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# Geography of Folk Culture

## Lecture Outline

California State University,  
Northridge

**Geography**



# What is Folk Culture?

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- Popular
  - large and ever changing mass of people
  - division of labor
  - money based economy
  - police and army maintain order
  - heterogeneity and individualism
- Folk
  - traditional ways
  - often rural
  - cohesive and homogenous
  - little labor specialization
  - family maintains order
  - subsistence economy



# Is it so simple to tell?

- Exactly what is folk and what is popular is sometimes “a distinction without a difference”.
- Consider “Old School” Hip Hop
- What is the role of space and place?
- Local is \_\_\_\_\_



# What? - Cultural Features

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- Material Culture-things that can be touched and tasted (artifacts).
- Non-material-things that can't be seen, touched or tasted such as, songs or folk tales (mentifacts).
- Some Geographers study nothing but folk material items.

# Raked Cemetery (fig)



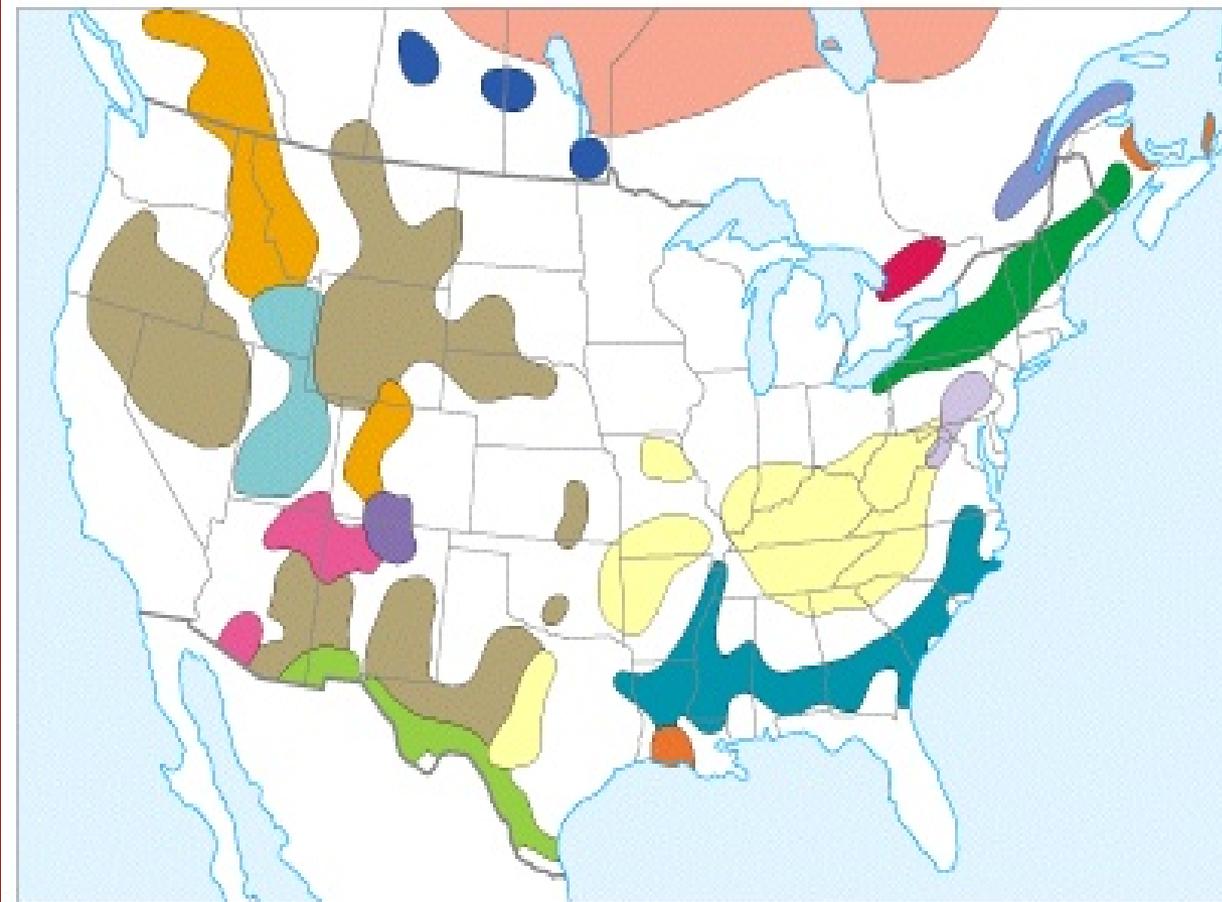
# Folk Culture Regions

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- Defined on the basis of their individual cultural elements.
- Included among these traits are:
  - Foodways
  - Song, dance and stories
  - Holidays, celebrations
  - Housing stock



# American Folk Regions (fig)



- Québec French
- Acadian French
- Yankee
- Upper Canadian
- Pennsylvanian
- Upland southern
- Mexican
- Highland Hispanic
- Mormon
- Mountain western
- African-American
- Northern Forest Native American
- Southwestern Native American
- Plains ranch
- Ukrainian

# Folk Food Regions

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- Geography of “spiciness” – Why?
- Do any folk food regions still exist in the United States?
- What would be a regional specialty for Southern California?

Why do many areas with hot climates have spicy cuisines? Pick the one that is **INCORRECT**.

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- A. It is easy to grow hot peppers in hot climates.
- B. In hot climates, spoilage is common and pickling with peppers helps prevent spoilage.
- C. In hot climates, sweating helps cool you down. Hot peppers make you sweat.
- D. In hot climates, spicy peppers help cover the taste of spoiled food.



# Folk Medicine

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- Roots, barks and fruits of plants used to cure ailments.
- Still preserved in parts of Appalachia, Indian reservations and the Hispanic borderlands.
- Also in the Asian culture groups.



# Digging for Roots (fig)

**Geography**



# Why dig?

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- COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - State wildlife officers have identified dozens of ginseng harvesting violations in their effort to protect the medicinal herb.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources says officers have uncovered over 60 violations involving more than 30 people. No one has been charged.

