

Making Round Peak Music:

History, Revitalization, and Community

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project tells the story of the revitalization of a community musical tradition. The music is the old-time string band music of Surry County, North Carolina, a driving and exciting regional style sometimes called Round Peak style. It developed from an Anglo-American fiddle tradition carried into the region and absorbed influences from outside: first from African American banjo and folk and blues music, and later from bluegrass and commercial country music. This combination created a highly dynamic and intricate ensemble tradition that, coupled with the music's age, imagined authenticity, and connection to an idealized agrarian past, made it especially appealing to members of the folk music revival of the mid 20th Century, many of whom visited the Mt. Airy area, some of whom recorded its most prominent practitioner, Tommy Jarrell, and some of whom ended up becoming full time residents. The revival not only brought Round Peak music to the attention of the outside world (it became the most popular of all the southern string band styles among revivalists), but to locals as well. Along with the revival transplants, they took up the music and gave it a new vitality. Several charismatic and forceful individuals from within and without the community were key to this revitalization. After the period of revitalization, during a late stage of the folk revival, the tradition continued with renewed vigor, and is one of a very few regional string band traditions that has sustained itself into the 21st Century and that continues to be a part of the everyday life of its community. This work comprises a history of old-time music in the region, drawing on oral history, newspaper and magazine accounts, and archival

recordings; an analysis of the impact of this regional style the broader folk revival movement; a musical and stylistic analysis of Round Peak old-time music; and a fieldwork-based ethnography of the music and dance scene in and around Surry County today.

Surry County, North Carolina is home to a distinct and driving style of old-time string band music. Early 20th Century legends like Ben Jarrell and Charlie Lowe took the common stock of American dance tunes and added influences from black musicians, created new parts for old tunes and pushed the music to create a sound like no other. The next generation of players, including Tommy Jarrell (son of Ben) and Fred Cockerham, became mentors to legions of young players who traveled from around the United States to learn directly from them. Mount Airy, the largest town in Surry County, North Carolina, is still a hot-bed of old-time music and dance. The Veterans of Foreign Wars holds an annual Old-time Fiddlers' Convention that draws crowds of thousands from all over the world. The commercial radio station WPAQ (740 AM) plays traditional old-time music all day. Square dances are held in Surry and neighboring counties every week. Rather than being a revival scene, old-time music and dance have been ongoing activities at the center of the community since the 1820s.

My project has three parts: a history of the music culture of Surry County, including the impact of the revivalists of the 1960s and 70s; musicological analysis of the distinctive "Round Peak" style that is associated with that community; and a fieldwork-based ethnography of the music and dance culture as it exists today. I've made many visits to the area over the years, with the first in 2001. I moved to Surry County in the summer of 2006, and have been a full time resident since 2008. I have interviewed,

jammed with, and documented many of the musicians, callers and dancers. Some of these people grew up in the tradition and others learned as revivalists and later moved to the area and became integrated into the music community. The revivalists are those who were not raised in the culture of the North Carolina Piedmont, but became involved in the area's music later in life, often as part of the broad popular culture resurgence of interest in traditional music and dance that began in the 1950s, reached a peak in the 1960s, and began to diversify in the 1970s. One of the key points of interest in my research will be the exploration of the dynamics and negotiations of this post-revival scene.

Old-time Music

Old-time musicians spend a lot of time defining themselves in opposition to bluegrass and country, its glitzier cousins. The web sites of old-time bands and musicians prominently feature their homegrown expositions of the music. The label itself invites confusion: much music is old and all music is based to some degree on the music that came before it. Jazz, blues and rock music all have earlier styles, sometimes called “old-time,” that are still played today alongside their more contemporary forms. But the music I will be discussing in this paper is specifically aurally or orally transmitted traditional music as it was played in the rural American South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and as it was taken up by “revivalists” who learned from recordings and field trips to traditional musicians in the latter half of the 20th century. Mike Seeger, a member of one of the first old-time revival bands, the New Lost City Ramblers, begins his essay “What Is Old-time Music?” with an example that will be familiar to many who play this music:

I travel by air quite a bit and as I put my fiddle in the overhead luggage bin someone often asks what kind of music I play. Sometimes I've answered "old-time music" but soon learned that means little to the general public, as it could mean any kind of music that occurred before the time of our conversation. Sometimes I try "old-time country" and they might say "oh, like Hank Williams?" or even Merle Haggard. "No," I say, "it's acoustic and more backwoods than that." Then sometimes (if they're really knowledgeable) they'll say, "oh, is it bluegrass?" I wish old-time music had such a nice handle. (Seeger 1997)

Old-time music, also called “old timey,” “old-time country,” and “hillbilly,” is a category that includes old British-derived ballads, renditions of popular songs by country people, the banjo music of Black Americans, and the fiddling of Celtic, English and German immigrants and their descendants. Though a review of vintage 78 R. P. M. recordings from the late 1920s and early 1930s (sometimes called the “golden age” by old-time revivalist players) will reveal a wide variety of instrumentation including cello, harmonica, autoharp, kazoo, tenor banjo, ukulele, dulcimer, pump organ or piano, among others, the most common line-up of an old-time band in the early 21st century is fairly standardized. There will be a fiddle, a banjo played clawhammer style, and a guitar, sometimes complemented with a string bass (plucked) or mandolin. The fiddle plays the lead melody, with the banjo usually playing a simpler variant an octave lower in heterophony. The guitar typically plays an accompanying role, alternating bass notes and chords on the beat. There are both instrumental and vocal genres in old-time music. A typical old-time instrumental, usually called a “tune,” has two parts, one with a higher tessitura than the other. Each part is repeated once, resulting in an AABB structure. This AABB structure is not universal, some tunes having three, four or even more parts, these parts repeated varying numbers of times. Whatever the arrangement of the parts, though, the whole tune is repeated an unlimited number of times. The old-time tune was

originally dance music, and the lack of variation was no bother to dancers, but to modern-day listeners who do not play old-time, such consistency holds limited appeal. Some tunes were originally songs, or have had some kind of floating verses attached to them over time, and these are sometimes called “singing tunes” by revivalists. There are also many songs played in old-time style, and these come from early 78-era recording artists like the Carter Family and Charlie Poole, and also from classic country, bluegrass and western swing. Bands and performers who wish to make a career playing old-time music often incorporate many of these vocal genres into their repertoires, as they have more appeal to contemporary audiences.

The Place and its Places: Surry County, Mount Airy, Mayberry, Round Peak, and Bobville

No place is perceived in the same way by all people and the same people will apprehend their location in different ways under different circumstances. The politically bounded area that I've named as my topic (Surry County) is comprised of a variety of small towns, rural crossroads “communities,” one small city, and several imagined communities, which are socially constructed by those who believe themselves to be part of them (Anderson 1983). Some parts of Surry County are much better known to me—the City of Mount Airy, the towns of Pilot Mountain and Pinnacle, the crossroads village of Ararat and the community called Ash Hill on some maps. These places lie along US Highway 52. The crossroads communities of Beulah, Pine Ridge and Westfield are also familiar territory, stretched out along NC 89. Less well known to me are the southwest parts of the county, where I spent little time. Elkin, Rockford, Level Cross, State Road—I

do not know these places, though they lie within the area I've chosen. On the other hand, I cannot adequately discuss the music of this "Surry County" without talking about Galax and Ararat and Lamsburg and Fancy Gap in Virginia. Or the town of King or the big city of Winston-Salem which are neighbors. As I discuss the diffusion of the Round Peak style, I'll need to address the influence and impact of "outsiders"--both human and institutional. So if the borders of Surry County are fixed, the borders of "Surry County old-time Music" are quite a bit more fluid. Within the geographic space under consideration, there are certain communities that will be more prominent in the story: Round Peak, Mount Airy/Mayberry, and Bobville.

Round Peak

Round Peak was a community near a mountain of the same name. A US Postal Map from 1896 shows the community of "Roundpeak" between Low Gap and Oak Grove. The Round Peak Post Office was closed in 1931, and the community has been serviced by Mount Airy since. The community has not been on most maps since. In the early years of the 20th century, this part of Surry County was home to a circle of extraordinary white banjo and fiddle players. The way they played the old tunes, stripping them down, or stretching them out, adding new parts, owed a lot to the music of African Americans. Some learned directly from black musicians who travelled through the area or lived there, others incorporated the syncopations and rhythms that had been incorporated into the music of white Americans since the days of the blackface minstrels. This circle of musicians, Ben Jarrell, Tony Lowe, and Charlie Lowe, are sparsely represented on recordings, and none of them ever achieved anything we would today

recognize as commercial success as musicians. Nevertheless, their style of old-time banjo and fiddle music, now called by the short-hand “Round Peak,” was to have enormous influence on the course of folk music in the 20th century, and would be remembered, recognized—and sometimes resisted—up to the present day. Tommy Jarrell, son of Ben, was the most well-known native of this community, and the man whose playing is most associated with the Round Peak label. When people in the broader old-time community think about Surry County, it is largely this sound that they associate with it. This dissertation will in part be an examination of the rise of Round Peak music to become something nearing a national standard of old-time music.

Mount Airy/Mayberry

The largest town in Surry County is Mount Airy, population 8,742, best known as the home of the actor Andy Griffith, whose “Andy Griffith Show” ran for 249 episodes between 1960 and 1968. The show remains phenomenally popular in syndicated re-runs and depicts the life of a widowed sheriff in a small community called Mayberry, North Carolina. Andy Griffith often played guitar and sang old-time songs on the show, and some of the best-loved episodes were those featuring the bluegrass band the Dillards. Present-day Mount Airy is a charming small city, with a tourist-centered downtown, a granite quarry northeast of town, a series of closed-down textile mills and clothing factories, and a creeping commercial sprawl out on US 601. The tourism board’s motto “Mountains, Music, Mayberry” sums up the attractions of the town for visitors. Indeed, music is a major component of the way the city of Mount Airy presents itself--as Mount Airy and as Mayberry--to the world. Though the city of Mount Airy today has more than

two peace officers and more than one drunk, locals take a certain bemused pride in their representation as the quintessential American small town, the perfect Southern community. The musical history of the area has become part of the town's Mayberry image. Mayberry Days, an annual festival, and probably the biggest tourist weekend of the year for Surry County, features actors dressed as characters from “The Andy Griffith Show.” There are also live performances by members of the Dillards and by local old-time bands.

Besides Mayberry Days, the city hosts an Autumn Leaves festival in October which features live bluegrass and old-time music. The Surry Arts Council presents a Tommy Jarrell Festival each winter to celebrate the old-time tradition. The most significant Mount Airy old-time event for most is the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, put on as a fundraiser for the Veterans of Foreign Wars every June since 1971.

Bobville

As the music of the Round Peak circle became circulated and exported via commercial recordings and jam sessions in the late 1960s and 1970s, people from outside Surry County began visiting to seek out and learn from the older musicians in the area. Tommy Jarrell was particularly popular and hospitable. Several of these travelers settled in the area and became the center of a diasporic web of old-time musicians. In the 1980s, one group of these revival transplants has been hosting a series of annual house parties that go by the name Bobville, a reference to an incident at the Galax Fiddlers' convention . Bobville is not a fixed location, but a name for the “scene” in whatever location a number of its adherents are gathered. The Bobville New Year's Eve and post-

Mt. Airy Fiddlers' convention parties serve as reunions for an extended family of musical friends, a way to transform the distinction between revivalist and traditional artist, and are a compelling reason to visit friends and play music in Surry County.

The Time and Times of Old-Time

That time and history are important to any consideration of old-time music should go without saying. The name of the genre includes elements of both. The name “old-time” declares “this is music from *a* time, and it is not *this* time.” The time *frame* of the present study is approximately 1820 to the present day. As I went around doing my fieldwork and talking to people, many would assume I was “writing a book about Tommy Jarrell” or some such thing. Several seemed to think that it was too late to do research on old-time music in this area, as the great old musicians were gone. Others, perhaps thinking of the scholarly-performance mode exemplified by Alan Jabbour and the Chapel Hill area revivalists, wondered if I had found any unknown source musicians with forgotten tunes. If I told people that I’m interested in the history of the music, but also the present-day scene, they would often name off the older living musicians or ask if maybe I should be spending my time among the counterculture revivalists in Asheville.

I love the old musicians who have gone on. But I don’t think that the story of Surry County old-time music ended with those men. To assume so is to ignore the musicians who played with them and still live, and to ignore the people who love to play and listen to this music today. Most dire, it consigns this music to the past. The locals seem to agree. Two recent compact discs from Surry County were titled *Round Peak: the*

Tradition Continues and *Rise and Bloom Again*. These titles declare—one literally and one metaphorically—that the music has continued in this place and that the tie to local history is stronger than the tie to national trends.

Another strain in old-time music research that I gratefully acknowledge, admire and appreciate--and partially resist--is the study of revivalism separate from tradition. The community of old-time musicians that extends across the United States and around the globe has been aptly described as a “Diasporic affinity group” (Wooley 2003 using terminology developed by Slobin 1992). The figurative “homeland” of this diaspora is rural America, often, but not exclusively the southeast, and within that it is imagined as being in the mountains, even if many of the great practitioners were not, strictly speaking, mountaineers (Carlin 2004, Huber 2008). Literature on old-time music has tended focus either on the “source musicians”--who grew up in a tradition and learned in their community--or on the revival and the ways that the music functions outside the customary realm of rural life. If this present study has any claim to originality, it is in an attempt to bridge these two strains by examining the effect of the revival on and in one of the rural southern homelands of American folk music. The revival was an important part of the revitalization of Surry County old-time music, but only part of it. I move the community to the center of the story.

Literature

The study of Anglo-American folk music has followed several paradigms over the last century. Chief among them are tune collections, biographical and discographical studies of musicians, regional folklore studies and revival studies.

