7—
Selling Tradition

Covering an exhibition of guild crafts at the Milwaukee Art Institute in 1934, one journalist noted the apparent abandonment of traditional terms like "coverlets"; instead, this writer asserted, the southern mountaineers had "surrendered to the call of the modern and name them all 'couch throws.'" [1] This statement suggests that efforts to tame the "wild" mountaineers and to steer them toward a new, nonthreatening role in modern, industrial America—as producers of furnishings for the nation's middle-class homes—had met with success. The journalist's comments also reflect, however, some of the ways in which ideas about tradition and modernity shaped conceptions of Appalachia and its peoples, hinting at the complex roles such ideas played in the domestication of Southern Appalachian culture in the 1930s. The contingent structures of an industrial capitalist consumer culture—the aggressive calculus of the market, on the one hand, and such related engines of longing and nostalgia as museums, the Arts and Crafts movement, and the colonial revival on the other—created a niche for southern mountain products that helped redefine both their meaning and the relationship of their makers to the larger culture of industrial America.

Mainstream Americans saw the uniqueness of southern mountain culture as deriving from preindustrial conditions that persisted into the present, preserving the legacy of an idealized colonial past. Thus the difference between mountaineers and inhabitants of other parts of the country was explained as a temporal rather than a cultural one. They were Americans, certainly, but Americans repre-

Articles made of coverlet weavings and hooked mats, n.d., Allanstand Cottage Industries.
(Courtesy of Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, Folk Art Center, Asheville, N.C.)

senting an earlier and nobler time. Tradition, then, played two important roles in domesticating the Appalachian South: it mediated between past and present, and it made the mountain people's differences seem benign. [2]

As earlier chapters have shown, the process of "traditionalizing" these crafts and their makers stripped them of their individual and multidimensional contexts and histories and endowed them instead with more generalized meanings that proved valuable in the marketplace. The worth of mountain handicrafts as commodities was tied to the identification of mountain people with an idealized past that belied the complexity of culture and society in the region, past and present. Nonetheless, the mythic interpretation of mountain culture, which bestowed a seal of authenticity upon objects made in the region, was sometimes at odds with the consumer-market orientation that came to influence the design, styles, materials, and circumstances of production. For example, the economic need that

prompted Mrs. Nolan's tiring work on a twelve-treadle loom for the Pine Mountain Settlement School, and the conditions under which she performed that labor, contrasted vividly with the images of women engaged in pleasurable activity constructed to sell such goods to middle-class American consumers.

In short, tradition sold goods by providing an avenue for com-modifying culture and history. Advertisements, the popular press, public exhibitions, sales outlets, and marketing endeavors all ex-tolled mountain handicrafts as objects steeped in mountain tradition and used by contemporary mountaineers. History and tradition, which were not yet understood to be commodities, bestowed value on contemporary mountain crafts by locating their meaning outside of the marketplace. Tradition—of skills, peoples, and things—gave modern consumers access to the values and standards of an imagined past without sacrificing the conveniences and options of the present. Consumable yet noncommercial, mountain crafts offered the variety of forms and designs consumers wanted without the taint of commercial mass production.

The dual role assigned to mountain crafts, as embodied history and as commodities, played out one of the central tensions of American culture in the 1930s, that between tradition and modernity. The association of Appalachian handicrafts with tradition proved to be a powerful inducement to buyers, but it took the institution of the modern marketplace to efficiently sell such goods. Ironically, those who promoted and dealt in handicrafts used the mechanisms of the marketplace to deny its own role in the production and sales of southern mountain crafts. At the same time, the people of the Appalachian South acquired a new place in modern American society. As producers of handcrafted goods marketed beyond their local communities, they were no longer merely protectors of the nation's past; now they were also participants in a mainstream consumer culture. This expanded identity did little to shake most people's dearly held notions of Appalachia as the vital connection to America's pioneer past, but it did help to assimilate these "alien" Americans into a modern culture that embraced the fruits of industrialism even as it revered the past.

Marketing and business professionals were instrumental in helping craft leaders identify a niche for mountain craftwork in the urban

marketplace. Several federal agencies and government-funded projects conducted studies to determine the nature of craft products and to identify those with the most market potential. One such organization was the Tennessee Valley Authority-sponsored Southern Highlanders, Inc. Soon after its inception, Southern Highlanders began consulting with sales experts from large manufacturing companies and marketing research and analysis firms. These analysts recommended that the cooperative market its mountain handicrafts through standard commercial trade outlets such as retail stores, which could develop and capitalize on the consumer appeal of the "mountaineer background"; focusing on costlier items like silver, fine pottery, and special textiles, they suggested, would attract a small but valuable group of customers drawn to quality in workmanship and style. They advised Southern Highlanders to enlist the aid of more experts—in particular, a designer and production and sales managers—to meet these goals. [3]

Indeed, Southern Highlanders's leaders believed that sales and design professionals would help them understand the needs of "a new consuming public" and would, moreover, provide a solution to the lack of contact between consumers and mountain craft leaders and producers that had delayed "modernization and improvement of handicraft design." In 1935, after consulting with the director of industrial relations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Richard Bach, Southern Highlanders hired textile designer Ruth Reeves to coordinate matters of design and the styling of products for the urban marketplace. Reeves expected to educate the craft leaders as well as the craftspeople themselves about "seasonally timed" colors and style trends, comparative market prices, and standards and competition.[4]

The cooperative offered design services to its producers through three channels: general bulletins circulated among members; special bulletins for particular crafts; and correspondence with the representative at the New York shop. General bulletins included reports on innovations and trends in color and design, along with suggestions for new products. They also offered sketches and pictures and occasionally comments by the cooperative's New York representative, Mary Rodney. Reeves's own "Style Notes for Women's Apparel and House Furnishings" was illustrated with color swatches and

drawings of particular styles and weaves. Her notes on women's clothing included instructions about textures and materials for spring dresses; suggestions for using handwoven materials in cruise, sports, and beach wear; reports on colors and color schemes, including fashion colors from Paris and Palm Beach; and information on accessories. With regard to house furnishings, Reeves addressed three significant trends in maple, modern, and eighteenth-century English furnishings, and she discussed design and color elements in bedspreads, table linens, and rugs. Finally, Reeves urged the development of modernized craft products, claiming that "modern patterns that lend themselves to the early American room are a distinct contribution." In her attention to color schemes, Reeves was responding to broad market concerns. The increasing quantity and variety of goods available commercially from the 1920s onward made it necessary for sellers to develop a corresponding knowledge about this new merchandise and its prospective markets. Especially as a wider variety of colors became available, the new concern with style often expressed itself in terms of "color harmony." [5]

Southern Highlanders believed that its New York shop provided the cooperative with important connections to potential urban customers and so continued to maintain it, despite financial losses. Indeed, the shop did prove an effective means of communicating consumers' wishes to mountain producers. Rodney made use of her New York contacts and market networks to do her own product research. Gleaning information from advertisements and from goods sold in such stores as Lord and Taylor and Bergdorf Goodman, for example, shop manager Mary Rodney identified style and design trends, pricing structures, and uses of particular goods that enabled her to critique samples from mountain producers in relation to market demands. In addition, direct correspondence between Rodney and individual producers or producing centers could result in the manufacture of crafts in response to Rodney's and customers' specific requests. The New York shop was featured in magazines such as *American Home* and *Creative Design*, sparking expressions of interest from middle-class women as well as from designers and merchandisers with prominent department stores like Filene's, Altman's, and Macy's. Allen Eaton suggested that southern mountain crafts provided American homemakers in "modest circumstances"

with opportunities to purchase functional yet beautiful objects for their homes. [6]

