1997

The making of an American myth : the Hatfields and McCoys

James Williams Hanmer
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Hanmer, James Williams, "The making of an American myth : the Hatfields and McCoys" (1997). *Master's Theses*. 1578.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.6ft2-z4j5>

https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/1578

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

**A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600**

THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN MYTH:
THE HATFIELDS AND MCCOYS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

James Williams Hanmer

December 1997

UMI Number: 1388196

**Copyright 1997 by
Hanmer, James Williams**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 1388196
Copyright 1998, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

© 1997

James Williams Hanmer

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Daniel Cornford

Dr. Daniel Cornford

Billie Jensen

Dr. Billie Jensen

George Vasquez

Dr. George Vasquez

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

William Fish

ABSTRACT

THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN MYTH: THE HATFIELDS AND MCCOYS

by James Williams Hanmer

This thesis addresses the topic of myth-making in America by examining the legend of the Hatfield and McCoy feud. The questions of how and why this family war, located in the distant backwoods of Kentucky and West Virginia during the 1880s, has become part of America's cultural folklore are studied through the examination of primary and secondary source materials.

Evidence suggests that the demonization of the Hatfields and McCoy's in the press as vulgar, violent, ignorant hillbillies was a purposeful attempt to dehumanize the mountaineers in the eyes of middle class America. Thus, lands rich in timber and coal could be easily acquired by powerful industrial capitalists of the time. Research also indicates that modern hillbilly stereotypes, propagated through the mediums of film, television, magazines and newspapers, emerged directly from exaggerated reports of this particular conflict.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1.
Myth and the South	5.
View of Appalachia Before the Feud	19.
The Historical Feud	41.
The Myth Begins	64.
Hatfields, McCoys and the Hillbilly Myth in the Twentieth Century	88.
Conclusion	109.
Selected Bibliography	111.

Introduction

The myth is created and cemented in the minds of Americans, and is viewed as a colorful cultural folk tale exemplifying lost days in the nation's violent past. Such is the case concerning America's most famous family feud between the Hatfields of West Virginia and the McCoys of Kentucky. The historical truth about this rivalry is faced with the daunting task of destroying a mountain of misinformation which has grown steadily over the last century.

It seems that the two families will forever be associated with the stereotypes of rural mountaineers and clan violence. Whether in a "Bugs Bunny" cartoon depicting a hillbilly duo inflicting violence upon one another while dancing to the music of a fiddle, or a baseball announcer's description of a bench-clearing brawl as "the players' version of the Hatfields and McCoys," the family names are invariably invoked.

Countless articles in newspapers, popular magazines and journals have been written attempting to interpret and understand the events that occurred in the distant Appalachian mountains during the 1880s. Many more were created simply to titillate readers with sensational accounts which harbor only a sliver of fact. Fictional accounts from novels to Hollywood movies have taken aspects of the feud to

enrich their stories with colorful characterizations and plot lines. In addition, seven book-length histories have been published since 1889.

Layers of myth remain and many people are shocked to find that the feud is not a cultural folktale, but an actual series of historical events. The Hatfield-McCoy myth, however, has naturally found its way into the medium of modern pop culture, evidenced by the fact that images of rural, ignorant and violent mountaineers are still propagated by the entertainment business. This, for example, is seen in a 1997 episode of the popular television series "The X Files."¹ Similarly, the family names are never far apart as heard in the famous country song performed by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson "Luckenbach, Texas," in which they sing "its [the music business] got us feudin like the Hatfields and McCoys."²

The following thesis examines the creation of the Hatfield-McCoy legend, and attempts to discover the manner in which this aspect of American mythology was built. It contends that modern hillbilly stereotypes are a direct product of the feud's portrayal in newspapers, magazines, books and movies. Recent historical scholarship has, through

¹Glen Morgan and James Wong, "Home," The X Files, directed by Kim Manner and distributed by Fox Television, 1996.

²Chips Morman, Luckenbach, Texas, Waylon Jennings' Greatest Hits, Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, RCA, 1979.

the careful study of evidence, debunked many of the inconsistencies and inaccuracies associated with this chapter in American history.³ However, a number of questions remain:

- How and why did so many half-truths concerning the hostilities proliferate thereby serving as a catalyst for the modern myth?
- Who created the myth?
- Why was the myth constructed?
- Why did the Hatfield-McCoy feud, out of the numerous vendettas staged in the Kentucky mountains, become the most notable, so as to be quoted by name time and time again?
- How has the myth, once started, continued with such voracity for more than a century?
- Why did the America of the 1880s-1930s initially embrace such a story of seemingly uncontrollable violence, so as to unconsciously mythologize the feud?
- Why has America been continually fascinated and intrigued by this story even as the twenty-first century draws closer?

To answer such questions, one must first understand the nature of myth in historical study. Secondly, knowledge of myth-making in the South as a region, and Appalachia specifically, is crucial to the elements inherent in the

³Altina L. Waller, Feud: Hatfields, McCoy's, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

making of the Hatfield-McCoy legend. Next, one must understand the view of Appalachia prior to the turbulent decades of the 1870s and 1880s, before looking at how the feud has affected the way Americans visualize southern mountaineers.

Finally, the primary sources that reported and consequently created the legendary story must be studied in detail. It is vital to attempt an understanding of the root of the fascination for Americans; for the seed of myths and stereotypes in American history have reasons for growth. In attempting to discover the kernel of such a curious attraction, it is possible to uncover truths about our nation, our culture, and indeed the world in which we now live.

Myth and the South

Whole library floors are dedicated to books that interpret the history of the American South. No other region, including the American West, has so captured the imagination of Americans or has been the focus of such an abundance of research. The stories of the South, the songs of the South, the aristocratic South, the slave South, the poor South - all have been studied to the point of exhaustion. Yet America is still intrigued and hungers to understand the Southern mystique, for the mythology that has surrounded the South for more than two centuries has not abated. Indeed, the tendency to visualize the South in its folkloric, pastoral beauty is as strong today as it ever was. Of course the plantation image is not the only southern myth to have survived through the twentieth century. The vision of the poor, white, ignorant, lazy, southern hill-billy drinking moonshine has long persisted as well.⁴

The history of the South, so filled with contradictions and dichotomies, has intrigued historians since colonial times, through the formative years of the

⁴George Brown Tindall, "The Benighted South: Origins of a Modern Image," The Ethnic Southerners (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 43-44.

nation, and to the present day. In fact, even in this modern age as American society is further regionally homogenized by advances in communication and technology, the South is still often seen as separate or different from the rest of the nation.⁵ The lingering impressions of bygone times trap the South in a historical vacuum it seemingly can never leave. So what role does myth play, not only in the development of popular images, but in the understanding of history and human actions?

Myth-making, has been a popular topic for historians of late. In 1964 George B. Tindall opened the discussion in his seminal essay "Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History" in which he viewed mythology, not simply as something to be debunked, but as a tool for understanding the nature of Southern history.⁶ Since that time, many historians have developed theories as to the power and usefulness of mythology in the writing and understanding of history.

What is the definition of myth in relation to history? To this question historians embrace two basic schools of

⁵Larry J. Griffin, and Don H. Doyle, eds., "Introduction," The South as an American Problem (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 1-9.

⁶George B. Tindall, "Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History," in Frank E. Vandiver, ed, The Idea of the South: Pursuit of a Central Theme (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 1-15.

thought. Some follow the belief of Thomas A. Bailey that myth is "an account or belief that is demonstrably untrue, in whole or substantial part."⁷ For these writers, a myth is something to be disproven, thereby finding the actual historical truth. Then there are those who accept the definition of Mark Schorer who believes myth to be "a large controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life."⁸ In this interpretation, the myth represents an element of understanding separated from the historical truth, but which cannot be denied or dismissed. Myths can become just as real as historical facts, and in many cases are harder to debunk due to their strength as a "controlling image."⁹ In the discussion of Southern myth-making in general, and in the Hatfield-McCoy myth specifically, both definitions are not only inherent but crucial to the understanding of events.

Myths, in contrast to the historical fact, can sometimes gain a life of their own upon which a whole series

⁷Thomas A. Bailey, "The Mythmakers of American History," Journal of American History 55 (June 1968):5.

⁸Mark Schorer, "The Necessity of Myth," in Henry A. Murray(ed.) Myth and Mythmaking (New York: George Braziller, 1960), 355.

⁹A more in depth discussion of mythmaking and the South can be found in a collection of essays edited by Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords, Myth and Southern History Volume 2: The New South (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

of interpretations are built. In this arena, the factual history is rendered nearly irrelevant, for the myths emphasize certain characteristics of a situation while leaving others out. Then, when information is put forth which seems to contradict the myth, one is left to sort out a confusion of distorted images and information to find the truth. "By their very nature - they are formed through selected emphasis, simplification, and generalization - myths can degenerate into distorted cultural stereotypes and even exaggerated caricatures of the mythic entity that can mislead and misinform, even as they motivate and justify human action."¹⁰

The myth, despite these special characteristics, is caught in the middle of a constant debate between supporters on one side of an interpretation and attackers on the other. Southern history presents the perfect example of such a phenomenon. Literally and figuratively, no other regional history and culture in the United States has been attacked and defended with such emotion and sacrifice.

Many historians agree that Southern history has since the early years of the republic been interpreted as being in one way or another contrary to the ideals of the nation.

¹⁰Larry J. Griffin, "Why Was the South a Problem to America", The South as an American Problem, 19.

The truth is that, all along, the South has been a victim of what Hubert Butterfield has called the "Whig Interpretation of History." The contours of the nation's history have been defined by the present: the story of America has been perceived as the triumph of freedom, national unity, and equality, the acquisition of wealth, the growth of great urban centers, and the ethnic diversification of the population. That present, as epitomized by those activities and values, is obviously northern in character; The North and America have been made synonymous. In a history so conceived, southerners can be viewed only as outsiders, people who never quite achieved a pure state of Americanism.¹¹

Interestingly, the South as deviant, contrary or as "the outsider" is a perception that has deep roots in American history and has been propagated by historians, sociologists, and writers from both the North and the South. Throughout the ante-bellum period, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and indeed until the mid-1890s the debate about southern culture and lifestyle was arguably the topic most likely to kill a good dinner party. Northerners debated its social, political, and economic failures while defensive southerners were reinforcing "this conception of the American as northerner by dwelling on southern differences from, and southern conflicts with, the North."¹²

The turn of the century ushered in a short-lived era of good feelings between the North and South. Both regions perceived that Reconstruction had been a failure, and thus

¹¹Carl N. Degler, "Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis: The South, the North, and the Nation," The Journal of Southern History 53, (February 1987):5.

¹²Ibid., 6.

the end of the federal government's efforts to regulate elections in the South helped regional relations. In addition, growing white racism in the North bridged a gap between the two sections allowing for southern racial segregation to proliferate unobstructed by northern civil rights activists. The North and South reverted to a "live and let live" attitude at the expense of the freedom of African Americans.¹³

The Progressive era, personified by President Wilson and his ideologues followed. It was generally believed that the United States was entering a time of quickened progress by which some glorious future would surely be a product. The two regions attempted to overlook and ignore major differences so as to help create the reality of the United States as the beacon enlightened humanity.

This national optimism faded quickly as World War I ended. A large gulf re-emerged between the North and the South as the twentieth century deepened. There was increasing social, economic, and cultural divergence between the North and the South; as the former became even more industrial, urban and dynamic than the latter. The renewed vigor of the Klu Klux Klan throughout the nation, but especially in the South, Midwest and Southwest created

¹³James W. Loewen, Lies my Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Book Got Wrong (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 192.

tension. Yet the media, and the nation, seemed to still view race relations as simply a "southern matter."¹⁴

The decade of the 1920s signified an even more pronounced escalation in regional animosities and was a crucial time-period for the development of Southern stereotypes. A great battle was fought in the newspapers and popular periodicals of the time as the South was once again examined and vilified by writers. The friction did not derive however, so much from factual recriminations about the Civil War or the immorality of "the peculiar institution" of slavery; it was generated by stereotyped images that were growing to mythic proportions.

The South in general, and the Appalachian mountain region specifically was portrayed as backwards, intolerant, ignorant, opposed to modernization, fearful of change, science and new ideas. Baltimore newspaperman and essayist H.L. Mencken was one of the most effective and persuasive writers. His work lambasted the South at every possible turn. He described southerners as "morons," "hill-billies," "peasants," and discussed the "degraded nonsense which country preachers are ramming and hammering into yokel skulls."¹⁵ His essay, "The Sahara of the Bozart" was

¹⁴James W. Ely Jr. "The Supreme Court and Race Relations", The South as an American Problem, 132.

¹⁵H. L. Mencken as quoted in George Brown Tindall, "The Benighted South," The Ethnic Southerners (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 46.

especially nasty as Mencken seemed to be at the top of his descriptive talent.

[In the South] a poet is as rare as an oboe-player, a dry-point etcher or a metaphysician. It is, indeed, amazing to contemplate so vast a vacuity. One thinks of interstellar spaces, of the colossal reaches of the now mythical ether....[I]t is almost as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara Desert. There are single acres in Europe that house more first-rate men than all the states south of the Potomac....

If the whole of the late Confederacy were to be engulfed by a tidal wave tomorrow, the effect upon the civilized minority of men in the world would be little greater than that of a flood on the Yang-tse-kiang. It would be impossible in all history to match so complete a drying-up of a civilization.¹⁶

Northern origins for the development of the Southern cultural myths are historically deep. The question to be asked is why, after a period of relative good-feelings between the two regions, was there a resurgence of animosities in the 1920s that continued into the 1930s? Firstly, as with most myths, there is historically a fair amount of truth from which the myth got its inception. Therefore, the historian's job is three-fold: separate the truth from the inaccuracies, examine the reasons for the myth, and study the affected perception caused by the myth.

¹⁶H.L. Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart," Prejudices: Second Series (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920), 136-137, quoted in Larry J. Griffin, "Why the South Was a Problem," "The South as an American Problem, 26.

In the case of the South during the 1920s, a series of events and atrocities brought dramatic attention to the South, thereby defining it as a savage region that still contrasted starkly with the ideals and moralities of the North.

The Scopes trial in 1926, was especially instrumental in bringing renewed tensions between the regions, for it showed the South as being resistant to science and education. The trial, and the great publicity that followed it captured the nation's attention. The court case challenged the passage of the Butler bill by the Tennessee Legislature which outlawed the teaching of evolution in high school. The debate between scientific evolutionism and creationism continued to show the South as a region unwilling or unable to accept new or "modern" ways of thinking. Taking place in the South, with three-time presidential hopeful William Jennings Bryan leading the fundamentalist prosecution and the agnostic Clarence Darrow as the defense attorney, the trial became a spectacle like no other in the 1920s. Despite the inconclusive results of the trial in which the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed a decision for the prosecution on a technicality, regional differences were once again thrust to the front stage of American social and political consciousness.¹⁷

¹⁷William E. Ellis, "Scopes Trial," Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 1376-1377.

The strong southern defense of prohibition also aggravated tensions. Ironically, whereas the South in the early nineteenth century was seen as irreligious, morally defective, sexually promiscuous and given to liquor, its image now was of nearly a complete contrast.

"Dixie was benighted, in large part, not because it was irreligious but because it was excessively religious; not because it was given to strong drink but rather because it was prohibitionist; not because it was sexually indulgent but rather because it was sexually prudish (in literature as well as in life); and not because it was lacking in moral seriousness but rather because it, more than any other American region, possessed a life-denying moral seriousness which refused to acknowledge the aesthetic or any other approach to life."¹⁸

Another reason for the South's defensive temper during the 1920s was the overall tendency throughout the nation to associate American nationalism with Anglo-Saxon nativism and Protestantism. The South, which seemed to have a majority hold on these properties, regained a regionalistic pride which gave rise to the newer, more powerful Klu Klux Klan as well as other incarnations of racial and regional fervor. "For Southerners unsure of their place in a changing America, nativism provided a language of protest, a catch-all for deeper cultural and social fears regarding changes brought on

¹⁸Fred C. Hobson, "The Savage South," Myth and Southern History, Volume 2: The New South, 141-142.

by any external force."¹⁹ Many southerners thus viewed the South to be the "most American" of all regions. "By the 1920's nativism in the South had become a peculiar expression of sectionalism in terms of American nationalism."²⁰ This strong sense of Anglo-Saxon ancestry, and the new creed of scientific-racism was of major concern to Americans of the early twentieth century when the discussion turned to Appalachia. For it was during this time period that socio-cultural antagonisms towards the southern mountaineers reached a fevered pitch.

