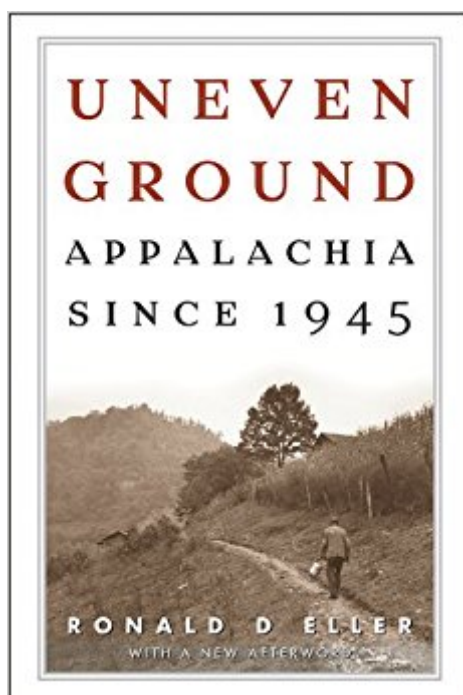


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# Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945



## Synopsis

Appalachia has played a complex and often contradictory role in the unfolding of American history. Created by urban journalists in the years following the Civil War, the idea of Appalachia provided a counterpoint to emerging definitions of progress. Early-twentieth-century critics of modernity saw the region as a remnant of frontier life, a reflection of simpler times that should be preserved and protected. However, supporters of development and of the growth of material production, consumption, and technology decried what they perceived as the isolation and backwardness of the place and sought to "uplift" the mountain people through education and industrialization. Ronald D Eller has worked with local leaders, state policymakers, and national planners to translate the lessons of private industrial-development history into public policy affecting the region. In *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945*, Eller examines the politics of development in Appalachia since World War II with an eye toward exploring the idea of progress as it has evolved in modern America. Appalachia's struggle to overcome poverty, to live in harmony with the land, and to respect the diversity of cultures and the value of community is also an American story. In the end, Eller concludes, "Appalachia was not different from the rest of America; it was in fact a mirror of what the nation was becoming."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Uneven Ground is passionate, clear, concise, and at times profound. It represents in many ways

the cumulative vision of decades of observation about, experience in, and research on Appalachia. Eller is astute to relate very early in the book how integral Appalachia was to the history of American development."

•Chad Berry, author of *Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles*""Uneven Ground makes important contributions to the fields of Appalachian history and the history of the United States anti-poverty public policy. A sweeping narrative that cuts across a half-century of economic, political, and environmental themes, this book provides a synthesis of scholarship and commentary concerning the politics of economic development directed toward the Southern mountains. It is a highly significant work that will serve as the standard reference for the foreseeable future."

•Robert S. Weise, author of *Grasping at Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850-1915*""Ever since the travel writing about Appalachia of the early 18th century and the beginning of coal mining before the Civil War, followed by industrialization and more colorful writing about "a strange land and peculiar people," Americans have tried to do something with, to and for the region. Few of us have understood it very well, but with the arrival of this book, I am convinced that no one offers better insights than its author."

•Al Smith, *lexgo.com*""Uneven Ground should be required reading for anyone who wants to understand the region that includes so much of Kentucky."

•Tom Eblen, *The Lexington Herald-Leader*""Uneven Ground is the culmination of more than 40 years of teaching and working for change in the mountains by one of the region's most esteemed scholars."

•Kentucky Monthly""Uneven Ground covers a staggering amount of historical terrain and fills along-overdue gap in the region's historiography. . . .[The book] is a must read for scholars, students, activists, and policymakers who hope to make sense of Appalachia's modern landscape."

•H-Net Reviews""This book has become one of the most eagerly anticipated in the history of Appalachian Studies."

•Appalachian Heritage""Eller's book is one of a kind, an invaluable description of Appalachia's past and a guide to our common future."

•www.dailyyonder.com""Simply stands alone as the best analysis and account of the attempt since 1945 to 'modernize' Appalachia through social engineering and economic development."

•Teaching History""Indispensible to any study of Appalachia, whether academic or otherwise."

•Teaching History""Provocative and enlightening."

•Teaching History""Eller does a superb job of showing the struggles to change Appalachia. His work is also an excellent study of why the Great Society practically succeeded and also failed"

•Choice""Eller offers a tight and at times passionate narrative of major historical events since 1945 and their connection to the national scene."