Apparently, at least some craftspeople responded to the advice offered by Southern Highlanders and its experts; the cooperative estimated that its efforts culminated in about fifty new styles, designs, and products. One magazine article suggested that some mountain craftworkers were earning "spectacular individual incomes" as a result of their responsiveness to the needs of New York customers. One such woman selling through Southern Highlanders, the authors claimed, made $175 in a month by weaving homespun blankets for the "fashionable dogs of New York City." A craft producer's positive response to suggestions from the cooperative and its New York representatives was of the utmost importance. In weighing an inquiry from an independent craftworker who wished to join the cooperative, Southern Highlanders staff members looked at more than the individual's products. They also considered how they might best be able to communicate advice to the craftsman or craftswoman, believing that "in few cases is there indication that unaffiliated producers will respond readily to a letter."[7]

Market studies and experts, New York stores, and design services all helped sell Southern Appalachian crafts to American consumers, while the value of these products ultimately derived from an ascribed "authenticity" based on their presumed origins outside of the marketplace. Mountain handicrafts, as the offspring of both age-old traditions and the contemporary marketplace, demonstrated the compatibility of the traditional and the modern, at least in terms of design. But the ease with which craft leaders connected the old and the new belied the difficulties mountain producers encountered in negotiating their changing world. Craft leaders' descriptions of the circumstances of production, the organization of industry, and the use of handicrafts in contemporary mountain life ignored the realities of economic and cultural life in the region.

The "authenticity" of Southern Appalachian handicrafts depended upon their established connection to mountain peoples. Thus, the advertising and promotional materials that craft organizations used sought to link craft and culture, craft and maker. Crafts were promoted as objects that had meaning in mountain culture and for mountain people, because it was this association that might make

them attractive to potential customers. Allen Eaton, for example, suggested that mountain crafts offered consumers a vital connection with Appalachian folk. He implored craft leaders to continue to focus on the personal associations conveyed by the crafts as a marketing device; mainstream America's interest in the highlanders, Eaton believed, came from the "true and quaint stories of them . . . captured by social workers, writers, and visitors to the region." To ignore this personal context, he argued, was to ignore a "strong bond relating the possessor of an example of Highland handicraft to some mountain character, family, or group of neighbors." [8]

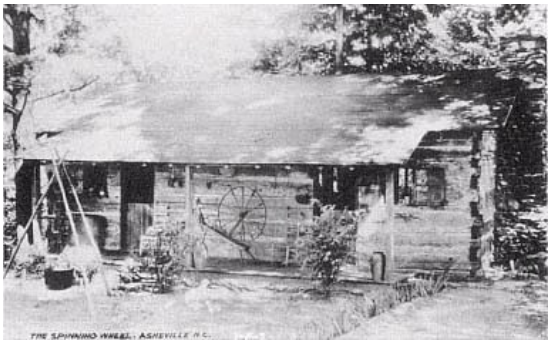
References to the aspects of mountain culture embodied in different crafts might be vague or specific. Southern Highlanders suggested that each woodcarving "carries with it a sense of mountain life and living." Other associations were more explicit, describing motifs for handicrafts that had been "drawn from life"—from typical objects, events, and "real-life characters" found in the mountains. As if to document the genuineness of the origins and meanings of its crafts, Southern Highlanders advertised books and drawings that "paint a true picture of life in the Southern Highlands," including Frances L. Goodrich's *Mountain Homespun* (1931) and Muriel Earley Sheppard's *Cabins in the Laurel* (1935). When an individual piece was signed by its maker, Southern Highlanders might designate it "an authentic, original work of art." Thus, woodcarvings marked with the carvers' initials were hailed as "the equivalent of the best folk art now being produced in America," complete with identifiable provenance.[9]

Promotional materials frequently linked crafts with their mountain makers by introducing "typical" artisans who appeared, either visually or descriptively, engaged in their craftwork. One article featured a series of captioned photographs that would, it said, give readers a chance to "meet some of the southern mountain folk" who had made the goods displayed at Southern Highlanders's 1935 Christmas sale in Rockefeller Plaza. These photographs depicted mountain craftspeople in old-fashioned dress, working with traditional tools and using traditional methods. They showed Nance Day carding wool for yarn to be woven into coverlets and Frank Ritchie of Mud Lick, Kentucky, weaving a chair bottom. The captions emphasized the historical and old-fashioned nature of their cloth-

ing and work processes. Publicity materials frequently reprinted Doris Ulmann's romanticized photographs of mountain scenes and people, such as her image of Granny Creech's granddaughters on the porch of a mountain cabin, "churning butter in a churn chopped out of the neighboring forest" and clothed in "linsey-woolsey which they probably wove themselves." [10]

Paramount among the visual images and props employed to support the notion that handicrafts were made in and for the traditional mountain home—thus attesting to the genuineness of the products—was the log cabin with its domestic contents. As an icon for the Southern Appalachian home and as a symbol of local culture and crafts, it was used almost universally wherever crafts were sold, advertised, or displayed. Mountain craft leaders like Clementine Douglas had long housed their industries in old log cabins. In The Spinning Wheel, as in many such enterprises, the traditional tools of the craft—looms, spinning wheels, hackles, cooking pots, and other domestic implements—were carefully placed around the cabin and displayed "about its fireplace." Cabin porches held still more tools, and the yards contained dye pots, situated where visitors could easily see them. Such carefully arranged artifacts created quaint environments for the work carried on in these buildings, providing "a link between the present and the past" and supporting the notion that life in the present-day mountains was much the same as it had been 150 years earlier. [11]

The log cabin, of course, was a popular device in all sorts of celebrations and interpretations of American antiquities, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth. The Appalachian craft revival was in some ways just another manifestation of the colonial revival. Both expressed a yearning for an idealized past and tried to cultivate ways of life associated with a vague premodern state in the interests of creating a unified national identity. Both focused on preserving or re-creating particular kinds of objects to embody tradition and foster the maintenance of yesterday's skills, designs, and forms. "Period room" displays, log cabin reconstructions, craft demonstrations by women and men in costume, and icons of preindustrial production such as spinning wheels and looms were all typical expressions of the colonial revival. In the mountains, organizations marketing craftwork por-



The Spinning Wheel, Asheville, N.C., n.d.
(From *The Spinning Wheel*, n.d.,
pamphlet; courtesy of Southern Highland Handicraft Guild,
Folk Art Center, Asheville, N.C.)

trayed mountain culture as a lingering remnant of colonial American culture. [12]

The value and the beauty of handicrafts, Southern Highlanders manager Paul Johnson insisted, grew partly from their "continuance through the years, carrying with them the pride of workmanship and the traditional patterns and methods of work." Continuity suggested the persistence of a preindustrial culture in a region where one could find the sixth consecutive generation of weavers working at the craft "in the same familiar atmosphere of colonial charm" as their ancestors. One Southern Highlanders brochure explained that, as "kinfolks" of pioneers who settled in the mountains some two hundred years ago, southern mountaineers preserved many of the customs and traditions of their "Anglo-Saxon" forebears. They lived a wilderness life of self-sufficiency, creating beauty by making useful things by hand and acquiring goods through barter and the exchange of skills.[13]

This kind of advertising stressed continuity in the mountain residents' use of handmade objects. Some publicity materials explicitly claimed that the types of craft products sold to urban consumers were identical to ones still used by mountain folk in their own

Advertisement for mountain pottery.
(From *The Southern Highlanders, Inc., Native American Crafts*, [1939?];
courtesy of Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, Folk Art Center, Asheville, N.C.)