Ron Rogers, wildlife law-enforcement supervisor for central Ohio, says the state regulates ginseng to discourage over-harvesting, preserve the wild plants and allow them to reach maturity.

Last year, 3,626 pounds of ginseng were legally harvested in Ohio's mature woodlands. The dried roots sell for \$400 a pound.

Potential violations include digging ginseng without landowner permission, off-season collecting or possession, failure to maintain accurate records and failure to certify ginseng prior to export.



# Geophagy

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- Dirt and clay eating
- Still practiced in Africa and some parts of the American South.
- Why?
- Parasites, nutrition, religion.



# Distribution of Geophagy (fig)

Geophagy by Children



Geophagy and Pregnancy



Religious Geophagy



Geophagy As Treatment for Parasitic Diseases



Geophagy As Remedy for Syphilis (x) and Diarrhea (-)



Total Distribution



# Geophagy: US Southland

- <http://whitedirt.samsbiz.com/>



# Folk Music

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- Folk music is that music that is produced largely for local consumption.
- Profit motive is low.
- Often uses homemade, or modest instrumentation (or none)
- Often reflects the peculiarities of the local culture, local performance venues and even local climate conditions.

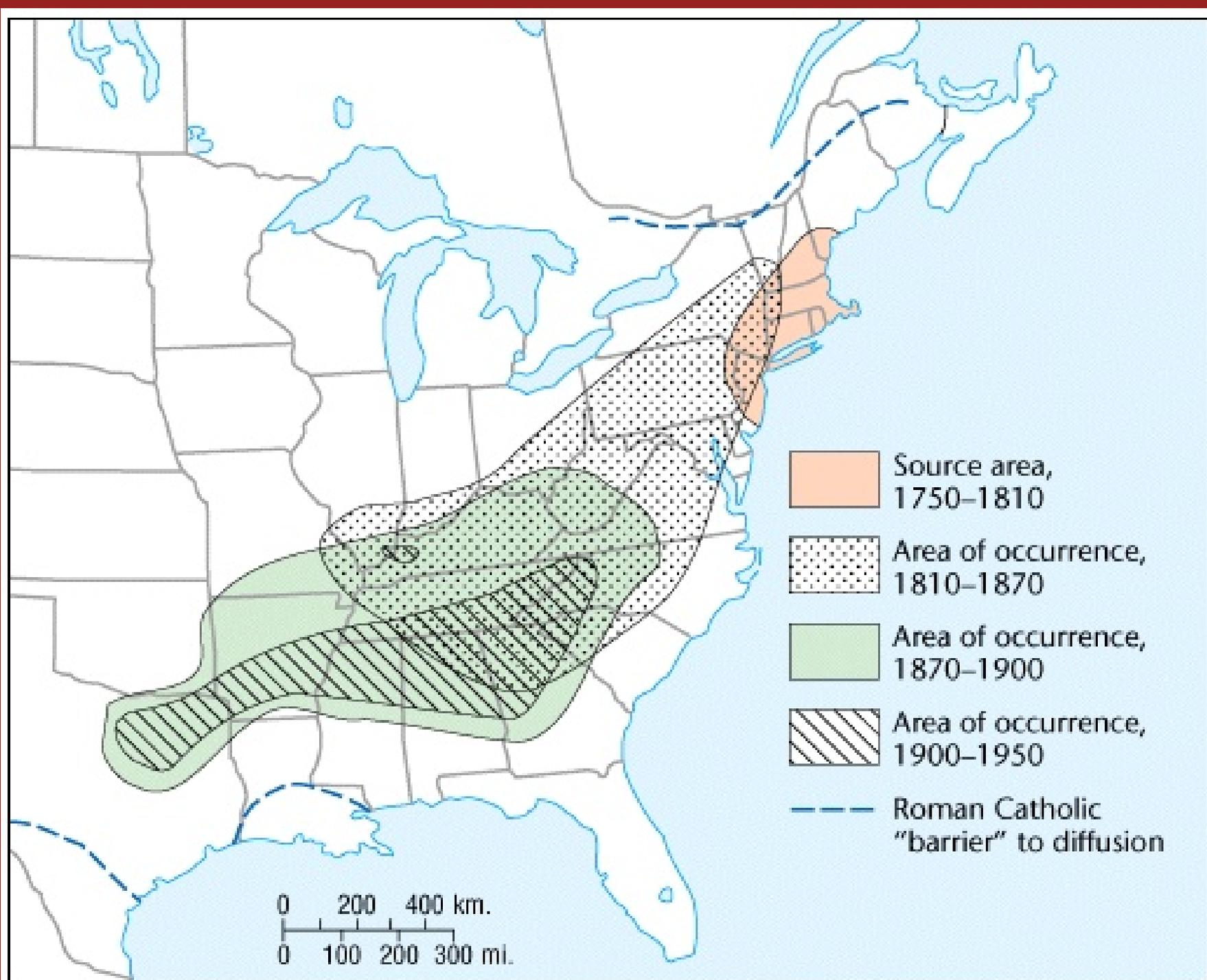
In class, which of these music genres was called “folk”.

- A. Opera
- B. Heavy Metal
- C. Old School (early) Hip Hop
- D. Disco

# Lining Out – Folk Style Gospel

- The “lining out” style of church singing is an ancient folk singing style brought from the British Isles to the United States.
- It has long since died out in New England where it was once most popular.
- It can still be found in two types of places:
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jByWbxlg7OI>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNOIY5lqepA>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2o0NoCAHpvg>





# Why is it “here and not there”

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- Still most popular in the Upland South and among black churches. Why?
- Camp meetings and Yankee teachers.
- Why has this style diminished in the source area?
- Why did it not spread to South Louisiana, or Southern California?