Tune Collections and Transcriptions

Perhaps the first attempts to systematically study the folk music of the American South were made by Cecil Sharp, the intrepid English ballad collector who travelled widely through Appalachia transcribing the words and melodies of folk ballads and songs. Sharp's collections are foundational to the study of folk song and dance in the southern Appalachians. Sharp and Olive Dame Campbell's collection of ballads from the southern Appalachians (1917) consist of transcriptions made on the spot at the performers' homes. The earlier work of Francis James Child, whose *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-1898) was the watershed publication of folk song scholarship, and had an influence on Sharp and many who followed. Sharp had collected ballads from living singers in the English countryside (1907, 1916) and was primarily seeking, in America, ballads that could be traced back to the British tradition collected by Child. Sharp found material that interested him as close to Surry County as Alleghany County, immediately to the west and up the mountain. Popular songs, hymns and instrumental music were excluded from the collection, as were songs performed by people judged to be too prosperous, clean or educated. Instrumental music or music performed by African Americans was also abjured by Sharp and Karpeles as beside the point. The larger cities and towns and the Piedmont region of North Carolina were too crowded and compromised, both commercially and racially for Sharp to collect in these places (Yates 1999). Most of the ballads and folk songs collected in Surry County have been the Native American ballads—those composed in the United States, which cannot be traced back to an Old World source. The unaccompanied style of ballad singing, which was the primary

interest of Sharp, does not seem to have been a common activity in Surry County. Sharp's chief idea about the music he found, that it was traditional English village music preserved in isolated mountain redoubts, has been questioned and debunked, but the romantic image of old-time traditions musical and otherwise thriving there in isolation, persists to the present day. Whatever the reason, Sharp and Karpeles passed Surry County by, and the ballad tradition of Surry County was not well documented in the early-20th Century. However, some few pieces of folk song were collected in the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* (Ivey et. al. 1965), and these are examined in Chapter 3.

The Round Peak string band music which is the focus of this study is instrumental music, even though it may often have words that go with the tunes. The fiddle and banjo music was not collected in depth by the folk-song collectors. Fiddling began to attract attention somewhat later. One of the earliest scholarly considerations of old-time fiddling was Malvin Artley's doctoral dissertation on West Virginia fiddlers (1955), in which the performance practices and contexts were considered and a sample of West Virginia tune performances was transcribed and analyzed. Individual musicians, though named, were not quoted directly, nor were their biographies given much attention.

One of the ballad collectors who did begin to study the fiddle tradition was Samuel Bayard, whose collections of tunes from Pennsylvania (1944, 1982) establish him as the dean of American fiddle scholarship. Bayard's method was to transcribe a typical time-through a tune and note significant variations by placing a lower-case letter above the varied measure in the transcription, with the varied measure transcribed below the main transcription. This does imply a normative standard for performance of the tune

which may not exist in the mind of the fiddler, but it is an effective and clear system.

Bayard's transcriptions are accompanied by annotations, some of which go on for pages, describing connections with other fiddle tunes of American and British provenance, alternate titles and performance notes. As with Sharp's ballads, these are transcriptions of specific fiddler's versions of tunes, and Bayard will include multiple versions of a single tune.

The variety in Anglo American folk music that Sharp and Bayard were seeking to convey through their multiple transcriptions became the subject of analysis. Musical change within traditional parameters was assumed to be a fact, but some, like Bertrand Bronson and Bayard wondered how far a tune could vary and still be recognizable (Bronson 1949:122). The repeated study of collections of folk tunes began to reveal similarities and patterns, which led to the postulation of tune families (Barry 1937, Bayard 1950, Bronson 1949). Phillips Barry noted that "we are forced to the conclusion that the number of originally distinct British folk melodies is small; increasing, however, traditionally, through what may be called secondary differentiation" (1937:11). Bayard took up this thread and defined tune families as

a group of melodies showing basic inter-relation by means of constant melodic correspondence, and presumably owing their mutual likeness to descent from a single air that has assumed multiple forms through processes of variation, imitation, and assimilation. (1950:33)

Methods of comparing individual variants by use of diagnostic tones and melodic contour were developed. Though Bayard subsequently published studies of ballad tunes (1954) using the tune-family analysis, his mammoth collection of fiddle tunes, did not use refer to tune families at all (1982). Bertrand Bronson was critical of the early tune family

theorists for not finding “abstract characterizations” and wondered whether tune family studies would ever produce any sort of real understanding of music or simply point to a “patternless complexity” (1969:141). In order to abstract hard data Bronson encoded tunes on computer punch cards and tried to find the “ideal melodic contour or archetypal image of the family as a whole” (in Cowdery 1990:86). Cowdery sums up the differences between Bayard and Bronson:

Bronson was not interested in qualitatively discussing variants; he was interested in reducing them to quantifiable data which could then generate statistics and averages. Bayard immersed himself in thousands of tunes so that his musical sensitivities could ferret out the important correspondences; Bronson encoded thousands of tunes on punch cards so that a computer could find the invariants which unite the repertory. (Cowdery 1990:86)

Charles Seeger also took a stab at computer aided analysis in his study of the ballad “Barbara Allen.” This study sought to expand on the tune-family concept with consideration of “majority usage,” which attempted to link text, melody and geographic distribution (1961).

The earliest ethnomusicologists to have written extensively about this music have taken an approach in which the music is often removed from context and subjected to analysis according to a grand theory such as Schenkerian analysis (Burman-Hall 1968) or the Historic-Geographic method (Goertzen 1985). Burman-Hall’s microscopic study of Bunt Stephens’ “Sail Away Ladies” is perhaps the earliest attempt by an ethnomusicologist to study fiddling as music, though the Schenkerian element seems an unnecessarily grandiose and roundabout way of saying that Stephens’ melody implies a functional harmony. A visit to a gathering of live old-time musicians will reveal guitar and bass players simply making these chordal choices on the fly. Uncle Bunt’s life

experiences are not treated in Burman-Hall's essay. Burman's dissertation (1974) compares the performances of two specimen tunes across four large geographic areas and finds that broad regional categories can be discerned (Blue Ridge, Appalachian, Ozark and Western). Chris Goertzen's continent- and century-spanning study of "Billy in the Lowground" offers few hints of possible reasons for the changes he identifies and indeed the large scope of his study would probably frustrate any meaningful explication. Goertzen's later work would deal [deals] provocatively with the influences of fiddle contests on traditional fiddling (1988, 1996, 2003). Goertzen's descriptions of fiddlers' conventions in the larger region around Surry County are accurate, but his conclusions about traditional old-time fiddling are colored by his view of it as musically inferior to the smooth, jazz-influenced style associated with Western fiddle contests. His essay on "Balancing Local and National Approaches at American Fiddle Contests" (1996) views old-time fiddling (the "local approach") as an antique art in need of preservation in the face of bluegrass and western fiddling. One of my criticisms of [reservations about?] this article is that Goertzen's idea of what the "national approach" is depends upon where in the nation the contest is taking place. His case study of a contest in Illinois presents western-style as "national" while his case study of conventions in North Carolina and Virginia posits bluegrass as the reigning mode. At times, he seems to be making excuses for why the judges at these conventions award high marks to what he seems to consider inferior fiddling. In any event, Goertzen's argument that fiddling has separated from dance, and that contests have become the dominant context for fiddling in America (Goertzen 1988:113) is belied by my own observations, and ignores the rise of informal jam sessions, music camps and dances, both of the older square dance type, and the

newer revival-influenced contra dances which call for live string band music.

Jeff Todd Titon's *Old-Time Kentucky Fiddle Tunes* uses a transcription-with-annotation model similar to Bayard (1982), and also includes transcription of certain significant variations. Titon's analysis in the annotations is largely concerned with provenance and distribution of tunes, and points to sources for alternate published or recorded versions. The introduction postulates three "melody types" for fiddle tunes. These are much more inclusive than tune families and are based upon phrase length, tonality, rhythm, melodic movement and range, instrumentation, ornamentation, and origin. Each of these melody types is typical to a particular region of Kentucky (2001:19-22).

Transcription and analysis, which were at one time the foundation of the ethnomusicology, have declined to the point where they may have become "peripheral or anachronistic," in the words of Ter Ellingson (1992). The scholars of North American fiddle music, Bayard, Burman-Hall, Goertzen and Titon, have continued to practice transcription, though, and I do the same. In my chapter on the sound of Round Peak music, I make use of several transcriptions to analyze one particular tune and the various ways it has been performed in the region. My analysis is based in part on Titon's melody types and I have proposed that melody type can be expanded to analyze different performances of the same tune, a project that began with my master's essay (Ruchala 2005). Much of my musical analysis chapter is dedicated to an attempt to use melody type analysis on a representative fiddle tune in order to formulate a Round Peak melody type.

Biography and History

Folklorists and serious amateur scholars who have written about old-time music have often taken a biographical or discographical approach, writing about the migrations, occupations and recording careers of musicians more than about the music they made. These first-level works of research filled early issues of the *John Edwards Memorial Foundation Quarterly* and the British magazine *Old Time Music*. Some of the more substantial research from these journals has found its way into books. Charles K. Wolfe's collection *The Devil's Box: Masters of Southern Fiddling* (1997) offers biographies and discographic information on fourteen old-time and country fiddlers, with rudimentary stylistic analysis. Some old-time country recording artists have been the topic of book-length biographies, including Jimmie Rodgers (Porterfield 1979), the Carter Family (Zwonitzer and Hirschberg 2004), the Stoneman family (Tribe 1993), Charlie Bowman (2007) and Charlie Poole (Rorer 1992). More obscure artists have been discussed in omnibus studies by Paula Hathaway Anderson-Green (2002), Marty McGee (2000), and Bob Carlin (2004). Carlin's book, about string bands in the North Carolina Piedmont, aims to be "long on research and short on analysis" (1), and this is the model of much of the work on early country and old-time musicians.

The foundational history of country music, Bill C. Malone's *Country Music, U.S.A.* (1968, second edition 2002), is the standard on which many subsequent, more narrowly focused studies are based. Malone's work dealt with old-time music in his earliest chapters, considering it as a part of the "folk background" out of which the commercial country music industry of records and radio shows grew. Later studies on regional aspects of country music have followed Malone's format, starting with folk, then

advancing to early recordings, radio shows, commercial stars and folk revivalists. Ivan Tribe's *Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia* (1996), Charles K. Wolfe's *Kentucky Country* (1996), and Wayne Daniel's *Pickin' on Peachtree: a History of Country Music in Atlanta, Georgia* (2000) are examples of this Malone school of country music history scholarship.

Charles K. Wolfe, an English professor at Middle Tennessee State University, was perhaps the most prolific of the early old-time researchers, and the fruits of his researches led to several books including *The Devil's Box: Masters of Southern Fiddling* (1998), *Kentucky Country* (1982), *Tennessee Strings* (1977), and *Classic Country: Legends of Country Music* (2001). In these works, Wolfe set the standard for historical and biographical research on old-time music. The essays in *The Devil's Box* represent are the result of a campaign of research that begins with a name on a 78 rpm record label, proceeds through hand-typed discographies, record company archives, newspaper reports and interviews with elderly musicians or their widows or surviving musical partners. As he started with the records, Wolfe's interest was in commercially recorded musicians rather than those who appeared only on field recordings such as those made by John and Alan Lomax. Wolfe did have broad interests within commercially recorded country music, and his writings covered a great many country musicians in varying degrees of detail. Book-length biographies have been written about relatively few old-time musicians. Those that are in print address the lives of West Virginia legend Melvin Wine (Beisswenger 2002); early radio and recording stars John Carson (Wiggins 1986), Charlie Poole (Rorrer 1982), Charlie Bowman (Cox 2007), Ervin Rouse (Noles 2007), and the Stoneman Family (Tribe 1993); and lesser known fiddlers of regional interest, Arizona's

Kenner Kartchner (Kartchner 1990) and Florida's Richard Seaman (Hansen 2007). Thomas Carter's study of the Alleghany County, North Carolina, fiddler Joe Caudill combined a biography with a collection of tunes in Caudill's repertoire (Carter 1973). This approach yields some fascinating detail and a great deal of less interesting material. Most of the biographers are able storytellers with a more than sufficient interest in their subjects' lives and times. Most are good interpreters of the folk song lyrics that their subjects sang, but of the foregoing list, only Beisswenger and Carter attempt any substantial amount of musical analysis. This present study is not explicitly a biography, but it does compile much of the information known about Tommy Jarrell, and contains previously unpublished accounts of the lives of some other musicians, including Dix Freeman and Kyle Creed. One of the aims of this work is to put the biographical and historical information into dialogue with musical transcription and analysis. I examine the ways a musical community and tradition have been changed by historical events, and how a romantic view of history works with ideas about music.

Regional Studies

There have been some regional studies that treat the fiddle, banjo, or old-time tradition of a particular area. Gerry Milnes' collection of essays on West Virginia folklore, *Play of a Fiddle* (1999), covers several aspects of old-time fiddlers, banjo players, square dances and songs. There are also engaging essays on such topics as hunting and Appalachian nick-names. Milnes' portraits of old fiddle players set them in a well-rendered cultural context, but he maintains a useful skepticism about some of the legends that circulate around fiddlers and old-time songs. Erynn Marshall's study of fiddling and

singing in West Virginia (2006) is one of the most significant studies of old-time music, and one of the very few based on ethnographic fieldwork in a “source” community. Marshall's fieldwork yielded exciting discoveries about the way that old-time musicians conceive of songs and of tunes and the ways in which they convert songs into tunes (Marshall 2006). Joyce Cauthen's study of fiddlers in Alabama, *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow* (Cauthen 2001), covers fiddle contests, tune choices as represented in newspaper accounts, fiddle lore, and includes brief biographies of the better-known “brag fiddlers” of the state. Pamela Hathaway Anderson-Green's collection of essays on old-time musicians from southwest Virginia and western North Carolina, *A Hot-Bed of Musicians* (2002), is almost exclusively biographical with some cultural context. Her area of interest includes four counties: Alleghany and Ashe in North Carolina, Grayson and Carroll in Virginia. Except for Ashe, all of these counties border Surry County and are largely “up the mountain” from it. Her book's chapters are devoted to brief biographies of some of the better known mountain musicians from this area. Ola Belle Reed, Albert Hash, Wayne Henderson and others are covered and their repertoires are listed (incompletely). She also includes very brief biographical information on dozens of other area musicians and some miscellaneous information on musical events and destinations in the area. Marty McGee's *Traditional Musicians of the Central Blue Ridge* (2000) also claims Virginia and North Carolina as its territory, but covers many more musicians with brief biographies based mostly on published sources and extensive discographies that include 78 rpm recordings, reissues, and contemporary field and studio records. Bobby Patterson's Foreword to this work is noteworthy as a memoir of his discovery of the Round Peak scene and the creation of the Mountain and Heritage record labels with Kyle

Creed. Bob Carlin's *String Bands of the North Carolina Piedmont* (2004) is also largely biographical, based on extensive research in newspaper and county records offices. Carlin has published an amazing mass of information on the under-appreciated musicians of the Piedmont, and the ways they practiced their art at square dances, in recording studios, on stages and radio broadcasts. Chapters are also devoted to African American musicians, professionals and bluegrass. Though most of Surry County is in the Piedmont region, it is not among the counties that Carlin lists, nor does he devote much attention to the Surry County musicians. This is to be expected. If Carlin's goal was to give attention to musicians who were neglected by folklorists and scholars going back to Cecil Sharp who left the racially-mixed, industrial Piedmont for the imagined purity of the mountains, it should not be surprising that he does not dwell on the relatively renowned Round Peak circle.