homes. An article in *House Beautiful* asserted that the jugtown pottery made in Waco and Bybee, Kentucky, "is not made for the exclusive use of (and purchase by) the rest of America. It is made in the mountains, and it is used in the mountains." The candlesticks, batter and syrup jugs, and teapots advertised in its pages, the magazine declared, were found in mountain homes that needed them as well as in the city homes that "treasure them." [14]

Regardless of the crafts' true origins, these invented circumstances of their production, together with their presumed cultural and historical meanings and the natural materials and hand processes that went into their making, stamped southern mountain creations as authentic and noncommerical goods. Yet even commercial companies employed similar images and strategies. The Withers workshops in Kirk, Kentucky, claimed that geography and descent were fundamental to the fine hand quilting done by local women. The "picturesque log cabins" and "stately Colonial houses set in old fashioned gardens" where their needlewomen presumably lived and worked provided an atmosphere "rich with the enchantment of other days . . . highly favorable to the creation of . . . art." Like-

wise, publicity for the modern Aunt Nancy rugs made in the Blue Ridge Mountains asserted that environment and the old-fashioned production process endowed the crafts with "much of the quaintness and charm of the Old Colonial rugs—really it's there—worked right into the rug." Aunt Nancy rugs featured new designs, but, the company promised, they descended from the old colonial types. Dyed and hooked in mountain homes, these rugs were "really and truly homemade," evidenced by the fact that "there is none of the symmetry and precision in them that is so apparent in the machine and factory made rugs." [15]

The past that these crafts presumably represented was itself an invention, vested with honorable and virtuous attributes of the colonial and pioneer eras that supposedly prevailed in the mountain region—among them domesticity, community, and fine workmanship. In this construction of the past, continuity of traditions was ensured by upholding the family, the credit for which was ascribed to women—and saintly women at that. Women who practiced old crafts at home supported their households both materially and emotionally, earning needed income while caring for their families. To preserve community traditions, they adhered to high moral standards established long ago—the gifts of Anglo-Saxon ancestors to contemporary mountaineers. Small wonder that one Appalachian School brochure captioned a photograph of a mountain woman seated at her loom next to the fireplace thus: "Her children rise up and call her blessed."[16]

Such continuity of traditions among mountain folk, craft promoters suggested, played a valuable role in preserving this pioneer past for the rest of the nation. Isolated from modern America by "cosmopolitan philosophy and machinery" rather than distance, claimed one writer, southern highlanders continued to raise and make, rather than buy, the necessities of life, those useful objects of beauty that were "the current delight of a machine-glutted and gadget-burdened society."[17] Mountain handicrafts also appeared to embody another feature of the past: direct human contact in the form of the face-to-face relationships characteristic of local culture in the southern mountains. One Southern Highlanders catalog claimed that mountain craftspeople themselves both made and delivered their goods "direct to their ultimate owners," contrary to

the "accelerated and impersonal system" that distributed machine-made goods in the urban world. Another writer explained that the mountaineers offered the nation something more valuable than material wealth, "since in their open-handedness and sincerity repose gifts of the spirit that warm and elevate." Craftspeople also provided alternative models for business and commerce based on, for example, cooperation rather than competition. [18]

Tradition bespoke quality workmanship, assured by hand as opposed to machine production. The "homely materials" and motifs, typically "drawn from life" and from objects and events familiar to their creators, suggested the genuineness of mountain handicrafts. "Rugged skill and honest craftsmanship" conveyed character from the maker to the created object, and these qualities implied inherently high standards. Mountain craftworkers presumably "learned their trade from their forefathers," which by inference made their products superior to those of, for example, the Mexicans or Japanese. Paul Johnson argued that shops handling mountain crafts rarely showed anything "cheap or tawdry," for true products of mountain folk assured excellence. This sacralization of the handmade over the degraded, machine-produced object reflected the connections between the craft revival and the late-nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement.[19]

But craft leaders and consumers, however uncomfortable they might be with their rapidly changing and increasingly bureaucratic and industrial world, were not willing to return to the real past; instead, they longed for an imagined past—a domesticated one compatible with present-day comforts and conveniences. Leaders of the benevolent craft enterprises devoted much effort to creating designs and forms that met the emerging consumer demands and to instructing mountain craftspeople so that they would produce appropriate goods. The workshops at Berea College capitalized on the colonial design sources of many of their textiles, but they also accommodated the modern through their use of updated colors. Their colonial "kivers" were available in old patterns such as Queen Anne's Lace and Lee's Surrender, but they could be purchased not only in the madder red of yesteryear, but also in green, yellow, or orange. Like many of the advertisements and articles about mountain handicrafts that appeared in domestic magazines, Berea's pub-

licity focused on the uses for mountain crafts in modern homes and country houses as well as in those decorated in the popular colonial style. Ultimately, the ads claimed, "no modern home is too modern to be without the gracious touch of Colonial weavings." [20]

In stressing the compatibility between the "traditional" and the "modern" home, advertisements often characterized the skills and methods used in making the crafts as traditional and the forms as modern. Southern Highlanders, for example, offered baskets in traditional forms, but its 1938–39 sales book also featured auto picnic, pet, magazine, and thermos picnic baskets. Furniture offerings included a Tuckaway folding table and a luggage rack with matching tray. One media review of merchandise in the Southern Highlanders New York store found the crafts remarkably undistinguishable as southern products. It described a variety of goods, including the kitchen aprons that made one look like cookbook author "June Platt whipping up a *pain surprise* over her outdoor grill." Presumably, Southern Highlanders's aprons would fit right in with the cooking accessories prescribed for modern middle-class housewives all over the nation.[21]

Some advertising strove to bridge past and present by suggesting that tradition was to be found in the mountaineers' heritage and environment, and modernity in the styles and forms of the goods they made. Eleanor Beard emphasized the rustic environment of her quilting studio in Hardinsburg, Kentucky, "notable for its primitive natural beauty, for the unspoiled Anglo-Saxon sturdiness of its people and for the unequalled facility of its needlewomen in the art of quilting." Like many craft leaders, Beard attributed the abilities of her workers to their cultural and racial roots. But Beard's merchandise was distinctly modern in style, and she described her shops in such fashionable places as New York, Chicago, and Palm Springs as "a rendezvous for interesting women." Here women came not only to purchase clothing, but also to meet, talk, and smoke "the fascinating green-taffeta-tipped Eleanor Beard cigarettes."[22]

Bringing together the traditional in crafts with modern aesthetics and functions focused attention on mountain handicrafts as consumer goods rather than cultural artifacts. For the convenience of the shopper, the Southern Highlanders sales book arranged items by consumer market or purpose in sections such as "Dolls and Party

The Art of the Basket Maker

(Sizes may vary slightly from those shown)

1. Auto picnic basket of split whiteoak, dyed walnut brown, removable lid—tall enough to hold thermos bottle upright—two sizes, 7x18 ..... 2.50
   7x21 ..... 3.00
2. Pet basket — sturdily built of brown-dyed whiteoak splits, in three sizes—all with handle — Kitten, 14" square (not pictured); Cat, 15x10; Dog, 17" high x 24" square 2.00, 2.50, 3.50
3. Three-decker brown-dyed whiteoak picnic basket, with shawl strap—the cover makes a grand tray—three sizes: 9x14, 11x18, 13x18 ..... 4.50, 5.50, 6.00
   (Two-decker, not pictured, same sizes, 3.00, 3.50, 4.00)
4. Gayly colored maple splits are used in this thermos picnic basket—7x15x12 (high) 2.50
5. Oval covered picnic basket of natural whiteoak splits, decorated with red-and-blue or green-and-yellow dyed splits—three sizes: 9x10, 11x17, 14x20—1.25, 2.50, 3.00
6. Big magazine or flower basket—brown only—12x18, 15x20, 18x24—1.50, 2.00, 2.50
7. Scrap basket of maple splits—attractively dyed—blue and grey tones, green and yellow, brown and yellow 1.75
8. Garden tool or kindling basket—natural or brown dyed whiteoak—8x18 ..... 1.50
9. Window garden — brown dyed whiteoak basket complete with heavy galvanized inner tray 2.00
10. Wall pocket—used by many as a mail or newspaper basket—natural or brown dyed whiteoak only 60c

Most baskets are made of whiteoak splits; sturdy, and long lasting. Maple splits are smoother, lighter and take a more delicate color in the dyeing. Either will give excellent service.

