the relationship between mass media and consumers in negotiating the dissemination of medical knowledge.

⁷⁷ “Dr. John Brinkley,” *DigitalHeritage.org*, n.d., accessed March 1, 2015, <http://digitalheritage.org/2010/08/dr-john-brinkly/>. For more information about Dr. John Brinkley see Pope Brock, *Charlatan: The Fraudulent Life of John Brinkley* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2008); R. Alton Lee, *The Bizarre Careers of John R. Brinkley* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2002).

medical license in Kansas and moved to Del Rio, Texas, where he started a radio station that popularized some of Jackson County's most well-known musicians including Harry Cagle and Samantha Bumgarner. Cagle recalled, "in a big Cadillac....It was something special anyway. I remember the hub-caps having 'Brinkley' on them."⁷⁹ Brinkley's legacy and the phenomenon of medicine shows and their potions and elixir cure-alls had their sensational moment in Jackson County and America, but they did not have the longevity of folk healing.

One of the main benefits of the availability of herbs as opposed to other types of medicine was their profitability and convenience, but a glaring disadvantage was their limited capabilities for some ailments. Despite the negative response to alternative sources of healthcare by medical professionals, the presence of drugstores in downtown Sylva, and a hospital built in the 1920s, many Jackson County residents continued to rely on locally sourced plants and old superstitions handed down from family members and shared with neighbors. One reason for the sharing of information within the family was that, as Bryson City resident Betty Carlson stated, "working in a small town you learn the faults the old country doctors had- truly they were humanists but they also did not have the knowledge and buried a lot of mistakes that knowledge could take care of."⁸⁰

Many residents continued to rely on self-sustaining practices. Resident Jane Chastain, born October 23, 1909, remembered the ways in which her family fed themselves. For the most part they had a farm that provided the necessities of life. They canned foods, dried hams, and

⁷⁸ Sydney B. Flowers, *The Goat-Gland Transplantation: As Originated and Successfully Performed by J.R. Brinkley, M.D., of Milford, Kansas, U.S.A., in Over 600 Operations Upon Men and Women* (Chicago: New Thought Book Department, 1921), 14-15.

⁷⁹ Harry Cagle interview.

⁸⁰ Carlson, Betty and Karen Carlson-Hall, interview by Emily Lower, October 17, 1998, tape, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center.

used herbs for medicine.⁸¹ The accessibility of self-sustaining farms and folk healing was a necessity, as cars remained scarce into the early decades of the twentieth century. Jackson County native Jean Lefler remembered, “we had—1930 cars didn’t become very—travelling up here until the 40s and 50s. So, if you went to the doctor, you had to get your neighbor or you had to catch the train...to the doctor.”⁸²

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, and resulting from the moral and economic changes that occurred, the projected image of a hearty and wholesome Appalachian life became the beacon on the hill—the idyllic societal regression back to simpler times as with the Country Life Movement in the early twentieth century. In *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940*, Jane Becker outlined the construction of a traditional folk identity that has commonly been associated with Southern Appalachian people. According to Becker, at the start of the Great Depression, southern Appalachian customs and folkways were viable responses to existing in a less materialistic/capitalistic society.⁸³ Michael Woods supports Becker’s proposition suggesting, “rural people are venerated as national icons because they are believed to retain traditions...whilst idyllic representations position the rural as a refuge from the pressures of modern life.”⁸⁴

Similar to the late nineteenth century color writers, in the 1930s Eleanor and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt fostered a romanticized notion of the people of Appalachia and its

⁸¹ Jane Chastain, interview by Emily Lower, June 21, 2000, transcript, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

⁸² Jean Lefler and Birdell Edwards, interview by Emily Lower, July 17, 1998, tape, Native Plants Project. Mountain Heritage Center.

⁸³ Jane Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 19.

⁸⁴ Michael Woods, *Rural* (London: Routledge, 2011), 29.

rural charm. In the wake of the devastation to the American economy during the Great Depression, they looked to self-sufficiency in the Appalachian region. Later, the Roosevelt's also saw poverty in Appalachia as a problem they could fix by raising visibility of Appalachian cultural traditions through government programs. Ronald D. Eller suggested, "in urban ghettos this involved integrating blacks into white schools, neighborhoods, and businesses. In Appalachia, it implied breaking down the cultural isolation supposedly imposed by the mountains themselves and encouraging 'Yesterday's People' to become more like middle class Americans."⁸⁵

Residents from Jackson County benefitted from the growing interest in Appalachian culture. For example, Rebecca Ashe, also known as Mrs. Napoleon Bonaparte Ashe, from the Love's Field area of Sylva, North Carolina, began weaving as a means to earn a living in the early twentieth century. She was a self-taught weaver who built her own looms and hired her neighbors to work for her. An industrious woman, she opened a shop where she sold handmade coverlets, rugs, and table linens. She exhibited at the 1936 Associated Country Women of the World Conference in New York City where she presented a blue outfit to attendee Eleanor Roosevelt.⁸⁶ This exchange assisted in the visibility of Ashe and the popularity of Appalachian crafts.

As Ashe's employment of her neighbors indicates, a sense of community was important in Jackson County. Birdell Edwards, born in Cherokee in 1938, lived her life in Jackson County. Birdell learned about herbs from her father who used them to make teas for about every ailment,

⁸⁵ Ronald D. Eller, "Modernization, in *High Mountains Rising*, ed. Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 209.

⁸⁶ Susan Levielle, interview by author, March 16, 2014, Dillsboro, North Carolina.

but he only tended to the family with his herb practice. However, Jean Lefler, born and raised in Jackson County, learned from her grandmother who provided the community with her invaluable knowledge. She shared that her

grandmother always helped the sick in the neighborhood and she helped if someone died in the neighborhood, she was the one they always called to come help. And in 1918 when they had the flu epidemic she was the one that went out and took care of all the sick and—Not that she ever sat down and told me that much of her growing the herbs. It's just that I knew about it from her. I guess it runs in your blood.⁸⁷

Folk medicine was not just a benevolent community service but also a way to circumvent unaffordable medical bills. John C. Campbell noticed a certain habit among his “Highlanders” in relation to healthcare: that they waited until their health has become dire to seek out a doctor.⁸⁸ He remarked, “his delay in seeking medical advice is due in large part to the great scarcity of physicians, which has existed from the early days in the Highlands, but the unreliable character of some of the native doctors and high charges made— \$15 to \$25 a visit being not uncommon—have doubtless been discouraging factors.”⁸⁹ As the 1940 Jackson County census indicates, despite a healthy population increase, few doctors lived in the rural area. This made the value of a doctor’s visit quite substantial. For example, Joe Deitz, was born in 1942 on land owned by his family “since the Indian days, or anyway the early 1800s sometime” in the Jackson County community of Big Cove. The land in Big Cove had been in the family prior to when

⁸⁷Jean Lefler and Birdell Edwards, interview by Emily Lower. July 17, 1998, tape, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

⁸⁸ John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Home* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921), 205.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 205.

Jackson County was carved out of Macon and Haywood.⁹⁰ Deitz's words provide an interesting glimpse into the interactions between doctors and their patients.

In an interview from 1998, Dietz said about the family land,

That's been sold off. Like I said we were born up there and my mother's people used to own that. But it's been sold since then. I know the people who own it. They're from Pumpkin town I think. They're not part of the family you know now. Doc Wilkes got that. Doctor Wilkes is a doctor here—He got it probably in the 1940s. Dad says he got it for a few soda pills. You know the Greens own it. Bud Green, the old man, had a stroke and Doc Wilkes took care of him. And he got all that for the doctor bills. The doctors back then in the forties got a lot of land in this area in that way. And of course made a fortune off of it later.⁹¹

Even though Deitz ended his statement with laughter, the relationships between the professional doctors and their patients in Jackson County resembled a power dynamic that involved capital gain, and an exchange of health for home. However, his story also confirms the appeal of home remedies that have persisted in the region due to their affordability and accessibility. The herbs served multiple purposes: as home remedies and as a source of income.