Thomas Carter and Blanton Owen visited and recorded musicians from across the Piedmont and Blue Ridge regions of the Virginia-North Carolina border. Their work was presented in the form of two LPs with extensive liner notes, *Old Originals*, volumes 1 and 2 (Carter and Owen 1978a and 1978b). The notes describe the differences in repertory and style in the smaller micro regions of this larger area.

Yet, looking more closely, within this larger framework exist smaller subregions distinguished by less dramatic stylistic considerations and the presence of recognizable local repertoires. Stylistic features of the sub region might include different bowing accents, a diversity of banjo techniques, local "versions" of the widely known tunes, and varying concepts of instrumental ensemble groupings. (Carter and Owen 1978a:1)

The area I describe in this work as the Round Peak region is part of the subregion Carter and Owen call the Galax subregion (1978b). Though I agree that Round Peak and Galax

share many tunes and stylistic hallmarks, one of my arguments in this work is that the Galax style, and the popular fiddlers' convention held in the town of Galax, caused the distinctiveness of the near-by Round Peak style to be obscured during the early phase of the old-time string band revival.

The pairing of the European fiddle with the African-derived banjo is commonly considered to be the central defining ensemble of Appalachian dance music. Cecilia Conway's work on African-American banjo players and the white musicians influenced by them draws on historical accounts of banjo players dating back to the 18th century. She advances the theory that Appalachian whites learned to play the banjo directly from black musicians, rather than through the mediation of professional minstrels in blackface (1995). Conway takes on the banjo in America from several different perspectives. She examines the banjo as played by surviving black musicians in the Piedmont, looks at the banjo song genre, traces the history of the instrument as a folk-cultural object, explores the way black musicians have influenced music in three distinct regions of Appalachia, including Round Peak, Conway has also done extensive fieldwork with the few surviving black old-time musicians and found that they retained certain musical traits and genres (such as the banjo song) that were unique to them.

The closest to a regional study of the Round Peak tradition is in Kevin Donleavy's sprawling volume, *Strings of Life: Conversations with Old -Time Musicians from Virginia and North Carolina* (2004). The book is divided roughly by county, and the chapters follow a meandering path, recounting visits to one musician and then another. For Donleavy, the experience of the visit is what counts, and little is off limits for inclusion in his account: not just the tunes that were played, but the brand of soft drinks

that were consumed. Donleavy also did a great deal of research on who is buried where and who is related to whom and how. It's a great tidal wave of information and sometimes pretty strange reading with paragraph transitions such as: "HMMMM. How about Bird Snow (1864-1936) interred at Old Hollow/Stewart's Creek churchyard in Toast?" (52). One of the longest sections of the book is on Surry County, and the musicians covered include the Jarrells, Snows, McKinneys, Sutphins, Esker Hutchens, Melvin Slaydon and Gilmer Woodruff. Although *Strings of Life* lacks an argument, and is at times random, it is a source of great detail that I have relied on in preparing the historical sections of this project.

Another approach to studying the history of American fiddling is provided by Thomas Carter's essay "I Never Could Play Alone: The Emergence of the New River Valley String Band, 1875-1925" (1990). Carter reconstructed the history of the string band in the New River Valley of Virginia and North Carolina. Taking as his primary texts the recorded history of fiddle and banjo music in the area, Carter attempts to trace the historical and material changes in the region, and identify the ways that these changes, along with the creativity of individual musicians, have altered the music over time. Drawing on detailed transcriptions of the source musicians (made by Tom Sauber), Carter creates a rich picture of musical change in a traditional culture.

One of my aims in this work is to supplement the existing regional studies. The music of Surry County and the surrounding region have been highly influential on the old-time string band revival of the late 20th Century, yet there has been no in-depth, focused study of the area. I also, as noted above, aim to bring this historical research into dialogue with musical analysis and to bring the study of community tradition forward,

through the tumultuous era of the folk song revival and the old-time string band revival which followed. The implications of the African American influence on Round Peak music are taken up from Conway and explored in more detail.

Discography

Discography has been a major project of amateur researchers and independent scholars since the golden age of 78 record collecting in the 1960s. As typed lists circulated around the country, and pieces of information slowly came to light, it became possible to imagine something like a complete listing of old-time country records, provided one defined one's terms carefully. Often the record companies had already done the narrowing by, for example, creating separate release number series for "hillbilly," "race," "jazz" and "classical" music. As early as the 1970s, Tony Russell was promising to publish a complete discography of old-time 78s, and early issues of his magazine *Old Time Music* contained many articles on record companies and contributions to discography. The *John Edwards Memorial Foundation*, based first at the University of California at Los Angeles, published a newsletter and then a journal devoted in part to the discographical project. Kip Lornell's *Virginia's Blues, Country & Gospel Records, 1902-1943* (1989), was broad in scope in terms of musical style, and took on an impressive span of 41 years, but had the benefit of being limited to Virginia, with occasional references entries on musicians from bordering areas, including Surry County. Organized by recording act, Lornell gave a capsule biography and list of known 78 recordings for 75 recording artists. Lornell's entries on the Hill Brothers and Simmons and the Nance Family Singers are still the main source of information on these early performers of

sacred music. The early 2000s at last saw the publication of two comprehensive discographies of old-time music. *Country Music Sources: A Biblio-Discography of Commercially Recorded Traditional Music* (Meade 2002), was the life's work of Guthrie T. Meade, Jr., a computer programmer, fiddler and record collector. Meade was also among a group of field recordists who extensively documented the fiddlers of Kentucky. *Country Music Sources* was the result of decades of collecting and research and lists recordings by song or tune title, grouped into broad categories such as ballads, religious songs and instrumentals. For each tune title there is a listing of the recordings made of that tune or song. The range is 1921 to 1942, encompassing the years widely considered to be the “golden age” of old-time recordings, starting about 1927 and continuing through the 1930s. Meade traces the histories of the songs and tunes and draws connections, deciding whether or not two similar performances with different titles should be lumped together or split apart. A daunting task, and one that Meade did not complete in his lifetime. The book was completed by Richard Spottswood, himself a veteran discographer, and Guthrie's son Doug Meade. A worthy companion volume, covering the same years, is Tony Russell's *Country Music Records: A Discography, 1921-1942* (2004). Also a work of decades, Russell's book is organized by artist rather than song. The listing for each singer or band includes all the known recording sessions and known session personnel. Russell also lists unissued sides and notes when individual recordings were reissued under alternate band names on different subsidiary labels, a not-uncommon practice.

Though the discographers have very nearly completed their ambitions to compile lists of all known hillbilly 78s, there have been no such attempts to compile lists of post-

World War II old-time music. I do not attempt any such project, either, but this dissertation does contain a discography of LPs, cassettes and compact disk recordings of old-time music from Surry County. I have also included one live concert recording of Jarrell, Jenkins and Cockerham at the 1969 Newport Folk Festival that is only available for streaming or download from the web site Wolfgang's Vault. I have been influenced by the work of Russell in my attempt to be as complete as possible. Also included are a list of unpublished field recordings that were cited in this work. Archives, including the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina, and the Koetting Collection at Brown University, contain many more unpublished field recordings from the area.

Revivalism and Revitalization

The anthropologist Anthony Wallace proposed that cultures undergo a process called *revitalization*, “a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture” (1956:265). When a culture is under stress, and there is disillusionment with the cultural *Gestalt*, that culture may undergo such a revitalization movement. The revitalization movement may be further characterized based on its identification: if it identifies with something thought to have existed in the past of the culture under stress, it is a revival movement, like the Native American Ghost Dance movement. Ralph Linton described a similar phenomenon, the nativistic movement, a type of revivalistic movement that seeks to compensate for personal and social frustration: “The elements revived become symbols of a period when a society was free, or in retrospect, happy and great” (1943:233). Nativistic and revitalization movements

became important concepts for anthropologists and ethnohistorians, particularly as they were used in Native American cultures as a reaction to the pressures of contact with European colonizers. Ray Allen, in an early attempt to apply folkloristic methodology to the study of the folk song revival, found that these key concepts were useful in explaining the appeal of old-time fiddle music to the young urban revivalists of the 1970s and early 1980s:

Strong parallels can be drawn between the revitalistic movements described by Wallace and Linton and the old-time music revival. During the past two decades, many young Americans have felt a disillusionment with their cultural *Gestalt*. Rapid modernization and technological advancements caused psychological stress, which, for a small group, has been eased by the revival of an old folk form symbolic of a happier past when people lived closer to nature. Whether or not rural culture is, in reality, an idyllic garden of Eden, is inconsequential. The point is that old-time music represents the mythos of simpler existence, and playing it brings revivalist musicians spiritually closer to that way of life. (Allen 1981:78-79)

While recognizing that there was a difference between those who learned an oral tradition as they grew up in a rural setting, and those who learned old-time music later in life, through intermediaries, Allen found that the later group, the revivalists, felt themselves to be participating in a common project with their more traditional mentors. This distinction between traditional musician and revivalist, and the various subcategories within them, would be the hinge upon which much of the later writing on revivalism (sometimes tediously) turned, but Allen's insight that the groups were engaged in a common revitalization project was new, and is one that is supported by my findings about Round Peak. Mark Slobin examined folk music revivals in both Ireland and Appalachia, and found that they involved more than two kinds of participants. "Old masters" were the mentors and the source of traditional material. They were studied carefully by

“immigrants” who were highly committed students of tradition, and who—in turn—mediated and explained the tradition to more casually involved “tourists” (1983). All three were part of a common project of revitalization of tradition and all three were necessary.

The field of revival studies is relatively new, with the first major work being Neil Rosenberg's edited collection *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (1993). The folklorists and ethnomusicologists who contributed were mostly people who first became interested in music through their involvement in the folk song revival of the 1960s. Rosenberg called this period the “great boom,” and it saw Pete Seeger, the Weavers and, later, the Kingston Trio and Lamplighters become popular radio and recording artists. But it was preceded, accompanied, and followed by smaller revivals, which he called “named-systems revivals” (Rosenberg 1993). The old-time music revival, which played such an important role in the story of Surry County's old-time music, was one of these systems.

One of the more influential essays in the collection was Ellen Steckert's contribution, originally published in 1966. Steckert, a great boom-era folk singer who studied folklore at Indiana University, devised a categorization scheme for participants in the folk revival of the mid-1960s. *Traditional* singers are those who “learned their songs and their style of presentation from oral tradition as they grew up.” *Imitators* are those who learned by studying “the aesthetic of a culture different from their own.” *Utilizers* take folk material as a source, but alter “tune text and style of presentation” to conform to “accepted city aesthetics.” Finally, those who follow a *new aesthetic* alter their folk material, like the utilizers, but they combine their folk sources with classical, jazz and

pop music elements (Steckert 1993:96-99). These concerns about categorization, and the ideas about authenticity and history behind them, are present, if not always explicit, in most writing on the folk revival, and these categories and concerns are known, if not explicitly referred to, by most of the musicians studied in Chapters 4 and 5. Most of the people I write about would be called either *traditional* musicians or *imitators* in Steckert's scheme. Later scholars have come up with more complex schemes for analyzing types of musicians in a post-revival scene. One that I make use of in Chapter 5 was promulgated by Kara Thomas, who devised a taxonomy for the old-time musicians in the mixed revival/traditionalist community in Asheville, North Carolina. A *traditionalist* was raised “in the culture and worldview that produced the folkloric forms they actively perpetuate” (2004:277). A traditionalist musician may be *continuous* if they learned to play at an early age and continued to do so, or *non-continuous* if their music-making lapsed later in life or if they took it up later in life. Non-continuous traditionalists may be either *tradition-inspired* or *revival-inspired* depending on whether they took up or renewed their music making under the influence of local tradition or some outside revivalist. *Revivalist* musicians grew up in another culture from the one that produced the music that they make. Revivalists may be *rural* if their musical revivalism is accompanied by a version of the rural lifestyle that they associate with old-time music—farming, homesteading, back-to-the land activities. *Transplanted* revivalists are musicians from outside the area who play old-time music, but do not strive to live a rural old-time lifestyle (2004).

Another important essay from *Transforming Tradition* is Burt Feintuch's “Musical Revival as Musical Transformation,” in which he examines the old-time revival in parallel with a similar movement in Northumbria. Feintuch maintains that there was

“significant involvement of scholars and other conservers in shaping the revival” and that revivals tended to codify ideas of tradition, repertoire, style and models for the music (1993:184-185). In the revitalization of the Surry County string band tradition, both locals and outsiders, traditional performers and imitators played the part of scholars and conservers.