# Cultural Integration in Folk Geography

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- Many folk practices are accepted into the larger world, and sometimes money is earned.
- Popular culture frequently derived from folk materials.
- Folk cultures also absorb popular culture

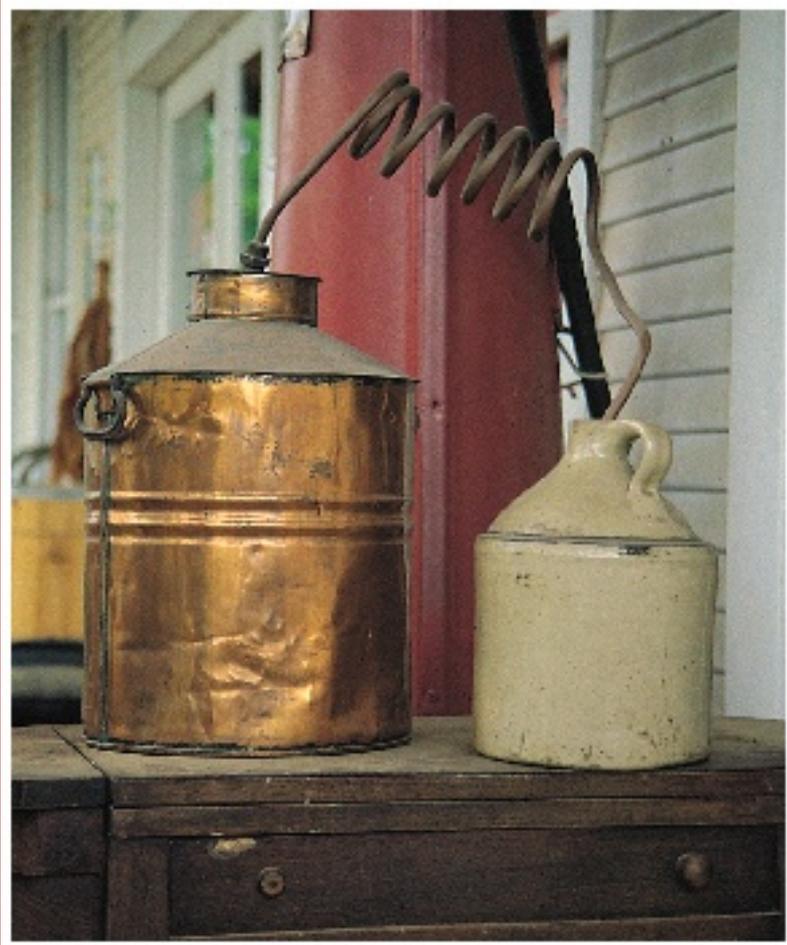
# Example: Mountain Moonshine

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- Came with the Scots-Irish in the 1700s
- Enjoyed much popularity during the prohibition era.
- Often most popular in devout Baptist/Methodist areas and in dry counties.
- Good money maker-much better than corn!
- What is the geographic factor?
- Major bust in July 2000 in Carolinas, TN.
- Stock car racing and Moonshiners?