By the mid twentieth century, the widespread influences of the color writers and the construction of the 1930s Appalachian folk that supported a nostalgic image of mountaineers' self-sufficiency gave way to a call for outside financial assistance. In the 1960s, Appalachia received more attention in this regard. Ronald D. Eller proposed, "it was difficult to separate Appalachia from the idea of poverty in the popular mind, and when the president decided to rally public support for his War on Poverty bill, he came first to Appalachia."⁹² Appalachia had become firmly ensconced in the American fabric as a site of backwoods poverty.

⁹⁰ Joe Deitz interview by Emily Lower, June 24, 1998, Transcript, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

⁹¹ Joe Deitz interview.

The creation of national and state initiatives to address widespread poverty in the United States brought attention to the region of southern Appalachia. During much of the twentieth century, “when Americans thought of white poverty, most turned almost instinctively to the people of Appalachia.”⁹³ The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the War on Poverty, modeled after North Carolina’s initiative to address poverty, the North Carolina Fund, highlighted the economic disparities in both rural and inner city areas. In fact, Appalachia became a source for confirming a “culture of poverty,” meaning Appalachian residents lived in poverty because they were “pessimistic and defeated,” as Michael Harrington wrote in *The Other America* in 1962.⁹⁴ A major component to these initiatives included modern methods of healthcare.⁹⁵

In western North Carolina one particular area, the WAMY region comprised of Watauga, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties, was one of the most impoverished areas highlighted during this era of poverty initiatives.⁹⁶ However, other areas in western North Carolina, including Jackson and Haywood Counties, also had impoverished residents and the role of folk healing remained a necessary component in sustaining life both physically and economically. The pervasiveness of this mindset filtered into books written about Appalachian residents in a similar way as the backwardness and anti-modern mountaineer stereotype did in the work of color writers a generation before.

⁹² Eller, “Modernization, 1940-2000,” 207.

⁹³ Robert Rodgers Korstad and James Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 230.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 1-10.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 247.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 231.

An autobiographical story by Haywood County resident Mary Judith Messer, *Moonshiner's Daughter*, addresses the issue of poverty and abuse and its effect on medical care in western North Carolina in the 1960s. What is so striking about Mary Judith Messer's memoir is the physicality with which she describes her life. The stories are packed with cuts, violent attacks and other injuries—events that call for medical treatment—and salves shared by a neighbor for poison ivy. In many ways her life revolved around the necessity for healthcare and the ways in which this proved a challenge. Even in the 1960s people still relied heavily on neighborly assistance, despite a fair amount of access to modern medical facilities. Because of her lack of access to medicine or medical treatment at home she received a salve from her neighbor. In addition, her parents hunted for ginseng and may apple roots to sell.⁹⁷ Messer's autobiography brings attention to the economic disparities in rural areas and the ways in which people living in poverty survived.

In the 1960s, a number of reflections and studies on Appalachian culture reflect a continuation of the perception of “the mountaineer” as a people removed from American culture. Jack E. Weller's *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia*, published in 1965, perpetuated the language of otherness born out of nostalgia and the creation of the idea that civilization meant something very specific: industrialization and the adoption of American values and culture. Weller's publisher gushed in his introduction to the book that Weller “brought the objectivity of the stranger” and “he came to know these people better than they knew themselves.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Mary Judith Messer, *Moonshiner's Daughter: Growing Up Poor in the Smokies* (Junaluska, NC: Doing Well Now Publishers, 2010), 15.

In reality, Weller's account of his time as a missionary in Southern Appalachia is riddled with clichéd stereotypes of the socially and culturally removed and impoverished mountaineer. Weller began his book with a list of conundrums: "So we stand before the mountaineer, utterly baffled by his peculiarities. Why isn't he like us? Why doesn't he respond as we do, think as we do, live as we do? What are his goals and hopes? Why, when he moves to the city and is exposed to all the opportunities of city life, does he still cling to his mountain ways?"⁹⁹ Weller's evaluation of residents in southern Appalachia—"mountaineers"—rested upon the stereotyped image that placed rural versus urban constructions.

In addition to Weller's observations of mountaineers, another publication, the *Foxfire* series, presented and represented rural southern Appalachian culture. Originating in the 1960s, the *Foxfire* series, a collection of magazines and books that document certain Appalachian folk traditions and based out of Rabun County, Georgia, was first published in the 1960s and has documented the use of astrology for planting, folk remedies, and other "traditional" practices of Appalachian mountain folk through interviews of local people. *Foxfire* provides a valuable source of orally passed down healing remedies, superstitions and folk customs. They confirm the continuing interest in the rural and stereotypically rural practices, but also serve as a testament to the importance of understanding a variety of socio-cultural practices within the context of the contemporary cultures from which the literary sources came.

Like Jackson County, other areas of Appalachia used folk medicine. The author's father experienced the use of medicinal plants when he was a child. Suffering from a bad case of boils in Mendota, Virginia, in the late 1950s, Bruce Baker was referred to doctors for a cure. Nothing

⁹⁸ Jack E. Weller, *Yesterday's People* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), v.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

worked. Finally, “Daddy” Baker, Bruce’s grandfather, went out to his garden when he saw Bruce’s boils and, as Bruce recalls, collected beet leaves that he used to make a poultice and apply it directly to the sores.¹⁰⁰ Inexplicably, after modern medicine failed, Bruce’s malady that had plagued him healed quickly. David Baker, Daddy Baker’s son, recalled a similar experience in which he cut his foot in a river and left it alone until it became terribly infected. Daddy Baker wrapped beet leaves around his infected foot. David recalled, “you could actually see where the infection went up into the veins of the leaf.”¹⁰¹ Though he does not remember how Daddy Baker made any of his healing potions, he remembers well the significance his learned skill played in his life. Both David and Bruce still remember their experiences as a miracle performed by Daddy Baker, evidence of the presence and importance of natural healing and the use of plants as medicine in everyday life.

In the small rural community that Emma Mosely grew up in in Swain County, herbal remedies made their way not just to family members, but to doctors in the area. She stated

Back in those days people hardly ever went to a doctor—they would just use herbs. And this fever weed, there was a doctor in Swain County hospital. He had the flu and he told my sister-in-law that, he told her that he had done everything that he knew and he couldn’t get rid of it. So she told him that I had some kind of something that could make tea out of and it would take care of the flu....He drank it and the next morning he was better....So it wasn’t but a couple of days that he was up and going. And he was a doctor. So I felt real good that I had something that would help somebody.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Bruce Baker, interview by author, April 16, 2013, email correspondence, in possession of author.

¹⁰¹ David Baker, interview by author, April 16, 2013, email correspondence, in possession of author.

¹⁰² Emma Mosely, interview by Emily Lower, October 6, 1998, transcript, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

“Official” licensed doctors did not signify the opposite of folk and herbal remedies. Instead, this example suggests cohesion between multiple modes of medical practices. The exchange was not simply that doctors took advantage or that there was a hierarchical order to healthcare, but that in this region there was evidence of a symbiotic relationship, negating any idea of polarity between modern and traditional medicine.

Another facet of folk healing in Appalachia has been the belief that women were the care givers and often the ones who would hand down medicinal knowledge.¹⁰³ John C. Campbell noted “there is in a neighborhood generally some older woman who is recognized as peculiarly gifted in the matter of charms.”¹⁰⁴ Mary Jane Queen, Lefler, and Mosely all discuss helping people through herbal means, and Mosely herself remembers being on the receiving end of herbal remedies. When Mrs. Mosely was young “this old lady gathered [stargrass] when I had bad kidney trouble.”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, John C. Campbell wrote about Granny women in *The Southern Highlander*:

There is something magnificent in many of the older women with their stern theology—part mysticism, part fatalism—and their deep understanding of life. Patience, endurance, and resignation are written in the close-set mouth and in the wrinkles about the eyes; but the eyes themselves are kindly, full of interest, not unrelieved by a twinkling appreciation of pleasant things. “Granny” –and one may be a grandmother young in the mountains—if she has survived the labor and tribulation of her younger days, has gained a freedom and a place of irresponsible authority in the home hardly rivaled by the men of the family.¹⁰⁶

Beatrice Beddingfield’s knowledge about which plants to use was handed down from her mother and grandmother, Granny Ward. Her experience with herbal remedies

¹⁰³ Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Home*, 205.