Two recent dissertations have described the contemporary revivalist old-time music community. Andrew Woolf's “The Fiddling Festival” (1990) was based on years of experience as a participant in old-time music festivals in the South. His report is dense and experiential, with Whitmanesque passages of description and quotations of the sorts of things heard, seen and done at festivals. He gives considerable attention to the counter-culture attitudes and attributes of northern revivalists and the version of old-time music they make. Amy Wooley's “Conjuring Utopia” (2003) explores similar territory, but from a base on the West Coast, far from the authenticating locus of Appalachia. Wooley also draws upon the internet's new media and the “diasporic affinity group” they have created out of the geographically scattered revivalist community. Michael F. Scully, an American Studies scholar has written an book that brings revivalist study forward by some decades, covering some of the institutions by which folk music has been distributed, debated and defined in the years since the great boom of the 1960s subsided. The “never-ending revival” that provides Scully's title is comprised of people, both traditionalists and those with more experimental ears, who love and promote varying versions of folk music, including old-time string music (2008). In writing about the old-time revival, Scully discussed a fierce debate over revivalism and cultural policy that was waged in the pages of the *Old-Time Herald*. One side, taken up by Joe Wilson, argued that folk arts

programming money should be directed towards the old masters, the people like Tommy Jarrell, rather than to revivalist performers, no matter how talented. Like the revivalist generation immigrants to Surry County, some contributors to that debate felt that they were being unfairly denigrated with the “revivalist” label because of the accident of their birth. Scully finds his synthesis in this dialectic in the “authenticity of self,” or knowing who you are, socially, culturally and politically. Bruce Molsky, a revivalist fiddler from New York with an engineering degree, is Scully's model for this phenomenon. Scully argues that by being a highly skilled performer of old-time music, but also acting in performance like the modern, tech-savvy, liberal person that he is, he transcends the labels and distinctions that so bedeviled the musicians and folklorists of the *Transforming Tradition* era (2008:123-132).

Steve Wishnevsky put out a call on various old-time listservs a few years ago, seeking reminiscences of the old-time revival. His turnaround was much quicker than Kevin Donleavy's, and the resulting book of interviews and memoirs, *How the Hippies Ruin't Hillbilly Music: A Historical Memoir 1960-2000* (2007) was self published through iUniverse. “Wish,” as he is commonly called, switches between interviews with revival musicians and his own memoirs of discovering old-time music and learning to build instruments in the 1970s at Dave Sturgill's shop in Piney Creek, North Carolina. The interviews vary in length, detail and interest, but some subjects were surprised by the reaction prompted by their words when they appeared in print. Surry County revival musicians who spoke to Wish include Joe Thrift, Nancy Sluys, Jacki Spector, Ken Bloom, Rob Gabb and Kirk Sutphin.

The research specifically dedicated to the area of my study is mostly confined to

articles in folk music magazines and informative liner notes to recordings. Among the most influential of the articles are those written by Ray Alden (1972), which introduced the life stories of the Round Peak musicians to a national audience, while at the same time getting at the character of life in the region. The liner notes that Richard Nevins wrote for various County Records LPs also went a long way to describing the characteristics of the regional style and repertory. Both Alden and Nevins' work is discussed in more detail in the section on the folk revival era. David Pruett's M.A. thesis covers the history of the Mount Airy radio station WPAQ and considers it in the context of its peer institutions in the South (2000). David Wood's M.A. thesis compares the old-time music scene in Surry County to that in the vicinity of Boone, North Carolina, and finds that Surry County has a larger community of "traditionalist" musicians than does the college town of Boone. Wood also examines the ways different communities of old-time musicians (revivalists and traditionalists) regard each other in Surry County (2009).

Ray Allen has revisited the revivalist categories in his study of the revivalist string band, the New Lost City Ramblers, who resist the *revivalist* label, and consider themselves "fellow travelers" with the older, rural musicians from whom they learned (2010:232). However, as he studied the spread of the old-time string band revival from field recording to Rounder LP to the revivalist old-time string bands that followed in their wake, he questioned "just how much revitalization was going on within the rural communities that were the actual sources of the music"

Just how much influence the Ramblers' documentation and promotion of southern folk artists ... had on the musical practices of their respective home communities is difficult to assess. To what degree did the Ramblers' work in those rural communities, along with the efforts of other outside documenters and cultural activists... actually result in a rekindling of interest in older styles among younger

musicians? This question and the broader issue regarding how those senior traditional musicians felt about being “discovered” and “revived” for urban audiences deserve a thorough study of their own. (2010:228)

I have attempted to answer these questions in this work. My argument in this dissertation is that the Round Peak tradition of Surry County was one such place where a rural community's tradition was effectively revitalized during the period of the old-time string band revival, and that it was a collaborative project between revivalist immigrants, tourists, and old masters. The senior traditional musicians of Round Peak had varying reactions to their discovery, and some would have liked to have been discovered more thoroughly than they were. The writings on the folk revival and the old-time string band revival have focused overwhelmingly on the impact of these movements on the outsider/immigrant/tourist/revivalists and their new affinity-based communities. In revisiting the revival, I re-center this discussion, focusing on the rural community, the purportedly authentic source of tradition.

Fieldwork in North Carolina

I've been visiting Surry County for years. My first musical visit to the area was for the Galax (Virginia) Old Fiddlers' Convention in 1999. I'd been playing clawhammer banjo for about two years, piecing together a style from what I could find in New York City, where I lived at the time. This mostly meant revival-era books like Miles Krassen's *Clawhammer Banjo* (1974) and recordings like the *Anthology of American Folk Music* (1952, reissued 1997). There were players of old-time music in New York City then, some quite accomplished, but no regular jam session. The better players met at each

others apartments in small gatherings. When I met them at public events they were polite, and often helpful, but my beginner-level playing did not earn me a spot in their circle. At the Galax festival, I found ample opportunities to play, and many invitations to have a drink or a sandwich, to sit and visit in the camps I wandered past. Most welcoming was Richard Bowman, a fiftyish fiddler with a white beard and a red ball-cap who sold fiddles and led the Slate Mountain Ramblers. Richard and his family band had a large camp with large plywood boards for people to dance on at the periphery and plenty of extra chairs for pickers. As I found myself welcome at their camp, I made it a default destination when I left my own campsite in search of music. Richard and his friends were quick to tell stories of their lives and music, and I loved it, though I felt very much an outsider. My friends back in New York seemed to think that my vacation in Appalachia was as exotic as anything they might think of. I was hooked on the music and fascinated by the food and the various ways of saying things and doing things and relating to people. After my trip to Galax, the New York City old-time musicians were not so intimidating to me—I had gained confidence in my banjo playing during the hours I spent on the periphery of jam sessions. The New Yorkers were familiar with Tommy Jarrell, but had not heard of Richard Bowman and the Slate Mountain Ramblers nor of the Bogtrotters or Southern Pride, two other winning bands. The Blue Ridge kept calling me back. My banjo case had been spattered with red clay Galax mud during the convention, and I left it like so, thinking, pretentiously, of Hindu pilgrims who mark their faces with clay from the Ganges. I returned to the Galax Convention the next August, and I've been going back to southwest Virginia and North Carolina every summer since. I wanted to be a part of it. I confess with some embarrassment that I sometimes affected a Southern accent.

On my second trip to Galax I met a young couple from New York who I did not know from the local old-time scene, but who seemed to be well connected with the Virginia and North Carolina musicians. I found that they lived very close to my apartment in Long Island City, Queens, and gave them my phone number. We didn't actually get together for over a year thereafter, when they came in to a country-old-time-bluegrass-blues jam in Brooklyn. They brought out a guitar and a fiddle and played several of the D tunes I knew from Galax: "Susanna Gal," "Old Molly Hare," "Stillhouse," "Rochester Schottische." After the jam they offered me a ride home and we talked about Galax and New York. The fiddler asked how I came to know so many "Surry County tunes." My new friends had been going to Galax for many years and had even lived in Surry County for a few months. My "Galax" tunes were their Surry County tunes.

Jason and Julie became regular musical friends and they introduced me to another aspect of Southern old-time music—the counter-culture derived Bobville. They bought me along for what they called "Breaking Up Christmas." This was a series of house parties, with roots in old Appalachian tradition, commencing a few days after Christmas and ending almost two weeks later. It was a long time to spend away from home, sleeping on floors, surrounded by strangers, eating other people's potluck dishes. It was a great time, though, and I made many lasting friendships during that trip. I had gained a sort of foothold among the old-time musicians. It was also my first extended stay in Surry County. I got to know the distinctive silhouette of Pilot Mountain; I ate a fried pork chop sandwich; I drank "peach;" I played banjo, still on the periphery mostly, but I got a few welcome compliments and useful tips. And another annual pilgrimage was inaugurated: I continued visiting North Carolina for these New Year's parties every year since.

When it came time to decide where to do fieldwork for a dissertation in ethnomusicology, I thought that I would possibly go someplace else. The fiddle music of West Virginia was fascinating to me, and just unfamiliar enough to be alluring. Maybe I had become too much of an insider in North Carolina. Maybe some lingering anxieties about the area (“area” meaning variously Mt. Airy or North Carolina or the South) would be confirmed and I would find myself isolated and disenchanted with my adopted home. I finally put these thoughts aside and loaded up a U-Haul trailer. I ended up living in a single-wide trailer with another resident alien, a Welsh-born banjo player and heating-and-air man with land in Pinnacle, North Carolina, on the border of Stokes and Surry Counties.

I arrived the first day of June 2006 and immediately set out for the Fiddlers' Grove Festival in Union Grove, North Carolina. This festival is a reformed continuation of the legendary and infamous Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention. Harper Van Hoy, the founding director of Fiddlers' Grove, started this festival as an alternative to the old Union Grove, which had been “getting out of hand” in the 1970s, with motorcycle gangs and rampant drug use and drunkenness spoiling the family-friendly atmosphere that Harper wanted to foster. In the process of cleaning up the fiddlers' convention, many would say that Van Hoy also stripped it of any fun. We located the other members of Robert's band and I set up my tent on the periphery of their camp. I had never met most of these other musicians before, but we spent the evening playing tunes and getting acquainted. The next few days were spent in typical fiddlers' convention activities: walking around, visiting friends, playing music and eating.

After a decent weekend in Union Grove, we returned to the single wide in Surry

County, where I moved my belongings in and tried to get settled. That summer was devoted to a series of festivals and conventions almost every weekend: Fiddlers' Grove, Mount Airy, Charlie Poole, Glenville, Elk Creek, Tazewell, Sparta, Clifftop, Galax, Fries, "Second Mount Airy," and Adwolve. I became the guitar player for the Appalachian Americans, a band led by my fiddling neighbor Steve Mason that included Steve's wife Sandy on bass and my roommate Robert on banjo. Since we all lived within a couple of miles of each other in the town of Pinnacle, we started referring to our efforts as the "Pinnacle sound." On the rare weekends that there was no convention to go to, I made my first tentative visits to the local square dances. During the weeks, I visited the libraries to read up on local history. Sometimes, I'd visit the older musicians interview them.

The system of funding ethnographic and ethnomusicological research is a patchwork, with many graduate students hoping to get the lucrative and prestigious Fulbright and Wenner-Grenn Foundation grants. It's been noted before that there is more support for Americans to do this kind of research outside the US than inside. I was not able to secure any funding for my research, and so was reliant on loans and occasional odd jobs. I would sometimes work for my landlord as an assistant on his heating and air jobs, and I spent part of the Holiday season working at a bookstore in Winston-Salem. I did secure a small grant from Berea College's Appalachian Music Fellowship program, which allowed me to spend two months in Kentucky, doing research in their archive of traditional music and conducting fieldwork. I thus spent January and February on a fascinating tangent. In comparing the position of old-time music in Kentucky and North Carolina I found more contrasts than similarities. I also found that regional style and repertory were very much alive, despite fears of cultural gray-out or—the revivalist

version—festivalization. There were different tunes: “Martha Campbell” instead of “Sally Ann;” “Rock Andy” instead of “Rye Straw.” There were different local heroes, both musicians and experts: Paul Smith and George Gibson and John Harrod and Roger Cooper rather than Bob Carlin and Chester McMillian and Verlen Clifton and Benton Flippen. The difference that made the biggest impression on me, though, was in the intensity of activity. I never found in Kentucky the same amount of activity that I found in Surry County. There was said to be one rather famous square dance in eastern Kentucky, but it was on hiatus for the winter months, while the North Carolina dances go all year round. There were no other community dances that I could find. Berea College has a well regarded dance group, but I never saw them perform. I spent a very cold day at Roger Cooper's house in northeastern Kentucky's Lewis County. We had a great visit and I was awed by Cooper's humility and insight. Time and time again he would respond to one of my questions with, “Well, I probably don't know too much about that, but...” and then launch into an eloquent and enlightening paragraph on just what I was asking. As I was preparing to leave, Roger told me that he would have been able to bring me around to visit twenty great fiddle players, but that would have been twenty years ago. Driving home that night, I reflected on the differences between Surry County, NC and Lewis County, KY, both home to strong and distinctive fiddle traditions in recent memory. But Surry County still had—maybe not twenty, but certainly a dozen—great old-time musicians and a host of very good ones, while Roger seemed pretty lonesome up there in Lewis County. The reasons for the differences are among the topics of the following work.

After my sojourn in Kentucky I returned to North Carolina determined to get

down to business and do some more field work and interviewing. And that I did.

A Half Acre of the “Field”

I began looking to rent a place of my own in North Carolina. I needed a little more space and privacy than I had in the shared single wide. I also ramped up my fieldwork efforts. I was visiting a guitar player outside of Mount Airy one evening when he mentioned that he'd been cleaning up his rental house all day. I asked if it was available and he said that it was, that he'd be glad to show it to me. I met Mac and his wife Nellie at the house the next afternoon and was shown around a small cinderblock house on half an acre of land bordering a pond. I asked Mac if he'd consider a short term rental as I was due to return to Rhode Island in September. He said that he'd gotten tired of the hassles of renting and landlording, that he'd sell it to me at a good price. I protested that I was returning to Rhode Island soon and didn't really have any money. He asked if I'd thought of returning to North Carolina and I said that I had. Well, then I'd need a house, wouldn't I? I told him I'd take a few days to think about it and get back to him. “Talk to your people” he told me, “maybe they can help.”

I talked to my people and they were glad to help. I called Mac and called the bank and started to work on buying my first house. I found myself a little embarrassed at my good fortune at first, but I was also excited at this development. On the one hand, most graduate students own little more than a computer, maybe a car, and a lot of expensive books. On the other hand, here I was, a member of the community I was writing about. When I told people about my house in the following weeks, I would joke: “Now when I finish my dissertation and can't find a job, I'll have a place to live while I work at

Walmart.” My half acre of Surry County may yet turn out to be a permanent home, but buying property turned out to have other immediate benefits for my project. The house needed a certain amount of work, which gave me some new ways to relate to the musicians I'd been talking to. People who grow up in rural areas tend to take a more hands-on approach to their homes, and acquire some basic facility in many trades, such as carpentry, plumbing and wiring. My inquiries were always met with useful advice and offers of a helping hand should I need one. My old roommate helped me find a suitable heating system for the house and came over to install it with me in exchange for lunch and the opportunity to mercilessly rib me for my lack of aptitude with tools. I learned about the helping-out ethic of my community this way.

