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CIVIL WAR TO CIVIL RIGHTS:
'NIGHT COMES TO THE CUMBERLANDS'



Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

LETCHER COUNTY — Harry Caudill was a writer, historian, lawyer and legislator. A three-time Kentucky state representative and a history professor at the University of Kentucky, Caudill's lasting contribution to the region and the country was the publication of his 1962 book "Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area."

The book brought national attention to the poverty and underdevelopment of the Appalachian region and is considered a catalyst for the

establishment of President John Kennedy's Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in 1963 and President Lyndon Johnson's focus on the Appalachian region in his War on Poverty programs in the mid-1960s. ARC and the War on Poverty brought more than \$15 billion in aid to Appalachia over the course of 25 years.

Caudill published nine other books on poverty, environmental stewardship and Kentucky, but none were as important as "Night Comes to the Cumberlands." He passionately opposed strip mining and was an early opponent of mountaintop removal mining, which he felt damaged the environment and ruined the natural beauty of his beloved region. A 1993 issue of "Appalachian Heritage" (produced by Berea College) honored Caudill's contributions to the region and celebrated his life.

The Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) links Kentuckians with their past via archival collections that document people from every walk of life, reaching back to 1509. Letters, diaries, oral histories and photographs, as well as the first and second Kentucky Constitutions, are included. Find these and other KHS collections online at khscatalog.kyvl.org

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