

Kentucky: Portrait in Paradox, 1900–1950. By James C. Klotter.
(Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1996. Pp. x, 424.
Endmaps, illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$38.00.)

Like many states, Kentucky is a study in contrasts. Geographically, the mountainous east is antithetical to the flat west. Northern Kentuckians are closer to Canada than the Jackson Purchase. But Kentucky history, argues James C. Klotter, is chock full of other kinds of paradoxes, and his new book, *Kentucky: Portrait in Paradox, 1900–1950*, examines many of them. Indeed, his is the first work to look honestly at the state's past by examining and analyzing decline as well as progress. The result is impressive.

Klotter sees the city of Louisville—an urban, cosmopolitan, modern center in an otherwise rural, traditional state—as a prime example of the state's many paradoxes. It was Kentucky and was not Kentucky, he writes. The plateau counties of eastern Kentucky were also paradoxical: rural and urban, agrarian and industrial, isolated and cosmopolitan, homogeneous and heterogenous, poor and wealthy, beautiful and ugly. They were engaged in stasis and revolution and were epitomized by both the hardship of Loretta Lynn and the success of Jean Ritchie.

Klotter's chapters go on to detail other examples of paradox. In 1945 two-thirds of Kentuckians had no access to local libraries, but the state had produced an abundance of major American writers. Kentucky in 1900 produced the most manufactured goods in the South, but by 1929 it was tied with Arkansas as the southern state with the slowest industrial growth. Prohibition, high railroad rates, and poor political leadership were culprits, but agriculture refused to give up the fight. In a chapter on minorities, Klotter notes that even the state's "United We Stand, Divided We Fall" motto is paradoxical, as women and African Americans were anything but welcomed into an otherwise patriarchal white society. Klotter uncovers a delightful vignette of Madeline McDowell Breckinridge, a leading state suffragette, who once told the governor that "Kentucky women are not idiots—even though they are closely related to Kentucky men" (p. 110). Eventually women had something to celebrate, but black Kentuckians experienced little about which to cheer, especially during the heyday of segregation. Yet paradoxically, perhaps, Kentucky was the only southern state that never disfranchised its black voters.

Much of the rest of Klotter's work focuses on politics, and his answer to "What was Kentucky politics?" is replete with stories of a damned system, but one with significant bright spots and with leaders intent both on personal gain and on courageous leadership. The peculiarities of Kentucky politics, Klotter argues, formed such a "complex labyrinth" that even "Daedalus might have become lost" (p. 195).

By 1950 reports were urging Kentuckians toward action—fix the schools, revise the Constitution, build more highways, even introduce new plants, “such as kudzu” (p. 338). What the state would do with those recommendations, of course, is the subject of another volume. But Klotter, always sober and critically detached, reveals the state’s difficulty with reform and tradition between 1900 and 1950. He shows how the state could have done many positive things during these years; “that it did not,” he writes, “doomed Kentucky, all too often, to retrenchment or retreat while too many other rivals were advancing” (p. 344). Kentucky in 1950, he concludes, had an opportunity to reverse “the negative trends of a half-century” (p. 344), an honest assessment of a paradoxical state indeed.

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Two Worlds in the Tennessee Mountains: Exploring the Origins of Appalachian Stereotypes. By David C. Hsiung. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997. Pp. xv, 239. Maps, illustrations, tables, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$32.95.)

This book is a significant contribution to the growing body of grounded and nuanced scholarship on the Appalachian region. It addresses the development and deployment of regional stereotypes about Appalachia and its people—a core feature of the region’s social, cultural, and political history. And it carries the analysis beyond any study previously available.

With a few exceptions, such as Rodger Cunningham’s *Apples on the Flood: The Southern Mountain Experience* (1987) and J. W. Williamson’s *Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies* (1995), virtually all scholars have accepted Henry Shapiro’s argument in *Appalachia on Our Mind* (1978) that denigrating images of the region and its people issued primarily from the local color literature of the late nineteenth century. David C. Hsiung’s work locates the origins of the images a full half-century or more earlier in processes different from those of the local color movement.

Mindful of recent scholarship that is skeptical of all generalizations about the Appalachian region as a whole, Hsiung focuses upon the Unaka range of upper east Tennessee between 1775 and 1865. He begins by asking whether mountaineers were as isolated and unable to collaborate in cooperative ventures as the stereotypes have long held them to be. His imaginative and meticulous research in court records, tax records, and lists of customers in local store account books shows that even before 1800 the area’s residents, far from