¹⁰⁵ Mosely interview.

¹⁰⁶ John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Home*, 140.

was significant to her upbringing, as well as her general beliefs, because “Maw and Dad never did take us to the doctor. Maw always called Granny Ward, Grandma Ward, she was the one that handed it down. That was the way that I learned how to do my young’uns.”¹⁰⁷ However, there is no clear distinction between men and women healers within the practice of home healing. There seems to be some gendered divisions in the world of home care, though they were somewhat murky. As a result, the democratic nature of medicinal care supported community.

Another democratic form of healthcare throughout pre-industrial America and after included accessible texts like medicinal almanacs. The presence of almanacs and medical literature litter the southern Appalachian social and cultural terrain, and Jackson County was no exception to this rule. Thomas A. Horrocks, proposed the wide circulation of Almanacs in early America as an avenue to understanding popular culture and accepted medicinal practices from the eighteenth century to pre-Civil War America. Accessibility of the printed materials as well as content that appealed to both men and women had a profound effect on the success of the phenomenon of almanacs.

In his *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*, Cavender acknowledged the complexity of medical and healing systems evident in the region. Mary Jane Queen referred to the benefit of using texts found locally, and mentioned many different books used for healing: *Back to Eden*, *The Hooper’s Drugstore*, *Herbs for Illness*, and *The Indian Herb Almanac*.¹⁰⁸ These books were used to learn and practice herbal healing. Another text used by Jean Lefler which was handed

¹⁰⁷ Denise Layfield, “Curing What Ails You—Naturally,” *Times-News*, 1993, n.p.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Jane Queen, interview by audience, 1988, transcript, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

down from her “grandmother’s grandmother” was one that had been used since its publication in 1830.¹⁰⁹ *Gunn’s Domestic Medicine*, written by John C. Gunn, a physician based in Knoxville, Tennessee, was first published in 1830. By 1840 there were several printings of the book in various parts of the eastern United States.¹¹⁰ His training was more formal than that of the average Appalachian person, yet his methods were still faith and herb based folk healing methods. His is a book that served both as a suggestion for how to approach illness as well as providing examples of medicinal uses.

In addition to written texts, other ways in which residents shared medicinal information happened by word of mouth. Many interviewees shared stories of people they had heard about, transmitting stories from the community. The interviews share just as much about the passing of oral information—superstitious, medicinal, or otherwise—within the community as they did about the information itself. For instance, Stanley, interviewed with Emma Mosely, stated that he had heard from several people that there was a man who could get rid of warts and that his uncle claimed that he could make bleeding stop using a verse from the Bible, though Stanley had never seen it himself nor did he know which verse his uncle used.¹¹¹ Little Savannah resident George Frizzell recalled a story in which George’s grandmother “rolled up cobwebs and gave him cobwebs to help break the fever. Spider cobwebs.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Jean Lefler interview.

¹¹⁰ Charles E. Rosenberg “Introduction” in *Gunn’s Domestic Medicine* (Knoxville: University of Knoxville Press, 1986), v.

¹¹¹ Mosely interview, 19.

¹¹² George Frizzell, interview by Emily Lower, June 17, 1998, tape, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

While medical practices in the twentieth century became more varied as new technology redefined the possibilities of health, pockets of people, often in rural areas, continued to incorporate folk medicine practices into their health practices. This aspect of life was important for many people, and a remnant of their ancestors' lives for others. The acknowledgment of the maintenance of these health patterns mirrors those of other traditions that came to define Appalachia as a construct, but does not truly explain the extent to which oral tradition gives meaning to both identity and experience.

Many scholars have challenged and debunked the many avenues of stereotypes in Appalachia by examining such cultural artifacts as literature, movies, medicine, and healing practices. They provide another viable way to approach the myth of Appalachia in American society in the twentieth century. Old almanacs, biographical sketches of urban doctors working in rural areas, interviews, and oral histories provide hints of home health practices. What once started out as a common practice of using home remedies and texts became a symbol of rural identity first by color writers and defining geographic areas by cultural signifiers, and then by the ways in which publications and cultural figures such as the Roosevelts celebrated residents of Appalachia. This helped shape the persistent connection of folk medicine and people living in the mountains.

Community, oral tradition, and profit are all important aspects of healthcare in Jackson County in the twentieth century. While the experiences of Jackson County residents in the mid twentieth century changed dramatically as a result of industrialization, access to different forms of medical care, and an increased interest from government initiatives, many people continued to use home remedies. Folk healing and popular medicine perpetuated traditions and encouraged

profitable endeavors. In the face of unaffordable healthcare, many people chose to use home remedies.

This continuation of medicinal healthcare paved the way for later interpretations of folk medicine as a facet of a mountain culture associated with southern Appalachia. As perceptions of mountain folk were perpetuated, folk medicine became an important aspect of this construction as well as the Appalachian identity despite, in Jackson County, the growing access to alternate medical access including hospitals and the arrival of locally made popular medicines available over the counter.

Residents of Jackson County who have used folk medicine serve as examples of the growing interest in and preservation of the practices of Appalachian people. Looking at the folk healing and medicine in Jackson County between the 1920s and 1960s emphasizes how the construction of Appalachia and its mountaineers shifted from self-sufficiency to a people reliant on outside intervention. However residents of Jackson County found ways to counter this assumption of dependence by using folk medicine as a means to acquire income and maintain health.

Herbal healing does not stand in opposition to modern medicine, but rather in conjunction with it. As is evidenced by the residents of Jackson County experiences with herbal, folk, and popular medicines, healing practices and medicine were used in many ways: maintaining health in the community, maintaining health in the family, for profit, and barter. These medicines in no way indicated a stubborn refusal for the use of modern medicine, but rather resourcefulness out of necessity and convenience. From the travelling musician's experience to the folkloric legend who recalled the many practices that travelled through time by

the sharing of the knowledge, these practices fulfilled an important place in the lives of Jackson County residents.

The designation of Appalachian culture as an “other” or an Appalachian resident as a mountain hillbilly, as suggested by Weller, did not stop the use of folk medicine, and in fact helped Jackson County residents retain power and tradition. In the face of changing medical practices in the early to mid-twentieth century, Jackson County experienced waves of medical trends such as popular medicine production and residents joining medicine shows. Despite the variety of medical options, folk and herbal medicine persisted. Residents of Jackson County continued to use folk medicine, and people continued to be interested in the mystique of mountain folk whether as a symbol of American fortitude or as a people who needed outside intervention to save them from impoverished circumstances. This interest in the Appalachian mountaineer would continue throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The triple x “Finest Down Home, Backwoods Brew fer gittin’ rowdy, necked, an’ likkered up” is evidence of this continuing trend of capitalizing on the image of the hillbilly’s “Great medsin in case you git bit by a snake” or any number of ailments that a hillbilly might suffer from.

CHAPTER 3
SANGIN' ON TV: NOSTALGIA, MEMORY, AND FOLK MEDICINE IN JACKSON
COUNTY

In the latter part of the twentieth century folk healing and herbal medicine became not just a symbol of place, but also a manifestation of Appalachian identity. While doing research for this project, many people volunteered information concerning superstitions and herbal remedies learned from their parents or grandparents or great-grandparents, including the author's father and great uncle. While on a daytrip at Fontana Lake in Graham County, North Carolina, for Decoration Day, the mere mention of this topic brought unsolicited offerings.¹¹³ A woman I had just met began spouting off a list of herbal remedies that she had learned from her mother. Throughout the afternoon she continued to share as they popped into her head. We never exchanged names, yet her personal attachment to and pride in having acquired this knowledge was evident.

On that day, among the family members of former cove communities lost to the creation of Fontana Dam, the importance of folk healing as a way to perpetuate aspects of life and familial memory that had visibly suffered the ebbs of time were rekindled every time someone talked about blackberry juice for croup or lady slipper tea for sleep. It was, in a profound way, an exceptional piece of their social and personal identities as locals and ancestors of early settlers in the area.