Northern books such as Henry Skaggs' The Southern Oligarchy: An Appeal on Behalf of the Silent Masses of Our Country Against the Despotic Rule of the Few continued the social and cultural criticisms with popularity and success.²¹ The critiques, however, were not only coming from north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Many southern writers took aim at their region's perceived inadequacies. Journalists such as Grover Hall of Alabama, Julian and Julia Harris of Georgia,

¹⁹Augustus Burns, "Mountain Culture," in Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, 415.

²⁰Tindall, "The Benighted South," The Ethnic Southerners, 44.

²¹Henry Skaggs, The Southern Oligarchy: An Appeal on Behalf of the Silent Masses of Our Country Against the Despotic Rule of the Few, (New York: Negro Universities Press; reprint of 1924 ed).

as well as novelists T.S. Stribling of Tennessee, and Sinclair Lewis bemoaned the shortcomings of the "New South."

During the 1920s, many southern industries such as coal, cotton, and other agricultural businesses were failing. Thus, as the decade of the 1920s ended and the Great Depression rumbled towards a nation unprepared for economic disaster, the southern culture was once again under a microscope both from without and from within its borders. Its reputation would continue to be the source of real and perceived faults socially, culturally, and politically.

The economic disaster that beset the entire nation during the 1930s coupled with the desperate migration of tens of thousands of southerners to the North and West in search of work, created antagonistic impressions of dirty, poverty-stricken outsiders attempting to steal northern jobs in industry. Of course, immigrants from around the world, and especially from northern Europe, had been flooding into American cities since the turn of the century, so the addition of "ignorant hillbillies" into the industrial workforce was not met with rounds of applause from the native northern population. It was at this time that even President Franklin Delano Roosevelt viewed the South as "the Nation's no.1 economic problem."²²

²²Roosevelt as quoted in John Egerton, "The End of the South as a Problem," The South as an American Problem, 264.

In conclusion, southern history since its beginning has been discussed, studied, and perceived through an intertwining series of factual and mythic interpretations. Many times southern legends and stereotypes, which began as factual accounts discussing truthful actions and accurate characterizations, were created by a variety of sources, as Patrick Gerster writes,

This stereotyped South is a country on the mental map of the national imagination, its citizenry a distillation of both fact and fiction....The South, in this sense, has done much to create and perpetuate its regional stereotypes owing to their usefulness in helping to shape a self-image and regional consciousness. For northerners the South is seen largely through a kaleidoscope of regional stereotypes and images. To them the South serves as both America at its extreme and as "Uncle Sam's other province."²³

The impressions of the South as a whole have been developed by northerners and southerners alike. The real and imagined differences between the two created an atmosphere of political, social, cultural and economic rivalry which became a cause not only of a terrible civil war, but also of the continuance of a mythology at variance with the historical record.

It is within this milieu that the discussion of Appalachia in general, and the making of the Hatfield-McCoy

²³Patrick Gerster, "Stereotypes," in Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, 1126.

myth specifically, must be understood. The South has been perceived through legend and mythology created by the powerful mediums based upon the written word. Later in the twentieth century, other forms of popular entertainment such as radio, television and film continued to propagate and define the region by making use of the existing and deeply-rooted stereotypes that had been formed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

View of Appalachia Before the Feud

Thus far, the South has been discussed as a monolithic, geographic and social entity. Yet within the South are a number of sections that are as diverse as any other part of the nation. There is the Deep South of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana whose geography, history and culture has been defined by forces quite different from the southern state of Virginia for example. Despite the commonality of secession, the defense of slavery and state's rights during the mid-nineteenth century, the differences are quite obvious and abundant. The causes range from different colonial ties for example, Virginia to England and Louisiana to France, to fundamental differences in physical features and climate.

One of the South's most distinctive sub-regions is Appalachia. Appalachia consists of three separate mountain ranges: the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east which extend from North Carolina to Pennsylvania, the Allegheny Mountains that parallel the Blue Ridge to the northwest, and the Cumberland Mountains located on the southwestern parallel. This third area encompasses parts of southeastern Kentucky, southern West Virginia, and small portions of Virginia and Tennessee.

At the end of the French-Indian War in 1763 the British government designated use of the southern mountains to the Native Americans. During the Revolutionary War years, the mountain region to the west of the British colonies was a dangerous wilderness fit for only the hardiest of travelers, but with the creation of the new republic came the hankering for more land. This pristine wilderness, and those who attempted to "tame" it, were recognized as rugged and adventurous individuals. Daniel Boone is a representative character of the white backwoods traveler, an American hero who could tame nature and create order out of chaos.

George Washington, while in his twenties, spent a great deal of time in the southern mountains mapping the territory for the British government. Davy Crockett and Stonewall Jackson also came from these backwoods. Their reputations as hard-working, industrious, "honorable" mountain men are enduring examples of all that is good in the American character as portrayed in our history books.

In the late 1820s, a new American hero swaggered out of the backwoods of Tennessee. Andrew Jackson, the champion of the War of 1812, was known for his "common man" individualism. He was a general who had survived the war, Indian fighting, and that other southern habit which has blossomed into a healthy myth--dueling--to capture the White House from the aristocrats of Virginia.

Jacksonian America was a time of fervent land acquisition and energy in the growing republic. The Indian Removal Policy which forced the Cherokee Nation to travel what later became known as the "Trail of Tears," and other spectacular land grabs constituted major events in the America of the 1830s and 1840s. Many interesting works have examined the social/cultural character of Americans at this time. Through the examination of literature, art, and politics historians have found that a deep sense existed in the American mind that the destiny of the United States was one of creating God's order out of the pagan chaos of nature.

To subdue nature and create the United States as "a city upon a hill" became a common theme of perceived destiny for the young nation. It was at this time that the idea of "manifest destiny" took hold giving rise to tremendous expansion throughout North America. In the words of one historian,

For a liberal society, one bent on carving a nation and a religion out of nature, a new sort of heroic deed was needed. This was found in the conquest of the continent, the subduing of nature. "In wilderness is the regeneration of the earth," Henry Thoreau wrote in the 1840's; in the conquest of wilderness, re-invented in every generation, is the creation and recreation of an American nation.²⁴

²⁴Allen W. Batteau, The Invention of Appalachia, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990), 29.

This idea, that out of every newly acquired area is the potential for the "recreation of an American nation," presents a powerful philosophy for which the domination of the continent was undertaken. Keeping this in mind, the rugged and remote mountain regions of Appalachia were still subsisting in a pre-industrial cultural lifestyle before the Civil War. Subsistence agriculture with little production for the market or trade businesses was the norm. As the powerful force of industrialization swept through many of the major population centers of America, this economic dynamism became equated with the idea of a successful America. In this context, the southern mountains were seen as a place ripe for industrial development. The dream, not only of regeneration but of fast-paced progress, was visualized for the mineral-rich yet historically isolated southern mountains.

Early writers who experienced the backwoods and its inhabitants presented interesting descriptions which equated the mountaineers with their natural surroundings. One such writer was Charles Lanman, a private secretary to Daniel Webster from 1850-1853, who wrote:

The entire country is mountainous, and for the most part, remains in the original state of nature. That the mountaineers are poor is a matter of course, and the majority of their cabins are cheerless places indeed, to harbor the human frame for life; but the people are

distinguished for their hospitality and they always place before the stranger the choicest of their store.²⁵

Lanman's letters, in addition to other writers of that era such as James Kirk Paulding and Charles Fenno Hoffman, presented descriptions of the highlanders as poor yet hospitable Americans who despite living in such remote areas survived through simple means and determination.

America was growing at an accelerated rate, however, and land acquisition was a major concern to the United States government. As more land was added to the Union, the sectional crisis between the North and the South grew. How did the developing tensions affect the Appalachian region?

Historian Allen Batteau argues quite convincingly that with the escalation of the sectional conflicts following the Mexican War and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, both North and South were determined to control land that was not already delegated to existing commonwealths. The Appalachian region, therefore was an area to be controlled. However, the view of Appalachia as a separate entity with peculiar people was not yet conceived. Those who lived in Kentucky, Tennessee, and western Virginia were still regarded as rugged Americans who had the potential to rise to great heights in American society as exemplified by the patron saint of Kentucky-

²⁵Charles Lanmen, "Letters from the Allegheny Mountains" as quoted in Batteau, The Invention of Appalachia, 32.

Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, with his humble, log-cabin beginnings was the consummate Kentuckian full of promise and potential. This view would certainly be drastically transformed in a matter of decades.

The Civil War constituted a major upheaval for the whole nation, but for the southern mountain region the experience was unique. The region was literally and figuratively caught in the middle of both sections, being not wholly part of one or the other. Situated on the border area between the Union and the Confederacy, mountaineers were forced for the first time to make loyalty decisions on a national level. It must be understood that this was a completely new phenomenon for small societies used to dealing with government simply in a local, even communal sphere. It is interesting to note that, unlike many southern whites, much of Appalachia sided with the Union.

The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, due to the reality of subsistence farming and the poverty of most mountaineers, slavery was not an issue which agitated many whites. Most did not own slaves. The ethnic population in the mountains had remained relatively unchanged since the European migrations into the area during the 1700s. Most people were of Scottish and English descent, and very few people of color, whether slave or free, were present.

Secondly, traditional hostilities between poor whites and southern elites dissolved much of the possibility for a

strong alliance in this area. It must be stated, however, that to generalize too much on this topic does injustice to the truth. This region, possibly more than any other, was an area rife with divided loyalties. Neighbors who had lived peaceably in the same valley for decades many times found themselves as enemies. Indeed, some families were torn apart by the crisis. Furthermore, the creation of West Virginia as a Union State in the middle of the conflict (1863) enhanced the political confusion of these small, mostly agrarian communities. Gordon B. McKinney writes,

The impact of the war on the mountaineers was overwhelming. These rural people were suddenly drawn into a great national crusade; mountain men who had never extended their loyalties much beyond their families and a local political leader now were called on to defend their section or nation. The highlanders' perception of the world often led them to think of the conflict in personal terms. Therefore, they often attacked the nearest family that supported the other cause and had to defend themselves against retaliation from other neighbors.²⁶

One might assume that this was the case with the now famous Hatfield-McCoy hostilities. However, as will be shown in more detail later, not only did the Hatfields and McCoys support the same army, both families acted contrary to the

²⁶Gordon B. McKinney, Southern Mountain Republicans: 1865-1900 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 19.

Appalachian norm for they supported the Confederate States of America.

After the war, and throughout the Reconstruction era, the development of new markets exploded with new possibilities. Money was being made from the expansion of business out West as the railroads created prospects for the transportation of goods and materials to frontier areas. Indeed, the railroads were seen as the grand civilizing agent for the United States. Of course, the West was not the only area considered prime for exploitation; the untouched southern mountains presented massive amounts of untapped coal and timber resources.

That economic prosperity could be brought to the South by the railroads created an optimism among venture capitalists. Historian Michael Perman writes,

throughout the region, a clamorous demand, amounting almost to a mania, had arisen after the war for the creation of a system of railroads as the key element in the revival of the southern economy. Railroads, it was thought, would not only produce prosperity, but they would also bring about economic development and usher in what was being referred to as the 'New South.'²⁷

Land speculators, supported by the growing public belief in the railroads as the machine to accelerate the march of progress, combed through the Appalachians. Their

²⁷Michael Perman, Emancipation and Reconstruction: 1862-1879, The American History Series, (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc, 1987), 83.

search for the best land deal garnered much valuable property. Local communities, unused to the scrutiny and business practices of this powerful, industrial conglomeration fell prey to enterprising outsiders. Before long, local communities became ultra-suspicious of outsiders who entered their small towns and valleys.

Indeed, it was during this crucial time that numerous feuds in the region took place. Many historians, including Altina L. Waller, now believe that it was this invasion from outside businesses that pitted neighbor against neighbor in a fight to keep their native lands and still survive in this changing society. "With agricultural opportunities declining rapidly and another severe famine in 1884, mountain farmers and local businessmen were more prepared than ever to fight - outsiders and each other, if necessary- for their share of the profits of economic development."²⁸

Press articles began to proliferate about the unruliness of the mountaineers. Their violent tendencies and their refusal to join the march of progress created an ideal scapegoat for companies interested in gaining more valuable land. Indeed, railroads came to be seen as heroic, paternal

²⁸Altina L. Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia: The Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype", Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century, Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, eds., (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 366.

saviors for the savage, violent, childlike mountaineers. The new railroads "will serve as missionaries to transform gradually the character of the secluded villages, and put an end to the feuds and vendettas in which the energies of an isolated people have been expended."²⁹

Allen Batteau provides a provocative contention concerning the historical realities and indeed even the myths of Appalachia in regards to its contrast with industrial progress.

What may be seen by one [side] as the destruction of social bonds is seen by others as the liberation of energies constrained by those bonds. What is seen by many as progress is seen by others as the loss of a world with its own nostalgic charm. What is felt by many to be oppression, in the destruction of their old mode of livelihood, is seen by others as an opportunity for upward mobility. In all cases, it is a chaotic and disorganized process, with much scrambling for advantage or for cover.³⁰

Thus, as the industrial capitalists discovered the wealth of Appalachia and made quick and deliberate moves to secure the land for new businesses, the rural community in the highlands was portrayed in the press as being contrary and resistant to progress. This socio-economic change happened at an extraordinarily rapid pace. For example, in 1880 when the timber industry was truly beginning to gather

²⁹New York Times, September 20, 1887.

³⁰Batteau, The Invention of Appalachia, 54-55.

force, two-thirds of the state of West Virginia was virgin forest. Yet, as Ronald L. Lewis states, changes occurred rapidly.

Nevertheless, by the 1920's West Virginia had been nearly denuded. The enormity of the timber man's calculations are difficult to comprehend, but it is estimated that over 30 billion board feet of lumber was stripped from the West Virginia landscape during this period....Every facet of life in West Virginia was affected by railroad and timber development; but no section of the state was so dramatically altered as the undeveloped back counties.³¹

Were the rural communities as resistant to these outside forces as the press would have its readership believe? Undoubtedly, there were many rural farmers who resented the intrusion of the railroads, lumber mills, and coal camps, for the fear of economic losses due to the destruction of their livestock and property. The newspapers of the time are filled with editorials expressing just such concerns.

For example, in the southern part of the state the *Greenbrier Independent* ran articles in 1872 opposing construction of the C&O [Railroad] because " it carried whiskey, killed chickens and cows, scared the horses, and threw teamsters out of employment." Residents of Tyler County rejected a right-of-way for the B&Q because " the trains would scare the game out of the country." Similarly, farmers held public meetings to oppose the B&Q running a line through Monongalia County to

³¹Ronald L. Lewis, "Railroads, Deforestation, and the Transformation of Agriculture in West Virginia Back Counties, 1880-1920," Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century, 297-298.

Pennsylvania, declaring," We don't want our hogs and cows run over and killed."³²

These concerns may sound silly to the modern reader, for the realities of modern survival are completely different than nineteenth-century subsistence in the mountains. However, the safety of these animals as property was crucial to the livelihood of the rural highlanders. They depended on such livestock for food, barter, indeed for their mere existence. The farmers in opposition to the business boom, despite fierce battles in the newspapers and courtrooms, were no match for the combined resources of the industrial capitalists supported by the state officials.

Not surprisingly, state politicians were ecstatic that their domain was going to be the base for an exploding economy, and they also visualized the railroads bringing the much desired modernization that had already spread throughout most of the nation.