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Advertisement for southern mountain baskets, ca. 1938.
(From *The Southern Highlanders, Inc., Handmade Gifts of Unusual Beauty*, sales catalog; courtesy of Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, Folk Art Center, Asheville, N.C.)

Favors," "For the Desk and Study," "For Cozier Firesides," and "For the Very Young." The simplicity of mountain craft products, one author suggested, made them ideal for "a truly early American house or a country cottage," even as another pointed out that these goods were attractive because consumers could choose particular colors and styles to fit their decorating needs, because essentially "all items are individuals." [23]

Interpreting mountain crafts simultaneously as commodities and as history created ambiguous new roles for the mountaineers and their handwork, in turn provoking a conflict within the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild that called into question the organization's identity as an educational enterprise. This tension was at the heart of the guild's relationship with the tourism industry as the opening of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park drew near. The Park Service, in planning concessions for the Smokies and the Shenandoah National Park, hoped to steer clear of the inexpensive, mass-produced souvenirs that it believed cheapened visitors' experiences in the parks. Early in the 1930s, the park system began discussions with the guild about building concessions around native mountain crafts in the two parks. Hoping to explore new markets, in 1933 the guild appointed a committee to consider the possibility of making small craft objects to sell as souvenirs for a dollar or less.[24]

Eventually the National Park Service awarded all concessions to one general operator in each park, but it continued planning for the sale of mountain crafts at park shops under some arrangement with the guild. In 1937 the government's concessions contract for Shenandoah National Park went to the Virginia Sky-Line Company of Richmond, with the understanding that souvenirs sold in the park would be "limited primarily to articles of native handicraft of the Appalachian region." Arno Cammerer of the Park Service initiated negotiations between Virginia Sky-Line and Allen Eaton of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, for he felt assured that mountain products obtained through the guild and its sources would "represent the genuine handicrafts of the mountain folk." As talks continued, Eaton realized that the guild would not only establish standards for mountain craft products sold in the park, but that it would also have to supply the goods. To meet the Park Service's needs, the guild would have to become more of a producing

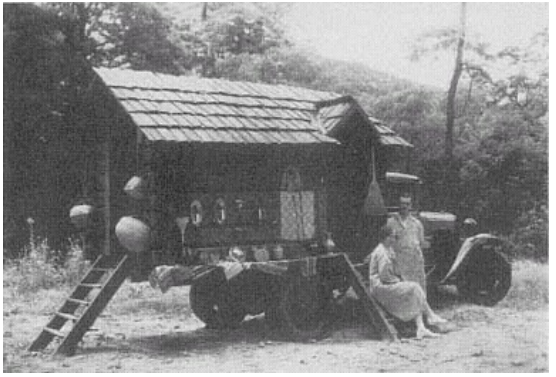
organization, and its craftspeople would have to specialize in crafts suitable in nature and price as souvenirs. [25]

The guild saw its venture in the park as a chance to educate the buying public as well as to control standards for mountain crafts and increase its sales. For a model, the guild could look to the Southern Highlanders store at Norris, Tennessee, which supported itself by selecting its merchandise for tourist consumption. At Norris, the cooperative increased its sales of small "souvenir-type articles," to the dismay of craft leaders who recognized the poorer quality of some of these goods. In fact, Southern Highlanders once had loftier plans for the Norris shop, which it had opened as its first sales room in June 1935. The cooperative hoped the store would serve as "a laboratory for experimenting in retail selling" and would also provide educational services—in product design, styles, and production and business methods—to mountain producers. On-loan exhibitions of "native and foreign" folk art, the work of modern craftspeople, and art from museum collections, along with demonstrations of traditional production methods, would both inspire and instruct teach mountain craftworkers.[26]

The guild found, however, that it could not fulfill both its commercial and its educational agendas in the national parks. Financial considerations forced the guild to wait until the 1914 season to open a park shop at the Big Meadows Lodge in Shenandoah National Park; it then operated the Big Meadows Shop at some hardship. Under the agreement with Virginia Sky-Line, the guild gave the company a quarter of all its gross sales at the shop; in order to finance this arrangement, producing centers sold their goods to the store at a 50 percent discount. By the end of the season, the guild had lost almost four hundred dollars at Big Meadows. Although it hoped to reopen the shop for the 1942 season, wartime gas and tire shortages diminished tourism, and the Virginia Sky-Line Company closed the lodge for that year. In 1946 the guild reopened the craft shop at Big Meadows under a new contract; two years later the *New York Herald Tribune* reported that handicrafts drew as many tourists to the southern Appalachians as the mountains themselves. Evidently, tourists were eager to purchase these symbols of another time, icons of the exotic world of a very alien Appalachian South. Such souvenirs helped domesticate the foreign and unfamiliar.[27]

Finances were not the only issue, however. Although the government hoped that mountain crafts would put a cultural rather than a commercial gloss on the concessions, some guild members were concerned that production of souvenir items debased mountain craftsmanship. Although he supported the sale of mountain handicrafts in the parks, Allen Eaton warned fellow guild members as early as 1931 that "indulgence in cheap articles" would ruin them unless they kept their standards of beauty and quality high. Eaton was troubled by the kind of merchandise the guild sold through the Big Meadows shop. The items that sold most successfully there included small turkeys made of native materials, leaf and shuck mats, party table favors such as tiny baskets, and pottery buttons. These goods sold for ten to fifty cents apiece. Eaton was unhappy with the preponderance of such inexpensive items and handmade goods from outside the mountain region, believing that the guild was being compromised by the commercial factors that controlled its establishement at Big Meadows. He did not want the guild to entirely abandon its efforts to display and sell mountain handicrafts in the park, but he urged the organization to refocus its efforts along educational rather than commercial lines. [28]

Reshaping the constructed Southern Appalachian past and present as commodities certainly made them accessible to the rest of the nation. Sometimes the connection of southern mountain craft traditions to a heroic American past provided such an elaborate context for the sale of the goods that it blurred the boundaries between consumables, entertainment, and history. The Penland Weavers and Potters exhibition at Chicago's Century of Progress in 1933 provides a useful example. In 1931 Lucy Morgan, the director of the weaving industry established at the Appalachian School in Penland, North Carolina, began conversations with Howard Odum, the chief of the Social Science Division of the Century of Progress, about bringing a guild exhibition to Chicago. By the following year the guild had decided that it could not secure sufficient funds for the venture, but Morgan was determined to bring at least Penland's crafts to Chicago. She hoped that a concession at the Century of Progress would save her struggling enterprise and put some of her mountain neighbors back to work, while displaying and interpreting for Americans "a heritage of which future generations will be proud."[29]



Penland Weavers and Potters' "Travellog," ca. 1933.
(Courtesy of A Century of Progress Records, Special Collections,
University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago)

