"APPALACHIAN TREASURE"

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Humanities
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Communications

by
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The purpose of this thesis is to provide documentary evidence as to how and why John Rice Irwin collected thousands of Appalachian relics and artifacts which eventually led to the creation of The Museum of Appalachia.

To present this evidence I decided to use the documentary format with a narrative by John Rice Irwin. I visited Irwin at his home in Norris, Tennessee for four days in August of 1983. During that time I videotaped his comments, explanations, and beliefs concerning the museum.

The documentary covers four points. First, John Rice explains why he became interested in Appalachian treasures and relics. Secondly, Irwin explains why he started collecting massive amounts of Appalachian antiques and pioneer log cabins. The third part of the documentary presents a visual tour of the different buildings and relics within the museum narrated by Irwin. During this segment Irwin includes anecdotes about particular Appalachian morals and practices of every day living. The final segment of the documentary
reveals John Rice Irwin's hopes and plans for the future of the Museum of Appalachia, and how he plans to carry them out.

The most important evidence discovered through this documentary is the immense contribution Irwin has made with his Museum of Appalachia. With its existence, the museum allows other Americans to realistically understand the Appalachian lifestyle, family structure, and the norms of the culture. The museum allows people to see how those Appalachian pioneers existed two hundred years ago and because of the museum this culture and heritage will remain alive for many years to come.

Accepted by: __________, Chairman

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INTRODUCTION

The term Appalachia refers, topographically, to the elevated region in the eastern United States. The major states included in the region are Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

Appalachia also refers to a group of people who lived in these areas and established a culture unique to this region of the U.S. The early pioneers who crossed the mountains into Appalachia in the late 18th century, came from various origins. Their ancestors were from English, German, Dutch, French, Scotch, Irish, and other European backgrounds. The culture and heritage of these settlers and their descendants evolved to meet the demands of the wilderness frontier. For example, the people had to adapt to the mountains in building their homes, farming their land, creating tools to build with, recreation, music, and everyday living. Due to the geographic isolation and lack of outside communication in the mountains, the lifestyle of these people saw relatively little change over the next 150 years. Industrialization did not reach Appalachia as quickly as it did the east coast, therefore, the culture they had created continued well into the twentieth century.

The Appalachian frontiersmen had little to draw from except their background, the land, their ingenuity, and their strong backs. Because of these conditions the Appalachians created and developed many unique and practical ways of dealing with everyday life, farming,
and survival. The way they built their log cabins, established their communities, and raised their offspring was unparalleled in any other part of the country at that time. These treasures and relics of their unusual and rare lifestyle need to be preserved so that future generations may understand Appalachia's extraordinary circumstances and the important role they played in the history of America.

The Museum of Appalachia is playing a major role in preserving the Appalachian heritage. Located in Norris, Tennessee, the museum was created and is maintained by John Rice Irwin. A Tennessee native, Irwin is a retired school superintendent. He became interested in preserving the treasures of Appalachia when he was in his twenties. He knew his grandparents well and enjoyed the company of the older people in the community. He realized these people had a wealth of information and knowledge, and they often gave him something to remember them by. Because of this, he started collecting items of the Appalachian culture. Through the museum, Irwin has recreated a working and living Appalachian settlement. He has reconstructed over 30 log buildings that are so authentically furnished one would be led to believe the occupants were out at the garden or spring and would be returning soon. Within the museum grounds sheep graze, corn and mole beans grow, baskets are woven and life goes on the way it would have more than 200 years ago. The State of Tennessee calls the museum the largest and most authentic collection of Appalachian relics in the world.
NATURE OF DOCUMENTARY

A documentary should have a social purpose in its conception and should be portrayed through the use of a technology. Using a technology (such as television) permits a significant impact in the documentary's dissemination.

A documentary seeks to inform, but above all, it seeks to influence. By providing information, the viewer forms some knowledge and from that, an understanding. This understanding could lead to societal action such as changing beliefs and concepts.

Communicating through a documentary is valid only when it is designed to further and advance individual and social causes, values, conditions, or institutions by inspiring man to consider the significance and relationship to himself as a social being.

A documentary involves creative application of cinematic technique, the poetry of the spoken narrative and the power of a musical score. The use of these techniques allows one to take the raw material of life and present a social comment.
"Appalachian Treasure" is a television script for a documentary. The length of the program is 27:45. The narration and only voice heard in the production is that of John Rice Irwin. The music at the beginning and end of the production was provided by The Museum of Appalachia Band.