"What wonder that the heart of West Virginia is set on railroads," proclaimed the *Wheeling Register* in 1881, "they are the life giving currents of modern civilization without which prosperity and progress are solecisms." The article captured the prevailing economic faith of the era in its proper metamorphic context when it declared, "we must have railroads....We must help our people out of the woods."³³

³²Ibid., 304.

³³Ibid., 298-299.

To understand that there was an important social division in the newly developing regions of Appalachia between the highland farmers and those supporting industrialization, is to understand one of the major foundations for the eventual demonization of the Hatfields and McCoys in the press. The press alleged that the two families were "backwards." In fact, neither family was in opposition to industrialization. Indeed, the Hatfield family in particular was respected locally as an economic and political power. Its land holdings were substantial and they developed a lucrative lumbering business. The McCoys, although not as successful, also attempted to better their economic situation through land speculation and other ventures.

The topic of land speculation in the mountains leads this discussion directly to the Hatfield-McCoy feud. Due to powerful state leaders entering into land speculation, small communities were sent scrambling to control and gain leverage through land acquisitions and lawsuits. The Hatfields, being more successful than the McCoys in the Tug River Valley, garnered a reputation as a powerful family not to be tested. Ironically, it is this underlying current of economic pressure brought in from the "outside" which created intense local competition thereby leading to violence; and next, to the vilification of the "backward" and "resistant" hillbillies.

Interestingly, the term "Appalachia" is a relatively modern construction coined in 1889 by William G. Frost as he described the backwoods area:

The vastness of the mountain region which has enveloped this portion of our fellow countrymen has been concealed by the fact that it was parceled out among so many different commonwealths. The mountainous backyards of nine states[contain] some two hundred mountain counties, covering a territory much larger than New England. This is one of God's grand divisions, and in default of any other name we shall call it Appalachian America.³⁴

The date of the actual naming of Appalachia as a separate part of the Southern region and indeed the whole of the United States is significant, for it was in that year when the Hatfield-McCoy feud gained national notoriety. As attention was brought to the region through sensational newspaper reports of family feuding and unreasonable violence, both northerners and southerners alike looked for ways to distance themselves from this previously obscure area. Therefore, the naming of Appalachia at this particular time is both a real and symbolic separation of the area, thereby defining it and its inhabitants as somehow different or alien.

One finds that much of the historical reality of Appalachia was ignored at this time. In the late nineteenth

³⁴William Goodell Frost, "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains," Atlantic Monthly 83(March 1899):311.

century and into the first half of the twentieth century the southern mountaineers were defined completely by a pop-culture dominated by journalists, novelists and "folk colorists." The now mythic stories of ignorant, bearded hill-billies senselessly hunting each other down with Winchester rifles grew fast and furious in the America from the 1880s through the 1930s; and once the image was created, it gained a life of its own which for decades has outlived the historical truth.

It has been only recently that serious scholarship through the examination of available evidence and the study of the economic, social, and political forces at work in the mountains has discovered the hidden truths behind the popular misconceptions. This topic will be studied in some detail in a later section of this thesis. Firstly, however, an answer must be found to the question - what was the view of Appalachia before feuding began?

The "otherness" of Appalachia, which defines the area as an alien entity, is not propagated in the early descriptions quoted previously. Allen W. Batteau in his intriguing interpretation entitled The Invention of Appalachia suggests that the "otherness" was a political invention created once Appalachia was discovered for its wealthy holding of natural resources such as coal and timber.

Like any segmenting of a human population, it is a semantic artifice that creates a political reality. The

drawing of such boundaries is in all cases an effort to gain advantage for the members of one category over another either through the consolidation of the one or the exclusion of the other.³⁵

Henry D. Shapiro, one of the foremost cultural historians of the Appalachian region, agrees. Indeed he believes that the literal and figurative separating of the region from the rest of the nation provided the opportunity for outsiders to attempt the restructuring of mountain society in their image.

Those who saw Appalachian otherness as a threat to the achievement of national unity, or who identified one or another of the characteristics of mountain life and landscape as undesirable, viewed Appalachian otherness as a problem in need of explanation and the characteristics of mountain life as a fact needing modification.³⁶

Advances in the printing and distribution of magazines and newspapers, in addition to the socio-cultural changes brought about by the industrial revolution, created the development of a more national society. In contrast to previous generations, Americans of the late nineteenth century were playing a part in the creation of the information age. These advances brought far-away information into the lives of interested and curious citizens with greater ease. Just as the information revolution in the

³⁵Batteau, The Invention of Appalachia, 33.

³⁶Henry D. Shapiro, "Appalachian Myth," Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, 1129.

1980s and 1990s has created a more global society, so too did its predecessor in the late-1800s create a society more connected to its outer regions.

American society in the 1870s wanted to know who these mountain people were. Even though Appalachia was not separated by distance or ethnicity, for most mountaineers were white and Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the area and the residents were beginning to be viewed as inherently different.

This interpretation was not only propagated in the 1870s, it was by modern standards packaged and sold by the new, popular, middle-class media. A multitude of magazines gained mass appeal in this American society deep in the throws of the new era of industrialization. Periodicals such as Scribner's, The Century, The Living Age, The American Review of Reviews, and Harper's New Monthly Magazine captured the attention of people from all over the nation.

Americans were reading sensational stories about far-away places and their hunger for such material was voracious. Just as modern-day television magazines such as "PrimeTime," and "Turning Point" search for entertaining news stories to capture the attention of viewers, so too did the editors and publishers of these early magazines look for stories meant to delight, amuse, and enthrall its readership.

The "local color" writers who developed these stories even had a formula for success. The stories were short and

heavily descriptive, meant to titillate their audience and still be topically fascinating. For example, Will Wallace Harney wrote "A Strange Land and Peculiar People" which was published by Lippincoat's Magazine in 1873. In it he describes the physical awkwardness "inherent" in the mountaineers.

The natives of this region are characterized by marked peculiarities of the anatomical frame. The elongation of the bones, the contour of the facial angle, the relative proportion or disproportion of the extremities, the loose muscular attachment of the ligatures, and the harsh features were exemplified in the notable instance of the late President Lincoln. A like individuality appears in their idiom...[which] is peculiar to the mountains, as well on the Wabash and Allegheny, I am told, as in Tennessee.³⁷

The popularity of these stories convinced other writers to venture into the mountains with their pens in hand. Importantly, these local color writers all came from metropolitan areas, and therefore were seeing the mountains as outsiders. Their impressions created a stereotypical version of the highlanders. "The cumulative effect of the publication of the numerous descriptive sketches and short stories of local color which took Appalachia as a subject was the establishment of a conventional view of the mountain

³⁷Will Wallace Harney, "A Strange Land and Peculiar People" as quoted in Henry D. Shapiro, Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 3.

region as an area untouched by the progressive and unifying forces that seemed to be at work elsewhere in the United States."³⁸

Indeed, Appalachia as a subject came to be known as a time capsule of human development. The mountaineers were viewed light-heartedly as a quaint people with a genuine simplicity who were our "contemporary ancestors." Between 1870 and 1890, ninety sketches and more than 125 short stories appeared in which Appalachia was the topic.³⁹ However, there was one writer in particular who helped cement the popular image of the southern mountaineer in the bourgeois American mind during the 1870s and 1880s.

Mary Noaillis Murfree wrote under the pen name Charles Egbert Craddock. Her stories presented, for the first time, mountaineers as main characters. Therefore, the formula in which she developed her popular tales served as a dictionary of mountain perceptions for those not familiar with the backwoods culture. Despite the given impression of an insider writing fiction about the mountains, Murfree was actually born to an affluent family on a plantation in Tennessee and spent adolescent summers at resorts in the Cumberland and Great Smoky Mountains. Educated at Nashville Female Academy and at a finishing school in Philadelphia, it

³⁸Shapiro, Appalachia on Our Mind, 5.

³⁹Ibid., 18.

can be said that her impressions of the mountains were not those of someone who grew up understanding the highland culture.⁴⁰

In the Tennessee Mountains, a collection of stories published in 1885, survived seventeen printings and presents ample information as to her style and method of descriptive storytelling. Overall themes of romance and revenge fill the pages as she develops a contrast between progressive, modern, educated city-dwellers with images of simple, aloof, ignorant mountaineers. For example, in the story entitled "A-Playin' of Old Sledge at the Settlement" the reader's first impression of the mountaineers is as follows:

In the middle of the stony road stood a group of roughly clad mountaineers, each in the attitude of sluggish disinclination to the allotted task of mending the highway [to the settlement], leaning lazily upon a grubbing hoe or sorry spade, -except, indeed, the overseer, who was upheld by the single crowbar furnished by the county, the only sound implement in use among the party.⁴¹

Without a doubt this is an interesting and descriptive paragraph, even the tools are "grubbing" and "sorry." As the story continues one notices that the mountaineers spend more time talking in broken English amply filled with slang and

⁴⁰Batteau, Invention of Appalachia, 41.

⁴¹Mary Noailles Murfree, "A-Playin' of Old Sledge at the Settlement," In the Tennessee Mountains (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), 81.

quaint mountaineer lingo than they do fixing the highway. Murfree continues to propagate the view of mountaineer as being parallel with nature, and against the forces of progress when the highway workers see a low-flying hawk which completely absorbs all of the attention that the workers can muster. "There was a portentous silence. The flight of the hawk, again floating above the mountains, now in the shadow of the resting clouds, now in the still sunshine, was the only motion in the landscape."⁴²

Eventually, the mountaineers enter the small settlement, a symbol of progress in the story, and end up ruining the area due to a brawl following a drunken poker game. Thus, the lazy, mountaineer has, albeit unknowingly, halted the march of progress only to lumber back to his pitiful cabin to sleep off the moonshine.

Other stories present similar typecast characterizations such as the lissome girl, the local idiot, the drunk, the young impetuous punk. Nearly always these mountain folk are contrasted with an educated outsider with whom the reader can associate. Another variation is the entrance of a local mountaineer who has been living in the modern, progressive city and has therefore learned the "civilizing ways" of the industrial society. This character inevitably must leave the mountains, for the civilizing

⁴²Ibid., 86.

influence of the city has made it impossible to rejoin the lower ranks of his former society. This is an important theme, for in later decades, especially in the 1900s-1920s the mountaineer will be viewed in the literature and silent films as being unable to learn the civilizing influence of the city due to his/her genetic and cultural inferiority.

The overall point to be made concerning Murfree, however, is that she created the basis for "the mountaineer as in opposition to the city" point of view. From this point onward, the highlander is seen as a person behind the times and reluctant to embrace the undeniably superior influences of modern society.

This contrast between civilization and backwardness, highland and lowland, and the penetration of progress into the chaotic nature of the mountains sets up the important division of one side against the other in the mind of the middle-class Americans of the 1880s and 1890s.

Interestingly, the image of the violent, blood-thirsty hillbilly is not seen in these early sources. However, as the dramatic stories and half-truths of the Hatfield-McCoy feud filtered out of the mountains only to be splashed onto the front page of national publications, the time was ripe for both the real and figurative destruction of the hillbilly to take place.

The Historical Feud

It is important to the cohesiveness of this thesis to comprehend the realities of the feud and the peculiarities of mountain social law during the 1870s and 1880s. Once these topics are explained, one can see the unique differences between the historical reality of the two families and the legendary stories of ignorant hill-billies attempting to exterminate each other senselessly.

The 1870s was a decade of immense growth in the Appalachian mountains. As mentioned before, land speculation and the growth of industrial capitalism threatened the stability and balance of the mountaineer culture already in place. Whereas previously, neighbors relied on each other sometimes for mere survival, the industrial era pitted community members against each other as land was bought and sold at an alarming rate. Indeed, as court records show, litigation between neighbors was surprisingly extensive.⁴³ Interestingly, it was during this time period that numerous feuds were reported in national and regional newspapers. Between 1867 and 1902, the New York Times printed stories on more than sixteen incidents described as feuds. The

⁴³Altina L. Waller, Feud, 86.

Louisville Courier-Journal, between 1874 and 1895, reported on forty-one Kentucky feuds.⁴⁴

Many of these violent incidents had their beginnings in political differences, racial conflict, lingering Civil War animosities or economic tensions exacerbated by the changing times. So what was the case with the Hatfield-McCoy war?

Many writers have mistakenly attributed the cause of the conflict to the Civil War. For example The New York Times, under the headline "The Hatfield McCoy War: A Vendetta That Began During the War of the Rebellion" stated, "The trouble began during the war. The Hatfields were in the Confederate Army and the McCoys in the Union Army."⁴⁵ This has been disproved by the fact that most Tug Valley residents, including the Hatfields and McCoys, were Confederate sympathizers. In fact, Randolph McCoy, the leader of the family, once served in the Confederate militia group ("the Logan Wildcats") which was captained by Anderson "Devil Anse" Hatfield himself.

Asa Harmon McCoy, however, joined the Union forces in 1863 and all evidence suggests that much of the community, including many family members, were disdainful of his choice.

⁴⁴Altina L. Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia", Appalachia in the Making, 348, 354.

⁴⁵ New York Times, 1 February 1888.

On January 7, 1865, Harmon McCoy was shot dead, and most of the community attributed the killing to Devil Anse and his "wildcats." No charges were ever filed.

Is this how the feud started? It seems unlikely considering the fact that Devil Anse in a later interview stated, "When the war ended we all went home and were good friends, until in 1873 or '74, when a difficulty arose between my cousin, Floyd Hatfield, and Randolph McCoy, who had married sisters over a sow and pigs."⁴⁶

The First Phase

The Hatfield-McCoy feud occurred in two phases separated by five years of relative peace. Before the beginning of the first phase, both families attempted to gain power and financial stability for themselves in the timber industry. The Hatfields were more successful, both in business and in the courtroom. Anderson Hatfield had leveraged much power in the Tug Valley and was seen as an aggressive yet upstanding citizen. Randolph McCoy, known simply as "ol' Ranel," seemed to be tiring of his

⁴⁶Wheeling Intelligencer, 22 November 1889. The reporter or Devil Anse made a mistake concerning the date. The trial occurred in 1878.

increasingly successful neighbors while his attempts at business and litigation were not nearly as fruitful.⁴⁷

In the fall of 1878, tensions between the families began when Randolph McCoy accused Floyd Hatfield (cousin to Devil Anse) of stealing a razorback hog. This was a serious offense, for in the mountains the "razorbacks" were an important source of sustenance. Floyd denied the charge, and in contrast to the modern "hill-billy" generalizations, revolvers were not drawn and shots were not fired. Instead, the case went to the justice of the peace, a man by the name of Reverend Anderson Hatfield. Deacon Hatfield, to be fair to all sides, selected a jury of six Hatfields and six McCoys. The testimony of Bill Staton convinced Selkirk McCoy (who happened to be married to a Hatfield) to side with Floyd, and the McCoys lost the case.

Although tension between the clans and their supporters was growing, no post-trial violence occurred. Two years later however, Bill Staton was shot and killed by "squirrel-huntin" Sam McCoy and Paris McCoy. Did the Hatfields round up a posse and string the boys up from the nearest tree? No, the Hatfields went to the justice of the peace, received a warrant for the arrest of the two McCoys and brought them to trial.

⁴⁷Altina L. Waller, Feud, 100.

Interestingly, the trial took place in Logan County, West Virginia (Hatfield territory) and the boys were surprisingly acquitted on the grounds of self-defense. Apparently, most of the community was familiar with the aggressive behavior of Bill Staton towards the McCoys after the hog trial, and therefore believed the evidence that Staton died while attempting to ambush the two McCoys.