¹¹³ As I experienced it, Decoration Day is an event in which ancestors and relatives visit family graves, often Confederate soldiers, and adorn the plots with flowers. The one that I attended on Fontana Lake was in a remote part that required a pontoon ride around several crooks and bends of the surviving parcels of land that remained above water. Once on land, the National Park Service chauffeured us several miles further into the woods in a sports utility vehicle. We arrived at a shelter with what had already turned into a sizable gathering of over 50 people that included those who were related to people buried in the cemeteries and those who were curious about the event.

Examining the popular image of the hillbilly, the iconic poor white southerner characterized by economic, cultural, and social stagnation, at the end of the twentieth century assists in understanding the phenomenon of nostalgia for folk medicine as a facet of Appalachianess. Geographer David Lowenthal suggested, “heritage departs from history in what it sees, what it stresses, and what it changes. From the same past, history and heritage carve out unlike and often competing insights.”¹¹⁴ The difference between the history and heritage of Appalachia can be seen in the ways the image of the hillbilly mountaineer has changed over time. While understanding the history of southern Appalachia relies on objective analysis, heritage—and nostalgia—result from memory. Nostalgia might stem from lived experience or, like the participants in the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s, an adoption or recreation of a perceived past. In addition, heritage tourism and recent pop culture phenomena like reality television have also affected the ways in which people experience nostalgic Appalachian culture and folk medicine.

Memory and nostalgia piece together a certain type of history that examines and creates culture. Memory is the recollection of fact, figures, and events, and nostalgia is a longing for times past, which can be experienced either by people who lived during the time or romanticized it after the fact. The evaluation of medical and healing practices within a broader cultural context relies on the use of oral histories veiled by the memory and its accuracy. For example, Jackson County resident George Frizzell recalled an instance in which a neighbor, Roscoe,

Went out in the yard, and there was a small tree. I think it was a fairly young tree...And he cut off a piece of the bark. Very carefully. I mean he didn't just rip the bark off. He carefully cut an incision all around it in sort of a long rectangular section about like a small finger...And there was of course sap inside of it. And he rubbed those all over my warts, and then he put the piece of bark back on the

¹¹⁴ David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 167.

tree. And carefully tied it up with a piece of cloth...I don't know how long he told me it would take. If it was like the next full moon, something like that.¹¹⁵

Frizzell peppered the interview with laughter, suggesting a fair amount of skepticism, but the memory remained, and Frizzell noted that the warts eventually disappeared.

Medicine and healing are an important part of life, and health itself is an important part of one's identity. The prevalence of traditional methods of medicine and healing in these distinctly Appalachian cultural locations conveys the importance of folk healing as a piece of shared history between family members, community members, and beyond. The transition from folk healing as necessity to a nostalgic interest of Appalachian culture is present in print, media, and performance. While the perpetuation of traditional medicinal practices occurred through nostalgic stereotypes, in Jackson County it also became a badge of cultural pride and heritage.

Beginning in the 1960s, and gaining momentum into the 1970s, an interest in folk culture resurfaced in the back-to-the-land movement which had appeared throughout the twentieth century in different manifestations. Historian Paul Salstrom noted

in rural Appalachia, those new 'homesteaders' found themselves welcomed by senior citizens who still knew how to harness horses, build log cabins, clear pastures, grow food and preserve it, find ginseng, bake bread, and do hundreds of other homesteading tasks. The young newcomers also found themselves grafted into Appalachia's local network of daily borrowing and bartering (including exchanges of work). The neighborhood economic networking allowed a comfortable existence even if no one in the neighborhood had much money.¹¹⁶

Salstrom viewed this phenomenon as reminiscent of the interest in Appalachian folk culture during the Great Depression. This generation's back-to-the-land movement went beyond the turn

¹¹⁵ George Frizzell, interview by Emily Lower, June 17, 1998, tape, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

¹¹⁶ Paul Salstrom, "The Great Depression," 74.

of the century and Depression era interest in Appalachia as a rural place with people practicing simple, economic pragmatism and self-sufficiency, but also found momentum with the growing concern of the preservation of nature and environmentalism.¹¹⁷

Many people involved in the back-to-the-land movement also viewed their retreat back to nature as a way to escape or challenge what they viewed as the stifling conformity of suburban culture. As Dona Brown highlighted, one back-to-the-land participant reflected upon the tumultuous socio-political landscape that influenced this shift in mentality. To blame were the “political assassination, burning cities, tear gas and bullets on university campuses, and the dragging on of the war.”¹¹⁸ Going back to the land offered an escape from the volatile social climate of America during this era. Southern Appalachia, as Salstrom indicated, provided back-to-the-landers with the cultural heritage they needed. Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century the adoption of Appalachian culture reflected the desire to escape from larger social issues that complicated day to day life, confirming the view of Appalachian culture as simplistic.

In Jackson County the phenomenon of Appalachianness was not only a result of the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s, but also a reflection of interest in local culture and history as is evident in the way the celebration of Appalachian culture took shape. Publications like *Foxfire*, which preserved folk medicine and superstitious practices of Appalachian residents, and events in Jackson County like the creation of an Appalachian folk festival, Mountain Heritage Day, indicated a new era of Appalachianness founded on both a desire to experience the past, but to do so in a contemporary way. This meant not only experiencing Appalachianness by going back to nature, but to consume it through festivals,

¹¹⁷ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 8.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 211-213.

television, movies, and other formats indicative of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This Appalachianess was nostalgia and a heritage that both residents and transplants found in Appalachian culture and the sources, like *Foxfire*, that perpetuated representations.

Although some scholars question *Foxfire's* validity as a scholarly source, accusing the series of perpetuating stereotypes and, as folklorist W. K. McNeil suggests, “with their overemphasis on survivals and old-fashioned ways, the *Foxfire* publications are largely exercises in nostalgia rather than folk scholarship.”¹¹⁹ *Foxfire's* popularity represented a form of nostalgia and authenticity for participants in the back-to-the-land-movement. However, there is still great value found in such attempts at documenting and preserving certain aspects and practices found in Appalachia through oral histories of the inhabitants, even if not all subjects are necessarily unique to the region. For example, Jackson County resident Joe Deitz said he learned some folk healing from the *Foxfire* series.¹²⁰ Therefore, it has served as an ‘authentic’ source that taught people about the folklore of rural Appalachia.

Anthony Cavender asserted the decline in folk medicine and healing practices resulted from easier access to over the counter meds, but it is just as important, however, to consider the ways in which folk healing has endured and how it happened despite the advent of modern medicine.¹²¹ Some people whose families have lived in Jackson County for generations have

¹¹⁹ McNeil, W.K., *Appalachian Images In Folk and Popular Culture*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 12. Though McNeil suggests that *Foxfire* romanticizes certain aspects of Appalachian culture it should also be noted that this romanticization, according to McNeil, also created a positive image of Appalachia and was likely to have boosted sales of the publication.

¹²⁰ Joe Deitz interview.

¹²¹ Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*, 176.

held on to “traditional” and orally transferred healing practices despite a rapidly changing social and cultural climate locally and nationally throughout the twentieth century. Mary Jane Queen, Joe Deitz, Jean Lefler, and Emma Mosely are all examples of this trend. Still others who were transplants from outside Jackson County have also embraced certain aspects of folk medicine because of social and cultural changes. Karen Carlson Hall, who moved to Jackson County as a young child in the 1960s, remarked “I think that sometimes the shape our society is in right now—we’re searching for something to believe in, and so that thing to believe in is maybe that Mother Earth is there to comfort us and take care of us. I certainly was raised in a family where Mother Nature provided a heck of a lot of that.”¹²² In a sense, it is a longing for a world removed from urbanity, the world sought after by participants in the back-to-the-land movement.