The script format is divided into two columns. The right column is the audio portion of the production script. The left column gives instruction for the visual content. The following information explains the camera shots in the script.

- Close up shot - the face only.
- Medium shot - most of the body.
- Full shot - full body of the person.
- Long shot - the setting with or without the person.
- Tilt down - camera looks down.
- Tilt up - camera looks up.
- Zoom in - camera moves in.
- Zoom out - camera moves out.
- Downstream character generator - super words over video.

Audio instructions are explained as follows.

- Music up and under - bring audio up but underneath the narrator.
- Music up and out - bring music up full as main audio source and then bring it down and all the way out.
Voice over - the narrator is not seen but is heard over the video.

The bibliography presented at the end of this thesis is provided for others who may want further information in this area.
"APPALACHIAN TREASURE"

**VIDEO**

CLOSE UP OF WOODEN BUILDING
ZOOM OUT TO INCLUDE MUSEUM GROUNDS
THE TITLE IS IN THE LOWER THIRD OF THE SCREEN ON THE LEFT

WIDE SHOT OF WEIGHTS IN DISPLAY BARN
CLOSE UP OF GUN DISPLAY

INTERIOR WIDE SHOT OF DISPLAY BARN
ZOOM OUT FROM WELL TO INCLUDE CABIN JUST BEHIND WELL

INTERIOR WIDE SHOT OF DIRT FLOOR CABIN

**AUDIO**

(MUSIC UP FULL FOR :05)

(MUSIC DOWN AND UNDER)

(VOICE-OVER) The reason I started collecting was because of my interest in the people. For example I had the good fortune of knowing all four of my grandparents, and had the opportunity to spend time with them until I was in my twenties. Occasionally one of them would give me a little something that belonged to them that was their grandfather's, and my great-great grandfather's. After a while, even in high school, I spent a good deal of time with the older people of the community.

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VIDEO
LONG SHOT OF MUSEUM GROUNDS
MEDIUM SHOT FROM ONE END
OF BLACKSMITH'S SHOP
LONG SHOT OF GROUNDS WITH
BARN IN BACKGROUND
INSIDE SHOT OF FURNISHED
CABIN
PAN FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
OF OLD COUNTRY STORE DISPLAY
CLOSE UP OF SIGN
"APPALACHIAN FOLK ART"
TILT UP TO CARVED INDIANS
IN BACKGROUND
WIDE SHOT OF WEIGHTS AND
SCALES TILTING UP TO
DISPLAY OF SCALES ON WALL

AUDIO
I enjoyed being with them and
they had a great store and wealth
of information.
Later on though, I started going
to an auction or two and I
thought it was really a shame
to see all those items that had
belonged to families since pioneer
times...since they came in here
from Virginia or North Carolina
or wherever. These relics had alot
of history connected with them
being sold to antique dealers and
to people who were going to
mutilate them and make them into
coffee tables and lamps and this
sort. So I started buying a few
things. Then I guess the more I
got to know the older people the
more I enjoyed being with them
and I suppose it's a natural
consequence if you know someone
for a long period of time that
you would like to have something to remember them by. Maybe it's the old chair that they sat in for fifty years on the front porch you know or maybe it was the hat that the old man wore as long as I can remember from childhood. I started collecting things in a direct relationship to the people and my affinity for them. As I became acquainted with more people in the mountains I gathered more items.

(MUSIC UP FULL TO END OF SONG :09)
VIDEO
WHEN ZOOM STOPS
DOWNSTREAM CHARACTER
GENERATOR THAT READS:
IN THIS DOCUMENTARY JOHN
RICE IRWIN EXPLAINS WHAT
THE MUSEUM CONTAINS, ITS
ORIGIN, AND A LITTLE OF WHAT
THE APPALACHIAN PIONEER WAS
ALL ABOUT...
WIDE SHOT OF THE ARNWINE
CABIN, FRONT VIEW

AUDIO
(MUSIC UNDER AND OUT)
(VOICE OVER) This building we call
the Arnwine cabin. The reason being,
it was occupied for several genera-
tions by the Arnwine family up
here in Granger County, Tennessee.
You'll notice the chimney is made
of stone on up about five or six
feet but beyond that it's stick
and mud. Many of the earlier
chimneys were stick and mud after
you got above where the intensity
of the fire was not so great. I
had heard many of these old
chimneys were built leaning away
from the house. I got a picture
of one several years ago that shows the chimney leaning quite a bit away from the house and was propped up by two big poles. So if and when the chimney caught on fire, or the sticks embedded in the mud caught on fire, all you had to do was run outside the house and pull the poles away from the chimney and the chimney would fall and wouldn't burn the house down.