Legend also suggests that Devil Anse tried to persuade the court to acquit, so as to stop any further violence which might eventually hurt his business relationships throughout the area. However, no written proof exists to confirm this possibility.⁴⁸

The next event which exacerbated tensions between the clans took place on an election day. Election days in the mountains were social affairs that brought the whole community together for voting, moonshining and other such pleasantries. In 1880, such an election day brought a romantic turn to the feud, to which many readers and writers have attributed much weight as the cause for the vendetta's resumption. Johnse Hatfield (son of Devil Anse) and Roseanna McCoy (daughter of Randolph) consummated a friendship in the bushes after the voting and whiskey drinking had been accomplished. Roseanna went back to the Hatfield home and by most accounts was welcomed by Devil Anse and the family. The

⁴⁸Ibid., 88.

two did not marry, and although legend suggests that Devil Anse refused to grant permission for the marriage, there is no proof to support this theory. In fact, more evidence exists to contradict this possibility. For after their affair, the failure of which should be attributed to Johnse's infidelities rather than to familial tensions, Johnse married Nancy McCoy, the cousin of Roseanna with no objections from his father.

Randolf McCoy however, seemed to be developing an intense hatred for the Hatfieds due to their continued high social and financial position, the hog trial, and his daughter's pregnancy out of wedlock. He did more damage to Roseanna by banishing her from his family than he did to the Hatfields through a series of indictments for carrying concealed weapons.⁴⁹

The McCoy's, however, did capture Johnse as he met Roseanna, and were taking him into custody when they found themselves surrounded by Devil Anse and his supporters. The McCoy's were forced to hand the young Hatfield back. It is possible that the embarrassment of being outdone once again

⁴⁹Other possible indictments reported in previous accounts of the feud include "moonshining, and seduction." However, the court gives evidence of only the concealed weapons charge. See *Commonwealth of Kentucky v. Andrew Hatfield, Elias Hatfield Sr., Thomas Chafens, John Chafens, John Staton, Elias Hatfield Jr., Floyd Hatfield, Cap Hatfield and Frank Elam*, Nov 26, 1880, Pike County circuit court records, KSA.

by Devil Anse increased Randolph's already growing animosity toward the West Virginians.⁵⁰

Election Day in August 1882 brought about a serious escalation of the feud. The voting was held in Pike County and the Hatfields crossed over the Kentucky line to enjoy the festivities. An argument occurred between Tolbert McCoy and "Bad Lias" Hatfield over money owed from the purchase of a fiddle. Eventually, others joined in the fight and when the dust cleared, Ellison Hatfield (brother of Devil Anse) had been stabbed twenty times and shot by Tolbert, Bud, and Pharmer McCoy. He was near death when the McCoys were arrested.

Many witnesses seemed to think that it was an obvious case of attempted murder and that justice would be done. However, since the Tug River was not only a physical boundary, but a political boundary separating the two states, there was some confusion as to where justice should be levied. Altina L. Waller explains the jurisdictional dilemma:

Nothing illustrates the dilemma of all the participants in this strange drama more than their responses to this difficult situation. The guards and constables had been instructed by such a respected authority figure as Preacher Anderson Hatfield, the justice of the peace, to

⁵⁰Interestingly, Devil Anse was alerted by Roseanna after she had ridden through the night fearing for Johnse's safety. Her desperate actions lend credence to the high tensions between the two clans.

take the boys to Pikeville jail, but now they were being told by another justice, one just as respected in age and position, to cancel that order and return to the Tug Valley. Not only that, but his argument made good sense. Pikeville was not really a part of their community, and it did seem only fair that the three boys, whom everyone knew were guilty, should stand trial in their own district.⁵¹

Devil Anse collected a group of Hatfields, and after this confused discussion about jurisdiction, decided to hold the McCoy boys at an abandoned school house. It was Hatfield's judgment that if his brother Ellison died, the McCoy boys would die also. Forty-eight hours after the election stabbing/shooting, Ellison died. Devil Anse and a large Hatfield group took the three McCoys to the Kentucky side of the Tug River and after tying them to some paw-paw bushes, shot them in cold blood.

The community was shocked by these events and unsure how to proceed. Both families were growing tired of the tension and violence. Would Ol' Ranel McCoy retaliate? Truda McCoy, in her written history of the family's oral traditions, explains how Randolph was convinced by his wife, Sally, to let the law deal with the Hatfields.

She began weeping for the first time since Tolbert, Pharmer and Bud were killed. She turned to her husband. "Ranel," she said, "the courts will see that justice is

⁵¹Altina L. Waller. Feud, 73-74.

done, and I don't want any more of my children killed. Won't you keep em from going?"⁵²

Randolf was convinced by Sally to let the law run its course. The rest of the community simply wanted the killing to stop. In September, twenty-one Hatfields, including Devil Anse, were indicted for the murder of the McCoys, however, no warrants or arrests followed. "In this case, community consensus was that it was best to live with the results of the McCoys' foolish challenge to Devil Anse....A crude sort of justice, after all, had been done."⁵³

The first phase of the feud was over. Five people had been killed in the four years between 1878-1882.⁵⁴ Over the next five years, the McCoys and Hatfields would travel in armed groups, but mostly stayed out of each other's territory.

To gain a better understanding of the first phase of the feud, one must study the reality of social law in the Tug River region. The Tug River constitutes the border between

⁵²Truda Williams McCoy. The McCoys: Their Story, edited and with a forward by Lenard Roberts(Pikeville, Ky: Preservation Council Press of the Preservation Council of Pike County, INC, 1976), 92.

⁵³Altina L. Waller. Feud, 76.

⁵⁴Two Hatfieds(Bill Staton, Ellison Hatfield), three McCoys(Bud, Tolbert and Pharmer)- The death of Asa Harmon McCoy(Unionist in 1865) is not counted here due to its seemingly unimportant influence in relation to the feud, and its chronological distance of twelve years.

Kentucky and West Virginia. The two families had members on both sides of the river, although most of the Hatfields resided on the West Virginia side and most of the McCoys were citizens of Kentucky. The nearest towns in this remote region were Pikeville, Kentucky and Logan, West Virginia. They were separated by several miles of severe terrain. Therefore, the law in this region was dependent upon the social beliefs and understandings of those in the community. In other words, modern law as it is understood today, with its dependence on interpretation of the written word as dictated by precedent, was not possible in a mountain society which was mostly illiterate.

One might believe that this type of social law would create an opening for lawless activity with no possibility of control or punishment. The prevailing myth depends on just that assumption. However, in contrast to the stereotype of mountain culture in which an eye for an eye-tooth for a tooth vigilantism is expected, the mountaineers actually made extensive use of the available justice system.⁵⁵

The Pike County Court Order Books are filled with lawsuits concerning most prominent families in the Tug River area including the Hatfields, McCoys, Vances, Clines, and Mounts. It is a truth that some members of these families were blood related; due to the minuscule size and distant

⁵⁵Altina L. Waller, Feud, 40-41.

remoteness of the community, it is no surprise that cousins would marry and raise families of their own. It is interesting to note that despite familial connections lawsuits continued to proliferate. This fact supports the contention that all corners of the local community were grappling with each other for control of the land and business of the promising Tug River Valley and surrounding areas.

Devil Anse Hatfield, the undisputed leader of the clan, was especially active in the court system. Hatfield, through cunning use of the existing system became a powerful, respected, and, in some cases, feared resident of the West Virginia mountains.⁵⁶ He garnered land for his family through a series of legal maneuvers which may have antagonized his future enemies including Randolph McCoy and Perry Cline. Cline, an attorney, was instrumental in the resurrection of violence during the second phase of the conflict. Hatfield was not so feared however, that people did not sue him. Despite Devil Anse's political connections, financial stability, and high community standing, the Pike and Logan County Court Books give ample evidence that he lost a number of cases.

⁵⁶Devil Anse's Civil War experience as a captain, and his reputation as the fierce leader of the West Virginia militia group "The Logan Wildcats" helped continue his sometimes mythic stature after the war, the feud, and even after his death in 1921.

One case in particular is quite intriguing (Bill of Complaint, Hatfield v. Smith, 1874). Devil Anse took John Smith to court over some money owed due to an oral contract which was commonplace at the time. Smith, a literate store owner, had kept diary details which helped his case; whereas, the illiterate Hatfield was depending upon the social code of a man's word and a handshake.⁵⁷ This difference introduces an important distinction.

For Americans in the ante-bellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction eras, the oral contract was a binding one; and if a person broke his word often, the social backlash could be devastating, both financially and personally. However, during the 1870s and 1880s, even in Appalachia, the growing force of modern industrial society was creating changes in the law by which written contracts would be more binding than oral ones. Even more importantly, in the second phase, the change from local/social law to state and even national jurisdiction entrenched the feudists in a completely foreign form of law enforcement. This, in turn, lead directly to the most violent events of the feud in which persons outside the clans were involved.

To comprehend the law of the Appalachians at the onset of the Hatfield-McCoy feud, it should be recognized that evidence indicates the society abided by and respected the

⁵⁷Altina L. Waller, Feud, 45-46.

court system. In fact, it can be argued that this community even over-used the court system. This fact directly contradicts one of the main contentions of the myth, that of the unruly, uncontrollable and lawless hillbilly.

The "mountain law," in many respects, was simply a scaled down version of "city law." The justice of the peace was elected and served for a period of time. This particular system, however, had some singular aspects in that the judge was usually related to some or many of the residents. Did this type of relationship lead to unfair hearings and trials? Evidence shows that great care was taken by the justices to treat all sides fairly so as not to antagonize one section of the community. In this respect, the communal law ran smoothly. Many times if the local population was of the same opinion concerning a certain event or crime, a case might be forgotten altogether. This seemed to be the situation concerning the first death which some attribute to the feud, that of the Unionist Asa Harmon McCoy.⁵⁸

The modern perception of "hillbilly justice" would predict a quick and ferocious retaliation from McCoys brandishing Winchester rifles. It did not happen. In reality, no action was taken by anyone to capture and bring to justice the killer or killers. Some writers are of the opinion that this is an example of mountain "lawlessness."

⁵⁸Altina L. Waller, Feud, 85-93.

They are right in the consideration of modern or "city law," however the understood law of the mountains was quite different. The "Letter" of the law was not followed, and a murder simply ignored, why? Otice Rice in his work The Hatfields and McCoys supposes this possibility. "Most of the Tug Valley probably felt little sympathy for their Unionist neighbor, and even members of the victim's family may have reasoned that he brought his fate upon himself."⁵⁹

This type of social law evidently created its own interpretations of the existing laws, and contrary to popular belief, evidence suggests quite strongly that this relationship actually helped to stabilize the society. It must be remembered that in 1865 and in the years to come, whole states were attempting to re-enter the Union. Kentucky was a border state, and West Virginia was created as a Union state in 1863. Imagine the confusion, especially when considering laws and jurisdictions, for regular citizens on the Tug River which borders both states. It was a unique situation. It should also be reiterated that Tug Valley residents were connected by familial relations, ties to land, economic position and neighborly dependence, sometimes for mere survival. Altina L. Waller in her interpretation agrees.

⁵⁹Otice K. Rice. The Hatfields and the McCoys (Lexington Ky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 14.

Conflict did exist, but it was handled at the local level between individuals who shared similar perceptions of authority and justice. As we shall see, the first phase of the feud provided several illustrations of the effectiveness of this system.⁶⁰

The dramatic changes in Appalachia, which affected the social, political and economic norms, came late to the wilderness region of Kentucky/West Virginia in comparison to the rest of the nation. The confusion and chaos that it created for the mountaineers would lend force to the escalation in violence during the second phase.⁶¹

As of this time, the events in the mountains were known only by those few residents in the near vicinity, and newspapers had yet to hear the names Hatfield and McCoy. Some scholars believe that the feud could possibly have faded away at this juncture. However, other forces outside the Tug community would begin to assert themselves politically, socially, economically and legally. They would therefore become catalysts in the resurrection of violence in the second phase.

⁶⁰Altina L. Waller, Feud, 24.

⁶¹An in depth study of social change in Appalachia, and the role that it played in this feud can be found in Altina L. Waller's book Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900.

The Second Phase

Railroads, timber, and coal were just some of the booming business ventures that continued to bring outsiders with money and political power into the Tug region. As the fragile peace between the two families continued, land acquisition in addition to other legal and political maneuvering heightened tensions throughout the community. Outsiders wanted to acquire as much land as possible, and locals did not want to be left out of the financial rewards. The time for the railroad to "civilize" the inner reaches of Appalachia had arrived in full force.

The mountain sections of the South, comprising of Eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, Southwest Virginia and Western North Carolina, promises soon to be the scene of the greatest activity in railroad building ever known in the United States....Soon the neigh of the iron horse will startle the mountain solitude, and long trains will flash to and fro like shuttles in the loom, weaving the woof of wealth and civilization.⁶²

A new breed of financiers, lawyers, and lawmakers were not only garnering power in state and county offices, but were also asserting their influences to create profitable businesses in the Tug Valley. In a very real sense, these power players upset the social equilibrium that was in

⁶²Courier Journal, 1, 18, September, 1887

evidence before 1887, and continued the social polarization of the Tug community. This social change caused devastating effects on the delicate peace between the Hatfields and McCoys.

The businessman's point of view paralleled the powerful belief of bourgeois America. The railroads, with the support of outside capitalists, would civilize the mountain savages thereby opening the untapped regions to money-making ventures. Heavily armed bands of mountaineers roaming the landscape did not create the best environment in which a venture capitalist could succeed. So it was in the interest of business that the Hatfield-McCoy tension (stories which had only begun to escape the wilderness) be assertively terminated. External capitalists needed to justify their increasing penetration into West Virginia through the railroad, and to dismantle the rural culture. This required that both social stability and the moral legitimacy of the "hillbillies" be undermined in the eyes of many to prevent resistance in any form to capitalist encroachment. Ironically, the attempts of the lawyers and politicians to stifle the violence served only to exacerbate the situation.⁶³

A lawyer, Perry Cline, had the ear of the new Kentucky Governor, Simon Bolivar Buckner and his promise to

⁶³Altina L. Waller. "Feuding in Appalachia," Appalachia in the Making, 358-361.

capture the indicted Hatfields. Cline played a major role in the change from the local community law to the larger state court systems. Having grown up locally, and having lost a significant amount of land to Devil Anse in a court case some years before, Cline may have had his own personal grudge against the Hatfields. Whatever the case, Cline had become powerful and was to throw all his weight into the capture and prosecution of the Hatfields for the murder of the three McCoy boys.

News travels quickly in small communities, and the Hatfields, having heard of the new danger of capture by the Kentucky law, reacted defensively by sending Cline a letter outlining their position.

We have been told by men from your county that you and your men are fixing to invade this county for the purpose of taking the Hatfield boys...[we] do notify you that if you come into this county to take or bother any of the Hatfields, we will follow you to hell or take your hide, and if any of the Hatfields are killed or bothered in any way, we will charge it up to you and your hide will pay the penalty....We have a habit of making one-horse lawyers keep their boots on and we have plenty of good strong rope left...⁶⁴

Perry Cline not only ignored this correspondence, but had Governor Buckner hire a deputy sheriff by the name of

⁶⁴Letter dated from the Logan County Court House, August 29, 1887.

Frank Phillips to capture the Hatfields.⁶⁵ Cline also wrote West Virginia Governor E. Willis Wilson. In a letter dated November 5, 1887, he stated, "they are the worst band of marauders that ever existed in the mountains, and have been in arms since the war; they will not live as citizens ought to."⁶⁶ Interestingly, during this time period Cline was never seen without the company of his two bodyguards toting Winchester rifles.

Ironically the first "Hatfield" captured was Selkirk McCoy, the banished family member from the hog trial. As other Hatfield supporters were captured by Phillips' raids into West Virginia, Devil Anse and his sons were forced to pull some political strings of their own to extricate themselves from this new situation.

This change in strategy on both sides of the Tug River is vital to the escalation of the violence, and to the eventual discovery of the feud by the media. Whereas in the first phase, the maneuvering was done by an isolated group of locals; the second phase action would eventually grow into a full scale legal battle between the two states involved. The two governors would become personally involved in attempting

⁶⁵Phillips would show himself to be a violent, uncontrollable lawman whose actions would include cold blooded murder.