It was Morgan's commercial aims that ultimately determined the location of Penland's exhibition at the fair, where she wanted to be able to sell goods "without undue restrictions." Upon learning that Morgan's plans went beyond educational endeavors to include the sale of mountain handicrafts, fair officials shifted negotiations to the Department of Concessions. Thus southern mountain craft production was not represented in the Hall of Social Science, among exhibits celebrating the advance of science and technology in "the struggle of knowledge to bring order to social life." Typical displays here compared the institutions of yesterday unfavorably to those resulting from the technological developments of the last "century of progress." Most indigenous craftwork shown at the fair appeared in exhibitions in the individual states' buildings or in the U.S. government building. North Carolina did not have a building at the Century of Progress. [30]

Penland, however, set up its log cabin shop in the midst of several other historically themed amusements that offered encounters with icons of pioneer America. The Carolina Cabin sat on the Street of Villages, between Old Fort Dearborn (a reproduction of Chi-

cago's first permanent settlement) and a group of five log cabins representing different periods in Abraham Lincoln's life. Here Penland's representatives settled and expanded a small log cabin they had brought from North Carolina to Chicago on a truck. Known as the Travellog, it had been used previously by Penland as a traveling gift shop. This use of the log cabin as a historical icon anchored the meaning of southern mountain people and their crafts to America's colonial or pioneer past; this same connection was visible in the log cabins and "colonial kitchens" typically featured in historical and domestic exhibits at U.S. Sanitary Commission fairs and other expositions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. [31]

Penland's people added even more mountain "pioneer" atmosphere to their log cabin with the baskets and brooms they hung outside, along with examples of their weaving. A loom, flax break, and wheel were on display, and spinning and weaving demonstrations established that Penland's crafts were genuinely handmade. Saleswomen, spinners, and weavers all worked in costume, as did "Liza Lu," who wove baskets in her calico blouse, bonnet, and linsey-woolsey homespun skirt. For Carolina Cabin Week in May 1933, Morgan brought in a Penland musician and storyteller, Doc Hoppas, to entertain at the fair. Hoppas was an important part of the tableau at the Carolina Cabin, offering an authenticity that Morgan herself, apparently, could not. Responding to one official's charge that *she* did not appear to be a mountain woman, Morgan pointed to Hoppas and his wife: "They are real mountaineers and look it."[32]

Beyond the midway and its environs, exhibitions of southern mountain handicrafts in museums also tended to blur the objects' meanings as historical, cultural, and consumable artifacts. Museum exhibits generally employed the same romantic photographs of bucolic rural landscapes and mountaineers dressed in archaic clothing that appeared in publicity materials circulated by retail outlets. Instead of relying on photographs of log cabins, some museums might feature a reconstruction of the "real thing"—the interior of a mountain home, for example—as a setting in which to display the mountain products. Yet exhibitions in museums bestowed other values upon the crafts. Their mere appearance in such galleries suggested that mountain crafts were significant as works of art—fine, applied, contemporary, folk, or simply American—or as historical

Penland Weavers and Potters' "Carolina Cabin" at Chicago's Century of Progress, 1933-34.
(Courtesy of A Century of Progress Records, Special Collections, University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago)

or ethnographic materials. More overt marketplaces such as shops and private sales did not confer the same value or authority as a museum. For the sake of this added commercial and cultural value, the guild, Southern Highlanders, and other Southern Appalachian craft enterprises were always glad to exhibit their work in prominent museums as art for sale. [33]

Art curators and collectors in the 1930s and 1940s were instrumental in defining the arts and crafts of preindustrial Americans as "folk art" and in creating a new market for the work of untrained artists and artisans.[34] Interest in these forms grew out of American artists' fascination with European modernism and primitivism and their increasing efforts to find uniquely American roots for their own work to replace the domination of conservative academic art. Critic and patron Hamilton Easter Field, who collected the work of European modernists and Asian and African art, found a similarly appealing aesthetic in early American decorative arts. Field decorated the studios at his School of Painting and Sculpture, established at Ogunquit, Maine, in 1913, with his collections of plain paintings, decoys, hooked rugs, and other American decorative arts of the

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The naturalism and abstract character of these objects inspired the painters and sculptors who gathered at Ogunquit. Moreover, rooted in the American past and culture, such artifacts offered artists a national aesthetic tradition upon which to base their own work. Many among the Ogunquit group, including Charles Sheeler and Bernard Karfiol, began collecting early American pieces for themselves, and other New York artists in the modern movement soon took up their interest. The art world's association of primitivism with modern art also encouraged a growing fascination with Indian arts and crafts during the 1930s. [35]

Quickly these American primitives and decorative arts entered the art and antiques marketplace through the efforts of dealers like Isabel Carleton Wilde and Edith Halpert, and in the 1920s they began appearing in gallery and museum exhibits, sometimes in connection with modernist art. The codification of this emerging fine arts definition of folk art resulted from the exhibitions and publications of museum curator Holger Cahill. Trained in aesthetics and art history, a supporter of modernism, and patron to many American modernist artists, Cahill was introduced to what he soon defined as American folk art at Ogunquit in 1926. He subsequently mounted exhibitions of American primitive paintings and sculpture at the Newark Museum. It was Cahill's 1932 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, titled "The Art of the Common Man," however, that established the definition and place of folk art in relationship to the fine arts. In this show and its accompanying catalog, Cahill declared folk art to be the "expression of the common people, made by them and intended for their use and enjoyment." Folk art, he continued, was "the work of people with little book learning in art techniques, and no academic training." As Cahill explained it, folk art was the creation of craftspeople whose work "carried over into the fine arts," and he focused on its aesthetic qualities, such as design and composition. He located folk art production chronologically in preindustrial times; in his view, the production of folk art ceased with the growth of industry in the mid-nineteenth century.[36]

In the years following the First World War, this evolving definition of folk art fulfilled many longings for an imagined bygone America of ethnic and cultural homogeneity and social stability. In an increasingly diverse society, American folk art was a comforting

reminder of a simpler past and a reflection of an ideal nation. This new category of folk art was judged according to the aesthetic standards applied to high art and was collected by and shown at some of the most prestigious art museums in the country. Catalogs and exhibitions alike focused on the aesthetic qualities of this type of art, ignoring issues of function and the social and cultural meanings of the objects. Like other types of fine art, folk art acquired values that enhanced both its own worth and that of its owners. Within the marketplace, the power and prestige of collectors like Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Harry DuPont, and Edsel Ford, as well as such institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, increased folk art's value. This high-art definition and reputation of folk art soon extended to the middle class as well. Smaller institutions and galleries like the Everhart Museum in Scranton, Pennsylvania, began purchasing American folk art. By the mid-1930s, thousands of Americans had seen pieces from Rockefeller's collection displayed in an early American house in Colonial Williamsburg. Others learned about American folk art from the visual renderings produced for the Index of American Design, which Cahill oversaw as director of the Federal Art Project. These drawings and paintings were shown widely in museums, libraries, and department stores in the late 1930s. The sight of index plates in department stores must have encouraged the consumption of reproductions of early American furniture among middle-class Americans. [37]

