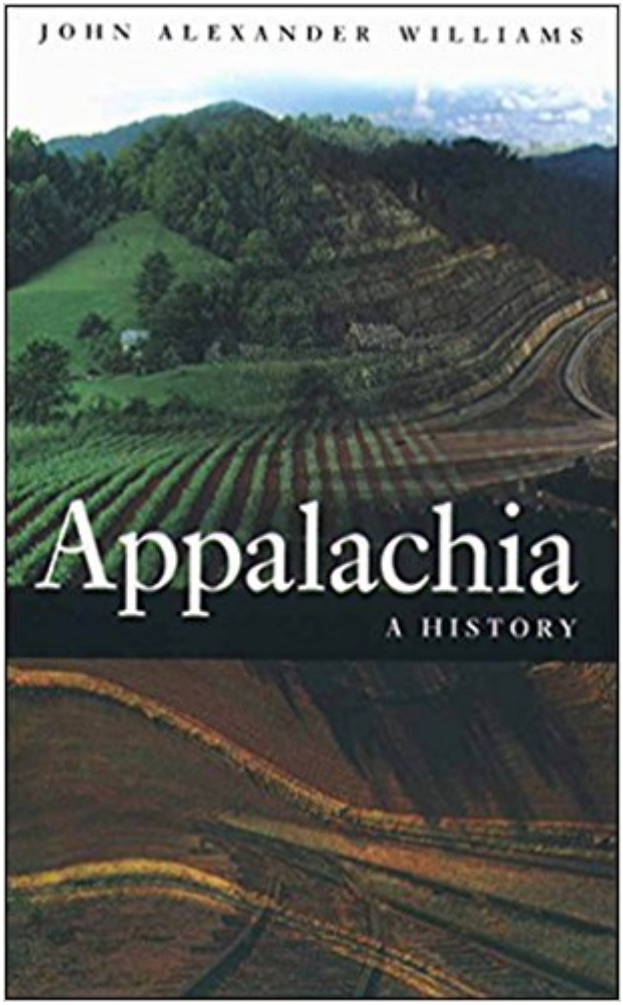
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Appalachia: A History



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Synopsis

Interweaving social, political, environmental, economic, and popular history, John Alexander Williams chronicles four and a half centuries of the Appalachian past. Along the way, he explores Appalachia's long-contested boundaries and the numerous, often contradictory images that have shaped perceptions of the region as both the essence of America and a place apart.Williams begins his story in the colonial era and describes the half-century of bloody warfare as migrants from Europe and their American-born offspring fought and eventually displaced Appalachia's Native American inhabitants. He depicts the evolution of a backwoods farm-and-forest society, its divided and unhappy fate during the Civil War, and the emergence of a new industrial order as railroads, towns, and extractive industries penetrated deeper and deeper into the mountains. Finally, he considers Appalachia's fate in the twentieth century, when it became the first American region to suffer widespread deindustrialization, and examines the partial renewal created by federal intervention and a small but significant wave of in-migration. Throughout the book, a wide range of Appalachian voices enlivens the analysis and reminds us of the importance of storytelling in the ways the people of Appalachia define themselves and their region.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

By analyzing carefully the complex dialectic of myths surrounding Appalachia, Williams does an especially fine job in evoking a sense of place. (Durwood Dunn, Tennessee Wesleyan College)He or she who cares deeply about this region needs this book. ("Blue Ridge Country")An outstanding

interpretation of Appalachian history. Williams's explanations on many topics are the best presently available from any publication. (Gordon B. McKinney, Berea College)