⁶⁶Transcripts of Records, U.S. Supreme Court, 1887. Case Record no. 17477, Vol.21.

to protect the rights of their citizens. A multitude of letters between the two politicians show how far this small war had grown as Governor Buckner called for the extradition of the remaining Hatfields, and Governor Wilson called for the release of West Virginians and the termination of illegal captures being committed by the Kentucky detectives described as "a set of men quite as lawless as either the Hatfields or the McCoys."⁶⁷

The stage was set for the most violent chapter in the Hatfield-McCoy feud. The Hatfields, in desperation, attempted a midnight raid on Randolph McCoy's cabin in an effort to kill any witnesses to the murder of the three McCoy boys. It was a disaster. Alifair and Calvin McCoy (daughter and son of Ol' Ranel) were killed, and Sally McCoy was savagely beaten by Jim Vance (uncle of Devil Anse) and the cabin destroyed by fire. Vance, in turn, was murdered in cold blood by Kentucky detective Frank Phillips during another raid into West Virginia.

The more outside interests entered the fracas, the more bizarre events became. In reality, the Tug Valley had become a war zone between Frank Phillips and his Kentucky detectives hired to capture Hatfields, and Hatfields (plus West Virginia detectives) attempting to capture Phillips and

⁶⁷Exchange of letters between governors quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones' The Hatfields and McCoys (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 255.

his gang. Things rose to a boiling point during the pitched battle at Grapevine Creek, at which one West Virginia deputy was killed and many persons injured on both sides.

Meanwhile, the legal argument concerning whether one state could forcibly capture residents of another state went to the U.S. District court under the jurisdiction of Judge Barr, who with a deft stroke of the gavel passed the buck. "This court cannot, however, consider what is or should be the law of comity between the states of this Union....All such controversies are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Supreme Court." ⁶⁸

The small Hatfield-McCoy conflict was now in the capable halls of the nation's highest court. Would the handful of Hatfield supporters jailed in Pikeville, Kentucky be returned to West Virginia? Or would Frank Phillips' raids into the Hatfields stronghold continue?

On May 14, 1888, the decision was rendered under the heading *Mahon v. Justice*. (Plyant Mahon was a jailed Hatfield supporter and a part of the group that killed the three McCoy boys).

It is true that Phillips was appointed by the Governor of Kentucky as agent of the State to receive Mahon upon his surrender on the requisition; but no surrender having been made, the arrest of Mahon and his abduction from the State were lawless and indefensible acts, for

⁶⁸District Court, *Mahon v Kentucky*, 34 F. 525, March 3, 1888.

which Phillips and his aids may justly be punished under the laws of West Virginia. It is true, also, that the accused had the right while in West Virginia of insisting that he should not be surrendered...the question is not as to the validity of the proceeding in West Virginia, but as to the legality of his detention in Kentucky.⁶⁹

The captured Hatfields would stay in Kentucky and go to trial. The West Virginia Hatfields would travel in armed bands and retreat into the vast wilderness to fight off continuing raids by the Kentucky detectives who, of course, were outlaws according to West Virginia law.

The actual violence involved in the feud was at an end. The trial would force most of the five captured men to serve life in prison with hard labor. Ellison Mounts, a Hatfield cousin who confessed to killing Alifair McCoy in the midnight raid, would be the final death in the feud as he was hanged in Pikeville on February 18, 1889.

Needless to say, the politicians and business entrepreneurs were displeased with the violence "inherent" in these mountaineers. Ironically, it is at this juncture near the end of the violence that the media was motivated to report about this "family feud."

What conclusions can be drawn from this study of the historical feud? Was there unnecessary violence between the

⁶⁹ *Mahon v. Justice*. Supreme Court of the United States. 127 U.S. 700; 32 L. Ed. 283; 8 S. Ct. 1204, May 14, 1888.

two clans? One must answer this question in the affirmative. The events in the Tug Valley were undeniably shocking both to the country as a whole and especially to the local community. The small area had never experienced such occurrences or such notoriety. For example, one woman whose father was a business partner of Devil Anse's stated: "My family didn't know they were living in a land where such things occurred, in fact, it was unusual to hear of such things."⁷⁰

Were the hillbillies ignorant and adverse to the march of "progress" as the soon to be published reports would assert? To this question, the answer is no. It has been shown that many persons of the local population, including the Hatfields and McCoys, were entrepreneurial and in favor of money-making possibilities. In fact, Devil Anse, the most notorious personality of the feud was desperate for the violence to stop. His logging business depended upon it. In the end, his businesses never recovered from the negative publicity garnered at the time of the feud.

Devil Anse's reputation, the reputation of the families, and indeed the reputation of all southern mountaineers would never be the same. For as reporters and journalists swarmed to the mountains, the truth was twisted and distorted thereby planting the seed of the modern myth.

⁷⁰Fannie Simpkins Booth, Williamson (West Virginia)
Daily News, 2 August 1982.

The Myth Begins

A letter has been received by Senator A.H. Stewart from a friend in Pikeville, Kentucky, giving an account of the terrible tragedy in Pike County on January 1. It appears that in 1882 parties led by a man named Hatfield abducted three boys named McCoy, and conveyed them to West Virginia. A reward was offered for the arrest of the Hatfield party, and one of the gang was captured, who is now in the Pike County jail. On Sunday last others of the same party went to the residence of Randolph McCoy, in Pike County, and killed his wife, mother of the three boys mentioned and his son; also set fire to the house, which with its contents was entirely consumed.... The Pikeville jail is strongly guarded, but fears were entertained at the hour of writing that an attempt would be made to release the member of the gang confined there.⁷¹

It was this story, first published in the Louisville Courier Journal and then distributed nationally with headlines such as "A Terrible Tragedy Perpetrated in Pike County by Desperadoes" and "A Murderous Gang," in which the general public first heard the names Hatfield and McCoy. Over the next several months and even years, similar articles providing misinformation and misinterpretation would be published in state and national publications. The sensationalism that followed this story out of the distant mountains was rampant. Accurate reporting was extremely difficult due to the remoteness of the Tug River area, which

⁷¹Louisville Courier Journal, 8 January 1888.

separated the McCoys of Pike County, Kentucky and the Hatfields of Logan County, West Virginia.⁷²

The Louisville Courier Journal article, in particular, combines many separate events of the feud into seemingly unreasonable acts of violence, and even prints the inaccurate information that Randolph ("Ol' Ranel") McCoy's wife Sally was murdered. In actuality, she survived the incident and continued to live for many years. The lack of important and complex details concerning the reasons and events of the feuding would continue to over-simplify information, thus helping to define the present stereotypes of Appalachian mountain culture. The Hatfields and McCoys would come to symbolize "typical hillbillies."

The Louisville Courier Journal article also gives evidence as to how this story even reached out of the deep mountains and into the pages of a big-city, Kentucky newspaper. The article mentions "a friend in Pikeville" as the source of the information. Although no proof exists to determine the actual individual who broke the story, it seems likely that Perry Cline was involved in some way, for he had both the motive and the connections. Interestingly, many of the early reports accepted the Kentucky, or McCoy side of events, thereby painting West Virginia in a derogatory light, and the Hatfields as a blood-thirsty, barbaric clan. The

⁷²Logan County is now named Mingo County

Kentucky newspapers from which national publications picked up the information, were only too happy to denigrate another state's reputation; for the Bluegrass State's character had been repeatedly lambasted in the national press as a state unable to control its previous vendettas. West Virginia newspapers were quick to retaliate. Soon articles emanating from West Virginia in support of the Hatfields were displayed in newspapers all around the country.

So as January 1888 unfolded, and the raids into West Virginia by "Bad" Frank Phillips yielded the captures of more Hatfield supporters, the attention in the press paralleled the growing tension in the mountains. It was a unique, continuing story with daily updates. This appealed to the American readership as it was reminiscent of fictional narratives that printed bi-weekly chapters in popular magazines. Readers were continually intrigued by two families portrayed as attempting to exterminate each other.

A New York Times article dated February 1, 1888, originating from Charleston, West Virginia added fuel to the growing fire of public interest. This article relayed that the trouble began during the Civil War, information which has been disproved, and it presented the Hatfields in a more favorable light. The following quote gives evidence to the political nature that was now intertwined with the feud, for the article was written by Col. M.L. Mahon, an emissary sent

into the mountains by West Virginia Governor E. Willis Wilson:

I visited all the Hatfields and found them to be good law abiding citizens, who have the respect and confidence of everyone in the neighborhood. While many depredations have been committed and the whole surrounding county has been in a state of excitement and tumult bordering on a genuine young war, peace has again been restored and the belligerent parties on both sides have disbanded and no further trouble is anticipated.⁷³

This article continues to expound the West Virginia interpretation of events as it states that Frank Phillips "fired on and killed old man Vance, without as much as calling on him to surrender." Another paragraph of this article then contrasts the earlier quote by stating "It is feared by the law-abiding people of the two counties that hostilities will be renewed before a great while." These attention-grabbing details were continued when the article declared, "The strangest part of the whole affair is that the Hatfields and McCoys are related."⁷⁴

Two inter-related families bent on the destruction of the other because of festering Civil War animosities was a titillating topic indeed. It should be reiterated that the surrender at Appomattox was only twenty-two years previous, and strong animosities between the North and the South still

⁷³New York Times, 1 February 1888.

⁷⁴Ibid., 1 February 1888.

existed. Therefore, at some level, northern readers could relate to the plight of the McCoys, and southerners could relate to the feisty Hatfields. This false representation would be one of many that would help sear the names Hatfield and McCoy into the minds of Americans.

One of the more interesting aspects of the feud, and one that played a tremendous role in the creation of the myth, was the action taken by the Kentucky and West Virginia newspapers. The extended vendetta through the publications was extraordinary, and not surprisingly, the reasons for the "paper war" went deeper than just the defense of its citizens.

The seed of the paper war, started by forces in Pikeville, Kentucky then spread to the governors of the two states. Their personal feud, in letter form, set the stage for a state versus state confrontation. This permeated the courts, as the case rose higher through the system eventually landing in the U.S. Supreme Court. The case/feud also attracted significant national attention.

The Pittsburgh Times introduced a new interpretation that would eventually have lasting effects as to the world view of mountaineers at the time. The paper suggested that the governors refused to use state militia to stop the violence because "the conflict would in time exterminate a lot of citizens of no earthly use and that had better be

killed off for the good of the state."⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, The Wheeling Intelligencer defensively retorted:

West Virginia has many sins to answer for, but one of them is not the possession of the notorious Pike County alluded to. If something is not done soon to muzzle a few of the sensational liars who furnish, for pay, specials to the Eastern press, West Virginia may look soon to see the scene of Texas cowboy raids and Mexican outrages located within her borders.⁷⁶

Many of these misconceptions were propagated by two journalists in particular. Charles Howell of the Pittsburgh Times and T.C. Crawford of the New York World. Both were dispatched to the feuding region and wrote extremely influential articles when considering the creation of Appalachian stereotypes. It was the opinions of these two men that were reprinted all over the country and enforced the "white savage" view which still permeates the conception of the hillbilly.

Howell spent three days in Pikeville, Kentucky in 1888 during the height of the press's interest in the feud. He visited Ol' Ranel McCoy and the Hatfields who were imprisoned in that town. He never once attempted to contact the Hatfields in West Virginia and his writings show his bias. For example, he described Randolph McCoy, the leader of that

⁷⁵Pittsburgh Times as quoted in Virgil Carrinton Jones, The Hatfields and McCoys (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 114.

⁷⁶Ibid.

family, as "a man who had been bent and almost broken by the weight of his afflictions and grief." The Hatfields were portrayed as "cool and self-possessed at all times" and accomplished at "bravery and cunning." He accused William Anderson Hatfield (Devil Anse), of setting out to "exterminate" the McCoys for no reason.

There is a gang in West Virginia banded together for the purpose of murder and rapine. There is a gang in Kentucky whose...principle is the protection of families and homes...an unresisting family has been deprived of five of its members, a father and mother of five of their children, their home burned, their little substance scattered to the wind.⁷⁷

Despite his seeming sympathy with the McCoys, his conclusion would leave a lasting unfavorable impression of the two families.

The Hatfield-McCoy war is simply a succession of cowardly murders by day and assassinations and house-burnings by night. All the murders have been cruel, heartless, and almost without the shadow of provocation. Given, on the other hand, a family with its contingents of the same blood, allied and cemented by a common desire to avenge an imaginary affront, and on the other another family, small in the matter of alliance and collateral sympathies, doomed to destruction by the larger one, and the case is stated.⁷⁸

T.C.Crawford of the New York World deserves an even closer look, for it was his work that was published as the

⁷⁷Pittsburgh Times, February, 1888.

⁷⁸Ibid., February, 1888.

first book on the feud. In the summer of 1888, Crawford traveled with a sketch artist into the wilds of West Virginia to interview the Hatfields who were barricaded in a remote, mountain cabin. Again one sees an outsider, this time a New York City reporter, viewing and judging the mountain culture. His writings were very popular and his observations, solidified a framework for the stereotypical view of Appalachian lifestyles. His interpretation not only successfully demonized the Hatfield and McCoy families, but condemned the Appalachians and destroyed any legitimacy of their culture in the minds of the American readership of the time. An American Vendetta: A Story of Barbarism in the United States was the title he chose for his book.

I have been away in Murderland for nearly ten days. No one, unless he has had the actual experience of a visit to the region made notorious by the Hatfield-McCoy feud would believe that there is in this country such a barbarous, uncivilized, and wholly savage region.⁷⁹

This opening paragraph sets an obvious tone. Identifying the region as "Murderland" is especially colorful and ironic since Crawford's home town of New York was notorious as a violent city. Crawford's sub-titles also provide much information as to the emphasis of his text: "How

⁷⁹T.C.Crawford. An American Vendetta: A Story of Barbarism in the United States(New York: Belford, Clarke and Company, 1889), 9.

the Feud Began- the Story of the Brutal Warfare and the Leading Spirits in It," "Taking the Law into Their Own Hands," "The Outlaws at Home- A Talk with the Murderous Hatfields, and their Version of the Feud."⁸⁰

Crawford's prejudice against the mountaineers deprives him of any objectivity that may have balanced his work. For example, on page fifteen he states that "while there may be no more murders committed in proportion to the population than in more civilized states, it is a fact that the murders committed are by men in a different rank in life."⁸¹ It seems that in Crawford's eyes a literate, high-society murderer is somehow more civilized than an illiterate murderer from the mountains.

He goes further. "There is a very large, lawless class throughout the mountains, people who live irregular, immoral lives."⁸² This type of moral judgment typifies much of Crawford's insights. His description of the mountaineers, from beginning to end, dehumanizes the mountain folk so that any impression other than that of a Neanderthal-like existence seems contrary. Cap Hatfield was "hideously repulsive" and the "most pronounced type of human murderer I have ever seen." All Appalachian women were "revolting-

⁸⁰Ibid., 18, 19, 50.

⁸¹Ibid., 15.

⁸²Ibid., 97.

looking" and represent "the worst class of human animal" as well as being the "most vicious, the most hideous, the most repulsive creatures I have ever seen in my life." Mrs. Hatfield, who served Crawford and his artist dinner at the Hatfield table, was simply described as having "no more idea of what is right and wrong than a mastiff dog."⁸³

Interestingly, many of Crawford's interpretations conjure up images made popular by Mary Murfree's stories. The mountain people are unequivocally related to nature and represent the human debased of any civilizing agents. Many times he compares them to American Indians: dirty and uncivilized. "Such an article of soap is absolutely unknown in the history of the [Hatfield] family."⁸⁴

Despite Crawford's blatant disgust with the mountaineers, his transcript is an important source for some of the continued legends that have surrounded this feud. Firstly, he supports and propagates the falsehood that the first trouble between the families was caused by Civil War. He does this by describing the Confederate Hatfields fighting and plundering on one side of the river, while the Unionist McCoys were robbing and murdering on the other. Secondly, Crawford clearly overemphasizes the short-lived love affair

⁸³Ibid., 61, 71-72, 109, 111, 122.