A component of folk medicine is the sharing of information that has perpetuated its practice, and made the trips to a doctor less necessary, which was important in isolated places with few doctors like Jackson County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Longstanding folk healing practices— such as herbal medicine and superstitious beliefs— appeared in newspaper articles, question and answer sessions at public events, and projects like the Mountain Heritage Center’s Native Plants Project conducted in the late 1990s. The Native Plants Project project was comprised of a number of interviews of Jackson County local old-timers and their family members and, like *Foxfire*, documented the ways in which they maintained health and used plants found locally. Interviews sparked a dialogue not just between the main interviewee and interviewer, but also included the sharing of knowledge through conversations with younger and older family members. In addition, some grew up with written

¹²² Betty Carlson and Karen Carlson-Hall, interview by Emily Lower, October 17, 1998, tape, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

sources of medical knowledge such as almanacs and herbal and folk healing texts. Others still, like Cherokee resident Mary Chiltoskey, who published a book about Cherokee plants in 1975 learned about plants in multiple ways. She learned from books, by talking to knowledgeable people, and teaching herself.¹²³

At one point in time most residents in Appalachia would have known something about folk medicine and use of herbs. During the latter part of the twentieth century, as people born in the mid-twentieth century grew to adulthood, older people in the community passed down folk healing practices, as is the case with Emma Mosely, but were not used enough in everyday life to retain how to find the right herbs and prepare them.¹²⁴ For others folk healing was not an inherent gift passed down from generation to generation. Jackson County resident Joe Deitz recalled

That was something too that's almost lost. I know the yellowroot and the sassafras and a few things like that. You know that's something my grandfather had—he called it bitters that he made. Boneset and he'd mix different things up, and of course you'd put a little whiskey in most of that and say that. And he would take a little swig of that every night. But nobody really bothered to find out what he gathered, other than just a few things. I know he used yellowroot. And boneset. I don't even know what boneset looks like. My mother does. People neglect things like that and then years later you'd wished you had.”¹²⁵

Luckily, as is evident from the interviewees, not all of the information was erased from memory.

¹²³ “Origin of Plant Medicine Told in Cherokee Belief,” Newspaper article, 1975, 2007.20.2237, Kinsland Collection, Museum of the Cherokee Indian; For further information about Cherokee plants and Mary Chiltoskey's plant knowledge see Paul B. Hamel and Mary U. Chiltoskey, *Cherokee Plants and Their Uses —A 400 Year History*, (Sylva, N.C. Herald Publishing Co. 1975).

¹²⁴ Emma Mosely, interview by Emily Lower, 6 October, 1998, transcript, Native Plants Project, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

¹²⁵ Joe Deitz interview by Emily Lower, June 24, 1998, Transcript, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

As Jackson County residents whose families had practiced folk medicine and herbal healing for generations began to lose the knowledge because it was no longer a necessity, certain people, places, and events in Jackson County began to rescue this information from extinction. Mountain Heritage Day, the largest annual festival that has taken place on the campus of Western Carolina University every September or October since 1974, celebrates Appalachian culture and traditions. The festival commemorates old and new traditions in Appalachia. Described as a celebration of “the region’s rich history,” and a “celebration of mountain culture,” it has included activities such as cat shows, tobacco spitting, Cherokee dances, crafts, and heritage food contests.¹²⁶ Individuals or groups who make “outstanding contributions to the preservation or interpretation of the history and culture of Southern Appalachia, or for outstanding contributions to research on, or interpretation of, contemporary or future problems which threaten the quality of life of the people of the region” receive Mountain Heritage Awards.¹²⁷ The Mountain Heritage Awards have become an important part of the festival and a way to recognize those who have contributed to their communities.

The 1999 Mountain Heritage Award went to Mary Jane Queen and the Queen Family, a family well-known for their music who have resided in Jackson County for generations.¹²⁸ In

¹²⁶ “WCU’s 40th Mountain Heritage Day Features David Holt,” *Sylva Herald*, September 24, 2014. Accessed February 15, 2015. http://www.thesylvaherald.com/top_stories/article_2ee0c52c-43f8-11e4-8ee9-001a4bcf6878.html; Lunsford, Mackensy, “Mountain Heritage Day Comes to WCU Sept. 27.” *Citizen-Times*, September 23, 2014. Accessed February 15, 2015. <http://www.citizen-times.com/story/life/food/2014/09/23/mountain-heritage-day-comes-wcu-sept/16099577/>.

¹²⁷ “Mountain Heritage Award,” DigitalHeritage.org. 2013. Accessed February 15, 2015. <http://digitalheritage.org/2013/11/mountain-heritage-award/>; “Y’all Come, the Best Kind of Get-Together: 40 Years of Mountain Heritage Day.”

¹²⁸ “Mountain Heritage Award,” DigitalHeritage.org. 2013. Accessed February 15, 2015. <http://digitalheritage.org/2013/11/mountain-heritage-award/>

years past, Mountain Heritage Day has included interviews about folk medicine practices such as an interview from Mountain Heritage Day in 1989 in which Mary Jane Queen shared her experiences with both herbal medicine and almanacs stating, “the first herb book that I ever owned, was, we got ‘em through the mail. It was Indian Herb Almanac. So that is where we learned the biggest part about herbs was outta this book...it’s older than the children.”¹²⁹

Because students of Western Carolina University and community members have consistently attended Mountain Heritage Day, Queen’s medicinal knowledge reached a new generation of interested people seeking history and heritage.

Many communities in western North Carolina have resisted the erasure of medicinal traditions in various ways. Ethnobotanist, and interviewee for the Mountain Heritage Center’s Native Plant Project, Karen Carlson Hall suggested “Cherokee healers and individuals within the tribal government and other local positions described to me the need to preserve existing medicinal plant information. Additionally, they sought to find a way to teach younger Cherokees this important aspect of traditional identity.”¹³⁰ Therefore, oral histories and traditions continued to serve as an important method to maintain connections with their ancestors.

This resurgence of interest in traditional Cherokee practices in the Appalachian area mirrors that of the growing interest in Euro-American folk healing and “non-modern” medicinal practices during the same period of time. In an article published in 1989 about Walker Calhoun, the author wrote, “there is a growing interest in younger generations in the material healing

¹²⁹ Mary Jane Queen, interview by audience, 1988, transcript, Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University.

¹³⁰ Karen C. Hall, “Ethnobotany of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians: a Path to Sustaining Traditional Identity with an Emphasis on Medicinal Plant Use.” (Ph.D. diss., Clemson University, 2006).

powers of herbs and plants, he said. The generation immediately behind Calhoun didn't show much interest in hers and for the time the U.S. government tried to stamp out the medicine man's ways."¹³¹

However, some perceptions of inhabitants of Jackson County and the surrounding areas support the idea that their beliefs are from another time, another culture, another world, like the previous periods in the development of Appalachia. Cherokee Davy Arch, who was the Mountain Heritage Award recipient in 2014 for his celebrated traditional Cherokee art and crafts. Davy Arch is a significant figure in the preservation of Cherokee traditions at the Oconaluftee Indian Village in Cherokee, North Carolina. Writers have described him as a man who “for the first 10 years of his life...lived with his grandfather, who taught him to tell Cherokee stories, practice herbal medicine, and use wild plants for food. While working at the Oconaluftee Living History Village, Arch learned to carve masks from the elder mask maker Sim Jessan.”¹³² In an article that appeared in the *Asheville Citizen Times* from July 3, 2014, Ralph Burns laid out the persistence of a unique Cherokee culture in his Living Portrait Series, an editorial column that documented “the public and private aspects of culture and religion in transition.”¹³³ Burns's approach resembled many of the color writers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in how he paraphrased the interviewee:

If you ask Davy Arch about himself, he will tell you that first he is a Cherokee, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, revealing in that identity that he has, sealed indelibly within his veins, the blood of the original inhabitants of the

¹³¹ Bob Scott, “Cherokee Medicine Regaining Interest,” Newspaper article, 1989, 2007.20.4251. Kinsland Collection, Museum of the Cherokee Indian.

¹³² “Davy Arch,” 2003. <http://www.cherokeeheritagetrail.org/nextgenart/neg02.html>.