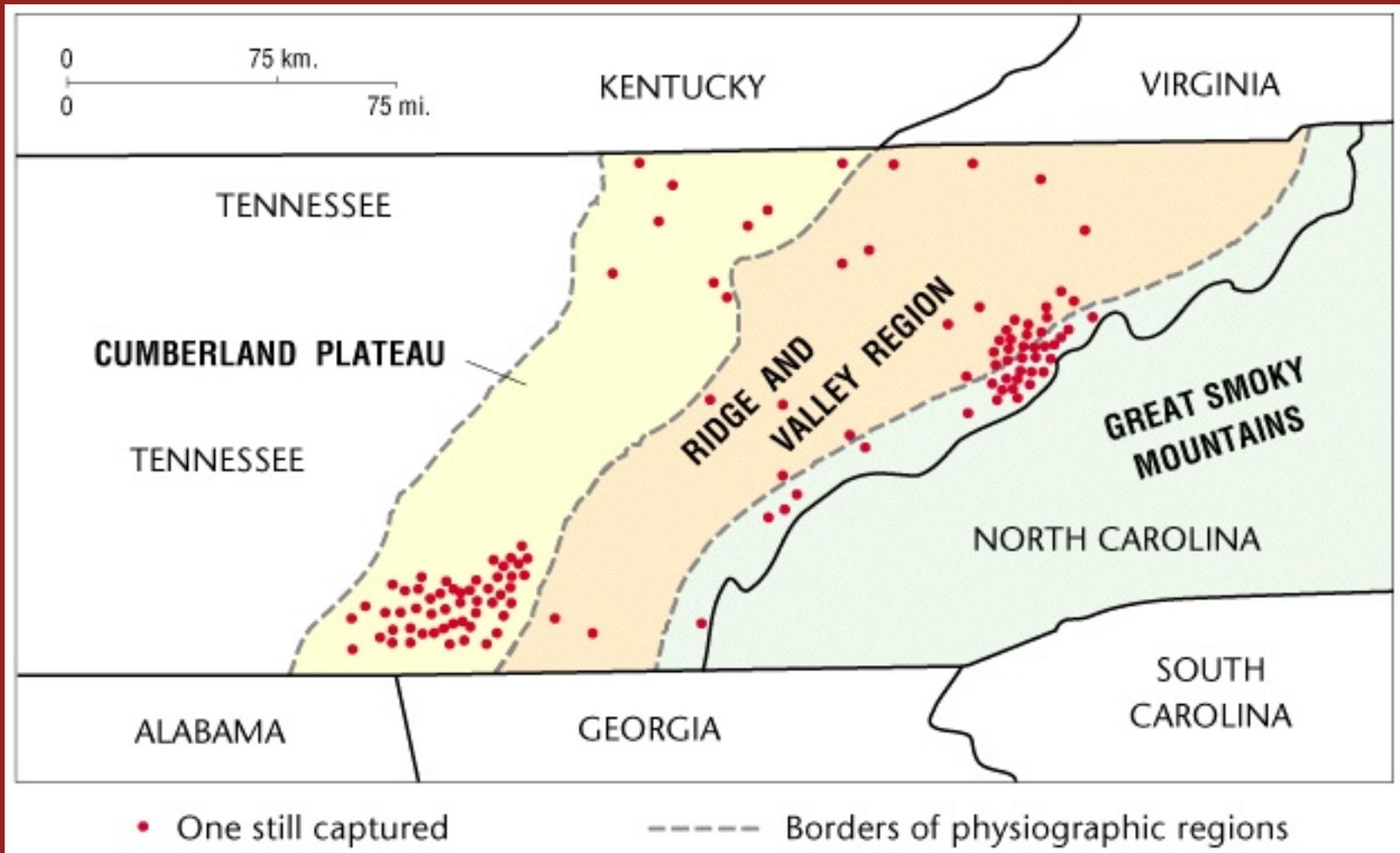


# Whiskey and Fast Cars (fig)



Geography

# Map of Moonshine Busts (fig)



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# Country & Western Music

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- We got bof' kinds of music hyear...
- Derived from Scots-Irish roots.
- Fiddle heavy-bagpipe substitute?
- Stayed in the mountains for decades
- Mixed with African elements
- Role of Ralph Peer and WSM.
- Popularized, electrified and homogenized by Nashville.

# Example: Bluegrass

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- Bill Monroe
- Scottish Church singing
- Mountain Jazz
- Arnold Shultz and Uncle Pen
- Place oriented
- Voice pitch and sexual mores?
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2XT9u7iw9o&feature=related>



# Bluegrass Hometowns (fig)



- Home of professional bluegrass music performer, 1972
- Bluegrass music festivals held, 1972

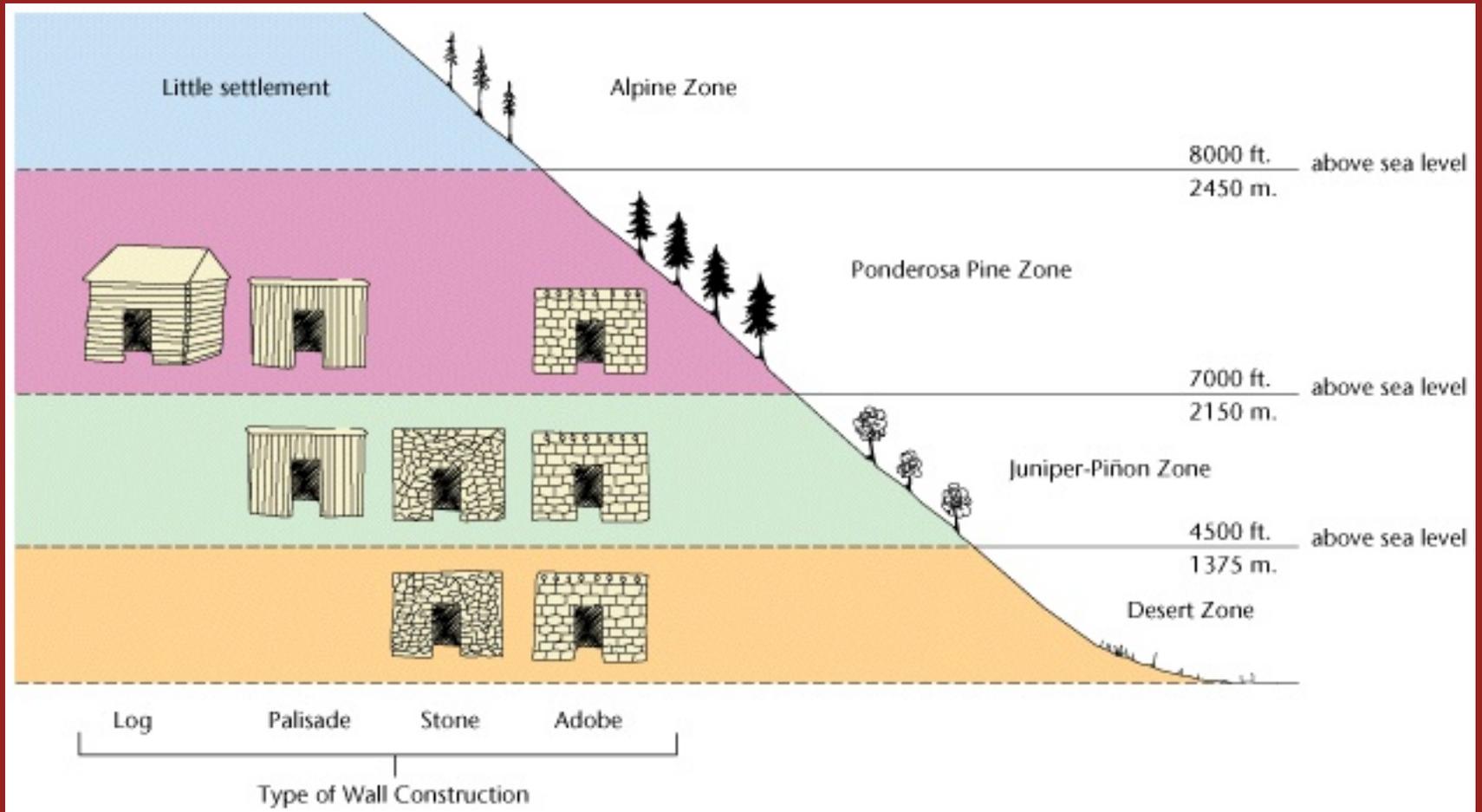
# Folk Landscapes

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- Folk architecture is a good indicator of past folk life activity.
- Structures built from collective memory.
- Functional and often specific to natural conditions