⁸⁴Ibid., 84.

between Johnse Hatfield and Roseanna McCoy as the major catalyst of the feud.

This angle, now seen by most historians of the feud as a minor event, was too tantalizing a plot for the journalist to ignore. He therefore made the most of this story, retelling the titillating details again and again. "The great romance of the feud is in the history of Roseanna McCoy and Jonce[sic] Hatfield. Jonce Hatfield was a married man when he fell in love with Roseanna McCoy. But the mountaineers have no rule of morality."⁸⁵ Again, even with the simplest of plot development, Crawford morally judges the mountaineers as inferior. Even worse, he gets the facts wrong. Johnse's love affair with Roseanna was before his marriage to Nancy McCoy. It seems the truth may not have been Crawford's number one priority.

An American Vendetta, despite its lack of balanced reporting, is a vital primary source. Indeed, due to its slanted view, modern readers get an unadorned example of the nineteenth century mindset, complete with a brutal honesty devoid of any open-mindedness toward diversity, or the self-conscious, political correctness that pervades much of present-day rhetoric. Secondly, one sees many of the crucial aspects of myth-making relevant to the Hatfield-McCoy occurrences.

⁸⁵Ibid., 42.

For example, Crawford alludes to the original view of mountaineers as "rugged individuals" when describing Devil Anse. "He does not know how to read or write, but he has lived the life of the mountaineer so long that he has embodied such a spirit of freedom that he will not submit to the dictation of anyone." This trait, however, has undergone a perceptual change in the mind of Crawford. No longer is this individualism seen as a positive form of Americanism, but it is now viewed as a catalyst for lawlessness. Anse is seen as an "absolute dictator" who does as he pleases regardless of rules and laws.⁸⁶

That the "rugged individualism" of the mountaineer is now perceived as a negative trait is significant, for it cuts to the heart of the myth of the hill-billy. Surely, "rugged individualism" was still admired as an American characteristic. This is supported by the fact that heroes such as General George Armstrong Custer and Theodore Roosevelt, whose reputations were built in the same era, were revered for this exact characteristic. So why were the hill-billies subjected to a double standard?

One possibility is that individualism was respected if it did some sort of "good" for the nation. Custer was a brash Civil War hero, an individual who killed uncivilized savages. Roosevelt was similar, except he killed

⁸⁶Ibid., 74.

bloodthirsty Spaniards. The mountaineers were individualistic, but were viewed as white savages squatting on land that could be put to better use. "There are no finer coal deposits anywhere than to be found in Logan County and this neighborhood. But the community has not progressed for upward of a hundred years."⁸⁷ The hillbillies are thus seen as throwbacks to a bygone era, and as hindrances to the progress of the nation. This coming at a time when progressivism was a major tenet of the way Americans viewed the future of the United States. The perceived "backwardness" of the mountaineers might as well have served as an eviction notice, for big business was gaining a full head of steam in its desire for this mineral-rich region.

Not surprisingly, Crawford argues for the displacement of these small landowners in favor of big business.

This country, which is now dominated and controlled by as lawless a class of people as is known in any country, is wonderfully rich, and needs only a railroad to come up through it to drive out this outlaw class and develop as rich a line of coal and iron properties as can be found anywhere.⁸⁸

Later in the text, Crawford befriends a businessman prospecting for land, and after a lengthy discussion about the acquisition of land asks, "'Do you mean to say,' said I,

⁸⁷Ibid., 97.

⁸⁸Ibid., 122.

'that you have deliberately planned to have these people begin killing each other simply for the purpose of freeing this property?'"⁸⁹ That this question should arise in Crawford's text strongly supports the contention that outside forces had major responsibilities in the continuance of feuding in the Kentucky-West Virginia mountains. The surprises do not stop there however, for Crawford concedes,

I must confess that I even took actual pleasure in the thought that the McCoys were going to cross the river that night to aid in evicting the murderous Hatfield....Perhaps I had been in this barbarous country so long that I had become infected with its spirit; however that may be, I present the case as it is, without any attempt to soften anyone's judgment of my conduct.⁹⁰

Is it any wonder that Crawford, at the beginning of his investigation, noticed that the mountain people were "the most suspicious people on the face of the earth. Every one who visits that region who is not a land speculator or a drummer is regarded as a detective."⁹¹

Crawford's study does more than merely portray Appalachians in a certain light while discussing the Hatfield-McCoy feud. He makes broader assumptions which

⁸⁹Ibid., 163.

⁹⁰Ibid., 164.

⁹¹Ibid., 12. The use of the word "detective" in this context is comparable to the modern-day bounty hunter.

typify the northern perspective toward the southern mountaineers. Indeed, in addition to debasing the Hatfields, McCoys, and all of Appalachia, Crawford goes a step further by taking aim at the whole South. "While there may be no more murders perpetrated in proportion to the population than in the North, there is no doubt that the killing in the South is done by a different grade of people."⁹² This quote is nearly identical to the one describing the nature of the mountaineers evidenced earlier. Thus, Crawford creates a parallel between the Appalachian highlanders and all southerners.

Crawford even proposes that a "prominent Southern official" who "holds one of the highest offices under the Government" and is respected as a man of good character is somehow tainted or contaminated due to his Southern upbringing. "Yet, underneath his veneering of civilization there dwells the spirit of barbarism which transforms this polite, well-mannered man into a savage."⁹³ Here again one sees the North proclaiming itself as the embodiment of civilization while relegating the South to a region unfit and unworthy to be a part of the great promise of the United States.

⁹²Ibid., 120-21.

⁹³Ibid., 118-19.

The misinterpretations, prejudices, and generalizations found in Crawford's manuscript are revealing. In his book all of the stereotypes that are so crucial to the Hatfield-McCoy legend are found in one neat package. The hillbillies are described as the most savage humans, unable to grasp the divine hand extended by the "civilized" world. They are "nature's children" ignorant of the world outside, prone to violence, adverse to the march of progress, and living on extremely valuable land that should be used for the betterment of the nation. In his work, one sees the connection between the singular event of the feud, portrayed as an example of typical hillbilly violence; and the seed of a powerful image that continued to define all of Appalachian culture, a culture grown in the rebellious, barbarous South. In his view it was a culture in need of drastic change, if it was to be a part of a progressive nation whose future is perceived as the beacon of humanity.

As the newspaper articles continued to flourish throughout 1888 and 1889, the reputations of both Kentucky and West Virginia were being publicly destroyed. Citizens of both states became defensive, and in the editorials of the time one sees that some surrounding communities turned against the Hatfields and McCoys. "The West Virginia authorities should, for the sake of the credit of the state, take some action in the matter of the alleged outrages in Logan County....The notoriety West Virginia is acquiring by

reason of the reports is decidedly unpleasant, and is very damaging to the welfare of the state."⁹⁴

This change of some newspapers from defending their citizens to attacking the Hatfields and McCoys in particular and mountaineers in general deserves a closer look. The Louisville Courier Journal, which the New York Times called "the chief interpreter of Kentuckian ideas to the world outside,"⁹⁵ presents a fascinating case.⁹⁶

Henry Watterson, editor of the Courier Journal and proponent of economic modernization, developed theories for the rash of Kentucky feuds in the 1880s. His editorials concluded that the earlier feuds had their beginnings in political and racial disagreements. Nowhere in these early articles was there any evidence or accusations that mountaineers were inherently more violent than any other Kentuckians or southerners for that matter; but as Altina L. Waller discovered: "In 1885, however, the reporting of feud violence changed dramatically as the mountains and

⁹⁴Wheeling Intelligencer, as quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones, The Hatfields and McCoys. 113.

⁹⁵New York Times, July 9, 1885.

⁹⁶A more in-depth discussion of the research concerning this particular topic is found in Altina L. Waller's essay "Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype," Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century.

impoverished mountaineers began to be singled out as the unique locus of family feuding."⁹⁷

The following quote from the New York Times not only identifies Appalachian Kentucky as the particular region of concern, but shifts its analysis from political and economic roots for feuding. The newspaper now supported a position contending that violence is caused by cultural or even genetic defects in the mountaineers.

It is a poor, weak-spirited county in Eastern Kentucky now that has not its feud and its band of thugs protected by the courts....The savages who inhabit this region are not manly enough to fight fairly, face to face. They lie in wait and shoot their enemies in the back....One can hardly believe that any part of the United States is cursed with people so lawless and degraded. The Courier Journal asserts that in these counties "the increase of idiocy is so rapid that in a short time the idiots will outnumber the murderers and then exceed the number of voters. Eastern Kentucky can be redeemed, but it is clear that its redemption must come with the extension of railroads in this benighted region whose natural resources invite development."⁹⁸

Henry Watterson accused the New York Times of distorting editorials from the Courier Journal, but within six months, the paper had indeed reversed its opinion on the Appalachian region of the state. "The mountain counties where lawlessness prevails must be redeemed. [The Church] must

⁹⁷Altina L. Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia," Appalachia in the Making, 355-56.

⁹⁸The New York Times as quoted in Altina L. Waller "Feuding in Appalachia," Appalachia in the Making, 356.

regenerate them...from their evil ways."⁹⁹ Why had Watterson changed his focus so drastically?

Altina Waller in her essay "Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype" puts forth a possible explanation.

While white southerners in the black belt engaged in an orgy of lynchings in the 1890's, it was mountain feuding that elicited sensationalistic reporting. For Henry Watterson and his readers in bluegrass Kentucky, it was undoubtedly a relief to focus on the suppression of violence in mountaineer culture that industrialization would soon bring about rather than confront the uncomfortable reality of increasing racial violence in their own backyard."¹⁰⁰

Despite the growing concern of some residents concerning the reputation of their home state, other citizens were intrigued by the two families, and the notorious Devil Anse Hatfield in particular. Some West Virginians even viewed the clan leader as a celebrity. So when Anse Hatfield decided to come out of hiding to appear in court on charges of violating Internal Revenue laws, the courthouse in Charleston, West Virginia was packed with people wanting to see this outlaw. Interestingly, Hatfield was promised safe passage to and from Charleston by the judge and law

⁹⁹Louisville Courier Journal as quoted in Altina L. Waller "Feuding in Appalachia," Appalachia in the Making, 358.

¹⁰⁰Altina L. Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia," Appalachia in the Making, 361.

enforcement officials so as to keep any "detectives" from capturing him and attempting to take him to a Kentucky court. Hatfield, however, insisted on his own body-guards consisting of well armed supporters. "He was dressed in a suit of navy blue, and no one would judge from his appearance that he is the blood thirsty villain that imaginative newspapermen have pictured him to be."¹⁰¹

Before the trial, in which he was acquitted of all charges, Anse gave an interview outlining his version of the feud to a Wheeling Intelligencer reporter. After a short discussion of the feud, and of Perry Cline's involvement in the resurrection of hostilities, Devil Anse concluded his statement. "Every man in Logan County who knows me will tell you I am a peaceful, law-abiding man, and no man will say I ever told a falsehood. In this contest I have only defended myself, as any man would do under similar circumstances."¹⁰² This public appearance, and the continued news coverage, kept the Hatfield-McCoy drama in the public eye.

In 1890, the Courier Journal continued to discuss the possibilities of capturing the Hatfields. In one article a swap was proposed. The offer had Devil Anse, Cap and Johnse Hatfield going to trial in Kentucky in a trade for "bad"

¹⁰¹Wheeling Intelligencer, 21 November 1889.

¹⁰²Ibid., 22 November 1889.

Frank Phillips and Bud McCoy going to the courts in West Virginia.

It would be 'devil eat devil' if such should take place. West Virginia would be better off without the Hatfields, and Pike County can well afford to relinquish all right and title to Phillips and McCoy. So, if this is done, there will in all probability be fine rope-stretchings.¹⁰³

In September of that same year, the Huntington Times wrote an optimistic report that was reproduced around the country.

The famous Hatfield-McCoy feud is at an end. After partaking in the bloody butchery of all the men they could kill, after living as outlaws, with prices on their heads, defying arrest and courting meetings with their enemies, after seeing their young men shot down, their old ones murdered, with no good accomplished, they have at last agreed on either side to let the matter rest.¹⁰⁴

The violence of the feud had ended, and both the Hatfields and McCoy's were tired of the whole affair and desirous of a quiet end. This is supported by an editorial sent to the Wayne County News by the infamous Cap Hatfield dated February 24, 1891:

I ask space in your valuable paper for these few lines. A general amnesty has been declared in the famous

¹⁰³Courier Journal as quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones, The Hatfields and McCoy's, 184.

¹⁰⁴Huntington Times as quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones, The Hatfields and McCoy's, 189-90.

Hatfield and McCoy feud, and I wish to say something of the old and the new. I do not wish to keep the old feud alive and I suppose that everybody, like myself, is tired of the names Hatfield and McCoy, and the "Border Warfare" in time of peace. The war spirit in me has abated and I sincerely rejoice at the prospect of peace. I have devoted my life to arms. We have undergone a fearful loss of noble lives and valuable property in the struggle. We being, like Adam, not the first transgressors. Now I propose to rest in a spirit of peace. Yours respectfully, Cap Hatfield.¹⁰⁵

That the families had settled their differences was not enough to convince the newspapers. Many publications were simply unable to let such a sensational story die. The New York Tribune editors quickly wrote a rebuttal to Cap's letter.

The rumor that the day Cap came to town with this letter he bought 200 long cartridges and took them home with him may have no foundation in fact, still it might be just as well for the McCoys to stay on their own side of the river for the present...our private and entirely disinterested advise to the white-winged dove of peace is for it to fly high in that neighborhood for a while yet, lest it be served up as the principal dish at a game dinner, while its downy covering is used to stuff a Hatfield or a McCoy feather bed.¹⁰⁶

Not long after these articles were published, newspapers made the most of another incident. This was not a violent confrontation, but a wedding between Aaron Hatfield

¹⁰⁵Wayne County News, 24 February 1891.

¹⁰⁶New York Tribune, as quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones The Hatfield and McCoys, 192.

and Miss Sophia McCoy. Sarcasm found on the printed page had never been so acute.

If young Mr. Hatfield wooed his mountain bride with the witching strains of music, he never used a lute, as the gallants of Verona did in Romeo's day, but he probably played her "Dixie" or "Marching through Georgia" on a new four dollar accordion, painted in blue and gold, and instead of swearing eternal love by the summer moon, he promised her a pink calico dress and yards of ribbon every year if she would preside over puncheon table and be mistress of his log cabin. But these things are neither here nor there, and if the mountaineers who used to plunk a ball into an enemy's eye at five hundred yards are to sing duets across a cradle whose inmate contains the mingled blood of Hatfield and McCoy, it is not for us to spoil poetry or to hunt flaws in the gilding.¹⁰⁷

After some time, the newspapers realized the part that they had played in the growing legend of the Hatfield-McCoy story. The Wheeling Intelligencer stated, "Many things that have been printed about the vendetta are pure fabrication."¹⁰⁸ The Logan County Banner joked further "the Hatfield-McCoy War has broke out fresh in the newspapers. The Hatfields and McCoys, however, know nothing about it."¹⁰⁹ Yet even as late as 1947, some sixty years after the battle of Grapevine Creek, when a McCoy interfering with the arrest of a friend

¹⁰⁷Courier Journal as quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones, The Hatfields and McCoys, 194.

¹⁰⁸Wheeling Intelligencer as quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones, The Hatfields and McCoys, 193.

¹⁰⁹Logan County Banner as quoted in Virgil Carrington Jones, The Hatfields and McCoys, 203.

grabbed the gun of a law officer and was killed by the chief of police, a Hatfield, it made national headlines. "Hatfield Shoots McCoy at Scene of Famous Feud," "McCoy is Slain; Yes by Hatfield," "The Reckless Mountain Boys at it Again-Dead, One McCoy."¹¹⁰

The myth had begun. Many factors had contributed to this: the growth of the industrial capitalist garnering untapped resources, the hunger of middle-class America for stories of unique, curious cultures, the advancement of media and information possibilities. Finally, and most importantly, the timing of the outbreak of tensions between the Hatfields and McCoys were turned into a juicy soap opera which would continue to fascinate Americans for decades to come.