I also turned over a patch of grass and planted a small vegetable garden—tomatoes and peppers at first. Over the following weeks, I turned over more ground and added more zucchini, summer squash and cucumbers and some herbs. This gave me a new understanding of country life as well. Most of the musicians I spoke with and knew had roots in the country and were accustomed to raising kitchen gardens. It also gave me a wealth of other topics I could ask my neighbors about. And I did. Some would see me at a convention and ask “how's your garden?” or “are you getting any ‘maters?” It may sound like I am romanticizing a simple hobby, but turning over the red clay of Surry County did make me feel connected to the land and eating the fruits of the land gave me a new and different appreciation of its power. I'd go to Steve Mason's house for supper and some music and he'd give me gardening advice. He also told me of his early visits to Dix Freeman in Round Peak when Steve was a young married man raising a family and growing a crop of bell peppers to make some extra money. Freeman gave him advice on

every stage of the process, from planting to fertilizing with “Bulldog Sody” to grading and selling them. I felt like part of a chain of knowledge, a tradition. Once I had the house in decent shape, I invited my friends over for a Sunday afternoon get together. I cooked a pot of gumbo and some rice and bought a case of Cola and one of Dr Pepper, Mac Snow's favorite soft drink. The weather that day was great and I had more guests than I thought would come. Nick and Chester McMillian started a jam in front of the house that was joined by many others. I'd had a hard time getting my old lawn mower started, so one friend had actually come by earlier in the day with his mower. I told Chester about how high my grass had got and how the woman who lived across the street had come by to mention that she knew a young man who mowed lawns “real reasonable.” Chester told me, “you know, Fred Cockerham never mowed his lawn neither. You'd have to move the grass to the side to get to the door of his house.” I'd never been compared to Fred before and I probably wasn't being compared to Fred at that moment, but Chester's story revealed a truth behind the common-sense perceptions of rural life, particularly in the South. The image is of a place of conformity and rectitude, where eccentricity is shameful and an embarrassment to one's kin (Martin 1990). Fred, who had tried to make a living as a professional musician, was an eccentric character and didn't care to mow the lawn, and for at least some folks, that was okay.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter One will briefly sketch the history of Surry County and the surrounding area and will discuss the population movements, religious groups and industries that have

shaped Surry County in the 20th Century.

Chapter Two is a music history of Surry County, beginning with the earliest accounts of fiddling and dancing in the 1820s and continuing to the mid 20th Century. The influence of African Americans, ballads, church music, bluegrass, and the recording industry will be examined. Chapter Three picks up the thread of musical history at about 1964 and considers the impact of and radio, television, the folk song and old-time string band revivals and cultural tourism on the community. I will show how the confluence of several factors in the mid-20th Century—several exceptional musicians, attention from revivalists, intervention by record companies—led to the rise of Round Peak as a kind of musical lingua franca for the nascent national old-time music community. Much of this story has been told in liner notes and articles in *Old Time Music* and *The Old-Time Herald*, but I will compile these strands into a narrative history.

Chapter Four is a description of the old-time music world in Surry County in the first decade of the 21st Century. The key annual events will be discussed, including the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, Bobville New Years, the Tommy Jarrell Festival, and the controversial “second Mount Airy” or Ralph Epperson Memorial Fiddlers' Convention. The community of musicians that live in and around Surry County and provide music for festivals, dances and radio shows is now a mix of native-born musicians and those who have moved to the area, sometimes from quite a long way away, to be part of the music. The way that these two groups—locals and revivalists, or “hippies” and “hillbillies” as Wish put it—interact has created what can be called a postrevival scene, one that is no longer a strictly local and oral tradition (if indeed it ever was one), but that has been influenced by the folk music revival of the 1960s and 1970s. I

will examine the scholarship on revivals and show how the current situation is the result of a strong, locally rooted tradition in which revivalists with various agendas have intervened. The result is a scene neither wholly traditional and not well described as a revival. This new kind of scene is what I call postrevival.

Chapter Five will attempt a musical analysis of the sound of Surry County old-time and includes an analysis of one popular tune as it has been played and interpreted by various musicians in Surry County. Finally, Round Peak melody type is proposed.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION TO THE REGION

Introduction

Theories of nativistic revitalization movements hold that communities under stress look to their past as a time when life was better in some way. Bringing back aspects of that golden age becomes a way of creating a better present. In the South after the Civil War, the antebellum situation was often thought of as such a golden era. The wealthy planters certainly may have looked back nostalgically on what was lost to them, but for the other white classes, there was much that they came to romanticize about the Old South. The Agrarian system, in which the independent family farm raised most of what it needed, was part of this New South myth of the Old South. This way of life, and the homemade music and dance that went with it, were also the objects of nostalgia for the musicians who would create the sound that came old-time be known as Round Peak. Many participants in the later old-time string band revival were attracted to this pre-industrial way of life as well, and sought to go “back to the land” and live that life themselves. The following chapter lays out some of the history of Surry County, what the Agrarian system was like in the antebellum period, how things changed after the Civil War, and what the industrialization and modernization trends of the New South meant in Surry County.

Antebellum and Agrarian Surry County

It is not known when Surry County was first inhabited by native peoples, but the earliest records of Europeans settling there date to 1749, when Peter Jefferson and Joshua Frye mapped the area as part of a survey of the Virginia-North Carolina border. The area around present day Mount Airy was called “the Hollows” at this point in time and the largest settlement was the Moravian stronghold in the present day city of Winston-Salem (now a part of Forsyth County). Surry County was named for Surrey County in England, the birthplace of Governor William Tryon, though an alternate local tradition holds that it was named for a Lord Surrey, who argued against onerous taxation of the colonies in Parliament (Jackson 1983:vii). Surry was formed out of the larger Rowan County in 1771 and at the time included present day Stokes, Forsyth and Yadkin counties. The current borders of Surry County, with the Yadkin river to the south, Stokes County to the east, Virginia's Grayson, Carroll and Patrick Counties to the north and Alleghany and Wilkes Counties to the west, were set in 1850.

The landscape is mostly the rolling hills of the Carolina Piedmont. The Piedmont is characterized by red clay soil and longleaf pine trees, with forests of locust, tulip poplar, maple and oak. Rhododendrons and Virginia Creeper cover the ground, Ailanthus trees spread on the roadsides and poison ivy and kudzu grow wherever they can. The

northwestern corner of the county is dominated by the steep rise of the Blue Ridge chain of the Appalachian mountains. Numerous rivers and streams traverse the county on their way from the mountains to the Yadkin River. The Ararat, Mitchell, Big Fishers and Little Fisher's rivers are among them. This division between mountain and Piedmont has had important ramifications for the county's identity, both musical and otherwise. Various maps and lists differ as to whether the county should be considered a "mountain" county or a "Piedmont" county. In recent studies of North Carolina a historian has counted it as a mountain county (Cecil-Fronsman 1992), and a music researcher writing on the North Carolina Piedmont has excluded it from consideration (Carlin 2004). Carolina Music Ways, a "music heritage resource group" dedicated to promoting the traditional musics of "Winston-Salem and the Northwest Piedmont of North Carolina" includes Surry County in its purview. Web sites maintained by different divisions of the North Carolina state government differ as to whether Surry is a Piedmont or Mountain county. In truth, about 85% of its area, and most of its population, is in the Piedmont region. The Appalachian Regional Commission, a federal-state partnership that promotes economic development, includes Surry in the region.

Among the earliest arrivals were the Scots-Irish and English who settled most of the rest of the South. A group of Quakers from Guilford arrived in the county and created the Westfield community in 1760. Primitive and Missionary Baptists were and remain the majority among religious, though there are also well-established Moravian, Episcopalian,

Methodist and Pentecostal communities.

The Moravians of Salem sent preachers to the Hollows—as the Mount Airy area was then known—as early as 1764, and continuing through the late 1700s. They returned with reports of Indian attacks, robbers and horse thieves. The Moravians refused baptisms to people in the Hollow in 1766:

"...until he [Br. Utley] should know the people better, and could see whether the Word of God bore fruit among them, and whether they could promise to bring up their children in the right,—this precaution is very necessary with people of this kind." (Fries and others, *Records of the Moravians*, I p. 337.

An 1862 article in Harper's New Monthly Magazine by A. H. Guernsey said the adult population of Surry in the 1850s was possibly the most poorly educated in the US. One third of men and one half of women were illiterate (Phillips 1987:3).

The Blue Ridge Mountains, which form the eastern ridge of the Appalachian range, begin in the northwestern corner of the county. This country was traditionally harder to farm and harder to navigate. The inhabitants were poorer and more isolated from larger cultural trends. Some of the earliest descriptions of life in Surry County come from the writings of Hardin E. Taliaferro (1812-1875), a Baptist minister, tannery operator and newspaper editor who spent his youth in this part of the county. Literary historians class Taliaferro as one of the "Old Southwest Humorists," a group of amateur writers who published in newspapers in the years before the Civil war and took as their subject the curious ways of the inhabitants of what was then the southwestern frontier of

the United States. Taliaferro is distinguished among these writers for the sympathetic treatment he gives to his characters and scenes. They are not grotesque caricatures, but carefully rendered individuals with distinctive voices (Craig 1987:4). Taliaferro's memories of Surry County life in the 1820s were published under the title *Fisher's River (North Carolina) Sketches and Characters, by "Skitt," "Who Was Raised Thar"* by Harper and Brothers in 1859. In this work he described the lay of the land, the cold streams running down from the mountains, the grandeur of the view from Fisher's Peak. The inhabitants of the Fisher's River section (centered on Shipp's Muster Ground between the Big Fisher's and Little Fisher's river), were introduced in the following passage:

Near the base of the mountain, and a few miles east, south, and southwest of it, lived a healthy, hardy, honest, uneducated set of pioneers, unlike, in many respects, any set of pioneers that ever peopled any other portion of the Lord's globe. They came mostly from Virginia, and a portion of them from the middle and lower parts of North Carolina, and a few from other sections—a sufficient number from all parts to make a singular and pleasing variety. The emigrants from Virginia furnished exceptions to the general claims of Virginians, most of whom claim to belong to the “first families;” but it was honor enough for them that they came from “Fudginny.” This section was settled between the years 1770 and 1780.... The early settlers were pretty equally divided between Whigs and Tories. A large portion of these early settlers were wholly uneducated, and the rest of them had but a rude and imperfect rudimental education. Each settler brought with him the rustic vernacular of his native section, and held on to it with great tenacity, thus making a common stock of the richest unwritten rustic literature that ever graced any community [W]hat few literary questions arose among them were decided by Meshack Franklin, for he was the only well-educated man in the community, and had been to Congress. Jesse Franklin, for several years United States Senator, and afterward Governor of North Carolina, lived and died here. For his opportunities, he was the greatest man North Carolina has ever produced. But with most of the people a rifle, shot-pouch, butcher-knife, and an article they dubbed “knock-'em-stiff” were of vastly more importance than

“larnin’,” while the younger ones preferred the sound of the “fiddle,” a “seven-handed reel,” and “old Sister Phebe” to a log-pole school-house. Yet, for all this, they were a clever folk.

....

It is emphatically a “poor man's country.” There is but little good land in it. All the valuable land lies on the small rivers and creeks in very narrow bottoms. No rich man will ever be tempted to live there. But, notwithstanding their long, cold winters and poor lands, the inhabitants, by hard labor and by the most rigid economy, live well. All extravagance, however, is necessarily excluded, and the people make the greater part of their own apparel, material and all. Money is very scarce, and corrupting fashions seldom reach them.

(Taliaferro 1859:18)

While this country is crossed by many creeks and rivers, they are not navigable. A visitor in 1810 said Surry was “far removed from market,” and that “they are behind some of their neighbors” (Newsome 1929).

This distance from markets had important implications for the economy of Surry County for most of the 19th Century. Like most other “common whites,” Surry County's citizens practiced traditional semisubsistence, diversified agriculture. With no way of transporting surplus produce to market, farmers in Surry County had little incentive to produce any surplus. Like other southern yeomen, they would have worked hard when it was required, but they also would have felt no shame in idleness when the work needed to support their families was done (Cecil-Fronsman 1992).

Governor Jesse Franklin (1760-1823) notwithstanding, Surry County was also part of the politically underserved part of the state. Under North Carolina's 1776 constitution, representation in the state government was apportioned by county, rather

than population. The eastern coastal plain, where most of the money and power were concentrated, had more counties than the west. When western politicians tried to divide their counties to gain representation, eastern counties were likewise split to compensate. The aristocratic eastern establishment had little interest in improving transportation, education, or commerce in the central and western parts of North Carolina (Powell 1977). Constitutional reform in 1835 brought greater representation for whites in the western counties (while disenfranchising free blacks), but change was slow to come.

Slavery was a fact of life in the South in the early 19th Century, but Surry County had fewer slaves and slave owners on average than the rest of the state. Census records from 1830 show only slightly more than 11% of heads of households owned slaves and that slaves were 13.4 percent of the population of Surry County. By comparison, over 33 percent of the residents of North Carolina as a whole were slaves and nearly 39 percent of Virginia residents were slaves. The Appalachian sections of North Carolina had even fewer slaves. Only seven percent of Ashe County were slaves.

Prior to invention of modern irrigation, most farms located near rivers and streams. Rural crossroads communities arose to serve these farms. They typically centered around a store, a post office, a mill, a school, a church or a combination thereof and became centers of rural life during the 19th Century. While some of these are still communities today, others are remembered only as names on the map.

By far the largest numbers of people in US censuses in nineteenth century Surry

County were farmers or farm laborers. Livestock raised were pigs, sheep, cattle, horses, in that order of importance. Major crops were corn, oats, wheat, rye, flax, potatoes, and tobacco. Butter and honey were also produced on a large scale. The county was still heavily forested even into the later nineteenth century.