There were, of course, competing notions of folk art circulating in the 1930s. Allen Eaton, for example, stressed the social and cultural contexts of folk art production and its contemporary as well as its historical roots. He considered not only the maker's aesthetic, but also his or her labor and the object's function. But drawing such distinctions between fine art and cultural or ethnographic perceptions of folk art obscures the similarities between the sources of these definitions and also overlooks the efforts of craft leaders to position the goods and their makers in the art would and the marketplace. Whether represented through the disciplinary lenses of art or anthropology, the makers of folk art have historically been interpreted as primitive and their cultures as authentic and traditional. In both contexts, the physical objects are situated in a "vague

past" or in a "purely conceptual space" defined by primitive qualities "such as magic and closeness to nature." Allen Eaton, while recognizing that folk art was indeed produced in the contemporary world, nevertheless idealized the cultures whose work he studied. He romanticized the rural folk and immigrants who perpetuated the skills and customs of their ancestors. To Eaton, these people did represent remnants of preindustrial America and Europe struggling to survive in modern times. Furthermore, the folk art conceptualized by Eaton quite reasonably reflected the aesthetic preferences of urban consumers rather than its producers; the goods that mountain craftspeople made were not commonly used in mountain homes (contrary to the popular advertisements), but they did fill needs in urban households. [38]

Indeed, mountain craft leaders angled to place their crafts-people's work in the very museums that eagerly displayed the folk art collections of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and other collectors. In such venues, despite the aesthetic and ideological affinities posited between the early American decorative arts and paintings called folk art and mountain handicrafts, the two often were exhibited in very different manners. Southern mountain crafts were typically displayed in one of two broad interpretive contexts—as art or as social tools. In both contexts, they were also shown as commodities.

The Southern Highland Handicraft Guild's first major foray into placing its work on public view in art museums outside of the region came about with the assistance of the American Federation of Arts (AFA). After opening the guild's exhibition, "Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands," at the American Country Life Association meeting in Virginia, the AFA toured the exhibit, consisting of more than five hundred objects, to major art museums around the country. Between 1933 and 1935, this guild exhibition appeared at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Brooklyn Museum, the Decatur (Illinois) Art Institute, the Joslyn Museum in Omaha, the Everhart Museum in Scranton, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Norfolk (Virginia) Museum, the Art Museum of Berea College, and the National Folk Festival in St. Louis.[39]

A number of these sponsoring institutions had an ongoing, serious interest in American art. But for the Corcoran Gallery, primarily known for its portraits of American statesmen, the guild exhibition

was an unusual choice; the gallery's commitment to showing the work of contemporary artists, however, may have encouraged its decision. The show proved to be one of the Corcoran's most popular. The appearance of the guild exhibition at Scranton's Everhart Museum likely reflected that institution's growing involvement in the collecting and display of American folk art and its general interest in arts and crafts. Other exhibits at the Everhart from 1933 to 1935 included displays of textiles, paintings, and pottery from Indian peoples of the Southwest and a collection of late-eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American folk art collected in the Northeast—plain paintings in oil, mourning pictures, fraktur, and wood-carvings, for example. [40]

The content and arrangement of the traveling exhibition, which was planned by Allen Eaton, suggested that the guild was more interested in selling its goods than in teaching Americans about the life and culture, past or present, of the Appalachian South. The exhibited objects represented typical contemporary work by guild members, but the majority were woven goods, woodcarvings, baskets, brooms, and furniture. They were arranged without any obvious intent to make historical or ethnographic statements concerning the crafts or the culture that produced them. Long, narrow platforms held a variety of goods, although in some areas Eaton did display several examples of a particular genre together. In selecting objects to be included, Eaton both considered artistic qualities and chose pieces that represented the typical present-day work of the region. Items thus ranged from "rough and useful" tools and other household accoutrements, made by pioneer mountaineers for their own use, to modern works in metal and wood. The AFA's exhibition of color reproductions by European and American artists, "Rural Scenes and Country Life," served as an introduction to the guild's show and helped place the mountain crafts within the context of rural art. Eaton arranged these prints beside the entrances to the craft display; inside, with the crafts themselves, he hung Doris Ulmann's portraits of southern mountain people, thus tacitly affirming a relationship between the exhibited objects and her romantic view of rural life.[41]

The exhibition catalog focused simultaneously on the mountain crafts as art and as consumer goods. An essay by Eaton addressed

the aesthetic qualities and work processes of some of the native handicrafts. For the convenience of consumers who wished to purchase the crafts for their homes, Eaton organized the catalog by producing center, with notations regarding available colors, sizes, and prices. The ultimate success of mountain crafts, Eaton concluded, would in part depend on consumer taste; their popularity, he predicted, would rise "as the taste of the American home-maker improves." [42]

How different from such art museum displays were the exhibitions of folk arts sponsored by social agencies? Reformers were often involved in the production of "homelands" expositions—international folk festivals that exhibited the craftwork and native traditions of America's newest citizens; as with the Appalachian mountaineers, these immigrant artisans were also presented as keepers of the past. The presenters' goal was to foster respect and tolerance among and for various ethnic groups and to encourage the newcomers' membership in various Americanization organizations. Allen Eaton organized a number of such homelands exhibitions as part of an assimilation effort he initiated through the Russell Sage Foundation in the late 1910s in New York State. His interest in southern mountain craftwork and culture reflected both his roots in reform circles and the perspective of the Sage Foundation, which sponsored much of his work.[43]

Sometimes, folk art exhibits at museums incorporated the homelands approach. In 1938 the New Jersey State Museum, which had already mounted a number of homelands exhibitions featuring immigrant craftwork, organized an exhibition entitled "American Folk Arts of Today" to "encourage individual expression" and foster interest in folk arts. It was organized by a special committee of local citizens and museum director Katherine Greywacz, with the assistance of advisers Allen Eaton and Gladys Spicer Fraser. Fraser was active in the recreation movement, specializing in the production of folk festivals for community work. The New Jersey show exhibited a wide variety of handwork made by independent craftspeople as well as those affiliated with organizations. It included work from such groups as Southern Highlanders and the League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts, crafts made by hospital patients, and products made for commercial companies like Laura Copenhaver's

Rosemont Industries of Virginia and Fred Leighton's Mexican Imports of New York City. [44]

Although no evidence remains to suggest the content of interpretive or identifying labels, the exhibition committee did collect information about the craftspeople and producing centers and their work. Research material for the labels ranged in content from simple identification of the object, maker, size, and value to more extensive notes regarding the craft process, design origins, and the nature of the materials. The museum held demonstrations of spinning and weaving and pottery making in the gallery as part of the exhibit-related programming. Southern Appalachian crafts constituted a major part of the exhibition. Much of the southern highland offerings were market-oriented goods: pewter or pottery napkin clips, carved animals and cigarette boxes, baskets, lunch mats, and patio strings and boutonnieres made from native materials. Some of the more traditional forms appeared among the furniture, baskets and pottery. As with the guild exhibit at the Corcoran, the objects or duplicates thereof were clearly intended for purchase. At the New Jersey museum, visitors could either buy crafts from the exhibition or order copies to be provided by the producers themselves.[45]

Thus, from the scant evidence available it appears that, in whatever museum context the mountain crafts were exhibited—as art or as the cultural and social artifacts of a people—they were nevertheless exhibited as consumer goods. Certainly there were connections between the social reformers who organized such exhibitions and festivals and collectors and curators like Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Holger Cahill. Some individuals and institutions participated in both of the folk art worlds represented by Cahill and Eaton, suggesting that, to contemporaries, the two perspectives were not considered opposites or mutually exclusive. The example of Elizabeth Burchenal and the Folk Arts Center she established in New York City is a useful one. Burchenal was active in the recreation movement, which quite early in the century had seized upon folk dance and other traditional arts as useful forms of leisure in community work. Burchenal taught folk dance in the New York City schools and organized folk festivals in the 1920s. Her activities in researching, publishing, and teaching folk dance led her to organize the American Folk Dance Society in 1929. Ten years later she changed

the name of her organization to the Folk Arts Center to reflect her goal of promoting all the folk arts. [46]