¹¹⁰Virgil Carrington Jones, The Hatfields and McCoys, 249.

Hatfields, McCoys and the Hillbilly Myth in the Twentieth Century

In 1882, as newspaper reports of the Hatfields and McCoys began to dominate all stories of Appalachia in the press, a writer began the first of a series of fictional mountain stories. Within a few years, he had succeeded in becoming one of the most popular fiction writers in the nation. His stories, which first appeared in popular periodicals such as Century Magazine, were instant money-makers and elevated him to the position of an American celebrity.

John Fox Jr. was a Kentuckian. After studying at Harvard, working on some coal-mining enterprises in Tennessee, and reporting for the New York Times, he began to write A Mountain Europa.¹¹¹ This story published in 1892, reintroduced readers to mountain characters first made popular by Mary Noallis Murfree. The moonshiner, preacher, and pure mountain girl were all stalwart characters that followed in Murfree's footsteps. Fox, however, introduced a new character which added an edge of danger to his popular tales, the feudsman. Fox's timing was impeccable. His recurring theme examining the clash between the outside world

¹¹¹John Fox Jr, A Mountain Europa: A Cumberland Vendetta (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).

with mountaineer society provided numerous plot-line possibilities. Interestingly, his storylines differed little from Murfree's excepting a deeper knowledge of mountain ways and realities, and a more balanced and sympathetic approach in relation to the highlander's plight.

Fox's financial and political success was another story however. The American public was primed and ready for stories of southern mountaineers; so as he perfected his style, his reputation grew and he soon was a regular on the lecture circuit and was seen hobnobbing with President Theodore Roosevelt.

His first completed book, A Cumberland Vendetta: and Other Stories was published in 1895. Not surprisingly, the most successful of his formulas was the "feud" story. In A Cumberland Vendetta the feuding families are the confederate Stetsons and the unionist Lewallens. Although he treated the mountaineers more fairly than previous writers, and was sympathetic with their struggle against exploitive capitalists, his writing presents a new fold in the general characterization of hillbillies.

Fox's introduction and development of the theme directly connecting the hillbillies with their ancestral blood ties to the ancient Anglo-Saxon/Scottish Highlanders was a profound one. It strongly suggested that the reasons for the hillbillies' supposed propensity toward violence is a direct correlation to their genetic makeup, and that feuding

was an inherent part of the mountaineer character. This, coming at the exact time-period when scientific racism and social-Darwinism were popular theories coming of age in a growing industrial America, presented the southern mountaineers a new negative stereotype:

When the feud began, no one knew. Even the original cause was forgotten....Through the hatred of change, characteristic of the mountaineer the world over, the Lewallens were for the Union. The Stetsons owned a few slaves, and they fought for them....The war armed them, and brought back an ancestral contempt for human life; it left them a heritage of lawlessness that for mutual protection made necessary the very means used by their feudal forefathers; personal hatred supplanted its dead issues, and with them the war went on. The Stetsons had a good strain of Anglo-Saxon blood, and owned valley lands; the Lewallens kept store and made "moonshine"... and gradually the retainers of both settled on one or the other side of the river....It was feudalism born again.¹¹²

In addition to the theme of blood ties to ancient Anglo-Saxon highlanders famous for their vendettas, obvious parallels to the Hatfield-McCoy feud and the myth that followed fill the pages of Fox's accounts. Many examples are found in the above quote: the boundary between the two Cumberland families was a river, they were once friends but hostilities arose due to the Civil War, the original causes of the violence had been long forgotten as simple clan hatred took over, while moonshining was the preferred occupation.

¹¹²Ibid., 124-25.

This presents an important consequence, and an aspect that has followed the Hatfield-McCoy legend for decades. This is a case where popular fictionalized accounts impressed a multitude of half-truths upon the American consciousness in relation to the troubles between the two families. This, being an unconscious by-product of the literature, continued to proliferate unexamined myths throughout most of the twentieth century.

Other connections to the Hatfields and McCoys in Fox's stories are more transparent. For example, in a later collection of stories entitled In Happy Valley (1917), the opening tale is "The Courtship of Allaphair."¹¹³ Although this story does not follow the events leading to the tragic death of Allifair McCoy, the connection is undeniable. Similarly, in the extremely successful The Trail of Lonesome Pine, serialized in Scribner's from January to October 1908, the dangerous and violent father of a mountain girl is named "Devil" Judd Tolliver. Here it seems Fox has gleaned a united influence from both Devil Anse Hatfield, and from the Martin-Tolliver feud of Rowan County, Kentucky. The star-crossed love affair between offspring of feuding clan patriarchs is exploited to the fullest measure as in the case

¹¹³John Fox Jr, "The Courtship of Allaphair", In Happy Valley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 3.

of the relationship between Rome Stetson and Martha Lewallen in A Cumberland Vendetta.

Once again, the previously proven formulas of feud stories take aspects of the historical personages and then develop fictional tales around the memorable images. The impact of these tales created mythical actions, incidents or "controlling images" in the mind of Americans which have proliferated to this day. One cannot and should not blame an author for making use of such colorful and memorable people, however, one must acknowledge the part that these stories have played in the continuation of the legends and stereotypes.

Fox's success at the storytelling of a unique area and of the people that were its inhabitants, defines him as one of the most prominent writers of local-color fiction. Although a late-comer to the genre, his influence on the hillbilly myth is irrefutable. His popular stories soon reached an even wider audience as they were translated to the stage in the 1920s (The Trail of Lonesome Pine), and to films (The Trail of Lonesome Pine in 1916, 1922, 1936 and The Little Shepard of Kingdom Come in 1915 and 1928).

Two more full length semi-fictional accounts were written during this era. The Devil's Brigade by John L. Spivak in 1930, and Harry Harrison Kroll's Their Ancient

Grudge in 1946.¹¹⁴ Both are prime examples of creative fiction based on an already growing myth.

Spivak's The Devil's Brigade follows the general plot line of the feud well. In this arena his work is successful. However, the afore-created myths and legendary misinterpretations are presented in full decorative flare. For instance, in the introduction, three whole decades are added to the length of the feud, "the trouble actually lasted some forty years."¹¹⁵ Not surprisingly, the mythic cause of the feud is reiterated, the number of participants exaggerated, and the enjoyment that hillbillies allegedly receive from killing is demonstrated as well.

The feud started over a tragic love affair between Rosanna McCoy and Jonse Hatfield and immediately drew into its web hundreds of people and for a period threatened to cause civil war between West Virginia and Kentucky. A good many of the killings were committed with the tacit approval of the legal authorities of each state. Everybody seemed to have enjoyed it.¹¹⁶

According to Spivak, civilization in the form of business and industry thankfully ended the unreasonable violence, "the vendetta did not begin to wane until civilization in the form

¹¹⁴John L. Spivak, The Devil's Brigade: The Story of the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, (Brewer and Warren Inc, 1930). Harry Harrison Kroll, Their Ancient Grudge (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1946).

¹¹⁵John L. Spivak, The Devil's Brigade, 5.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

of coal mining came to the remote vastness of West Virginia."¹¹⁷ This book presents evidence that the newer interpretation concerning blood ancestry of the ancient clans of Scotland is now concretely entrenched in the legend, for Devil Anse is described "with a sense of family loyalty inherited from his clannish Scot ancestors."¹¹⁸

Indeed, what makes Spivak's contribution to the Hatfield-McCoy myth interesting is not so much his reiteration of the previously created legends, but the way in which the information was given. It was presented with emotion, drama, intensity, and outrageousness. In a word, it was submitted to sell.

Firstly, the cover of his book shows a monstrous hillbilly stereotype with floppy hat and smoking Winchester rifle standing, unmoveable. In a sense, the hillbilly seems to dare the reader to open the book to its first dangerous page. Of course, the title arouses images of an evil tribe of warriors bent on releasing chaotic mayhem at the orders of the dark angel himself.

In the text, the hillbilly joy of violence is described as a way of life. The author's description of the election day fights are filled with quaint and colorful hillbilly dialogue followed by uncontrollable gang violence;

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 21.

and as the feud escalates, none of the uncivilized participants are aware of "how many were killed in those nervous days."¹¹⁹ In the end, the most famous of ignorant hillbillies, Devil Anse Hatfield, finally comes to the realization that violence, Winchesters and clannish loyalties are things of the past; for the modern, successful and civilized man now deals in the art of business. "A new world, and Devil Anse looked wonderingly at it. Coal, money, and business were in command."¹²⁰

Their Ancient Grudge by Harry Harrison Kroll attempts to tell the story from a completely different angle. In his notes on sources he writes that he spoke with a number of descendants of the Hatfields and McCoys and became intrigued, not by the story of the men in the feud, but of the women. His work interprets the feud through the eyes of four McCoy women, Roseanna, Nancy, Sadie and Mary. It is a choppy, melodramatic fiction which carries the mythic stereotypes to an incredibly low level.

The inauspicious opening of this interpretation shows the McCoy women lusting and fighting over Johnse Hatfield, the book then slides down the slippery slope of cartoon-like hillbilly fiction as the pages crawl to its denouement. Familiar myths are reiterated, but this time with a renewed

¹¹⁹Ibid., 112.

¹²⁰Ibid., 289.

sense of vigor. For example, take the description of Devil Anse, supposedly from Roseanna McCoy's point of view.

He was a filthy-looking creature. There had been times when Rosanna[sic] honestly wondered if man - at least some men - were made in the image of God, and this was one. He was foul and clotted with vomit, and he looked more like an animal than a human being. Somehow it was a kind of insult to an animal to make such a comparison, for animals in their health and vigor were almost always clean. Even a hog was so by nature, while old Anse was ugly by choice.¹²¹

Their Ancient Grudge represents the low point of written fiction on the Hatfield-McCoy feud. One hardly need not wonder about impressions received by readers from these novels. The two families were portrayed in no uncertain terms as the ugliest of human beings, devoid of any worthy use, and an embarrassing stain on the reputation of the United States citizenry. This low point in written fiction is not the end of Hatfield-McCoy myth making however. Pictures, cartoons and movies continued the ideological destruction of Appalachian culture throughout twentieth century.

Before entering the study of the myth in pictures and celluloid, an important question must be answered. Is the popular image of the classic mountain hillbilly with floppy hat, and long, black beard made famous in cartoons, pictures

¹²¹Harry Harrison Kroll, Their Ancient Grudge, 42.

and films a direct product of the Hatfield-McCoy war? In a previous chapter, it was mentioned that during the mid-late 1800s there were numerous acts of violence reported as feuds. Indeed, between 1851-1910 the New York Times reported on sixteen Appalachian conflicts described as feuds.¹²² So, could it be that the popular hillbilly image originated from a feud other than the Hatfields and McCoys? There is some evidence to support this possibility.

The Martin-Tolliver war of Rowan County, Kentucky which sprang from the Underwood-Holbrook feud of adjacent Carter County, Kentucky together received more newspaper coverage than any other feuds including the Hatfield-McCoy's. Perhaps it is upon this other highly publicized feud that the classic American hillbilly image owes its inception.

Although this contention is in the realm of possibility, it is highly unlikely. As the following evidence shows, the Hatfield-McCoy feud is unique in that it embodies all of the mythic qualities and connections associated with the stereotyped hillbilly image.

Firstly, the American hillbilly/feudist generalization is never associated with citizens of high social standing or elite families. This is the case with other famous conflicts such as the eighteenth-century vendettas associated with

¹²²Altina L. Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia," Appalachia in the Making, 348.

Corsica, and the famous, fictional socialites of Romeo and Juliet, the Montegues and Capulets. No, the classic Appalachian feudist is a poor, uneducated mountaineer. Surprisingly, many of the feuds reported in the New York Times were the products of overtly political fights between upper-middle class citizens. For example, the 1854 Hill-Evans feud in Kentucky witnessed physicians, town officials and wealthy property owners arguing over the ownership of a slave. A second conflict, the Darnell-Watson feud, followed the same script. Both were socially prominent land owners who fought over a slave, property rights and court cases, actions which eventually ended in a shooting. This feud has an added interest in that it served as the basis for Mark Twain's feud stories in Huckleberry Finn and Life on the Mississippi. It is important to note that Twain preserved the respectable social status of its participants. These examples hardly resonate with the twentieth-century image of drunken, brutal hillbillies attacking each other from high mountain ridges.¹²³

In addition to breaking with the stereotype of the poor feudist, these feuds did not take place in the mountains! Doctors Hill and Evans were found grappling in Garrard County, south of Lexington and not even considered in the Appalachian region. The Darnell-Watson feud occurred

¹²³Ibid., 351-52.

along the Mississippi River near the Tennessee/Kentucky border. Even the famous Martin-Tolliver feud took place in the foothills, along major transportation routes which already had a railroad and commercial development.¹²⁴

To continue, still more evidence is found that other feuds contradict the famed hillbilly stereotype where family hatred is the enduring cause. As Altina Waller suggests,

The Kennedy-Sellars feud in Garrard County, the Jett-Little shootings in Breathitt, the Walker-Smoot feud in Owen, and the Henry County conspiracy were all intertwined with political and racial violence. In each case one or the other faction were Republicans who were blamed for supporting black voting."¹²⁵

Political causes of feuds were the norm and not the exception. In Breathitt County, which tallied feuds in 1874, 1878, 1885, and 1902, in each case the violence was much more overtly political than the Hatfield-McCoy conflict in which the underlying political tensions were much harder to grasp.¹²⁶ Inherent in the Hatfield-McCoy feud are all the stereotyped factors not present in the others mentioned: the poor, uneducated mountain man fighting simply for a skewed sense of family loyalty and justice.

¹²⁴Ibid., 360.

¹²⁵Ibid., 353.

¹²⁶Ibid., 364.

The first popular visual stereotyped hillbillies are found in early silent films and cartoons throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century. Over one hundred films were made in which southern mountaineers played a major part. Few of these early films with titles such as: Higginses vs. Judsons (Lubin, 1911), Ferdie's Family Feud (Imp, 1912), Why Kentucky Went Dry (Frontier, 1914), Good Cider (Lubin, 1914), and Jerry and the Moonshiners (Cub/Mutual, 1916) remain.¹²⁷ This is unfortunate, for it would be useful to determine exactly when the cartoon hillbilly image made its first appearance in film. J.W. Williamson, an expert on films portraying the southern mountains, states that some of the earliest surviving biograph films show mountaineers as slightly western, or even as aristocratic southerners, which suggests that the floppy hat hillbilly character was a later creation.¹²⁸

Although the specific date for the introduction of the classic hillbilly image on film has yet to be determined, some interesting evidence supports the contention that the

¹²⁷For more information on mountaineers in early films see: J.W. Williamson, Southern Mountaineers in Silent Films: Plot Synopses of Movies about Moonshining, Feuding, and Other Mountain Topics, 1904-1929 (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 1994).

¹²⁸J. W. Williamson, Hillbillyland: What the Movies did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 270.

year 1915 had special significance. For it was in that year that Maurice Tourneur was preparing to make the first film version of The Cub (World Film, 1915), which until then had been a stage production. Mr. Tourneur, who was researching his project in an attempt to be completely authentic, traveled by train to Mingo County, West Virginia to interview Devil Anse Hatfield. A photograph was taken of the film maker speaking with the legendary feudist across an unopened fence. J. W. Williamson states, "the image of Devil Anse is suggestive and invites the interesting speculation that the cartoonized hillbilly was originally a specific parody of this real personage."¹²⁹

During the 1920s, movies depicting hillbillies proliferated. More and more, rural southern mountaineers were portrayed as the comic fools unable to even work a double barreled shotgun. In Rainbow Riley (Burr and Hines/First National, 1926), for which only a trailer remains in the Library of Congress, the city hero is showing a group of classic stereotyped hillbillies how to swing a golf club.¹³⁰ It became a classic joke to show mountaineers as unable to understand modern technology. This theme, continued through the television era and can be found in series such as

¹²⁹Ibid., 270-71.

