

Editors' note.
**Appalachians / Carpathians: Researching,
Documenting, and Preserving Highland Traditions**

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The present issue represents the proceedings of the Romanian/American International Conference, *Appalachians / Carpathians: Researching, Documenting, and Preserving Highland Traditions*, supported by the Transilvania University of Braşov, Romanian Ministry of National Education, Romanian - U.S. Fulbright Commission, Barbara Knowles Fund, Pogány-Havas Association, the Anglo Romanian Trust for Traditional Architecture [ARTTA], Fundația Adept [Adept Foundation], and distinguished Appalachian Studies scholars from the U.S.A.

The 2015 Appalachians/Carpathians conference took place in the historic town of Braşov, at the southern end of the eastern Carpathian range. The area is known across Europe for its incredible mountain scenery and unique multicultural history. Even today, it is possible to find individuals in the Transylvania region possessing Hungarian, Saxon, Roma, Armenian and, of course, Romanian ethnic heritage. The Braşov area also provides unique opportunities to witness subsistence practices historically found in Appalachia, including brandy distillation, hay cultivation, animal pasturing and transhumance, horse-logging, and the growing of heirloom corn, beans, tomatoes, and pumpkins in home gardens. In one Transylvanian community, ethnobotanists discovered that local residents were able to identify 120 different species of plants. The same villagers also have an incredible “habitat” vocabulary, meaning they use different words when describing a location as “damp,” “mossy,” “shady,” or “steep,” for example. While the average person on the planet uses only 25 to 40 such words to describe a particular landscape, people in the Carpathian village of Ghimeş (Harghita county) can verbalize as many as 148!

While Romania is still predominantly an agrarian nation, it is quickly becoming urbanized and has witnessed extraordinary social changes in the past two decades. Only a handful of Romania’s rural communities have avoided the modernizing effects of EU integration and most are struggling with the dilemma of maintaining their unique agricultural heritage in the face of an ever-expanding global economy.

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Communities in the Romanian Carpathians have much to teach Appalachia. Numerous NGOs in the Carpathians have been successful in promoting environmental and cultural preservation as interdependent enterprises. Place-based community development is also practiced in Transylvania. Of course there is much Romanian communities can learn from Appalachia as the Americans' own experience with modernization and rural economic development has not always gone as planned.

The 2015 Appalachians/Carpathians conference is the culmination of a more than a decade of collaboration between Appalachian Studies scholars in the U.S. and academics and NGO representatives from the Carpathians of Ukraine and Romania (the 2013 Conference was held in Ukraine). In more recent years, scholars have uncovered very real historical connections between the two mountain regions as a result of early 20th-century migration from Maramureș and Transylvania to the coalfields of Appalachia.

The contributions to this issue are based on topics ranging from cultural preservation and folklore, community development and history, critical representations of mountain cultures in literature and media, sustainable agriculture, and other issues related to mountain life in the Appalachians and Carpathians.

The issue opens with **Donald E. Davis'** *Researching and Documenting Appalachian and Carpathian Traditions: A Comparative Approach*, which provides an overview of Appalachian / Carpathian scholarly exchanges over the last two decades. It also illuminates the many historical and cultural connections between Appalachia and the Carpathian. The author argues that there are more than just superficial similarities between the two mountain regions: individuals from the Appalachians and Carpathians practice the same land-use strategies as a result of "the Columbian Exchange." For two centuries, people in the Carpathians have been growing and consuming maize, tomatoes, beans, potatoes, peppers and sunflowers, all cultigens from North and South America. Conversely, Appalachians share a unique European ancestry and maintained many Old World cultural traditions well into the 20th century.

The Language studies section opens with **Gabriela Chefneux's** article entitled *Representation of History in American and Romanian Regional Newspapers*, which analyses the way in which history is represented in local newspapers in the Appalachian and the Western Carpathian regions. The author's assumption is that newspapers represent the world and reinforce the community's beliefs and values, thus providing social consensus. The article attempts to identify differences and similarities related to the way in which local and national historical events are presented in such newspapers.