¹³³ Ralph Burns, “Living Portrait series: Davy Arch,” *Asheville Citizen Times*, July 3, 2014.

mountains of Western North Carolina, the blood of a people who had lived here long before the Europeans and the Americans came, the blood of a people who lost nearly everything in their encounters with those explores and settlers, and then lost even more in their subsequent expulsion from nearly all of their ancestral home.¹³⁴

The language used by the author of the article abandons his own words, one moment saying, “he [Arch] is one of the living bridges of the Cherokees who, through his energy and zeal and cheerful openness, helps connect the tribal past to a slippery and ever moving present.” He followed his assessment of Arch as a visionary looking toward the future with a description of Arch as symbol of a dying culture, like writers have portrayed Euro-American residents in Appalachia. He stated, “in protecting and honoring and explaining the history and the traditional core values and skills of the Cherokees, Davy Arch becomes a wise and resilient reminder of another path, a gentle buffer to the beguiling and ever-breathless call of modernity, and an unmistakable rebuff to the capriciousness of history.”¹³⁵ Like the image of the barefoot overall clad yokel who enjoys the “Finest Down Home, Backwoods Brew” Cherokees have often been portrayed as stagnant and removed from modern society. The author of the article perpetuated the language used to “other” Native peoples.

Ultimately, Arch is a connection to practices that Cherokees used for centuries prior to Burns’s article. As David and Elizabeth Metzger Armstrong suggest, “although most nonnatives considered Native Americans to be bloodthirsty savages, they were also believed to be clever children of nature.”¹³⁶ Simultaneously a nostalgic rebuff of modernity and essentializing a group

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ralph Burns, “Living Portrait series: Davy Arch,” *Asheville Citizen Times*, July 3, 2014.

¹³⁶ David and Elizabeth Metzger Armstrong, *The Great American Medicine Show: Being an Illustrated History of Hucksters, Healers, Health Evangelists, and Heroes from Plymouth Rock to the Present*. New York: Prentice Hall (1991), 177.

of people as homogenous and monolithic, the ways in which Cherokees have been presented echoes that of the mountaineer. Therefore, the continuity of traditions forces practitioners into stereotypes that often spread beyond the figurative walls of southern Appalachia.

There are several examples of “indianness” that are rampant in the sites of Cherokee tourism that enforce harmful stereotypes, in which Cherokees willingly participate.¹³⁷ In addition, tourism, which is an important part of Jackson County’s economy, reflects a desire to retain a sense of nostalgia and family history, and the maintenance of folk medicine in and around Jackson County. As Geographer Michael Woods posited, rural space is often “exploited for economic gain, tourism and recreation, a place to live, and a place in need of protection.”¹³⁸ Appalachian heritage, like rural space, experienced similar exploitation through tourism.

However, traditions transcend the façade of tourism. Walker Calhoun, a member of the eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian, learned herbal remedies from his mother, and his father, who “was a medicine man and an Indian doctor,” before he passed away when Calhoun was a

¹³⁷ For more information about tourism in Cherokee see: Christina Taylor Beard-Moose, *Public Indians, Private Cherokees: Tourism and Tradition on Tribal Grounds*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), Though Beard-Moose points out that many Natives have voiced their oppositions to acting out representations of “indianness” and exoticizing their own cultures, the act of chiefing continues to perpetuate an “other.” According to Beard-Moose, “the “chiefs” know that they are performing for the tourists’ imagination and that a vast majority of tourists neither realize nor care that they are being given the same preexisting image to take home that they came to the Boundary with in the first place. Representations and socially constructed fables that linger in the collective unconscious can often do more harm than good, but it should be noted that “chiefs” and other stereotypical performed roles represent the public Indians, not the private Cherokees. And in some respects, this helps them maintain ownership over their true identities.

¹³⁸ Michael Woods, *Rural* (London:Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2011), 265.

young child.¹³⁹ He is a good example of someone who continued practicing Cherokee medicine ways, and shared his memories to writer Bob Scott. He spoke of “a ritual where white root was first boiled, then set in the middle of the room and an Indian doctor sprinkled some of the potion at the four points of the compass while reciting ‘some magic words.’”¹⁴⁰

Other ways in which the preservation of folk medicine and Appalachian culture occurred includes a cornucopia of nostalgic and historical literature about Appalachia and Jackson County. Following Henry D. Shapiro’s *Appalachia on Our Minds*, published in 1978, a flourish of scholarship that evaluated both the construction and depictions of Appalachia in previous literature emerged.¹⁴¹ Many books published between the 1970s and 2000s served as invaluable testaments to histories that reassessed and restructured southern Appalachia as an entity that

¹³⁹ Bob Scott, “Cherokee Medicine Regaining Interest,” Newspaper article, 1989., 2007.20.4251, Kinsland Collection, Museum of the Cherokee Indian.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ For more information about re-presenting Appalachia within a scholarly context please see Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Minds: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978); Ronald. D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Michael Frome., *Strangers in High Places: The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994); Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2004); John C. Inscoe, ed., *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South From Slavery to Segregation* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001); W.K. McNeil, ed., *Appalachian Images In Folk and Popular Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995).

existed through the writings of authors like Jack E. Weller, Maurice Kaufmann, and the color writers. The approach that scholars used to investigate various social, cultural, and economic phenomena in broader Appalachia found its way into studies of smaller communities in Appalachia as well.

The Jackson County Historical Association has actively collected and published the history of Jackson County. *Knowing Jackson County: People, Places, and Earlier Days*, written by Johnson Davis McRorie, serves as an example of a number of interviews, musings, and information that highlights well known and lesser known history about Jackson County from the time of its creation in 1851. A number of people were interviewed decades before this publication came out in 2000. Some people were old enough during the time of the interviews to have been born late in the nineteenth century, testifying to the geographical and social landscape of Jackson County. However, its most important contribution to medical history in Jackson County is that McRorie preserved the historical background of Wizzard Ointment and its development from a homemade remedy to a marketable commodity discussed in relation to the early development of Jackson County.¹⁴²

Other written sources that memorialize Jackson County and medicine include *Heritage of Healing: A Medical History of Haywood County* by Nina L. Anderson and William L. Anderson, and *Jackson County Heritage North Carolina Vol. 1, 1992* published by the Jackson County Genealogical Society. The Andersons' comprehensive overview of local medicine provides an excellent starting point for developing further scholarship on the coexistence of traditional, or "primitive" as the Andersons called it, medicine and patent medicines such as the locally produced Wizzard Ointment for which they even include a recipe.

¹⁴² Johnson Davis McRorie, *Knowing Jackson County...People, Places, and Earlier Days* (Sylva: Jackson County Historical Association, 2000), 148-149.

Their emphasis on “primitive medicine” includes a wide variety of relevant categories such as home medical books, herbal medicine, and witchcraft. However, this section provides only an introductory top-down approach as they do include some first-hand accounts or oral histories but abruptly end their research on “primitive medicine” at the beginning of the nineteenth century, only mentioning the continuity of such practices into the twentieth century briefly in the chapter.¹⁴³

In general, this book emphasizes the rise of modern medicine and the glorification of formally educated doctors. One overarching idea that is recurrent in texts of medicine from the early to mid-twentieth century is a tone of condescension that examines dated medical practices from the viewpoint of someone who already knows the historical trajectory of medicine instead of considering it from within a framework that focuses on the language of insiders and outsiders of the region. The description of “primitive medicine” diminishes the validity of accessible folk medicine practices. It situates contemporary medicine, and the people who practice it, in a position of power over practitioners of other forms of healing as if the passage of time or use of newer scientific developments creates a social or medical hierarchy, one that recalls the general treatment of the mountain folk depicted by color writers. The use of “primitive” as a description shows the relationship between the rural, the hillbilly and the Appalachian folk medicine.