The reason for having it stick and mud was in case of when you were high up in the mountains there may not have been all that rock around. Secondly if you were trying to build a house in just a few days you wouldn't have had time to collect all the stone. The house itself was built around 1800, the Arnwine cabin was, and several families reared there. The last two ladies that lived there died about 1935.
and they were a very well-thought of family. One of their descendants for example, is the county judge in the town of Knoxville now. So you didn't just have poorer class people that never amounted to anything living here. Many...well Abraham Lincoln on down lived in cabins of this sort.

This is the overhang barn. Now originally what you had was the two log pens or rooms and about a fourteen foot overhang completely surrounding the two pens. There was no support whatsoever. Now in later years those beams that extend became weakened and we put poles there to support them. But originally you can see there was no support at all. People are always asking why they were built like this. I must say that I'm not sure and I don't know
anyone else who can give a definitive answer. We found them in extreme eastern part of Tennessee in Sevier County, Cock County and Blount County near the Smokey Mountains. However, there have been some found in Pennsylvania and in Switzerland. I suppose the advantage of having this [the Overhang Barn] would be that if you were coming in with a load of corn and it was about to rain you could just drive underneath the overhang. The same thing with a load of hay. Also it served a good purpose for the sheltering of the livestock, they could stand underneath. As a matter of fact, their saying now, after two or three hundred years of going away from something, abandoning some practice, we're going back to it. Out west they're saying that it's much more preferable now to have
your cattle in an open shed than it is to have them in a stable. Because in a stable you have a lot of moisture and steam and it creates a higher humidity. They say it's better to have them in a dry place but in an open area. But, this is the kind of barn you found in this area and I suspect that the people who had them had a Germanic influence because of Pennsylvania and Switzerland.

This house that we are looking at now is not a dog-trot house because you don't have an opening but you do have chimney in the center of the house. If you look at it closely it might remind you of a pair of saddlebags across a horse's back. At least it's called a saddlebag house because you have the big pocket on one side and then the same on the other side.
Interesting things in this particular house is, if you were upstairs on the right side of the house, in order to get to the upstairs on the opposite end of the house, you couldn't just go by the chimney. You had to go downstairs, wake up grandma and grandpa, out on the front porch all the way across into the other downstairs room and then upstairs.

Or then in later years you could go to the chimney and go up.

Anyway, the reason being I suppose was the girls were sleeping on one side and the boys on the other.

One of your more affluent homes, a big brick home, it's often the same. This house as you can see is surrounded by a number of buildings. We call this The Great House to distinguish it from the other buildings.
VIDEO
CLOSE UP OF LOOM DOORWAY
ZOOM OUT TO INCLUDE YARD
AND MAIL BOX

AUDIO
Just to the right of it is a small building called the Loom House.
Now it would be a mistake to say every old home had a loom house
but a few of them did. It was simply a place where they could take their wool, flax and their cotton, and process it, cart it, spin it, weave it, and dye it.

MEDIUM SHOT OF JOHN RICE IRWIN ON CABIN PORCH

This Loom House came from the old Rufus Eledge place up in the Smokey Mountains. Just beyond that [the Loom House] you might be able to see the outhouse, or the double privy.

WIDE SHOT OF DOUBLE PRIVY

MEDIUM SHOT OF JOHN RICE IRWIN ON CABIN PORCH

There's a chicken house up on the hill. The chicken house is the only old-type building that did not have a A-type roof. It was only in one direction. It most always faced the east and the cracks between the slats was so the early morning sunlight would
come in and the chickens would get up and start moving around faster laying more eggs. There's a little wooden house, there's a pig pen, and the big barn that we just talked about goes with the homestead, as does the blacksmith shop. So after they got on their feet, after a generation or two, they began to have all these auxiliary buildings that sort of surrounded the main house.