¹³⁰Ibid., 39.

"Ma and Pa Kettle" in the 1950s, "The Beverly Hillbillies" in the 1960s, and "Hee Haw" during the 1970s.

The comic hillbilly image from the movies translated easily to cartoons in popular magazines. The most successful cartoonist in this genre was Paul Webb, whose depictions of the floppy hatted, black bearded hillbilly were printed in Esquire magazine from 1935-1948. His outrageous cartoons poked fun at the hillbilly at every turn. For example, as a group of shoeless hillbillies smoking pipes study a box marked "soap" the caption reads, "What d'ya reckon it is, Maw -Shucks-it tastes turrible." This joke is reminiscent of the quote from T.C. Crawford's book An American Vendetta: A Story of Barbarism in the United States in which he states "Such an article of soap is absolutely unknown in the history of the [Hatfield] family."¹³¹ In fact, Webb's drawings are surprisingly similar to the sketches made by the artist who accompanied Crawford on his trip to visit the Hatfields in 1888. One can clearly see the resemblance between the artist's sketch of Devil Anse and Paul Webb's hillbillies.

Webb's hillbillies are the perfect stereotypes. The men are always slouched, bare footed, smoking and/or drinking, completely unable to do any work and resistant to technology. Another example exemplifying the comic attitude taken by Webb and the readers of the time, shows three

¹³¹T.C. Crawford, An American Vendetta, 84.

drunken hillbilly men sitting on a porch with a broken wagon wheel in the foreground and the caption reads, "Wonder if Maw's had her baby yet-I'm gettin' mighty hongry." Webb's cartoon hillbillies also serve as the visual and ideological forefathers for one of the most famous animated cartoons featuring hillbillies. The Warner Brothers' classic "Hillbilly Hare" featuring Bugs Bunny playing the fiddle as two mountain brothers bash each other silly can still be seen regularly on Saturday morning cartoons.¹³² Thus, the comic hillbilly grew in movies, animation and in popular magazines during the same era.

In December, 1921, a movie premiered which was an instant sensation. Tol'able David (Inspiration Pictures/First National, 1921), which was one of the most influential of hillbilly pictures because it was seen by millions of viewers, helped define the meaning of the southern mountains in the 1920s. It was voted the best picture of the year by readers of Photoplay Magazine and was a box office money maker for three years, thus proving its longevity in the eyes of the public.¹³³ Its popularity is a bit surprising because

¹³²Robert McKimson, Hillbilly Hare (Warner Brothers, 1950).

¹³³J. W. Williamson, Hillbillyland, 178.

it was a feud melodrama, and such movies peaked in popularity around 1914.¹³⁴

Its relevance to this thesis is the discussion of the movie's antagonists, the Hatburns. They are the monsters, the Goliaths, the crude, mountain villains of the movie. The connection to the Hatfields of the Tug River Valley would have been obvious to most literate Americans of the day, and when the leader of the Hatburns on one of the title cards is to say that he and his sons are running from trouble "over Tug Valley way" the circle is complete.¹³⁵

Similarly, in The Kentuckian (United Artists, 1955), starring Burt Lancaster, the black hatted, black bearded bad guys this time are the Fromes brothers. J.W. Williamson makes the following observation, "The Fromeses have been anachronistically injected from a Hatfield-McCoy style feud parody into this dramatization of the 1820's frontier."¹³⁶ Again, the generalized vision of the classic hillbilly, whether it be comic or evil, is somehow inherently related to those family names which symbolize the hillbilly, the Hatfields and McCoys.¹³⁷

¹³⁴J. W. Williamson counted no less than seventy-one new hillbilly movies for the year 1914 alone. Hillbillyland, 179.

¹³⁵Ibid., 181.

¹³⁶Ibid., 90-91.

¹³⁷One notable exception in the discussion of the portrayal of hillbillies in Hollywood productions is that of

In 1972, Warner Brothers released a movie that would be hugely influential in defining what people believed southern mountaineers to be. Deliverance (Warner Brothers, 1972), starring Burt Reynolds, Ned Beatty, and Jon Voight examined the story of city dwellers adventuring into the southern mountains before the area is to be destroyed by bulldozers to make a dam. The raping of the land is a powerful foreshadow to what happens to Ned Beatty's character, Bobby, at the hands of two evil, monstrous hillbillies. The stereotype of the dangerous, high mountain hillbilly is portrayed full force in the rape scene which is designed and filmed to horrify the audience. The desired effect is successful.

J. W. Williamson chronicles descriptions of the mountaineers found in the second draft of the script. The author, James Dickey, and the director John Boorman, had something particular in mind. One can recognize the seed of these desired characteristics as coming directly from the myth:

He is almost ridiculously country, almost like a caricature, with an absurdly cocked straw hat.[The old man who pumps gas at the Oree gas station.]

the movie Sergeant York (Warner Brothers, 1941). In this movie, America's greatest war hero is depicted as the improbable homespun hick who defies his humble upbringing to define all that is good in the American character. In doing so, he underscores the triumph of American democracy.

He is probably a half-wit, likely from a family inbred to the point of imbecility and Albinism.[The boy with the banjo.]

Three or four weird looking hillbillies have materialized out of the weeds.[At the Oree gas station.]

He is an enormous country brutal-looking man, with no humor in him. He suggests nothing but brutality and stupidity.[Griner, the man who agrees to drive their cars down to Ainty.]

If there were any degenerate red-necks, they are these two.[The two rapists in the woods.]¹³⁸

The landscape, the theme of modern America encroaching in on the mountains, the danger of being in a foreign, frightening culture separated from the "normality" of city life America, all harken back to the stories and myths created from the century old legends of the feuding, moonshining, illiterate, inbred hillbilly.

After Deliverance, the brutal hillbilly in film seemed to crawl back in to the woods. There were other films depicting Appalachian culture in a more positive light such as Coal Miner's Daughter (Universal, 1980), but the hillbilly as the monster of nature finally seemed to have lost the allure that it had so long garnered in the American psyche. For a number of years, the Hatfield-McCoy hillbilly stereotype seemed to vanish.

Then, in 1996, the hillbilly as the monster of nature was resurrected in the immensely popular television series "The X Files." In the episode entitled "Home," two F.B.I.

¹³⁸Ibid., 163.

agents, Mulder and Scully, are sent to investigate the unexplained death of an infant whose genetic disformities are so acute that the baby is almost unrecognizably human. The agents' investigation leads them directly to the Peacocks. These are the new, modern hillbilly monsters of Hollywood. The family has lived in isolation since "the war of northern aggression" and survived simply by inbreeding and raising their razorback hogs. Their 1880s style cabin is a gruesome sight with blood on the floors, a severed pig head on the front steps, and a series of primitive "booby traps" intended to keep outsiders away.

The television audience is witness to Mrs. Peacock attempting to conceive a new member of the family by mating with her son, and her adult grandsons all at the same time. Thus, the explanation for the genetically disfigured infant at the beginning of the episode.

When Mulder and Scully witness the animalistic murder of a local police officer at the hands of the Peacock boys, agent Mulder attempts to explain the behavior. In his monologue, the hillbilly myth is reborn once again.

What we are witnessing Scully, is undiluted animal behavior. Mankind absent of its own creation of civilization, technology, and information. Regressed to an almost pre-historic state, obeying only the often savage laws of nature.¹³⁹

¹³⁹Glen Morgan and James Wong, "Home," The X Files, directed by Kim Manner and distributed by Fox Television, 1996.

The F.B.I. agents kill two of the grotesque hillbillies, but Mrs. Peacock and one of her grandsons/sons (for he is both) escape. As the police set up a search party, and it is believed that in time the two escapees will be caught, Mulder states, "I think time already caught them Scully."¹⁴⁰ That the recurring themes of hillbillies living in a bygone era, adverse to progress, prone to incest and given to extreme, irrational, animalistic violence makes a reappearance in the mid-1990s is significant. It reinforces the contention, discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, that once a "controlling image" is created in the mind of a person, or in the collective mind of a culture for that matter, any contradictory information brought to the surface seems false and out of place. Therefore, it is easier to propagate the myth than it is to challenge it.

¹⁴⁰ibid.

Conclusion

It is fascinating to research, and in a sense, witness the birth and growth of a legend. Each step necessary to continue the legend seems to fall directly into place. The timing in which events occurred, from the feud arising in an era of intense land speculation, to the growth of local color writers, and eventually to the popularity of hillbillies in films, proves to be one of the most invaluable and provocative components of the whole equation. It is as if one single occurrence were missing, the American public would never have heard or even remember the names Hatfield and McCoy.

The feud itself was a truly minuscule event somewhere deep in the mountains of America. That the family names rose to such a prominent position in the realm of American folklore is incredible. That the view of Appalachian mountaineers changed so drastically from the time of Andrew Jackson and Davy Crocket in the early 1800s, to the vilification of Devil Anse Hatfield eighty-eight years later, and continued forward in time to the grotesque portrayals evidenced in Deliverance and "The X Files" is reason to ask the pointed questions of how and why? The contentions put forth in this thesis allow for engaging interpretations as to the nature of American character, legend and culture.

Perhaps the press and bourgeois America near the turn of the century were motivated by a desire to define the new America by trying to show what it was not. The white, primitive savages in West Virginia and Kentucky were just contemporary ancestors trapped in a time capsule. They were not really part of the modern, industrial America headed toward a bright future as the beacon of human progress.

Could another reason be that the mass media, which was the most instrumental creator of the Hatfield-McCoy/hillbilly myth, found it easy to destroy the rural mountaineer culture in an attempt to justify the dominant system of money and power that was driving the middle-class, urban lifestyle? For greed and the need to justify one's self-definition are deep seeds in human nature, and have always been an integral part of the American culture.

Whatever the case, the making of the Hatfield-McCoy myth presents issues and questions that cut to the heart of American history and society. That the story has survived for over a century proves that something inherent in the myth resonates deeply within the American psyche. The answers to these issues and questions may prove to be a mirror in which we see the greatness of America, as well as the nefarious, dark underbelly which challenges our ideals and frightens our sensibilities.

Selected Bibliography

Books/Essays:

- Batteau, Allen W. The Invention of Appalachia. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990.
- Crawford, T.C. An American Vendetta: A Story of Barbarism in the United States. New York: Belford, Clarke and Company, 1889.
- Egerton, John. "The End of the South as a Problem." In The South as an American Problem, ed. Larry J. Griffin and Don H. Doyle, 259-274. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995.
- Ely, James W. Jr. "The Supreme Court and Race Relations." In The South as an American Problem, ed. Larry J. Griffin and Don H. Doyle, 126-141. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995.
- Fox, John Jr. A Mountain Europa: A Cumberland Vendetta. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920.
- _____. In Happy Valley, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917.
- Gerster, Patrick., and Nicholas Cords, eds. Myth and Southern History Volume 2: The New South. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Griffin, Larry J. "Why the South Was an American Problem." In The South as an American Problem, ed. Larry J. Griffin and Don H. Doyle, 10-29. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995.
- Harney, Will Wallace. "A Strange Land and Peculiar People." In Henry D. Shapiro, Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920, 3. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978.
- Hobson, Fred C. "The Savage South." In Myth and Southern History, Volume 2: The New South, ed. Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords, 141-42. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

- Jones, Virgil Carrington. The Hatfields and McCoys. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948.
- Kroll, Harry Harrison. Their Ancient Grudge. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1946.
- Lanmen, Charles. "Letters from the Allegheny Mountains." In Allen W. Batteau, The Invention of Appalachia, 32. Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 1990.
- Lewis, Ronald L. "Railroads, Deforestation, and the Transformation of Agriculture in West Virginia Back Counties, 1880-1920." In Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, 297-316. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Loewen, James W. Lies my Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Book Got Wrong. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- McKinney, Gordon B. Southern Mountain Republicans: 1865-1900. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978.
- Mencken, H. L. "The Sahara of the Bozart." Prejudices: Second Series. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920.
- _____. "The Benighted South." In George Brown Tindall, The Ethnic Southerners, 46. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976.
- Murfree, Mary Noailles. "A-Playin' of Old Sledge at the Settlement." In the Tennessee Mountains. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885.
- Perman, Michael. Emancipation and Reconstruction: 1862-1879. The American History Series. Wheeling, Illinois: Harley Davidson, Inc, 1987.
- Rice, Otice K. The Hatfields and the McCoys. Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982.
- Schorer, Mark. "The Necessity of Myth." In Myth and Mythmaking, ed. Henry A. Murray, 355. New York: George Braziller, 1960.

- Skaggs, Henry. The Southern Oligarchy: An Appeal on Behalf of the Silent Masses of Our Country Against the Despotic Rule of the Few. New York: Negro Universities Press; reprint, 1924 ed.
- Spivak, John L. The Devil's Brigade: The Story of the Hatfield-McCoy Feud. Brewer and Warren Inc, 1930.
- Tindall, George Brown. "The Benighted South: Origins of a Modern Image." The Ethnic Southerners. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976.
- _____. "Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History," In The Idea of the South: Pursuit of a Central Theme, ed. Frank E. Vandiver, 1-15. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
- Waller, Altina L. Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- _____. "Feuding in Appalachia: The Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype." In Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, 347-376. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Williamson, J. W. Hillbillyland: What the Movies did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- _____. Southern Mountaineers in Silent Films: Plot Synopses of Movies about Moonshining, Feuding, and Other Mountain Topics, 1904-1929. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 1994.

Journals/Periodicals

- Bailey, Thomas A. "The Mythmakers of American History." Journal of American History 55(June 1968):5.
- Degler, Carl N. "Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis: The South, the North, and the Nation." Journal of Southern History 53(February 1987):5.

Frost, William Goodell. "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains." Atlantic Monthly 83(March 1899):311.

Encyclopedias

Wilson, Charles Reagan and William Ferris, eds. Encyclopedia of Southern Culture Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989. S.v. "Mountain Culture," by Augustus Burns, "Scopes Trial," by William E. Ellis, "Stereotypes," by Patrick Gerster, "Appalachian Myth," by Henry D. Shapiro.

Newspapers

Huntington Times.

Logan County Banner.

Louisville Courier Journal. 1, 18 September 1887, 8 January 1888.

New York Times. 9 July 1885, 20 September 1887, 1 February 1888.

New York Tribune.

Pittsburgh Times. February, 1888.

Wayne County News. 24 February 1891.

Wheeling Intelligencer. 21, 22 November 1889.

Williamson Daily News. 2 August 1982.

Public Documents

Kentucky. Pike County Circuit Court Records. November 26, 1880.

Kentucky District Court. "Mahon Vs. Kentucky", 34 f. 525, March 3, 1888.

United States Supreme Court. Transcripts of Records. no. 17477, vol 21. 1887.

United States Supreme Court. "Mahon Vs. Justice." 127 U.S. 700, 32L. ed. 283, 8s. Ct.1204, May 14, 1888.

Films/Television

Coal Miner's Daughter. Directed by Michael Apted. Universal Films, 1980.

The Cub. Directed by Maurice Tourneur. World Film, 1915.

Dickey, James. Deliverance. Directed by John Boorman. Warner Brothers, 1972.

Ferdie's Family Feud. Imp, 1912.

Good Cider. Lubin, 1914.

Higginses vs. Judsons. Lubin, 1911.

Hillbilly Hare. Directed by Robert McKimson. Warner Brothers, 1950.

Jerry and the Moonshiners. Cub/Mutual, 1916.

The Kentuckian. United Artists, 1955.

Morgan, Glen and James Wong. "Home." The X Files. Directed by Kim Manner. Fox Television, 1996.

Rainbow Riley. Burr and Hines/ First National, 1926.

Sergeant York. Warner Brothers, 1941.

Tol'able David. Directed by D.W. Griffith. Inspiration Pictures/ First National, 1924.

Why Kentucky Went Dry. Frontier, 1914.

Music Recordings

Morman, Chips. Luckenbach, Texas, Waylon Jennings' Greatest Hits. Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, RCA, 1979.