•Jake Struhelka, *West Virginia History*""Eller has again produced a sharply focused, insightful, and at times relentless overview of a region that continues to mystify and perplex historians, social scientists, economists, and public policy makers."

•Journal of American History""A comprehensive,

powerful analysis of post-1945 Appalachia." â •Journal of Southern History""Eller pieces together a very disjointed history to make a significant contribution to our understanding of Appalachia....His parallel notions of regional uniqueness and national conformity will challenge students, scholars, and interested Appalachians to ask new questions about the region's recent past and uncertain future." â •Ohio Valley History""[Eller] has researched and written about this rural industrial region with passion, personal insight and a hope that is often lacking in work on Appalachia. Equally important, he insists that Appalachia is not a region apart, but rather that its dilemma is, in fact, increasingly America's dilemma." â •Journal of Rural History""Now as one of his field's elder statesmen, Eller systematically analyzes a more recent period in Appalachian history; a complex era of regional ferment that gave birth to his own ground-breaking book and the scholarship that evolved from it...His practical and prescient messages are essential reading for both regional and national audiences...Eller's prose persuasively refutes-once again-the persistent, intellectually lazy notions of Appalachian isolation, uniformity, and peculiarity. Eller is at his very best when he explores how "unintended consequences" of those broader developments converged with internal challenges and crises (most notably massive out-migration and unregulated strip-mining) to foster outbursts of grass-roots activism and a cultural renaissance that were simultaneously unique and universal...Uneven Ground warns Americans about an array of challenges to our national soul and general well-being including: environmental threats, inequities of status and income, and matters of economic security and sustainability." â •Journal of East Tennessee History""Few regions of America are more emblematic of the problems and challenges of poverty as Appalachia. And the author concedes that over the years - even recent years - "inequalities in the region have grown." â •History Wire"â •History Wire"In Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945, Eller examines the politics of development in Appalachia since World War II with an eye toward exploring the idea of progress as it has evolved in modern America. Appalachia's struggle to overcome poverty, to live in harmony with the land, and to respect the diversity of cultures and the value of community is also an American story. â •Pensville Herald"â •Pensville Herald"A former head of the Appalachia Center at the University of Kentucky, Ron Eller is one of the most distinguished scholars of his generation. This book, along with its predecessor, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: The Modernization of the Mountain South 1880-1930* constitute the definitive history of the industrialization of Southern Appalachia. â •Appalachian Heritage"â •Appalachian Heritage

Ronald D Eller is former director of the Appalachian Center and professor of history at the University of Kentucky. He is the author of *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the*

Appalachian South, 1880â€”1930.

A masterpiece of cogent subtlety. Dr. Eller, a native of Appalachia shows his passion and concern for an area of the U.S. (constructed as a region) that is closest to his heart. Much like colonies of Britain or France, Appalachia has been robbed of its rich natural resources. Still, rather than leading a vitriolic campaign directly against industries that have plundered the region e.g. coal, timber, and mica Dr. Eller seems more interested in finding a sustainable alternative. To be sure, proponents of the continued use of dwindling fossil fuel reserves will have problems with this book, but the simple truth is that we can't continue to stay the course if we want to ensure this to be a world that our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren can live to see and enjoy, in all its natural beauty.

This book reminded me of the classic "Night Comes to the Cumberlands". It deals with the social and economic development of Appalachia in a very thorough, but very readable way. I thought it was EXCELLENT and a must-read for anyone interested in the subject of Appalachia from a social, economic and historical perspective. The afterword is particularly interesting, in that it discusses the critical question: "What's next"?

Good book

served its purpose as a college textbook.

Provides the rest of the social/economic history following his excellent first book. Well researched and full of local references. Offers explanations for questions I've had about the region. Glad I read it and wish more would.

Husband loves this this book.

The book is as advertised and once again the service was outstanding. A great book of area history and very accurate

Living in eastern Kentucky and working in economic/community development I have dealt with much of what Eller talks about and explains better than any other author. This book is a must read for anybody who wants to understand America as we crash head long into another century of

conflicting values and goals as a people. Eller's central idea- that the reason much of Appalachia has not "succeeded" is because many here continue to value success differently is thought provoking to say the least. This is a region where connection to and a rootedness in place and family are more important than consumerism (consumerism is still important- this is America after all.) Too much has been decided by outsiders trying to make Appalachia into something that many here don't want this place to become, or the locally powerful who don't want the things to change. You may not agree with some of his conclusions or views but you need to read this book if you want to even begin to understand one of the most culturally complex regions in the country.

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