# Folk Ecology and Building Materials (fig)



# Thatch (fig)



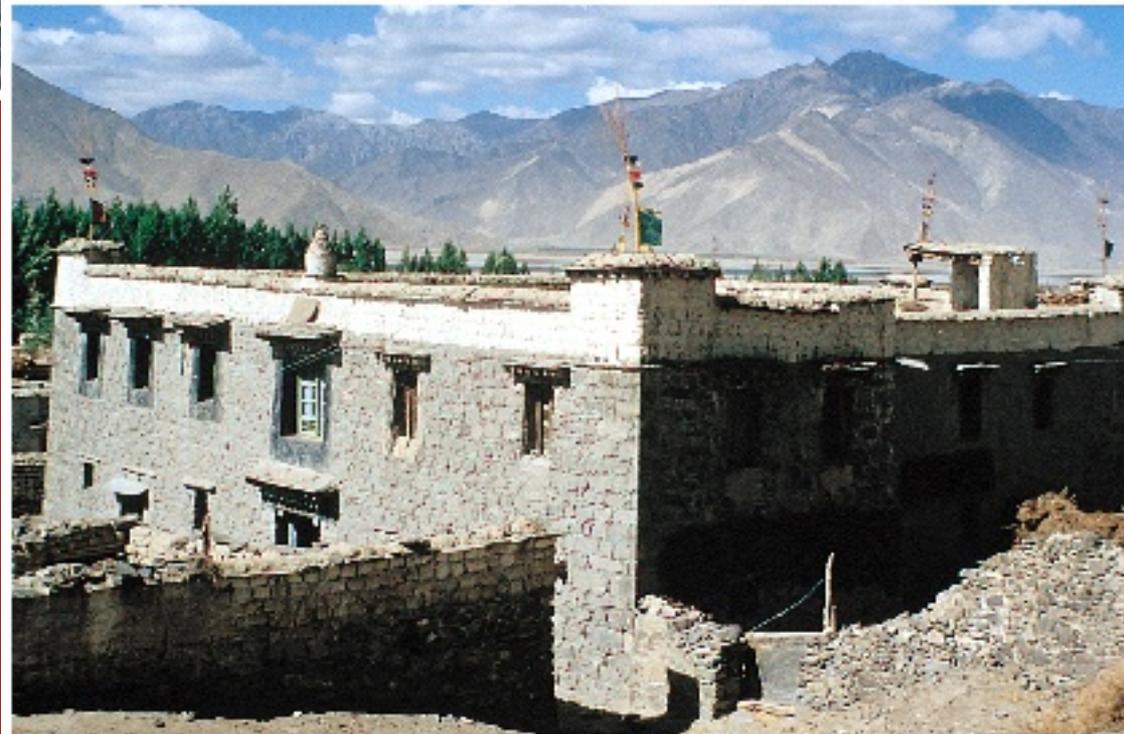


Mud/Log

Dirt/Thatch  
(fig)

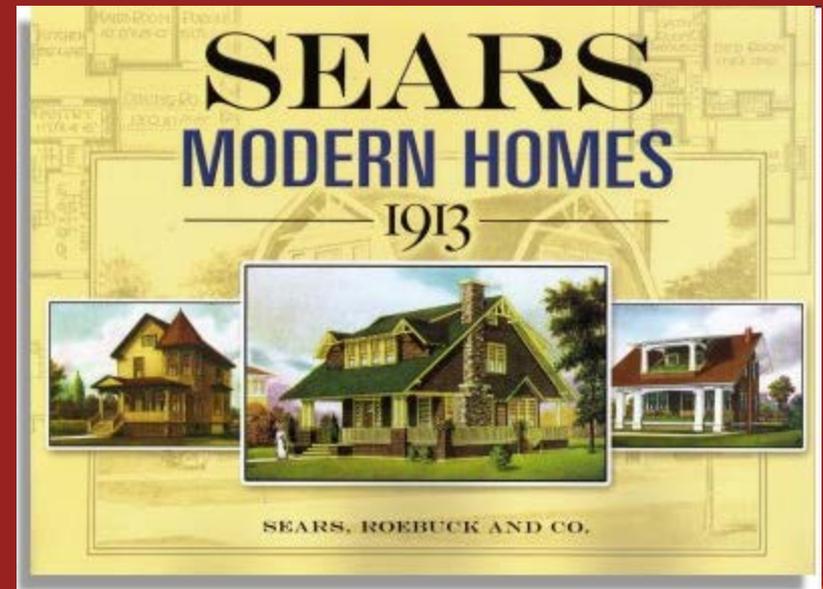


# Grasslands and Mountains



# Folk Housing in North America

- Little new folk construction today
- Balloon framing, professional design emerges in the 1850s....Sears & Robuck Houses
- Still many survive



Geography

# Building Materials

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- A sure clue to folk architecture is the local source materials.
- Buildings made from distant materials are rarely of folk origins.
  - Bricks, grass, wood, sod, stone
- Climate influences choice of materials
- Adobe houses of the Southwest



# Floor Plan

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- The floor plan of a house is another clue to its folk origins.
- Many times the exterior of a house has been redone making it hard to determine its folk past.
- Certain floor plans are common in certain regions of the United States.

# Other clues

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- Consider the shape and pitch of the roof
- Placement of the chimney (s)
- Number and location of doors and windows.
- Design of the porch...if there is one.



# Which of these is a clue your house is NOT a folk house?

- A. It's made of entirely local materials
- B. The walls were built with 2x4 boards.
- C. The house is well designed for the local climate.
- D. It was built in 1820.