The section continues with **Adrian Lesenciuc** and **Elena Buja's** *Patterns of intercultural communication: a case study of Cata rural district*. Their article studies the patterns of communication among the ethnic groups living in the Transylvanian rural district of Cața (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Roma people) aiming at identifying the people's openness to communication and the non-conflictual nature of the dialogue in this rural area.

The Literature section opens with **James Tyler Chadwell** and **Tiffany D. Martin's** article *Mountain Mystics: Magic Practitioners in Appalachian Witchlore* that explore the tales of magic and witchcraft found in mountain cultures. These beliefs and oral accounts have been passed down through countless generations and are still present in the traditions of its people today. Commentary on gender, identity, and cultural fears as seen through the lens of the region are on display in these tales.

In their article *The Memory of Symbolic Indeterminations – The Founding Legends of Râșnov Citadel*, **Rodica Ilie** and **Andreea Ivan** analyze the existence of a common cultural, social, moral and symbolic foundation among the members of the multi-ethnic community of Râșnov, a foundation which ought to be exploited especially in the current context oriented towards globalization.

The section continues with **Iuliu Rațiu's** *Surveying the Interval: Henry David Thoreau's Climb of Saddle-back Mountain in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. His article focuses on Henry David Thoreau's poetic experience of the climb on Mt. Greylock interpreted as "predawn meditation" (Lawrence Buell) in the Romantic (Wordsworthian) tradition of a quest for the sacred and for the sublime.

The Cultural Studies section opens with **John R. Akeroyd** keynote address *Transylvania: Biodiversity, Living Tradition and Future Prosperity*. The author argues that Saxons' agricultural heritage can be a sound basis for future economic growth. For both people and nature, this should combine the best of traditional farming practices and innovative technology to achieve an enhanced rural economy that can provide a good livelihood again for farming families. Conservationists, by protecting the natural environment and assisting the economic development of farming communities, are working to protect and enhance the natural wealth of plants and animals.

The section continues with **Chris Baker's** *Globalization and Family Farm Survival in Southern Appalachia*. Small farming practices and local foods are an essential part of cultural heritage and rural development in Appalachia. However, the survival of family farming is being challenged by changing landuse patterns and foodways linked to globalization. The author addresses the challenges of rural development

and revisits the role of family farming in local economies of scale and the policies supporting markets for local foods and small businesses. The research calls for policies dedicated to linking the local produce provided by family farms to cultural heritage preservation and to addressing social problems in rural communities.

Anthony DePaul Sadler's article *Response and Consequence: The Asheville Flood of 1916* argues that the disastrous Southern Appalachian flood of 1916 was no "Act of God." It is a story about class, race, and the rise of industrial capitalism in America. The disaster ignited broad social discord and challenged the hegemony of Asheville's elites. Tourism received the full support of Asheville's government leaders as river-based industries declined. As a result, hundreds of laborers, both black and white, lost their jobs, homes, and places in society. Forced by circumstance, they joined nation-wide migrations to the West and North.

The section concludes with **Barry Whittemore's** article *Town Building and Town Persistence in Virginia's Blue Ridge: Lessons from the Past and for the Future*. He considers the coming into existence of eight Appalachian towns. The author identifies three factors that predicted their relative success: the availability of modern transportation, the complexity of the economic base, and the geographic source of the primary funding for the town. Many scholars consider Appalachian America to be an internal colony. The author wanders and fears that post-Soviet Eastern Europe might suffer a similar fate.

The issue concludes with a review written by **Gabriela Chefneux** of *Appalachia in the Classroom: Teaching the Region*, edited by Theresa L. Burriss and Patricia M.Gantt (2013). The book focuses on several topics through which we can learn more about the region: history, literature and folktales, novels and poetry, and prose. The contributors' goal is to persuade their students to overcome the stereotypes related to the Appalachian region, to make them aware of the richness and variety of its culture, its distinct and complex character.