Industries recorded in rural areas of Surry County included “cotton factories, tobacco factories, tanneries, forges, saddle shops, shoe shops, blacksmith shops, a distillery, flour mills, woolen mills, a circular saw mill, and a coach shop” (Phillips 1987:7). The people who worked these farms and ran these mills lived in modest circumstances, with traditional building styles and techniques holding sway even into the 1920s. A survey of the architecture of Surry County undertaken in 1987 observed that:

Based on remaining structures, the houses and other buildings erected by most Surry Countians during the early nineteenth century and later did not contrast with the lifestyle depicted as most common. They were good, functional buildings, usually small and simple, with log or frame construction being the rule, and with little or no evidence of style. As with other aspects of life, building traditions were slow to change, and the same house type or plan was frequently use for generations.

....

Oral tradition ...revealed that in many cases, well into the nineteenth century, settlers would erect a single-room log structure that would initially serve all housing needs. After the construction of the main house, the original single-room building would become either a detached kitchen or part of a rear ell to the house. Many log houses, however, were intended as permanent structures from the start and were substantial, one-and-a-half or two story dwellings. Usually these were no-nonsense houses reflective of a simple yet practical approach to life. (Phillips 1987:4-7)

Log houses built the same way for so long that it is often difficult to date them. "Log

construction was utilized for house building in Surry County from the eighteenth century, through the entire nineteenth century, and until at least the 1920s, at which point this *survival* form met with log construction that was a *revival* form based on nostalgia" (Phillips 1987:7). This is the very pattern that would be repeated with the music of the region in the late 1960s.

The people building these homes were mostly whites of modest means, those that historians have called, plain folk (Owsley 1949), yeomen (Thomasson 1996), common whites (Cecil-Fronsman 1992) and crackers (McWhiney 1989). These have different connotations—yeomen very positive, cracker the reverse, but the way of life that they created and the myths around it, have been guiding ideals of (white) Southern life and culture despite and because of their steady erosion over the decades since the Civil War. For many, the agrarian way of life gave rise to the agrarian ideal, the idea that independent farming was not just a way to live, but the ideal way of life (Beck, Fransden and Randall 2009). These people were the ones described by Frank L. Owsley as “the core of the social structure... a massive body of plain folk who were neither rich nor very poor. These were employed in numerous occupations; but the great majority secured their food, clothing, and shelter from some rural pursuit, chiefly farming and livestock grazing” (1949, 7-8). In areas where people were very sparsely settled, such as western Surry County in the early 19th Century, the family unit was the main social group with which individuals would work, worship, play and interact with others. Owsley observed

that this narrow social orbit would foster filial piety:

for daily association demonstrated that “pa” knew the seasons, the habits and peculiarities of the crops; that he was a master of woodcraft, and he knew the stratagems of the chase and many other fascinating matters that only long experience and reflection could teach. “Pa” could also cut a smarter step in the reel and square dance and play the fiddle better than the boys could, and they knew it. As for “ma,” it would take a lot of hard apprenticeship for the daughters to learn to cook, quilt, knit, garden, and “manage” like she could. As likely as not, too, she could dance forty different square-dance figures—and call them. (95)

Bill Cecil-Fronsman, writing about the same group, whom he called “common whites,”

said that their folklore reveals a rich “egalitarian culture in an unequal world”:

They evolved a set of norms that asserted that wealth was not a valid criterion for assessing human worth. They devised a complex set of racial attitudes. They developed a body of songs stories and other traditions that gave meaning to their lives. They formed tightly knit communities built around extended families, which gave cohesion and support in what might have otherwise been a fragmented society. They transformed the hierarchical religious culture of the eighteenth century into an evangelical Protestantism that made personal piety the meaningful measure for an individual. (Cecil-Fronsman 1992:8)

Religion was another guiding force in Surry County life, as it was throughout the upper South. In Surry County, Baptists have long been dominant, and Primitive Baptists especially so. The church was not only a place for worship, but a social center. People were known to gather outside the church with no intention of entering, but just to enjoy the social scene outside. As Primitive Baptist meetings would go on for hours, people would wander in and out throughout the day and sometimes visit with the crowd outside. The space outside the church has had a long tradition of serving as a place for young

people to court, as well. Revivals, also called “protracted meetings” or “camp meetings,” were big annual religious gatherings that typically took place in late summer. Most often these would attract a few hundred participants to gather for worship and fellowship in a natural setting for several days. People of all social classes attended and often planned their trips to the meetings long in advance. Owsley cites a New England schoolteacher who witnessed one such meeting in antebellum Georgia. She described it as the “great social event of the year” and an attraction for all social classes, ages and races. Indeed “everything was dated with reference to whether it happened before or after the camp meeting.” Usually, these meetings would be shadowed by a nearby gathering of rowdies, who drank, smoked, gambled and stole (1949:100-103).

Large tasks were often accomplished through collective labor, generically called workings, but most often referred to by name of the job at hand: corn-shuckings, house-raising, apple peelings, bean-stringings, log-rollings, and the like. These workings involved calling in the neighbors to cooperate on a job that would be too large or onerous for a single family to accomplish on their own. The payment for this labor was usually a party with dancing and drinking and food when the work was done. As Taliaferro relates it, the workings had another use—that of facilitating courtship.

There were endless ways of getting the “young folks” together. In the spring there would be “grubbings” and “log-rollings;” in summer, “reapings;” and in the fall “corn-shuckings.” On all such occasions the girls would always manage to have “quiltings” and “sewings.” As soon as night came, or the work was done, the fiddle sounded, and they danced and courted all night. (Taliaferro 1859:114)

Of course, the beneficiaries would be expected to show up for their neighbors workings as well. This system of cooperative labor is documented widely throughout the old south. Owsley notes that house raisings were still practiced until World War I. Oral history collected in Surry County and elsewhere in the southern Appalachians indicate that many other types of workings survived well into the 20th Century as well (Alden 1972; Marshall 2006; M. Seeger 2007). The promise of drink must have been an important lure. One teetotaling teacher from the Yadkin Valley was unable to attract workers to an antebellum working because he didn't supply alcohol (Thomasson 1996:xxv, 154).

The decade leading up to the Civil War was one of increasing modernization in the South, with a broad based shift towards cash crops across the North Carolina. Surry County, like the Appalachian regions of North Carolina, was slower to make this shift, and was still a small-farm economy in the 1860s. In 1860, Surry's neighboring counties to the east, Stokes and Forsyth, had become significant producers of tobacco and wheat, respectively, but Surry was still producing less than ten dollars per white capita of any cash crop (Cecil-Fronsman 1992:124-126).

After the Civil War

Although Surry County did not have many slave owners, its citizens enthusiastically supported the Confederate cause. Out of an 1860 Census population of

10,880, approximately 1,000 Surry County men fought for the Confederacy (Summerlin 2004:201). The area was mostly spared fighting and looting, with one exception. The Union General George Stoneman's army came through in April 1865, did a small amount of looting and continued on to Virginia.

During the later 19th Century Surry County's Piedmont developed into a major agricultural producer, with the town of Mount Airy as the primary shipping point. Grains were a major crop, including wheat, rye, Indian corn, oats, barley and buckwheat. Apples and cabbages grown at higher elevations were shipped out in large quantities on trains from Mount Airy. By the 1850s, Tobacco was the major cash crop in the county, and continued to grow in importance. Production in 1850 was 42,953 pounds; in 1860, 452,098 pounds. By 1910, Surry Co. produced 5,715,414 pounds of tobacco (Summerlin 2004:159).

Tobacco became a major viable crop in Surry County, as in other counties of the Virginia-North Carolina border, largely because of the creation of the new Bright-leaf type of tobacco. Originally rumored to have sprung up unbidden on a Caswell County farm in the 1850s, it was actually an evolutionary development that was made into a viable cigarette tobacco by means of a new method of curing using a system of flues.

The great boom in Bright Tobacco came in the post-war days, when its expansion, as described by the usually prosaic Census Bureau, was “one of the most abnormal developments in agriculture that the world has ever known.” And its culture was indeed paradoxical. The highly-treasured Bright Tobacco grew only on thin soils, once classified as shamefully poor. Presently county argued with

county as to which had the more poor land. Immediately after the Civil War there was despondency in most farm areas of the South; not so in those parts of Virginia and North Carolina to which Bright Tobacco was spreading. With reference to the meaning of Bright Tobacco a commentator of the 1880's remarked: "Alongside the decline in wealth in old areas of prosperity there are other instances in the South of the growth of thrift and wealth in communities which were poor before the war, but no other section presents such wonderful changes. Comfortable farm-houses have taken the places of rude log-cabins, excellent and convenient barns and outhouses exhibit the new thrift and new life has been infused into all classes and into both races." (Robert 1967:183-184)

One of the most important changes to come to Surry County, and one that had major implications for the agriculture of the area, was the arrival of the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Rail Road in Mount Airy in the spring of 1888 (Summerlin 2004:236-237). This allowed the produce of the city's hinterlands and the nearby mountains to be shipped to distant markets. A spur was added to connect the railroad with the granite quarry at Flat Rock in 1891. This allowed the quarry to ship its granite far and wide. The rock, now known as the world's largest open-face granite quarry, has been quarried since the 1760s, but the railroad made it a big business, with 1282 train cars full of the rock shipped out in 1904.

In 1899, a narrow-gauge railroad was built to carry travelers the fifteen miles from Mount Airy to the White Sulphur Springs Hotel. During the 1880s the population of the town increased from 490 to nearly 2,000 in 1892. The railroad, in addition to allowing local goods to be shipped out, also brought new products and services into Surry County.

These changes brought money and created a class of elite merchants in the “Granite City,” as Mount Airy came to be known. These new rich attended dances called “Germans” at the splendid Blue Ridge Hotel on Main Street, and afternoons of chamber music performed by the Woodroffe family, proprietors of the quarry. One society ball, held in 1899, was described in the local press as follows:

The floor was slicked to the “Queen's taste,” and the music by Pascucci's Orchestra, was perfect in time, soul-stirring in effect and all that could be desired in every way. The dancing ladies, robed in their rich and handsome gowns, and the gentlemen in their patent leathers and "spike tails," presented a rare and beautiful sight as they moved about through the intricate marches and astonishing figures of the German. (quoted in Summerlin 2004:218)

The railroad created a means for traveling performers to get to Surry County and the Galloway Opera House, a 600-seat venue built on Main Street in 1891, gave them a place to perform.

Out in the country just a few miles from town, life was very different. When the fiddler Tommy Jarrell (1901-1986) remembered his boyhood later in life, he described a world of self-sufficient small landowners who ate what they raised and hunted. When cash was required, a batch of moonshine could be run off in the hills using the abundant local creek water. There were certainly no balls on slick floors, but house dances, revivals and fighting were favored diversions. Richard C. Davids (1986), writing about the Buffalo Mountain community, forty miles to the north east, says that various types of hunting and dog and cock fighting were common. Fighting often started as a friendly

competition, but when the combatants were goaded or drunk, things could quickly turn uglier and fists would be replaced by knives and guns. The courts would often punish lightly or excuse these combatants, reasoning that, since everyone was armed, any shooting could be considered self defense. Nor was a drunk man considered responsible for his actions, and many prepared for fighting by drinking (1986:89). One fight at Round Peak took place on Election Day 1908, and was remarkable enough to be reported on in the *Mount Airy News*, which was generally more concerned with the comings and goings of local merchants and farmers, and with advocating for prohibition (which happened to pass in North Carolina that very day).

“Old Time Fight”

It is common to hear the old people tell of the golden days of the past when men stripped to the waist and entered a ring and settled their difficulties with their fists while their friends looked on and saw that the game was fair. This way of settling disputes is now so rare that it reads like fiction to hear of an encounter where no knives or guns are used. But as a matter of fact they tell us the old way of settling a grudge was resorted to at the polling place in Stewart's Creek township on election day, the participants being Ben Jarrell and Bonus McCraw. Both are fine specimens of rugged manhood, each about six feet tall, and Jarrell weighs something like 180 lbs while McCraw would tip the beam at over two hundred. There has been bad feeling between the men for some years and they had words and wanted to fight each other at the election ground two years ago but friends stopped the encounter. Tuesday they met and the quarrel was renewed and they agreed to fight it out and their friends stood by and kept anyone from interfering. The fight was swift and furious from the start and lasted for only a minute. They say that Jarrel [sic], the smaller man, made at his opponent like an enraged tiger and had him on the ground as quick as thought. He then beat his face with his fist until the blood stood in pools around his head and the man was unable to resist. The friends of the two stopped the punishment then and all parties agreed that it

was a fair fight. McCraw is badly bruised up and was unable to rise from the ground when his opponent was taken off. Friends carried him home in a buggy. It is not supposed that any serious damage has been done. Such are the reports that have reached town and all agree that it was the severest encounter that has taken place [sic] in these parts in many a day. Comment is out of place, possibly, but this method of adjusting a dispute is decidedly [sic] more honorable than [sic] the new method of carving a fellow up with a dull knife or placing bullets in one's anatomy where the doctors can't get at them. (*Mount Airy News* November 5, 1908)

Though he was only seven years old at the time, this incident would be remembered by the son of the victorious Ben Jarrell decades later, as would tales of his own violent encounters (Neithammer 1991). This incident illustrates the violence of life in the country, but also some of the romanticism about mountain life that even then was operative in the minds of the editors in the growing town of Mount Airy.

The self-sufficient way of life was largely gone by the middle of the 20th Century. Paved roads and automobiles enabled farmers to ship produce to far-off markets and made travel to the cities and factories easier. Farming became mechanized and the small, hilly plots of the plain folk were too inefficient for modern methods and equipment. More rural folk throughout the south were leaving the farm to work for cash in cities, or were switching to all cash crops like cotton and tobacco if they stayed on the farm (Kirby 1987).

The New South trends that were operating between the Civil War and World War II continued in the years after the war. It became difficult, then impossible, for people to

make a living on the farm. For many, agricultural work, even as a sideline, was distasteful, as stories by Tommy Jarrell and Benton Flippen attest. Like many locales in the Piedmont, Surry County has seen many changes since World War II. Several textile and clothing manufacturers opened and closed. Spencer's, which was a major employer, has an empty factory at the edge of downtown Mount Airy.

Today

Surry County in the early 21st Century is 536 square miles and home to 72,687 people, most of them white, but with about 8.0% black and nearly 6% Hispanic. The largest city is still Mount Airy, which has income, land and home values lower than the average for North Carolina, with a population older than the state average. The black population of Mount Airy is significantly higher than the state average. The Surry County Historical Society published a substantial volume of local and family history in 1983. The introduction rehearses the history of the area. In addition to providing useful background information for the foregoing history, it concludes with a section on "The People" of Surry that provides useful insight into the self-image of the Surry County establishment. It is nostalgic, romantic, and a little bit prickly.