Works of fiction also convey the importance of health maintenance in rural areas. In *The Cove*, author Ron Rash takes the reader into the heart of the southern Appalachian Mountains and nestles into “a cursed place...The Cherokee had stayed away from the cove, and the first white family to settle there all died of smallpox.”¹⁴⁴ This superstitious Appalachia is the one

¹⁴³ Nina L. Anderson and William L. Anderson, *Heritage of Healing: A Medical History of Haywood County* (Waynesville: Waynesville Historical Society, 1994), 26-27.

found in the shadowed coves of history, and the fictional outsider in the story simply passes through like so many real life writers before him. In another novel, *One Foot in Eden*, set in the 1950s, Rash writes about a granny woman who serves as a symbol of Appalachia. The woman exists as an archetype, one who practices folk healing and lives in the woods removed from others because of her eccentricities. That superstitions and folk healing granny women appear in fiction that takes place in Appalachia supports both the nostalgic connection of folk healing to Appalachia, as well as a certain memorialization through literary means.¹⁴⁵

As has been suggested, the intersections of Appalachian and rural stereotypes are many. By the late twentieth century the stereotyped hillbilly Dr. Kaufmann wrote about in *The Misadventures of an Appalachian Doctor: Mountain Medicine in the 1930's* appeared in many popular spaces like the television show *Beverly Hillbillies* and the comic *Li'l Abner*. Hillbillies, mountain men, granny witches, and other lively archetypes were born out of isolated areas removed from urbanity. They are rough and weathered, paralleling the tangled, uncultivated, yet untouched and uncorrupted mountain landscapes that writers have used to describe the Appalachian Mountains.

At the beginning of the twentieth century modernity and industrialization created the ubiquitous image of the rural backwards mountaineer, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century the mountaineer “other” became a symbol once again of the changing cultural landscape. The image of the “likker” drinking hillbilly mountaineer maintained a socio-cultural endurance because of the ways in which it adapted to contemporary culture. Anthony Harkins suggested, “indeed, ‘hillbilly’ continued to be a vital actor on the American cultural stage throughout the

¹⁴⁴ Ron Rash, *The Cove* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 17.

¹⁴⁵ Ron Rash, *One Foot in Eden* (New York: Picador, 2004).

last three decades of the twentieth century, long after similar stereotypes for other racial and ethnic groups had become unacceptable.”¹⁴⁶

In the last few decades there have been many widely disseminated and accessible images of the Appalachian stereotype. Projected images like *The Dancing Outlaw*, Shelby Lee Adams’s photography, and shows about ginseng hunters *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Smoky Mountain Money* depict calculated images of Appalachia.¹⁴⁷ *Appalachian Outlaws* takes place in West Virginia and *Smoky Mountain Money* takes place in the Great Smoky Mountains in North Carolina. After a century of development, Appalachia became a mass produced nostalgic vision that juxtaposed modern forms of entertainment with the cultural relic of the hillbilly, thus confirming Harkins’s assertion that the perpetuation of the image of the backwoods yokel is due to popular cultural representations, mainly seen in movies, cartoons, and literature.¹⁴⁸ The hillbilly ironically became an escape from modern themes through the use of modern technology.

The premise of National Geographic’s *Smoky Mountain Money* is that “four teams of mountain folk set out into the Great Smoky Mountains every September, searching the ridge-tops and hollars’ for wild American Ginseng,” which is “a federally protected endangered species so

¹⁴⁶ Harkins, *Hillbilly*, 205.

¹⁴⁷ Jesco White is the subject of three documentaries highlighting his family and his famed mountain dancing, for which he is well known. The documentaries take place at his home in rural West Virginia, and depicts his life as a poverty stricken resident in Appalachia. Shelby Lee Adams is a photographer known for his photographs of residents in Appalachia. He was the subject of the 2002 documentary *The True Meaning of Pictures: Shelby Lee Adams’s Appalachia*, in which his approach to photographing people in Appalachia who live in extreme poverty as a subject for his art. Conversely, the film also discusses the value of such work. It is a quintessential look into the complicated issue of agency in the relationship between the photographer, the photographer’s subject, and the viewer.

¹⁴⁸ Harkins, *Hillbilly*, 3-5.

the harvesting of wild Ginseng is a heavily regulated, but profitable trade.”¹⁴⁹ Shows like *Smoky Mountain Money* offer the viewer a glimpse at long practiced hunts for ginseng, a profitable medicinal plant that has been important since the early period of Appalachia. Ginseng became an important product of southern Appalachia in its early development, as Horace Kephart noted in his writing from 1913.

A successful ginseng grower of our settlement told me that two acres of the plant will bring an income of \$2,500 to \$5,000 a year, planting 100,000 to the acre. The roots take eight years to mature. They weight from one and a half to four ounces each, when fresh, and one-third of this dried. Two acres produce 25,000 roots a year, by progression. The dried root, at that time, brought five dollars a pound. At present, I believe it is higher. Another friend of mine, who is in this business extensively, tried exporting for himself, but got only \$6.50 a pound in Amoy, when the U.S. consul at that port assured him that the real market price was from \$12.60 to \$24.40. The local trader, knowing American prices, pocketed the different.¹⁵⁰

His assessment of the value of the medicinal plant has remained of great importance in the economy and visibility of folk medicine practices. The connections between Kephart’s written account of ginseng harvesting and *Smoky Mountain Money* highlights the ways in which documenting Appalachian practices have evolved into capitalizing on the image of the rugged mountaineer in reality television.

However, revisions in the representations of mountaineers and their medicinal practices have also brought attention to the changing cultural and physical landscapes of southern Appalachia. For example, not only has ginseng become highly regulated, but also as Emma

¹⁴⁹ "Smoky Mountain Money." National Geographic Channel. Accessed February 8, 2015. <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/smoky-mountain-money/>.

¹⁵⁰ Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlander* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1913), 40. Kephart is an important source of information on the ways in which people lived in the Great Smoky Mountains area of the southern Appalachian Mountains in the early twentieth century.

Mosely shared, “it’s just not growing as plentiful in the mountains as it used to.”¹⁵¹ This brings up an interesting inquiry for future research. As the availability of long used herbs become scarce, and possibly highly regulated and expensive, what does that say for the next chapter in Appalachian folk medicine? What has already been lost?

Shared information and oral histories allow for the transference of knowledge to continue. The popular understanding of Appalachian culture is a direct result of these practices, and old ideas coalesce with new ideas to challenge the notion of nostalgia and modernity as mutually exclusive. When looking at medical practices it is not just important to see what has remained the same but also what has changed. Preservation came in many forms towards the end of the twentieth-century. With the passage of time, folk healing practices became less a reflection of old practices and more a reflection of the ways in which maintenance of cultural practices occurred. It also confirmed the importance of shared medicinal knowledge as a family heirloom and as a significant component of Appalachia handed down from generations to generation.

In Jackson County, such venues as Mountain Heritage Day, and the Mountain Heritage Center’s oral histories conducted predominately in the late 1990s, exhibit both the importance and interest in the topic of folk healing. Western North Carolina residents have been of great interest to the interviewer for the purposes of preserving social and cultural practices including health knowledge. Newspaper articles and oral interviews have provided a wealth of information about herbal practices that have been handed down from generation to generation, and also document the ways in which health information represents a sense of shared history. At the same time traditional and modern practices have coalesced to form new cultures, while also

¹⁵¹ Mosely interview.

retaining remnants of the individual cultures they came from.¹⁵² The syncretic systems often are the ways in which “traditional” models of life experience continuity and change.

So much of the history associated with Appalachia has to do with industry, economy, and cultural preservation that often times it seems that outside forces and binary constructions of rural and urban cultures shape Appalachia. Looking at the development and continuity of folk healing shows the ways in which Jackson County residents have influenced and been influenced by their geographical and cultural surroundings and how they have influenced their surroundings. Perhaps it is most easily seen in the families of the area, but it has had a far reaching effect in popular culture like other aspects of traditional Appalachian culture.

For Jackson County residents, medicine relates to memory and experience. The nostalgic image of Appalachia cannot exist without industrialization, and only with the advent of modern scientific medicine. Language, practice, and ritual reinforce stereotypes. Health and medicinal practices are one facet of Appalachian cultural traditions. They are also signifiers of larger trends such as the commercialization of healing and home remedies, and indicative of personal experience. From George Frizzell grasping to recall health practices from his youth, or Mary Jane Queen’s use of almanacs and knowledge about her father’s medical practices, or the advertisement for “likker” in the windows of stores and the willingness of strangers to share their family’s folk and herbal remedies, these are pieces of Jackson County’s history. The residents

¹⁵² For more information about and examples of the coexistence of traditional and modern medicinal practices refer to Anthony Cavender, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Sandra Lee Barney, *Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Medicine in Appalachia, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Messer, Mary Judith Messer, *Moonshiner’s Daughter: Growing Up Poor in the Smokies* (Junaluska, NC: Doing Well Now Publishers, 2010).

themselves have been integral in reconfiguring the ways in which Appalachian folk medicine fits into Appalachian imagery in the twentieth-first century.