In the recreation movement as well as the settlement movement, folk arts provided workers with what they perceived as positive cultural traditions upon which to build wholesome programs and habits. Often, the traditions that they fostered reflected a preference for the Anglo-Saxon and the middle class, sometimes revealing racial hostilities and xenophobia. Burchenal's aims were in many ways similar to the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild's interest in teaching Americans about the cultural resources of the southern mountain people: she wanted to foster knowledge and appreciation of older American arts and customs, native and transplanted. Like her counterparts in the mountains, Burchenal touted the folk arts as antidotes to the ill effects of modernity. She hoped, for example, that the study of folksong by the general public would counteract the "encroachments of social conditions dominated by Industrialism and Commercialism." The modern world that caused Burchenal anxiety was also an ethnically and culturally diverse one, however. Burchenal took comfort in and enlisted the traditions of America's European heritage to dispute the "general misconception that Indian and Negro music and dancing constitute our folk art, or that 'jazz' in any way represents the American people."[47]

Burchenal's preference for America's European roots probably disposed her favorably toward the definition of folk art codified by Holger Cahill. In addition to folk dance and music publications and concerts, the Folk Arts Center also organized and sponsored exhibitions and symposia. During the 1930s, its exhibition calendar included not only Kentucky folk arts, but also Pennsylvania German arts and crafts, Nantucket folk arts, and early American folk art, reflecting the interests of collectors and curators in early American decorative arts. Such exhibitions typically interpreted folk art as fine art and were sometimes lent by museums actively engaged in the collecting and interpretation of folk art. The "Loan Exhibition of Heirlooms and Many Other Old-Fashioned Things from the Homes on Nantucket Island" featured objects acquired by island families before or during the "golden era" of 1810–46. One exhibit publication revealed that, like the early American decorative arts defined as folk art, the Nantucket crafts were interpreted for their aesthetic qualities

and value—that is, as fine arts. The island's early cabinet makers, for example, were described as men of "taste" and skill who made work both "elegant and elect." Evidence of these qualities could be seen in the details of the "gracious" stairways and handturned rails of Nantucket homes. The exhibition of 1935–36 focused on items commonly defined by collectors as folk art, such as whale ship models, scrimshaw, lightship baskets, carvings from ships, decoys, portraits, furniture, and hooked rugs. Almost a decade later, in 1944, the Folk Arts Center's Institute on Early American Folk Arts featured several talks on the aesthetic and decorative qualities of folk art. [48]

While museum exhibitions effectively interpreted folk arts—often simultaneously—as art, heritage, and consumer goods, museums were, ironically, also instrumental in selling these products of tradition through the modernist lens of industrial design. One of the venues of the traveling guild show, the Brooklyn Museum, had an institutional history of interest in the industrial arts and ethnography. This commitment to industrial arts grew out of a relationship with the American fashion industry that was precipitated by the First World War. Stewart Culin, the first curator of ethnology at the museum (1903–29), and M. D. C. Crawford, an editor at Fairchild Publications, publisher of *Women's Wear Daily* and other fashion magazines, cooperated to make the arts of the past in their collections accessible to contemporary American industry. They wanted to close the gap between the industrial plant, or sales room, and the scholar by offering the museum as a laboratory. After the war, Culin embarked on a tour of central Europe expressly to collect "peasant art" for the benefit of American manufacturers. With the rise of the fashion industry in the interwar years, the museum's industrial division worked more and more closely with America's fashion industries, and Crawford was appointed industrial adviser to the museum. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the division mounted a number of "exhibitions of special interest to industry," including "Rayon" (1936–37), "Materials and Techniques in Chinese Arts and Crafts" (1938), "Masks—Barbaric and Civilized" (1938), and "American Folk Art" (1939). Such exhibits suggest the connections curators made between functional folk crafts and the industrial arts.[49]

Culin wished to encourage the use of museum collections to improve the design of everyday goods; in this goal he joined with

Richard F. Bach, who began the industrial art department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1918. Machine-made goods accessible to the middle class, Bach asserted, were valued according to their artistic design. Bach not only sought to put art museums at the service of manufacturers, but he also encouraged craftspeople to design objects for mass production instead of devoting themselves to unique luxury goods. John Cotton Dana, director of the Newark Museum, was similarly interested in the relationship of industrial design, art, and the museum. A crusader for the museum as the community's institution, Dana believed that it should collect and display the finest of useful and decorative manufactured goods; in this way, he hoped to teach the community to appreciate fine design in everyday objects and to inspire industrial design and manufacturing. **50**

As these examples show, the boundary between culture and consumer goods became a more fluid one in museum programs. The same thing happened in that cornerstone of the marketplace—the department store—as there, too, the distinctions between exhibits for commercial and cultural purposes blurred. Department stores had an interest in teaching aesthetics and values, thereby creating ready consumers for their merchandise. Even Robert DeForest of the Metropolitan Museum of Art suggested that department stores could be "missionaries of beauty" and the "most fruitful source of art in America." Here was a democratic means of reaching American homemakers, who set the "standards of culture" at home. The lessons of taste taught by conscientious department stores were of great importance, for they helped women, in turn, teach those same lessons of taste and consumption to their families, thus ensuring that they would not "burden" their children "with an inherited environment of mediocrity and insignificance." As one speaker addressing the American Federation of Arts explained, "Some of us may be able to cover our walls with the work of the masters but more of us can buy materials at department stores."**51**

Some postulated broad cultural and social roles for the department store, suggesting that it could function as a "university" for those whose "entire extra-mural existence is made up of going shopping." It might become, one critic asserted, "a community center" where people could attend concerts, lectures, motion pictures,

dance recitals, and exhibitions. Such stores also offered help to homemakers who lacked confidence in the domestic sphere: Bloomingdale's in New York staffed its infants' departments with trained nurses to provide mothers with free advice on childrearing; Filene's held a conference, complete with child welfare experts, to accompany an exhibition of modern nursery merchandise and toys. [52]

Along with these civic-minded exhibitions, however, department stores also arranged displays intended to arouse consumers' interest in and desire for certain goods that they offered for sale. Exhibits with historical and domestic industry themes apparently were very popular events; one writer observed that relics of the stagecoach, part of a display in celebration of the covered wagon, drew more interest than the "black glass and chromium" of modernist styles. In 1941 Garfinkel and Company of Washington, D.C., presented "An Exhibit of Rare Historical Interest, the Early American Coverlet." Although the display used the historical tradition of coverlet weaving as a means to draw customers' interest, actual historic coverlets appeared only in photographs. The physical weavings featured in the exhibit were modern overshot weavings made by the Kentucky Coverlet Industries. During the exhibition period, Kentucky Coverlet took orders for the three "hand woven coverlets of modern 1941" at a special discount price.[53]

And if department stores could be accessible repositories of tasteful and beautiful objects, why not museums? Museums were ideally suited as tastemaking institutions whose lessons could be applied to the purchase of goods for the middle-class home. This was one important context for the display of southern mountain crafts in these institutional galleries. In the case of the guild's traveling exhibition of 1933–35, the museums served as places in which to view potential purchases. Objects in the exhibition were tagged with prices, for the crafts could be "duplicated by order." Visitors at each venue could order copies of the crafts from the exhibition catalog; many were available in a variety of sizes and colors. The Milwaukee Art Institute claimed an "educational" purpose for the guild's exhibition there but acknowledged the significance of mountain crafts as consumable goods for the middle class. These crafts, the museum argued, were important to "countless consumers who find here many useful and beautiful objects for the home." One newspaper article

suggested that visitors might find there "an order of hearth broom for every fireplace and a darning basket for every mother," along with textiles "suited to the maple and pine furniture in vogue." [54]

