

TIMELINE

While there are arguably many “versions” of Appalachian history, the most publicized one largely aligns with negative stereotypes. Below, a two-sided timeline explores the contrast between this more mainstream narrative and the events that are often left out. While we cannot include all the critical milestones in Appalachia’s long past in this timeline, we hope that it will provide a basic view of the region’s history beyond the standard narrative. *Compiled by Rachel Ellen Simon*

STANDARD NARRATIVE

Trail of Tears and the forced Cherokee removal

Hatfield-McCoy feud rages along the West Virginia-Kentucky border

United Mine Workers of America formed in 1890



Chestnut blight first noticed in New York; kills virtually all American chestnut trees by 1950

Peak timber production in Appalachia

Doc Watson, the blind flatpicker who helped bring bluegrass to international and mainstream audiences, is born in Deep Gap, N.C.



Tennessee Valley Authority Act signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt; establishes regional agency to promote electricity and economic development; thousands displaced by hydroelectric projects

Great Smoky Mountains National Park formed

Construction begins on the **Blue Ridge Parkway**, employing thousands across the region



Appalachian Trail completed, extending 2,200 miles from Georgia to Maine

NASCAR auto racing league founded

“Beverly Hillbillies” show airs, reinforcing negative regional stereotypes

President John F. Kennedy forms an economic development council that becomes the **Appalachian Regional Commission**

President Lyndon B. Johnson launches the **War on Poverty** focusing on Appalachia

Congress passes **Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act**, regulating dust levels in the mines and creating the Black Lung Disability Trust

Mountaintop removal begins on a large scale in Appalachia



Buffalo Creek coal slurry impoundment dam bursts in Logan County, W.Va., killing 125 and leaving 4,000 homeless

“Deliverance” hits theaters, perpetuating negative stereotypes

President Carter signs **Surface Mining Control & Reclamation Act** to regulate strip mining

Blue Ridge Parkway completed after 52 years of construction



“O Brother, Where Art Thou?” movie renews interest in regional music

1.1 billion gallons of coal ash spills from Kingston Fossil Plant into nearby rivers

Upper Big Branch Mine disaster in Raleigh County, W.Va., kills 29 miners

Coal’s share of total U.S. electricity generation drops to 34 percent

1800

1831-1839

Kentucky’s **Hindman Settlement School**, nation’s first rural settlement school, founded by two women as an institution of social reform and cultural preservation

1863-1891

Dressmaker and activist **Mother Jones** organizes and is arrested at the Paint Creek-Cabin coal miners’ strike



1900

1905

Battle of Blair Mountain, W.Va., erupts over miners’ attempts to unionize; results in the largest civilian rebellion since the Civil War (see p. 16)

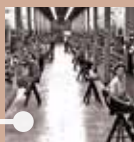
1910

Peak employment of bituminous and lignite coal miners, at 704,793 nationwide

1915

Florence Reese writes the famed union song, **“Which Side are You On?”** the day her husband is arrested for union activity in Harlan, Ky.

1920



The **town of Oak Ridge, Tenn.**, forms as a secret government city where workers create the first atomic weapons (see pg. 10)

1925

Founding of **Qualla Arts & Crafts**, nation’s oldest Native American arts cooperative, in Cherokee, N.C.

1930

Post-WWII decline of coal markets and mechanization leads to nearly 3 million Appalachians leaving the region for industrial cities by routes known as the **“Hillbilly Highway”**

1940

Ollie “Widow” Combs, 61, arrested for laying down in front of a bulldozer preparing to strip mine her Kentucky farm



1945

1950

Farmington Mine Disaster kills 78 coal miners in West Virginia

Chattanooga, Tenn., named **“Dirtiest City in America,”** prompting clean-up efforts that transform the city into a model for sustainable development

1955

1960

Appalachian Studies Association forms, focuses on regional scholarship and activism

1965

Broad form deed eliminated in Tennessee, requiring mining companies to seek property owners’ approval before extracting underground minerals; Kentucky follows in 1987

1970

Appalachian Land Ownership Study reveals 43% of region is controlled by absentee owners

1975

Construction of a condo on Sugar Mountain, N.C., leads to the state’s **Mountain Ridge Protection Act** designed to preserve scenic viewsheds



1980

1985

1990

Racial and ethnic minorities account for nearly half of the region’s population growth

1995



Martin County, Ky., 300-million-gallon coal slurry spill deemed one of the worst environmental disasters in the southeastern U.S.

2000

2005

First year with **no underground coal mining fatalities** in Kentucky since 1890

2010

Bush administration’s change of the **stream buffer zone rule** effectively legalizes burial of streams with mining waste

2015

Facing bankruptcy, mining company **Patriot Coal** announces decision to phase out all strip mining