There, of course, is no singular southern Appalachian identity, or a homogenous culture that envelopes the entirety of the population. There are, however, shared practices—vestiges of cultural inheritance—passed from generation to generation, like the Lady Slipper tea I learned about at Fontana Lake. There are also those who become familiar with such folk healing and traditional practices without familial connections, but instead through nostalgic connections and the celebration of heritage. David Lowenthal asserted, “heritage is sanctioned not by proof of origins but by present exploits.”¹⁵³ By going back to the land, visiting Mountain Heritage Day, reading almanacs and instructive medicinal books, or watching a television show visitors, viewers, and readers actively participate in the perpetuation and evolution of Appalachianess. Development, tourism, residents, and non-locals have all played a part in this process, but the most important aspect of this study has been to present the maintenance and variations in the ways in which folk and herbal healing have been preserved. Residents of Jackson County and western North Carolina, in the heart of Southern Appalachia, have made this possible.

Concluding her interview with Emma Moseley, interviewer Emily Lower exclaimed “I feel like this isn’t my home community but everybody’s experience is really valuable...it’s really recording a part of the local history. I mean you were before you talked to me but this is recording it.”¹⁵⁴ Folk medicine is a source to examine the trends that have redefined the ways in which people have come to understand health and healing life in Jackson County and beyond. In concluding *Hillbilly* Anthony Harkins wrote, “looking closely at the “hillbilly” image thus

¹⁵³ Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past*, 127.

¹⁵⁴ Mosely interview.

reveals the myriad ways Americans use popular culture to define personal and national identity and to help come to terms with the ambiguities in their own lives in a rapidly evolving society.”¹⁵⁵ The nostalgic image of the mountaineer and Appalachianess popularized by media and literature serves as an important tool with which to preserve local history. Examining the role of heritage and nostalgia in the perpetuation folk healing and the role of folk healing in the development of the hillbilly mountaineer illuminates not just an evolving Appalachianess but also an evolving American society.

¹⁵⁵ Harkins, *Hillbilly*, 5; Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 221.

CONCLUSION

There is a North Carolina Highway Historical Marker on Highway 107 in Jackson County that memorializes John R. Brinkley. In fact there are several of these markers denoting important fragments of Jackson County history: Judaculla Rock, William H. Thomas, Wade Hampton, and the Cherokee Indian Reservation are just a few. What these snippets cannot and do not impart in their truncated biographies and descriptions are the nuances of daily life in Jackson County. Instead, the task of understanding the experiences of residents in a particular geographic area requires looking to local trends and the influences of internal and external forces. Folk medicine is an important link to the past for many people in southern Appalachia, and to the future for many more. The ways in which the stereotypes of Appalachian folk medicine came into being required a process that first defined the places and people of Appalachia. However, over time the perceptions have changed and what once was a source of stereotype became the subject of fascination which has, in turn, led to its prominence as a function of preserving Appalachian culture in Jackson County.

Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the development of Jackson County, North Carolina, reflected larger socio-cultural changes in America. Using Jackson County and its residents as a way to examine the ways in which Appalachia—and Appalachianness—were created and subsequently affected by these changes offers a nuanced approach. Looking at the ways in which Jackson County residents practiced folk healing out of necessity and convenience, as well as for a source of identity and power, reveals the complex ways in which residents and visitors—insiders and outsiders—navigated the changing cultural landscape.

Changing influences and ways of life throughout the twentieth century played a significant role in the development of Jackson County's Appalachianess. The importance of this is profound. Jackson County became a site for community interest in actively celebrating and participating in Appalachian culture. However, as geographer Wilbur Zelinsky proposed, "we are describing a culture, not the individuals who participate in it. Obviously, a culture cannot exist without bodies and minds to flesh it out; but culture is also something both of *and beyond* the participating members. Its totality is palpably greater than the sum of its part."¹⁵⁶ Therefore, residents in western North Carolina lived within and outside of the culture of Appalachia. Like the ways in which Cherokees performed "indianness," Appalachianess encompasses a generalized understanding of culture. These behaviors have become visible through literature, performance, television, and other means of widely disseminated information.

In *Social Identities: Multidisciplinary Approaches* Gary Taylor and Steve Spence concluded that, "identity is in part a uniquely personal, internal sense of self, but at the same time it relates to that person's place in society and how they are categorized and the flow of dominant cultural meanings and the power relations contingent on these."¹⁵⁷ The dynamics of social life and identity in a rural community in southern Appalachia in the twentieth century was composed of cultural meaning and power relations as a result of the ways in which mountain folk—and the geography of rural space itself—were conceived of by the dominant culture of influential middle class writers. Folk healing practices became a symbol for the power relations and the creation of dominant cultural meanings within the context of rural southern Appalachia.

¹⁵⁶ Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992), 41.

¹⁵⁷ Gary Taylor and Steve Spence, ed., "Introduction," *Social Identities: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3.

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, writers depicted western North Carolina as a rural frontier removed from “civilized” America in popular magazines with a predominately middle class audience.¹⁵⁸ This assessment of Appalachia as a world removed, as well as the growing tension between urban and rural landscapes, reinforced differences between residents of the mountains in western North Carolina and other areas of southern Appalachia. These issues translated to the folkways and traditional practices that persisted in Appalachia.

In the early twentieth century, visitors such as Horace Kephart and John C. Campbell continued to write about western North Carolina as a place where the inhabitants were different. According to some color writers, many residents remained superstitious, and as Mary French Caldwell wrote “the Holy Rollers and faith healers prey upon ignorant, superstitious minds” in the mountains.¹⁵⁹ Many people considered such practices outmoded and primitive in nature, thus creating an association between southern Appalachian people in isolated areas with antiquated behaviors that belonged in the past.

From the 1920s onward performative practices of rurality formed and maintained an Appalachian folk culture. This did not mean that population and physical spaces no longer mattered, but the actions of the inhabitants or the ways in which certain behaviors or practices of residents were perceived were designated as a part of Appalachia. The result of the creation of folk medicine as a symbol of rural Appalachian life was significant in Jackson County in the

¹⁵⁸ Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: The University of Knoxville Press, 1982), 3; Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 2.

¹⁵⁹ Mary French Caldwell, “Change Comes to the Appalachian Mountaineer,” in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, ed. W.K. McNeil (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 225.

1920s to the mid twentieth century. Despite the arrival of a hospital and popular medicines, herbal medicine remained a resource for home use and community use.

However, the transitions throughout the twentieth century that led to the development of a distinct region and Appalachianess required the participation of visitors and residents in southern Appalachia, as is evidenced in the history of Jackson County. Interviews of Jackson County residents from the twentieth century indicate the role folk medicine played in everyday life. Folk healing played a valuable role in the maintenance of life, community, and economy in a place already filled with cultural meaning, changing the role folk healing played in the daily lives of residents. However, Mary Jane Queen, Emma Mosely, and other western North Carolina residents used folk medicine not because of cultural meaning designated by the dominant culture. Rather, they turned to folk medicine. Despite publications that promoted a folk culture, the ways in which Appalachian residents maintained their medicinal practices was less about Appalachianess than it was about their lives. They adapted to changes, but did not lose traditions.

In 1930, Mary French Caldwell wrote, “the mountaineer is standing face to face with the modern world. What he will do with it and what it will do with him are interesting subjects for speculation.”¹⁶⁰ The nostalgia for an Appalachia different than and removed from a larger cultural landscape in America, however, changed towards the end of the twentieth century. As the inundation of images in media crystallized, hillbillies, granny women, and ‘sang hunters retained an air of Appalachianess, but were no longer removed from American culture. Instead, they are a part of it. In Jackson County, the attention given to preserving Appalachianess and

¹⁶⁰ Mary French Caldwell, “Change Comes to the Appalachian Mountaineer,” in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, ed. W.K. McNeil (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 225.

the knowledge of folk healing exemplifies the ways in which Americans have sought to celebrate and retain cultures that some thought were lost to an industrialized country in the throes of modernity.

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