Southern mountain crafts, in short, offered affordable art for use in the middle-class home. Herein lay the distinction between such crafts and the "folk art" collected by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and sold by Edith Halpert. Halpert wrote of her objects: "We are opposed to the idea of selling individual items to persons who plan to use such pictures or sculpture as little household decorations. We feel strongly that this material is of great importance . . . and should be preserved now that it has been removed from parlors and attics." But mountain craft leaders wanted to sell products quickly instead of preserving them for their increasing value and aesthetic quality. These were objects meant to be sold and used, and their salability was only increased by their display in major cultural institutions known for collections of American art; craft leaders, therefore, took pains to place their work before visitors to such museums. Mountain crafts offered functional art to those who could not afford Shaker chests and primitive portrait paintings—in other words, the middle class.[55]

Thus, both the commercial world of the marketplace and the cultural world of museums helped redefine the Southern Appalachian people and their handicrafts. Whether the crafts themselves were collected as art or ethnographic relics by museums or as household goods by consumers, however, their transferal from their own particular cultural and historical contexts into new schemes of representation obscured the "specific histories of the object's production and appropriation." Moreover, as mountain crafts were reinterpreted as consumer goods, the specific histories of their makers also disappeared.[56]

In the emerging myth of southern mountain craftsmanship, the craft producers were recast as creators of traditional goods for the middle-class home and reinvented as preservers of an idealized American past. Using a vaguely imagined past to redefine mountaineers had profound consequences, however. Ultimately, mainstream America appropriated southern mountain culture by separating it from its people. This process played out vividly in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, for example, where the National Park

Service showed a marked preference for indigenous handicrafts as symbols of mountain life over real local inhabitants, whose presence might confront tourists with some unpleasant realities of contemporary life in the region.

The Park Service hoped that indigenous handicraft souvenirs would help visitors remember their southern highlands experience not as something tacky and cheap, but as something genuine, reflecting the unique pioneer culture that persisted as one of the region's precious resources. [57] The Park Service was particular, however, about the *kind* of mountain culture it wanted to display in the region's parks. Early in the planning stages for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, local residents expressed interest in establishing businesses on park land to serve visitors. The Park Service's responses to these requests suggested caution and a strong commitment to maintaining close visual and interpretive authority. Andy Farmer of Maryville, Tennessee, requested a lease on land to be used for a café, filling station, and campground. The Park Service refused the lease, assuring Farmer that it would "not tolerate the development of what we call AUTOMOBILE SLUMS close to our entrances of this or any other National Park." It swore to use "every ounce of energy to prevent the hot-dog stand, the soft drink stand, the gaudy filling station, the stand selling celluoid [*sic*] dolls, and the bill boards from marring the natural beauty of our gates." Instead, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wanted concessions operating in the region's parks to build their displays around native mountain handicrafts. This policy was already in place in the western parks, where shops were required to sell only "genuine handmade articles" crafted by Indians—no machine-made imitations. The Park Service wanted souvenir concessions in the Great Smokies park, too, but it wanted "useful or unique articles" rather than the "old type miscellanea of curio stuff, celluoid trinkets, pennants, pillow covers and the like."[58]

The Park Service's affection for indigenous handicrafts as symbols of mountain life did not extend to the presence of real mountain people. It denied local citizens' requests to supply its shops with their craftwork, turning instead to the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild as an intermediary to help with the selling of local crafts and to create the right kind of atmosphere in the Smokies park. The

guild would not only maintain standards and choose appropriate merchandise, it would also minimize the presence of local residents. The guild's involvement, park officials noted, would prevent the "influx of peddling of wares by irresponsible mountain people." J. B. S. McIntosh, for example, manager of a gift shop in Brevard, North Carolina, had proposed opening a store in the park to sell mountain weaving, rugs, pottery, woodwork, and basketry, including the work of Cherokee Indians. McIntosh even hoped "to have a neat squaw or two in each shop." The Park Service also dismissed one TVA official's suggestion that employing mountain people at park concessions would "contribute to the local atmosphere and the general surroundings." Instead, it reminded the TVA that the park would be "cleared entirely of residents." **59**

What was so threatening about the presence of local people in the park? Presumably, there would have been no problem if the contemporary mountaineers could have been counted on to happily continue the picturesque and virtuous ways ascribed to their ancestors, living out the past in the present. Life in the park region was actually very different from that imagined reality, however; instead, local culture offered a glimpse into the messy process of change and upheaval. Old ways coexisted alongside the new and sometimes took on entirely novel configurations as the mountaineers adapted to new opportunities and circumstances. To suggest that the strange-seeming ways and material poverty of mountain producers resulted from the persistence of a preindustrial economy and culture was to ignore the relationship of industrial society to economic conditions and the circumstances of handicraft labor in Appalachia.

The idealized and continuous past invoked to explain Appalachia did not acknowledge the industries that had transformed the region beginning just after the Civil War, or their impact on local and personal histories. Similarly, this version of the past neglected the presence of the commercial manufacturers who hired mountain women to do handwork in their homes for low piece rates; it also failed to consider the conditions of want and need that motivated mountain women and men to spend long hours making goods for middle-class consumers in the nation's cities. Replacing these specific histories with images of a generalized past, devoid of the conflicts and differences that shaped life in the region, past and

present, allowed American reformers, business people, institutions, and consumers to shape the meaning of mountain culture and its products to their own specifications. This required the mountaineers' invisibility in the present.

Explained as the people of a distant past, the southern mountaineers and their different ways posed no threat to the middle-class culture of mainstream America. They served an important function in preserving that past for the rest of America, but they offered no challenges to the "progress" of a society and culture dedicated to rationalism, technology, and consumption. Ultimately, Appalachia's history was reinterpreted to bolster existing notions of national history and identity. Such a reconstruction expressed an accommodation to rather than criticism of the structures and values of an industrializing nation, as mainstream America remade a perplexing mountain culture in comfortable and familiar forms. [60]

Middle-class reformers in the public and private sectors used the tools of corporate America—advertising, the media, marketing studies, and museums—to sell Appalachian products. Public exhibitions in museums placed mountain crafts in institutions that had a strong influence on standards of value and aesthetic taste. These handicraft exhibitions indicated some recognition of worth from the established art world and suggested a relationship to other culturally valued objects with similar meanings. Antimodernist longings and discomfort with a fast-industrializing society and culture, which fed the contemporaneous promotion and popularity of the folk art of museum curators and collectors, also fostered interest in southern mountain handicrafts. At the same time, the exhibition of Southern Appalachian crafts within these museums emphasized the relationship between the museum and the marketplace itself. Some of the same museums that exhibited folk art collected by wealthy Americans, thus institutionalizing its value, also offered venues for the display and sale of indigenous crafts commonly purchased by middle-class consumers for the decoration of their homes.

Craft leaders, meanwhile, shaped mountain products according to the ideals, aesthetics, and needs of urban consumers. They instructed craft producers in the principles and trends of modern design and urged them to make goods in the styles and forms preferred by middle-class homemakers. But it was tradition that

endowed mountain crafts with much of their meaning and genuineness, and it is ironic that their production and sale depended so heavily upon both the marketplace and a simultaneous denial of its role in the creation of these goods. Together, the marketplace and tradition constructed a version of mountain culture that Americans could comfortably incorporate into their own homes and into their national past. Coverlets had become couch throws, but the idea of the coverlets, or "kivers," as enduring links with the nation's past endowed the couch throws with value and meaning.