



# Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites

*Wayne Flynt*

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## **Poor but Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites** Wayne Flynt

First published in 1989 by The University of Alabama Press, *Poor but Proud* was met with critical acclaim and awarded the 1990 Lillian Smith prize in nonfiction, as well as being named a *CHOICE* Outstanding Academic Book. This new paperback version will make the classic work available for general readers, bookstores, and classrooms.

Wayne Flynt addresses the life experiences of poor whites through their occupations, society, and culture. He explores their family structure, music, religion, folklore, crafts, and politics and describes their attempts to resolve their own problems through labor unions and political movements. He reveals that many of our stereotypes about poor whites are wildly exaggerated; few were derelicts or "white trash." Even though racism, emotionalism, and a penchant for violence were possible among poor whites, most bore their troubles with dignity and self-respect - working hard to eventually lift themselves out of poverty.

The phrase "poor but proud" aptly describes many white Alabamians who settled the state and persisted through time. During the antebellum years, poor whites developed a distinctive culture on the periphery of the cotton belt. As herdsmen, subsistence farmers, mill workers, and miners, they flourished in a society more renowned for its two-class division of planters and slaves. The New Deal era and the advent of World War II broke the long downward spiral of poverty and afforded new opportunities for upward mobility.

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