The log church house you see here came from up in North Carolina. In many areas the churches and the schools were not built for several years because the communities were so sparsely populated and settled that they often held the services within the homes. Once they did build a building it was often used as a church and school. But this church was used
for many generations in a little place called New Homberg, North Carolina. And then after the people quit using it and built a larger church it was used as a tobacco barn or such. In later years it was sold for $35 and a cowboy hat. The fellow kept it for quite sometime and then eventually I bought it and moved it over there. This has been used for a number of church services, and a number of weddings. As a matter of fact my daughter was married there. Twentieth Century Fox used this when they did the Young Daniel Boone Series and it was viewed by twenty to thirty million people a night for several programs.

The little schoolhouse I found up in Union County, Tennessee called Tater Valley. There's a Big Tater Valley and a Little Tater
Valley but this was in Big Tater Valley. And when I found this, it was fallen in, one side was rotted in and it looked like that it couldn't be salvaged. But we replaced the logs and of course put a new roof on it and so forth. The people who remember the school as a child say that it looks remarkably similar to what it did when they used to go to school there, fifty or sixty years ago.

One of the things I've tried to do is to replicate not only with the buildings, we used the old buildings, but to set them up in the same type environment as you would have found them earlier.

The orchard here for example has various kinds of apple trees and I'm sure no one, or at least very few people would have known the difference if I had gone to a
nursery and brought regular apple trees. For my own benefit I guess, as much as anything else, I wanted to have the early type apple trees. The cottonpatch apple, the horse apple, and the limbertwig. However when I went to find those trees I couldn't find them anywhere. I kept inquiring and looking in the farm magazines where they sold apple trees. Finally we found them in a little place called Ball, Georgia where they still raise and propagated the old-type apple trees. I have a list of the trees and a corresponding little map to the orchard indicating which tree is the limbertwig, and the cottonpatch. The little picket fence that goes around of course keeps the animals out...the rabbits and things. The purpose...well you can see the two beehives where the bees are
working in the old type hives. The garden you will notice just below the orchard had the pailing fence. These pailings are sharpened on the end. Now that's the only area we have that people don't trespass. The reason being is that it is very difficult to get across them but the second reason, the primary reason, in the olden times it was to keep the chickens out of your garden. Because the chickens cannot, or have a very difficult time, flying over an obstacle. No matter how high a fence is, if it's ten feet tall, a chicken can fly to the top, alight there, and then fly on down in the garden and eat the tomatoes. But he cannot alight on these pailings because they are sharpened on the end. He doesn't have an inclination to fly over something and down. So it's one of those things that was abandoned
years ago, but it's a practice and technique that still is very practical.

This is the Dirt-Floored Cabin sometimes called the Uncle John Cabin. It came from a section in Anderson County, a very remote area, and anywhere in America there were cabins [like these] that were built and lived in for the first generation that didn't have floors except the earthen floor. If they were compacted properly, you could sweep them and care for them and it wasn't all that bad. But I suppose that they were built later here in the Appalachian area and certainly were used longer. As a matter of fact there were people, many people, who were living in dirt floored cabins in to this century. Some of them into the 1930's. But this one has the
stick and mud chimney and it also has the cracks that are not completely filled in with dirt above head level. I think it did not occur to the people that they could actually capture and enclose the heat. If you think about it, in the frontier there were lean-tos for a long time and the source of heat was the direct radiation that came from the fire itself. So if you had been accustomed to lean-tos and even outdoor heat then it's not surprising, it wouldn't occur to you to really capture that heat and hold on to it. So if they got cold they came up close to the fire. If they were too hot they moved away. Several years ago after I had two or three log cabins built and had them furnished and all, my wife, felt as did my parents, that I
should stop spending all my time and what little money I could get together by adding more items, and so forth, because it did look like there was enough. About as many things as people could see. After you get a few thousand, thirty, forty, fifty thousand items. But I've continued to go into other areas that I had not thought of at the time. The question is asked now, 'What else do you propose to do?' With thirty some buildings and with the church, the school, the wheelright shop and blacksmith shops and this. But I do as a matter of fact, have more ideas now as to what I would like to do perhaps more than ever before. Because everytime you do something it opens up another number of possibilities. Just immediately what I'd like to do would be to... and I've already got all the
equipment for this...is open up a small coal mine. I have the old cars that were handmade, where the hardware was handmade. And I would like to put this just like the little mine I used to go into up in the mountains. It's about four feet high and the little pony would go in there and disappear mysteriously back under the mountain. And then the old man would come out lying flat on there with a load of coal. He'd come out and it would automatically dump itself. Adjacent to that I'd like to have a company house furnished as it would have been in the 1930's. Just as an example of what I want to put in there, just the other day I found a big chest about three feet wide and 3 feet high and four or five feet long. It was sort of a blanket chest, quilt box, or whatever. It's made entirely...
of the boxes where the black powder came in. So this miner had brought these boxes home and made this chest. A lot of other furniture too that came out of mining camps. So I want to have one house furnished just exactly as it would have been, sparsely and so forth. Then the other house would be devoted to the mining memorabilia. The letters where these miners wrote as they were dying, when they were trapped over here in Freightersville. One hundred eighty-two of them all died, all suffocated, and many of them wrote letters as they were dying telling their wives not to buy new clothes but to bury them in the clothes they had. Many of them were saying that their little boys, eight and nine years old, had been mining by their side and they asked that the little boys be buried with them in the graves. I'd
like something of the Coal Creek Mining War. But that's one of the things. This entire, hopefully, realistic creation of an actual mine, of a mining company house, and the things that relate to mining. The other thing immediately and specifically is the re-establishment of a pottery. I've got the old wheel made of stone that the mule pulled round and round to grind the mud so that if there were any pebbles or stones, it would crush them and make sure there were no impurities. I've got the kick wheels and this kind of thing from the old LaFever Pottery Company which is one of the better known ones in the south I guess. So I want to do that and have the kiln.