# Main North American Styles

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- Yankee –
  - New England, Upper Great Lakes States
- Midwestern /Mid Atlantic –
  - Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland.
- Upland South - Appalachia
- Lowland South – “Black South”
- Southwest – Adobes (Texas- California)
- French

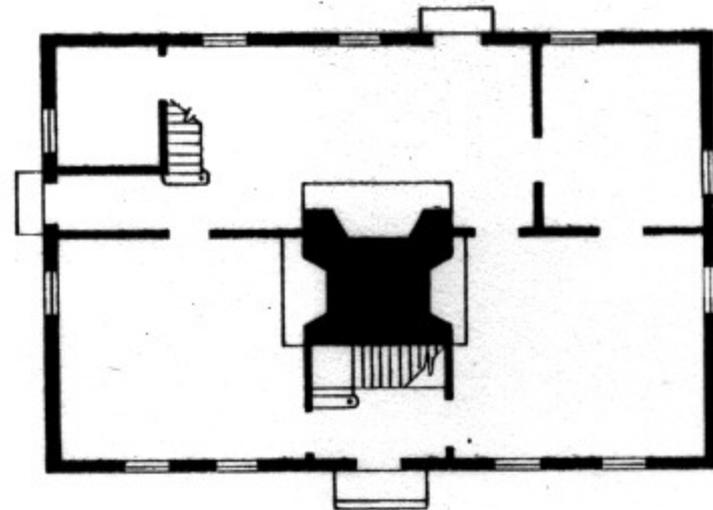


# Yankee

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- Found mostly in New England and the Great Lakes region of the Midwest.
- Features typically include:
  - Large central chimney
  - Rooms arranged around central chimney
  - Steeply pitched roofs
  - Symmetry is important
  - Frequent style references to Greece/Rome

# New England Large



(b)

# Yankee-New England Large



# Yankee – New England Large (fig)



# Yankee – New England Large (fig)



The American Landscape Project

Geography



# Yankee – Cape Cod

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- Similar floor plan to the New England Large.
- Story and a half.
- Side door.



# Yankee – Cape Cod



The American Landscape Project



# Yankee – Cape Cod

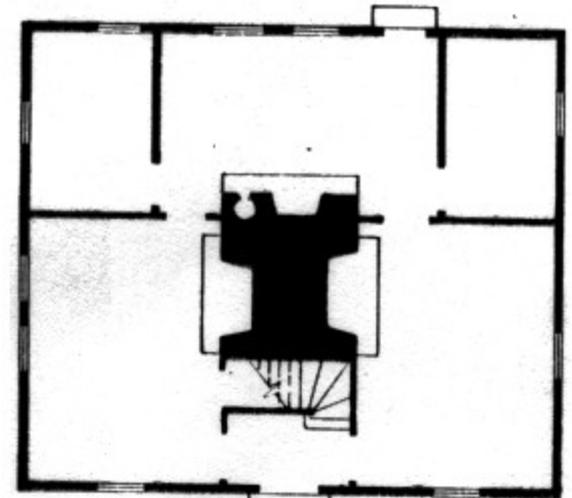


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# Yankee - Saltbox

- Similar floor plan
- Roofline extends over an additional row of rooms across rear of home.



(a)

# Yankee - Saltbox



# Yankee - Saltbox



# Yankee -Upright and Wing (fig)

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- Demonstrates the infusion of popular culture (style) into the more purely functional folk house (type).
- This house is in some ways a New England Large, turned sideways, so the gabled end faces the street to give it a Classical Appearance, which became popular in the early 1800.
- Later becomes fully “Greek Revival”



# Yankee- Upright and Wing (fig)



# Yankee -Upright and Wing (fig)



# Yankee -Upright and Wing (fig)



# Midwest / Mid Atlantic

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- The Midwest and Mid Atlantic states have only two, similar house types.
- Both are one room deep and two rooms wide
- Both have gable end chimneys
- Both have central hallways



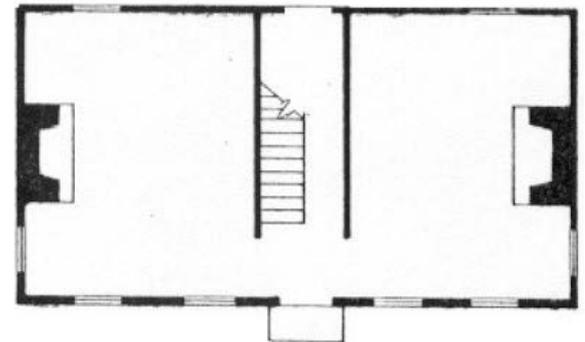
# Hall and Parlour



**Geography**

# The I house

- Named because of the states it was common in...
- Book explanation is wrong.
- Most common house among farmers in the middle states



# Carolina – I House



**Geography**

# Illinois – I House



**Geography**



# Upland South

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- The Upland South is the “hillbilly” south, or the part that was **not** dominated by plantation agriculture.
- Scots-Irish and Germanic influences are primary.
- The “pen” is the single room cabin. All other configurations build from the single pen.