This volume is the most comprehensive history of the Appalachian region written to date. It will certainly stand as an invaluable resource for both students and future historians of Appalachia.--Our StateA vivid and perceptive portrait of the region. [Williams's] seminal account not only provides an exceptionally readable and accurate text for the classroom, but it marks a new level of achievement and synthesis in Appalachian Studies. . . . Combines the narrative storytelling of good history with personal observations of someone who knows the region and its people. . . . An eloquent statement of how far we have come, Appalachia: A History provides a new platform upon which the next generation of Appalachian historians will begin their work. . . . Williams knows Appalachia and Appalachian scholarship. This book is a fine tribute to his commitment and skill; it should stand for years as the standard introduction to Appalachian history.--Appalachian JournalThis comprehensive study of the Appalachian past is based on the latest scholarship and original sources. This volume is much more than a textbook; it is an outstanding interpretation of Appalachian history. Williams's explanations on many topics are the best presently available from any publication.--Gordon B. McKinney, Berea CollegeWilliams has done what long needed doing. He has penned a readable, thoughtful, and comprehensive history of Appalachia. . . . Williams's study makes clear that Appalachia is a collection of very different places, with a population that is anything but homogeneous. . . . Well written and demonstrates a mastery of the available research on Appalachia. . . . [A] sterling achievement. This book is a milestone and will shape the debates in Appalachian history for years to come.--North Carolina Historical ReviewWilliams has written about Appalachia as place rather than problem and tells us what went on there. He does so, moreover, with grace and wit, in a book that is at once charming and helpful. As a contribution to the historiography of America, it is delicious. As a contribution to the historiography of Appalachia, it is essential. . . . A magisterial achievement, and welcome.--Journal of American HistoryBy analyzing carefully the complex dialectic of myths surrounding Appalachia, Williams does an especially fine job in evoking a sense of place. This quality is critical to understanding how the people of Appalachia define themselves, and no study can successfully describe the region's history without unraveling these myriad, often contradictory, layers of self-perception. Williams does so with both style and a trenchant sense of irony.--Durwood Dunn, Tennessee Wesleyan CollegeIt is a book that should be studied and savored by every Appalachian resident who cares at all about his or her homeland, and it will stand as a touchstone for studies of the region for many years to

come.--Journal of Southern HistoryWilliams’s new volume will appeal both to scholars and to a broader public long befuddled by repetitions of the tiredest of myths about the southern mountains. . . . Williams has written a book that can (and should) stand as the definitive one-volume history of Appalachia for some time to come. It is a welcome and valuable addition to the steadily growing body of new work on a long misunderstood region.--American Historical ReviewIn Appalachia: A History, one of the field’s most accomplished historians takes on a monumental task and does so with sincerity, wit, and a keen sense of place.--Journal of Appalachian StudiesA definitive, fascinating, extremely well written, comprehensive history of our region.--Appalachian HeritageThis book gives the best overall view of the history, geography, economics and sensibilities of Appalachia.--Black Issues Book ReviewHe or she who cares deeply about this region needs this book.--Blue Ridge Country

"Appalachia: A History" by John Alexander Williams is an incredible and fascinating treatise on the Appalachian region. It is, for certain, a worthy description of a region and population that has weathered repeated and severe exploitations by a long list of the assailants, including government, the extraction industries, missionaries, Reconstructionists, assorted myopic "do-gooders’, not-so-expert experts, unions, counterculturists, Progressives, Globalists, environmentalists and illegal aliens. Though Americans have traditionally wanted to view the people and problems of Applachia as something "peculiar", the Truth is that much of the country is a fair fit for that mold - admit it or not. Williams addresses and illuminates errors of the stereotyping we have inflicted upon Appalachia since colonial times and shows clearly that some of those labels would have been more accurately applied in some surprising places outside "the mountains". He also illustrates that there is no real ONE "Appalachia" but that in the area generally broadbrushed as "Appalachia" there are myriad differences of terrain, culture, demographics, religious focus and social strata and functions. This truly is an enjoyable and enlightening book. But, in the end, an alert reader will come away from "Appalachia: A History" with the realization that many of the things that were wrong in the history of "Appalachia" were, and ARE, very wrong in many areas of our country today, especially in our areas with farming/ranching economies.

A very well written book that will probably surprise you with the wealth of information about the history of Appalachia. It was written by an academic, but it is not "stuffy", and is easily readable. Mr. Williams is an obvious scholar on the subject matter, and I find his presentation to be an enjoyable and eye-opening read.Very glad I bought it.

Here’s the story of how an American region, by remaining relatively impervious to settlement and development, grew into a unique culture of contrasts.Appalachia is both loved and loathed by its natives. It’s both ridiculed and celebrated by curious outsiders. Internally, it’s a complex juxtaposition of deeply reactionary and progressive movements. Externally, it’s the target of exploitation and preservation.This book is a penetrating sociological history committed to capturing all the contradictory elements in the region in about 400 pages and, well, it works. Part narrative history, and part statistical analysis, I’m impressed by the book’s ability to bring continuity and definition to a region shrouded in debate. As the author claims, there’s a nice blend of social, political, economic, and cultural history.Organization is chronological, from native Americans to the late 20th century. Maps and illustrations are relatively few and really don’t do much to enhance the text.

Another of the many but too little known efforts to record and preserve a culture, sliding towards extinction. Not many ofus oldsters raised there, and then, still up on our pins.Good job.

interesting read

I highly recommend the book, for a detailed yet interesting history of the region. I was pleased with the the whole purchase process, and am enjoying the book.

Great.

Happy with purchase

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