



The Kingdom of Madison: A Southern Mountain Fastness and Its People

Manly Wade Wellman

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Tucked away among the ancient and rugged mountains of Western North Carolina, Madison County-sometimes called "the Kingdom of Madison" by its older citizens-is one of the most misunderstood and least-appreciated counties in the entire state. Until only recently, hard to get into and out of, it has been a genuinely isolated area, blurred in the attention of even neighboring counties. Partially because of this isolation the rest of North Carolina and the world has tended to lose sight of the unique history and folkways of this area and the vigorous, self-reliant, and proud men and women who have lived there since the frontier period of the 1770s. In this lively and fascinating book one of North Carolina's greatest ever writers redresses this myopic imbalance and introduces us to the real Madison County. In doing so he makes us realize that much of what has been written or said about the county or its people is rumor or, at best, exaggeration. As a part-time resident for decades of summers, Manly Wade Wellman came to know Madison intimately. He knew banjo-pickers and lawyers, blockaders (called moonshiners by outsiders) and preachers, and he heard many stories, legendary and true, of the mountain people.

He has roamed the mountains-Sandy Mush, Sugarloaf Knob, Max Patch, Bluff and Hurricane--and forded the creeks--Spillcorn and Sprinkle and Shut-in, Bull and Bear and Turkey and Doe, Puncheon Fork and Crooked Branch, Big Pine and Little Pine, and has stood on the banks of the rushing, rock-filled French Broad River. He makes this chronicle of the Kingdom of Madison sing in a way that resonates the heartstrings and does these proud people well.

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