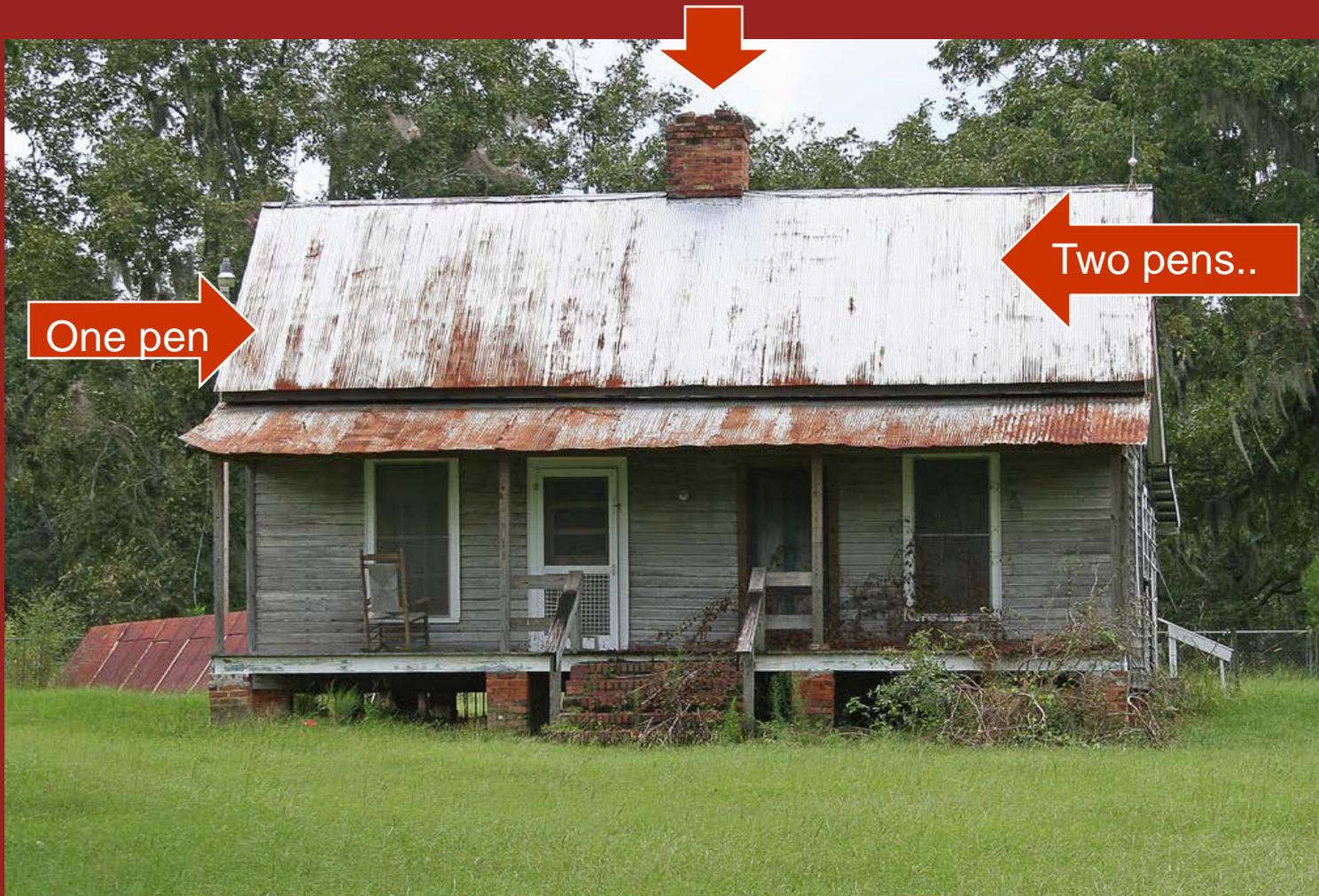


# Upland South – Cabin and Porch (fig)



Single Pen with back  
shed and front porch

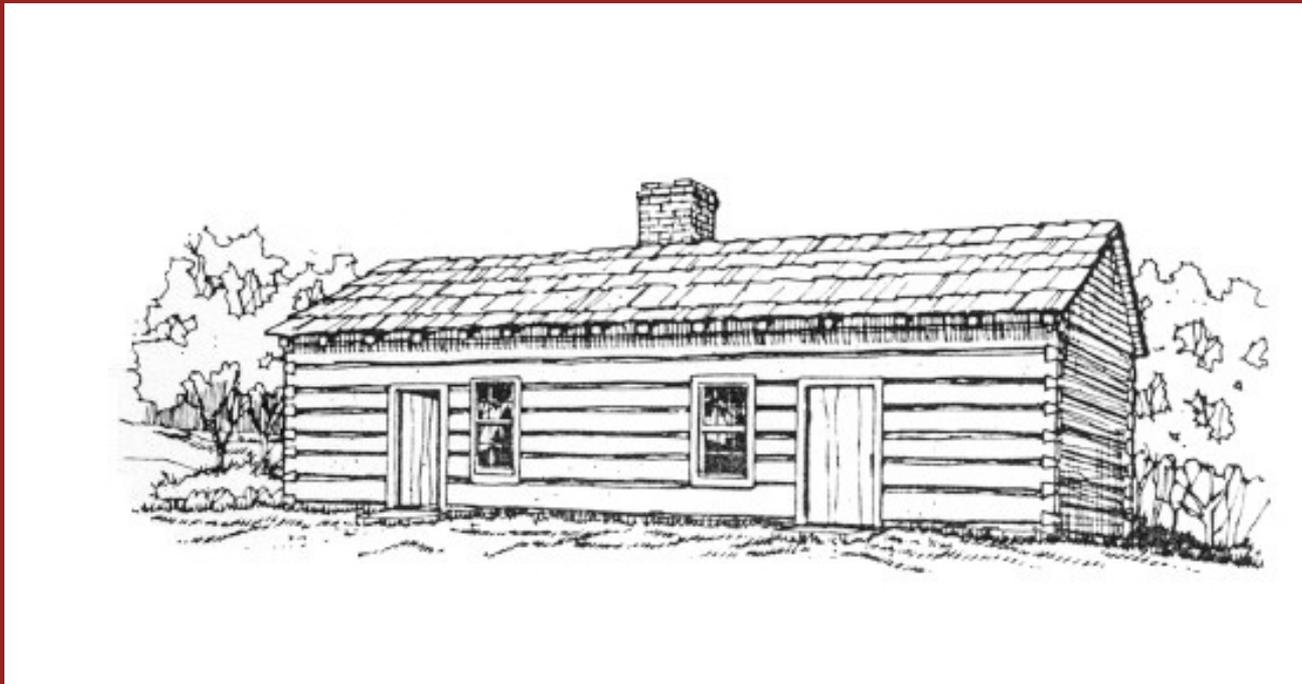
# Upland South – Saddlebag



Geography

# Upland South- Saddle Bag

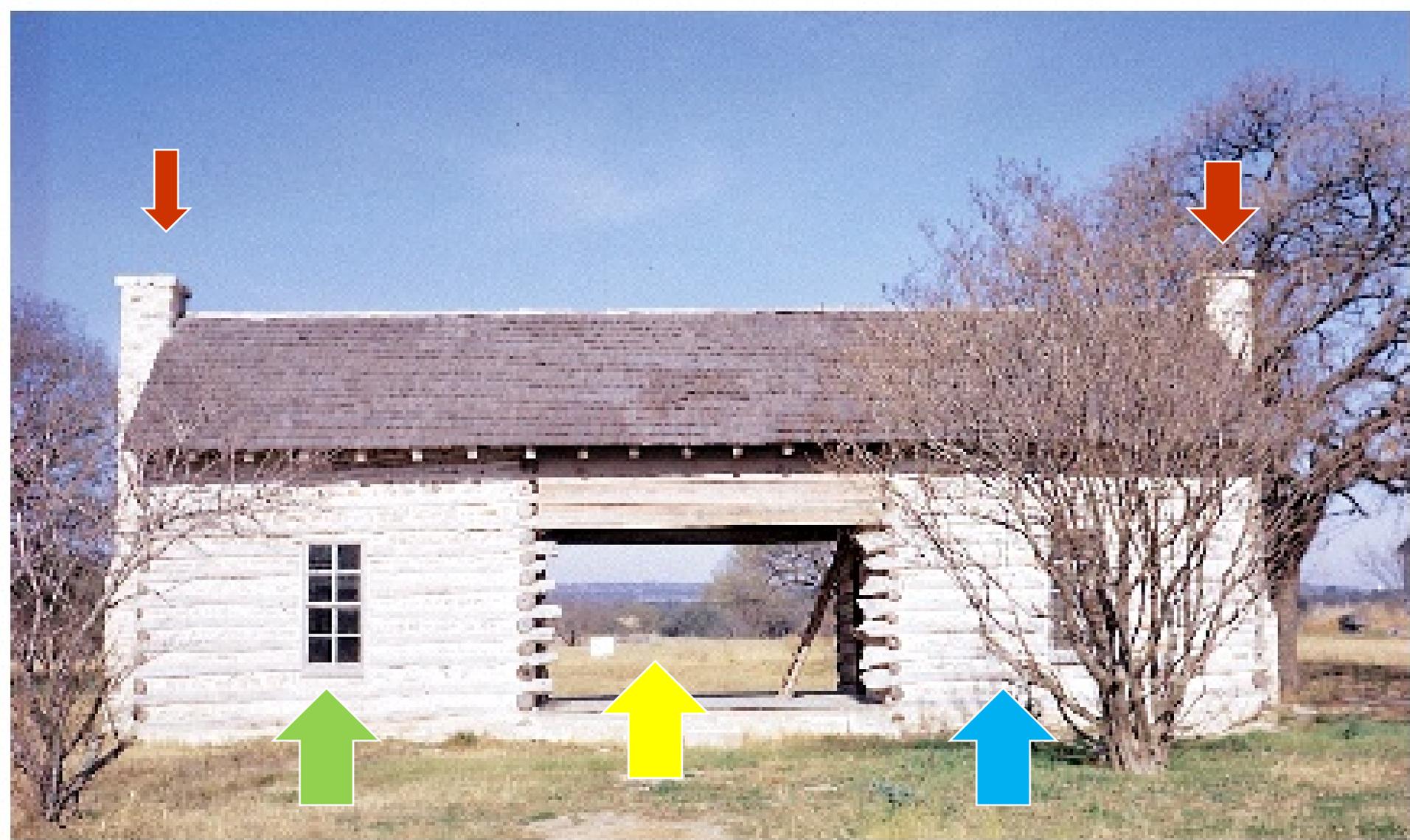
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**Geography**



# Upland South -Dogtrot (fig)



# Lowland South

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- The old plantation South
- African and Caribbean influences are evident
- Rare to find middle class housing. Why?



# Lowland South-Shotgun (fig)



Single pen wide...multiple pens deep. This one is special...it's a "camel back"

**Geography**

# Lowland South – Charleston House

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**Geography**



# What type of house is this?

- A. Cape Cod
- B. Saddlebag
- C. I house
- D. New England Large



# Where might you find this house?

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- A. Maine
- B. California
- C. Indiana
- D. Tennessee



# Other Regional Specialties

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- In some regions, the ethnic heritage of the local population remained dominant because there was less influence from other ethnicities or nationalities.