There are those who love the land and cling to it in the same way they keep the dialect their forefathers used. Ruth Minick, Surry Historian, is an expert on Surry's dialect. She states that it is pure Elizabethan English. But she also expresses the fear that television and other news media might eventually dilute or do away with the charming dialect.

There are those who say Surry has clung to her ways because she was somewhat isolated. There are others who say it is "just plain ole Scottish stubbornness". Others give credit to the Old Baptist upbringing. But Surry is deeply secure in her heritage; the reason is not important. Outsiders are not especially appreciated but are now tolerated.

There is an Old World courtesy among Surry's older people. With hat in hand they must pay respects to the head of the household or to the head of the organization. With them there is some impatience at dealing with underlings.

The children of older generations called their father "Father", not Papa or Daddy. Brothers and sisters were addressed as Brother Fred or Sister Minnie. Grace was said before each meal and most homes had a Bible.

Music has been an important part of the lives of Surry's people. Many play instruments. One of the more famous musicians is Tommy Jarrell who plays something called "Round Peak" style. He has had visitors from all over the world to come to learn that style from him. Some of his work is in the Library of Congress.

There were many singing schools where four part harmony was learned by the shaped note method.

Surry's most famous singer is Donna Fargo, whose name is Yvonne Vaughn. (Jackson 1983:xi)

“Mount Airy, North Carolina (NC) Detailed Profile - relocation, real estate, travel, jobs, hospitals, schools, crime, news, sex offenders.” <http://www.city-data.com/city/Mount-Airy-North-Carolina.html> (Accessed July 9, 2008).

Even as the agrarian life of the small yeoman farmer gave way to cash-crop monoculture and work in mills and factories, the ideals associated with agrarianism persisted and became stronger. Tommy Jarrell was very romantic about his childhood on what he remembered as a self-sufficient homestead, even while his father was getting out of agriculture and into retail entrepreneurship. As will be seen in Chapter Four, Tommy

would become a paragon of the counterculture romance that also embraced its own version of agrarianism in the form of the back-to-the-land movement. Tommy, living on the edge of town without a driver's license or telephone, seemed like a man from another time. Yet he enjoyed watching television and was supported by his pension from a forty year career building the roads and highways that transformed North Carolina. The myth was available to attach itself to Jarrell and the other Round Peak musicians because a certain amount of agrarian-ness did remain in Surry County. Round Peak never had any kind of New South industry, no mills or large tobacco farms. The music held on and served some of the same functions it had in earlier times, if the workings and school breakings were gone, there were still dances and house parties. In this it is very much like that other emblem of mountain life, the log cabin. As Phillips noted in her architectural survey, what was a survival form was used right up to the time that it was the inspiration for the revival (1987).

CHAPTER 3

MUSIC HISTORY OF SURRY COUNTY TO 1965

Introduction

The log cabins that served as survival structures for the independent small farmers of Surry County were not all standard, of course, and they evolved and grew as the families in them grew, and as the owners had time and resources to do so. The music that was heard in them changed as well. This chapter examines, roughly chronologically, the music of this “survival” period.

In a recent essay on the identity of ethnomusicology as a discipline, Adelaida Reyes cites the writer James Baldwin on the role of history in everyday life:

“History,” Baldwin said, “does not refer merely or even primarily to the past. On the contrary the great force [of history] comes from the fact that we carry it within us, [we] are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways ... history is literally *present* in all we do” ... The emphasis that Baldwin put on the word “present” calls attention to its two senses: its physical sense of here and its temporal sense of now. (2009:2)

The musicians of Surry County are acutely aware of the history of old-time music in their location, and they make various uses of the facts of this history. The old-time music tradition of Surry County will be shown to have been a nostalgic practice as early as the first decade of the 20th Century. In fact, the music was specifically linked to the antebellum world, as seen in an advertisement for a fiddle contest, which promised old melodies from “before the War.” While the banjo and fiddle tradition was considered

quaint as early as the first decade of the 20th Century, it was also an important part of social and political life in Surry County. old-time musicians were involved in politics, and their insider knowledge of the local scene was useful to politicians. The ballad tradition, so important to the folklore of Appalachia, is not as rich in Surry County, but the so called Native American Ballads were popular songs in the area, and one song, examined below, shows the speed with which ballads could be crafted to react to local events, and how they could be shaped to reflect local values.

Before Recording

In concluding his collection of songs from the first century of the North Carolina Charter Colony, Arthur Palmer Hudson quotes from Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* of 1643: "What song the sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture" (1963:81). Hudson's collection of songs that the charter colonists of 1663-1763 could or should have sung is based on the folklore research of Child, Sharp, Bronson and their colleagues in ballad scholarship. The English and Highland Scots who settled eastern North Carolina in this period were relatively literate for their time, and Hudson assumed that a song in distribution in print in the United Kingdom during this century would or could or should have been sung in the colony. This gives us little sense of what the instrumental music they played may have been like, or what dance tunes they might have played. Though

ballads and songs have been collected for longer, the fiddle based dance tunes have proven to be a more resilient tradition. Joan Moser writes that some of the tunes that may have been played by early colonists at their dances include “Soldier's Joy,” “Bile Them Cabbage Down,” “Fire on the Mountain,” “Bonaparte's Retreat,” and “Fisher's Hornpipe,” all tunes played in Surry County today, though none are strongly associated with the local tradition. Dances in colonial times would have been arranged to conclude weddings and the collective labor events that persisted in the country into the 20th Century. Colonial workings included house-raising, bean-shellings and corn-shuckings (Moser 1962).

Lefler and Newsome described dancing among the early planters of eastern North Carolina as well:

Dancing was the favorite amusement of the planters. Brickell observed, “Dancing they are all fond of especially when they can get a Fiddle, or Bagpipe; at this they will continue for Hours together, nay, so attach'd are they to this darling Amusement, that if they can't procure Musick, they will sing for themselves.” The square dance, the Virginia reel, and the minuet were danced to music furnished by a Negro slave who played the fiddle. (1973:120)

The early white inhabitants of Surry County were most likely not of the same class or background as the eastern planters, having come into the state not in ships from England but via the Great Wagon Road. We may surmise that dancing to fiddle music was among their most favored pastimes by the mid 18th Century.

The earliest descriptions of musical life in Surry County come from the writings

of Hardin E. Taliaferro (1811-1875), a native of the Fishers' River area of the county who, the reader will recall, settled in Alabama and became a tanner, Baptist preacher and newspaper editor. Taliaferro is best known today for his humorous writing on life on what was then the southwestern frontier of the United States. As noted elsewhere in this dissertation, *Fisher's River Scenes* (1858) includes a few references to the youth dancing to the accompaniment of fiddling.

Local historian J. G. Hollingsworth, probably basing his accounts on Taliaferro, wrote that during the frontier era of Surry County, “there were lighter moments in the lives of the frontier people. The dances, quilting parties, barn raisings, corn shuckings and general musters afforded opportunities for gatherings of both men and women... Excessive drinking was a common practice” (1932:37-38).

The earliest Surry County fiddler whose name is known is Will Carr, an African-American with some Native American blood, who lived in the 19th Century. Artis “Shag” Stanley, an Elkins-area guitar player told Kevin Donleavy:

Will Carr was the man who would have done all the fiddling for all the square dances and corn-shuckings, and first one thing and another like that. In fact, he fathered a child by Annie Bledsoe, my grandmother's aunt. But this child was cast out to the side, and she never did understand. But her daddy had pity's sake on her and kept her going. He was a wealthy man at one time, and he was part Indian. Had six hundred acres of land, and he lost every foot of it. (2004:76)

Donleavy points out that Carr was one of the earliest fiddlers that he had heard of in his researches. Carr was said to have played with Crawley Hamlin, a legendary white fiddler

from the area around Dobson, North Carolina (2004:77). We can only speculate on what the music of Will Carr might have sounded like. Stanley's story seems to indicate that, despite the widespread racial prejudice in 19th century North Carolina, it was possible for some African Americans to play music with white musicians, and to acquire large amounts of real property. He is not well-remembered today, and only a few of the musicians I asked had heard of him. I have also been unsuccessful at finding any record of a Will Carr (or “Kerr” the local alternate spelling) in the 19th Century census rolls for Surry County, or any of the numerous books of family and local history.

Early Newspaper Reports of Fiddle and Banjo in North Carolina

That players of the banjo and fiddle were disreputable in Southern society is a commonplace, and is encapsulated by such folk expressions as “thick as fiddlers in hell” or the nickname of “the devil's box” for the fiddle. The banjo was associated mostly with African Americans or blackface minstrels performing a stereotyped version of them. The North Carolina State Archives have facilitated research into 18th and 19th century periodicals by digitizing a sample of newspapers and making them available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov/Newspaper/index.html>. The articles cited in the following section were accessed via this site.

A brief review of 19th century newspaper reports involving banjo and fiddle players shows some of the role of early American media in creating the image of the hell-

bound fiddler and the negro banjo picker. In the late 18th century, most of the population of North Carolina was concentrated in the coastal plain. The *Wilmington (NC) Chronicle and North Carolina Weekly Advertiser* carried reports of escaped slaves from this area. One early report described “Abraham, a Carpenter” who “made it a practice to go about at nights fiddling and drinking, whereby he has contracted a loose idle habit, and much injured his health.” The advertiser, C. Burgwin, notes that the carpenter “eloped from my service,” taking his fiddle with him and offers a ten dollar reward for Abraham's return (August 20, 1795 p. 3). All antebellum mentions of fiddles or banjos in the *Wilmington Chronicle* and *Western Carolinian* are in connection with run-away slaves, with one intriguing exception: a wanted fiddler was advertised in the *Western Carolinian*, a Salisbury, North Carolina, weekly paper, in 1836. The Sheriff of St. Francis County, Arkansas, offered a three hundred dollar reward for John Hill, alias Nixon Curry, “who was condemned to be hanged in Iredell county, North Carolina, for Negro Stealing and Murder.” The story reads like a prompt for a work of historical adventure fiction:

Said Curry made his escape from North Carolina about fourteen years ago, and a few weeks since was taken up and identified to be Nixon Curry and committed to custody, and on the 23rd inst. Mad his escape. Said John Hill alias Nixon Curry is six feet high, has blue eyes, sandy hair and will weigh upwards of two hundred pounds when in good health. He was shot about three months ago, the ball entered the right breast just above the nipple and came out near the point of the shoulder blade. He is a gambler and a drunkard, plays the fiddle and is fond of joking and makes a great man shrewd remarks; is good company and a pretty smart man. He has lived in this county twelve or thirteen years and has been elected to the legislature twice during his residence here. (*Western Carolinian*, August 20, 1836, p. 4).

Hill, alias Curry, is the earliest white fiddler I have found record of in the western piedmont of North Carolina. That he was an outlaw, a gambler and a drunk who nevertheless was “good company” and was elected to public office puts him squarely in the mold of the stereotypical rakish hillbilly fiddler. Later accounts of fiddlers and banjo players almost always mention them in connection with drinking or violence. A story in the *Carolina Watchmen*, a Salisbury-based competitor to the *Western Carolinian*, describes a fatal brawl on Cherry Mountain in Rutherford County. “Ten braves... under the command of King Alcohol” fought with “rocks, rails and pistols” resulting in the death of William Wilson, age 45, of a shot to the head. “Over his corpse the following day many drank whiskey, cursed and played the fiddle” (*Carolina Watchman*, June 19, 1879, p. 3). The combination of alcohol and violence followed musicians, who might themselves be the target of violence. One brief article in the *Watchman*, taken from the *Wilson Mirror*, reports that “A North Carolina negro went right on playing the fiddle after a bullet had been fired into his brain. Exasperated people will hereafter fire at the fiddle” (August 13, 1885, p. 2). Newspapers often carried brief humorous pieces like this at the time, and it is difficult to say whether we should consider this to be a “true story” or not, but it is telling that in 1885 the murder of a black musician might serve as the premise for a joke in a major media outlet. The story also has familiar overtones to the story of a chicken being able to run around for several minutes without a head, implying, perhaps, that a black man was little more than an animal, and his music-making little more than

instinctive flailing.

Another questionably true story of a murdered black musician was reported in the *Watchman* in the spring of 1879:

W. C. Teague, a worthless white man of Taylorsville, N. C., without provocation and without excuse, shot and killed Anderson Denny, a negro banjo player, in the streets of that village, last Saturday. The crime was the work of a moment, witnessed by a number of citizens who immediately arrested him, and will no doubt help to hang him. (*Carolina Watchman*, April 17, 1879, p. 2)

In contrast to the preceding item, the banjo player is considered a worthy individual, and his white assailant worthless. Denny is not said to have been playing the banjo at the time, but he was known to do so. The story was unfolded in more detail the next week:

In our last we copied the substance of a statement we saw in our exchanges in respect to the killing of the banjo player, Denny, in Taylorsville, N. C., which, as will be seen by the following authoritative account, did Teague great injustice. We are glad to make the correction, as we are fortunately able to do on the best testimony.

For the Watchman.

TAYLORSVILLE N. C. April 14, 1879.

Our usually quiet village was the scene on Saturday of a fatal rencontre between W. C. Teague, white, and A. Denny, a colored man.

Denny, who was considerably under the influence of liquor used some abusive and insulting language to Teague.