Generally with regard to the expansion of The Museum of
Appalachia, it would be to make it more of a working-kind of thing. Every day of the year there was something the people would have been doing. For example, 150 years ago if we were sitting on the front porch they probably would have been peeling apples. They would have taken apple peelings and put them in the vinegar barrel to make vinegar. They would have taken part of the apples to have made apple butter or apple preserves. They would take other apples and dry them so they could use them in the winter for making stack cakes. They may have been picking blackberries and drying blackberries. They could have been pickling the beets, shearing the sheep, cutting the tobacco or pulling the flax or something, every single day of the year. This is the kind of thing
I'd like to do here. Not just for demonstration purposes. If you do something only for the purpose of demonstrating, then, it's not a good demonstration. For example, when the men here cover all the roofs of all the buildings with the shingles we actually split ourselves. Now if they're doing it for an exhibit they would show how it's done, then they're going to hit one once in awhile and they're going to explain this and do that and they're not going to get much done. But if they are doing it knowing that we've got to get a lot of them done, we've got to cover the roof, then you can really watch a man and it's a much more realistic and meaningful, even dramatic experience.

Even now with the gardens we have here, you're standing close there,
we are to an herb garden where we have garlic, different kinds of mint, horseradish and flax and cotton and broomcorn. We'd like to take the broomcorn and make brooms out of it. Take the flax and go through all the processes. So as far as I know this is not being done in a broad kind of way anywhere in the country and I would like to think that these things could, to some extent, pay for themselves. For example, when we kill the hogs and dress and hang them in the smokehouse we don't do it just for show but we use it to eat. Same thing with the gardens. If we raise cornfield beans, stick beans or whatever, we're doing it so people can see it, but we're also doing it for practical and utilitarian purposes. We have in the gardens out there now alot
of mole beans growing. Nobody seems to know what mole beans are, or castor beans. The gardens used to be completely overrun with moles. And the old people all told me if you get mole beans that will eradicate the moles. Well, I put the mole beans out and the moles are gone. I haven't had a mole in there since I started growing mole beans. In addition to that they're beautiful plants. So my goal and ambition is to have this even a more working-type thing. So many people are interested in this now. They are going back and they find that there is a great deal of what we have discarded that should not have been discarded. Cornbread for example is one of the best foods, if it's cooked right, I think there is. I can eat it two meals a day for one hundred years.
and never get tired. You know, it's just as exciting as before. But, I have never eaten a piece of cornbread, never one time in a restaurant, that I thought was top-notch cornbread. Never once!

(MUSIC UNDER)

And these are the kinds of things... we're not just trying to make it enjoyable for them to go thru the museum, but I think we're trying to, I'm hopeful, that it will be meaningful and will be of some practical benefit, we hear people saying it is this kind of thing.

(MUSIC UP FULL FOR :54)

(MUSIC DOWN AND OUT)
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