- They remain distinct today.



# Lowland South – Creole Cottage

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**Geography**



# Pennsylvania Dutch Forebay Barn (fig)



# North American Styles (fig)



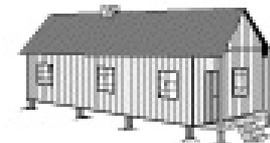
Yankee "upright and wing"



Yankee "Cape Cod"



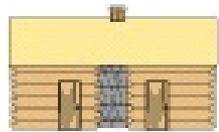
Yankee New England "Large"



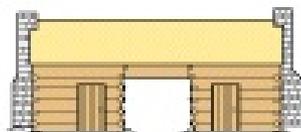
African-American "shotgun" house



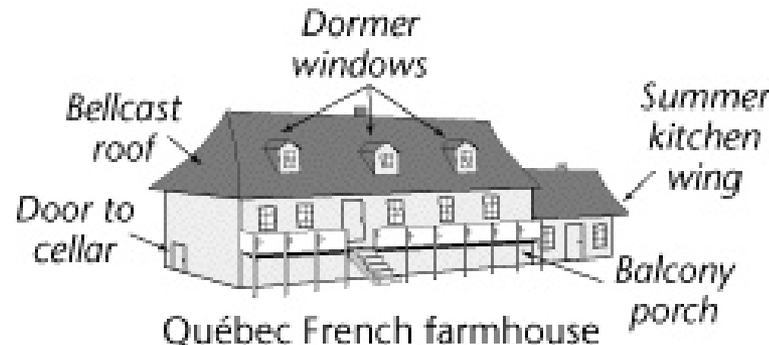
Acadian "Creole" house



Upland southern log "saddlebag" house, front view



Upland southern log "dogtrot" house



Québec French farmhouse



Upper Canadian "Ontario" farmhouse



# Pennsylvania Dutch- Forebay Barn (fig)

Geography



# Quebec House (fig)





# Value of a porch?

- A folk house's porch design may offer clues to its utility in a variety of climate types.
- This house did not have a porch.



# Study Guide

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- [http://www.csun.edu/~sg4002/courses/107/107\\_study\\_folk.html](http://www.csun.edu/~sg4002/courses/107/107_study_folk.html)

**Geography**