Teague struck Denny two or three times with a stick, Denny drew a pistol and fired at Teague who being also armed with a pistol returned the fire. Several shots were fired. Result—Denny was killed—Teague wounded slightly—and is now in jail to await trial. The verdict of a coroner's jury, was that “Denny came to his death by a pistol shot fired by W. C. Teague”—cause, whiskey and pistols—the first uselessly indulged in, the second needlessly carried. (“The Killing of Denny,” *Carolina Watchman*, April 24, 1879, p. 2)

Denny and Teague appeared in the pages of the *Carolina Watchman* one final time, in a brief article from the Statesville *American*: a judge, after “a lengthy examination of witnesses ... admitted the accused to bail in a bond of \$1,000” (*Carolina Watchman*, July 24, 1879, p. 3). Taylorsville, like Salisbury, lies in the Piedmont region of North Carolina, but the practice of condemning alcohol while simultaneously allowing intoxication to serve as an excuse for violent behavior reflects the mountain attitudes described in *The Man Who Moved a Mountain*. In a contrary vein, drunkenness could serve as good comedy, as in a story of a Rockingham County dance (misspellings and typos in the original):

There was a dancing party in the country last night, and as the guests were gathered, a tall red-headed fellow applied at the door to get something to eat. Bill Dix gave him a setup, and the tramp enquired if they didn't want a good fiddler to ply for them. Bill said it was the very thing, and soon had him a fiddle, seated in a corner and scratching out the music by the yard. He was such a sharp fellow and such a fine fiddler that Bill set him up once too many. Then the fun began. He not only tore life out of the fiddle but composed and sang little snatches of songs as he played. They saw he was getting most too mellow and took him out and poured water on his head, and thought he was all right again, but would insist on having another “short” before playing them for a quadrille.

“Ye'artners for a cotillion!” he cried, as he threw his head to one side and tucked the fiddle under his chin with a sort of half military stare out of his eye. They all took their places, and he brought the bow a swipe, and sang in a loud voice:

Promenade all
At this gay ball,
Over the river to Charlie.
First gentleman there,
With lard on his hair,
Will fly with his pard

Like a bird through the air,
Over the river to Charlie.

This was getting most to familiar the dancers thought—but he brought them to a dead stand the next pass.

He stopped the little man with an inflamed face and sang out:

Second lady too,
All got up in lace,
Swing hands with the gent
With the bumps on his face.
Over the river to Charlie.

That settled it. The crowd cried, “Put him out!” and the little man with the inflammatory face kicked at him with such force as he rushed out of the house, that the print of his shoe heel was left on the door.

[The above is a very good description of one of the old fashioned Scotch dances.]
 (“A Country Cotillion,” *Carolina Watchman*, October 25, 1888, p. 4)

This article demonstrates several facets of the fiddler persona in 19th Century Piedmont North Carolina. The fiddler is a “tramp” who begs his meals, but is nonetheless “a sharp fellow” and “a fine fiddler” who is able to play and improvise dance calls simultaneously, even after being “set up” (given a drink) a few times too many. The editorial comment that the story is a “very good description” indicates that the story may be taken to be representative and that the Salisbury readers of the *Watchman* may not necessarily have been familiar with the scene at a country dance. The “old fashioned Scotch dances” description may be intended to distinguish the older dances (what would today be called square dances) that were associated with Scottish and Scots Irish country folk from the more fashionable dances found in the towns, such as the “German.”

Not all country dances were so raucous. One 1883 article describes “A Charming Party” given for a girls sixteenth birthday. Much of the article describes the table decoration, a model of a lake with swans and fishing boys. But “The fiddle and banjo in Cuffey's hands furnished music for the dancing in the hall, which did not interfere with conversation in the parlors and 'on the stairs'” (“A Charming Party,” *Carolina Watchman*, March 29, 1883, p. 5). The musician's race is not mentioned, but the name Cuffey, from the leader of a South American slave rebellion, and the fact that the man is referred to by only one name, strongly hint that he was a black American.

An 1889 article details a Thursday night “Country Ball” held at a private home for about twenty-five couples, with music provided by the Second Creek string band, consisting of three fiddles and a banjo. The dancing began, as in the previous account, with a call for all to chose “Partners for a cotillion.” Dancing was done in a dining room cleared of furniture, and started at 10 o'clock and continued until morning: “It is needless to say the fun was fast and furious; it kept up all night and the participants danced one set in the hall after the tables were moved into the dining room for breakfast” (“Country Ball,” *Carolina Watchman*, February 21, 1889, p. 3). Another article from 1885 also reports of a dance going until 9 in the morning, with the fiddler playing seemingly in his sleep (“All Night,” *Carolina Watchman*, October 29, 1885, p. 3). An 1894 article tells briefly of “a genuine 'break-down' at Mr. J. A. Barkhead's last Friday. Three violins[,] a banjo, guitar and harp constituted the music for the occasion” (“Manning Zephyrs,”

Carolina Watchman, July 16, 1894, p. 3). The harp makes this an unusual lineup for a string band, and a rather early example of the guitar being played with banjo and fiddle.

The end of the school year was an occasion for celebration that often included music in the late 19th Century. These “school breakings” often involved the recitations and performances and concluded with the students marching ceremonially out of the schoolhouse to accompanied by musicians. One account from 1884 mentions that a school breaking at “the Bostian school house” featured “speeches, dialogues &c., interspersed by music on the violin and banjo, by Professors Gant and Drake” (“General Agents Notes,” *Carolina Watchman*, April 1, 1886, p. 3).

Nineteenth century newspapers tended not to mention a person's race, unless they were black, or “Negro” as the contemporary term had it. Banjo players, when their race is mentioned, are always black in these accounts from Salisbury in the 19th century. Fiddlers may be white or black. Another story, reprinted from the Tarboro *Southerner* reported of a tax collector: “He sent a negro boy three miles away to get his banjo to pick him a tune and after the tune had been picked seized the banjo for poll tax” (*Carolina Watchman* January 26, 1888, p. 2). Black Americans also are reported playing the fiddle, but the descriptions of such musicians are often colored by the stereotyped representations of the minstrel stage. A story by “The Arkansas Traveler” in which a “sentimental white man” “who had, while listening to negro melodies sung by white men, been impressing with the 'darkey's' fullness of sentiment,” tries to engage an old black man in conversation

about poetry. The black man keeps mishearing the word poetry and rhapsodizing about food and drink. The sentimental traveler interrupts:

“Just keep quiet now until I explain myself. Poetry is the music of--”

Music ! Now I got yer—got yer dis time, sho. Music—w'y bless yer life, chile, Ise er fiddler frum de ole house. I's made all dese yere folks roun' yere shake de hoofs at dances, I tell yer I'se got er old fiddle dat'll take de gout an' rheumatiz outen er foot in two minits.” (“Ole Uncle Dan,” *Carolina Watchman*, June 7, 1888, p. 4)

The dialogue continues with the sensitive traveler and the country Negro living up to their stereotypes until the black man believes he's been insulted and runs the traveler off.

In total these assorted brief mentions of western Piedmont musicians in the press give us an idea of the reputation that people must have held and the associations that were made with the fiddle and the banjo in the region around Surry County at the time. Banjo players were black. Fiddle players might be black or white, but they also were drinkers and associated with rough types. Musicians had power to entertain and to “take de gout an' rheumatiz outen er foot.” They were able to cleverly insert cutting rhymes into square dance calls and make a party complete. But they were also drunks, tramps, murderers, and negro stealers.

The Ballad Tradition and Surry County

Some of the first outsiders to take an interest in the music of the upland South were ballad scholars, the Englishman Cecil Sharp chief among them, who thought of the

Southern Appalachians as an isolated redoubt where old British mores and lifestyles—and the ancient ballads that went with them—were preserved from the corrupting influences of the modern world. Sharp spent time collecting in North Carolina, but he favored the mountainous western counties over the piedmont, finding too much commerce and too many African Americans in the hills [i.e., not enough isolation]. Later collectors of ballads were more wide ranging, and the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore's* volume of ballads contains contributions from all regions of the state, including two collected in Surry County. One, “When I Was a Little Boy” has no accompanying melody, but is of a type called a “swapping song,” about “successive exchanges at a loss” (Belden and Hudson 1952:471). The song was collected “probably by W. Amos Abrams, as 'given to me on September 29, 1939, by Louise Hutchins, who learned it from her classmates in school at White Plains.' White Plains is in Surry county.”

When I was a little boy I lived by myself.
All the bread and meat I got I laid it on the shelf.

The rats and the mice led me such a life
I had to go to London to buy me a wife.

The roads were muddy and the streets were narrow;
I had to bring her home in an old wheelbarrow.

The wheelbarrow broke and wife caught a fall.
Down went the wheelbarrow, wife and all.

I sold my wife and bought me a cow;
In that trade I learned how.

I sold my cow and bought me a calf;
In that trade I lost half.

I sold my cow and bought me a cat;
In that trade I got me a hat.

I sold my cat and bought me a mouse;
The darned little devil set fire to my house. (Belden and Hudson 1952:473)

No melody is provided for this text. Though I have not heard this song sung in or around Surry County in my time here. Belden and Hudson are contradictory on the connection with the “Papa's Going to Buy Me a Mockingbird” song. Such a song is included in the collection as “Sister, Sister, Have You Hear?,” as collected from a student at Trinity College, Durham, North Carolina, in 1922. A version of the “Mockingbird” song was sung by Tommy Jarrell as “Say Darlin' Say.” Jarrell's version joins the typical verses describing a series of trades to an invitation to marry the narrator and settle down in a “hollow by the old oak tree” where the new bride would take in laundry to support her man. A popular verse from Jarrell's performance runs:

Say little darlin', if you were mine
You wouldn't do nothin' but starch and iron.
Say darlin' say.
Starch and iron would be your trade
And I'd get drunk and lay in the shade.
Say darlin' say.

The idyllic picture of rustic life is presented ironically, with the suitor's ulterior motives for marriage laid bare.

Ballads as Social Commentary

As Cecil-Fronsman notes, the ballad texts can be read as expressions of the values of the “common whites” or independent farmers. The outlaw songs that originated in Great Britain and survived in the New World were often transformed in North Carolina: “those that remained did not celebrate the criminal and his deeds but dwelt on his tragic fate and warned others not to follow his path” (46). This could be true of newly composed ballads on contemporary topics as well. Among the “Native American Ballads” in the Surry County repertory are a few based on local happenings, mostly tragic and violent. “Poor Ellen Smith” is one about a murder that Tommy Jarrell sang. “The Lawson Family Murder” concerns a Christmas day murder/suicide in Stokes County and was recorded by the Nance Family. One ballad from Surry County, included in the *Brown Collection*, is a version of the outlaw ballad “Claude Allen,” collected in Rusk, North Carolina, in 1917. At the time of collection the story was still relatively recent history. The way that the tale is told in verse can show us how the anonymous song maker and his or her community thought about crime, punishment, and duty.

The events that made Allen famous took place right over the state line from Surry County, in the environs of Hillsville, Virginia, in 1912-1913. Accounts differ about what exactly transpired. Floyd Allen, father of Claude and a member of a large, prosperous family that lived near Fancy Gap, Virginia had a reputation for wildness was put on trial in Hillsville for assaulting a deputy sheriff. After he was sentenced to a year in prison,

shooting broke out between members of the Allen family and others in the courtroom, including, possibly, the clerk of the court, the sheriff, and the prosecuting attorney. The judge, prosecutor and sheriff were killed, as was a juror. Floyd Allen and several bystanders were injured. Floyd escaped on horseback, accompanied by his son Claude, and brother Sidna. Freel Allen, Byrd Marion, Sidna Edwards, and Wesley Edwards were also part of the fugitive “Allen Gang.” The gunfight and the manhunt that followed was news across the country, a lurid tale of wild mountain men that made the *New York Times* for weeks running in March and April 1912. Floyd and Claude were captured and sentenced to death in the electric chair. After multiple stays and delays, the Allens were executed on March 28, 1913 ((Belden and Hudson 1952:567-568; Davids 1986). Cecil-Fronsman notes that imported outlaw ballads downplay the crimes and dwell on the punishment: the ballad “Claud Allen” makes no mention of the crime in which he was implicated.

Claud Allen and his dear old father
Have met their fatal doom at last.
Their friends are glad their trouble's over
And hope their souls are now at rest

Poor Claud was young and very handsome
And had a hope until the end
That he might in some way or other
Escape his death in the Richmond pen.

But the governor being so hard-hearted,
Not caring what his friends would say,
Kindly took his sweet life from him,
And in the cold grave his body lay.

His mother's tears are gently flowing,
For the one is gone she loved so well.
No one can tell her of her troubles;
It seems no one can tell but her.

Claud Allen had a pretty sweetheart
Who mourned the loss of the one she loved.
She hopes to meet him beyond the river
With a fair young face in heaven above.

'Tis sad indeed to think of killing
A man just in his youthful years
And leave his dear old mother grieving
And all his friends in bitter tears.

To all young me: You must take warning;
Be careful where you go or stray,
For you might be like poor Claud Allen
And have that awful debt to pay.

Poor Claude is gone, but we can't forget him;
He's loved by all the country round.
His healths like the rose in summer,
But now he sleeps beneath the ground.

High upon yonder lonely mountain,
Poor Claud sleeps beneath the clay.
No one can hear his words of mercy
Nor see his face till the Judgement Day.

His sweetheart must have been sad-hearted
When she saw poor Claud lying still and cold.
Down on her knees she wept beside him,
And prayed to God to save his soul. (Belden and Hudson 1952:568-569)

The story of the Hillsville Courthouse shootout remained legendary in the area for decades. Everyone knew of the violence unleashed by the Allens, and the death and pain

caused by the shootout. So why such a maudlin song of pity for one of the killers? Malone writes of the tendency of southern American singers to bowdlerize the sexual elements out of British ballads, and to tack on moral warnings at the end (2002:14). Possibly, the coyness about sex extended to coyness about violence in some cases, particularly where any listener could be expected to know of the “Hillsville Courthouse Tragedy.” The “moral injunction” of the seventh verse would seem to bolster this interpretation, warning the hearer not to follow Claude's example, but not disclosing what it was that he did.

Sidna Allen (uncle of Claude) may give some hint at an alternate answer. Sidna was one of the more prosperous members of the clan, and he was sentenced to 35 years in prison for his role in the shootout. Allen was eventually pardoned and wrote a memoir that gave a different account of the shootout, one that had the clerk of the court, a Republican rival of the Democratic Allens, opening fire first. Sidna, who had been convicted of killing the judge, claimed that he fired no shots at the judge, but only at the clerk and the sheriff's deputy, and only in self defense. Claude Allen, 16 years old at the time, was only trying to protect his father. In this local version of the story, Claude was acting according to a Southern code of honor. Sidna recalls the burial of his nephew:

At the burial service the casket of Claude was opened and a medal, which had been presented to him by ladies of southwest Virginia, was taken from the lapel of his coat and presented to his sweetheart, Miss Nellie Wissler. Inscribed on the medal were these words: “FOR BRAVERY IN DEFENDING HIS FATHER.” (Allen 1929:108)

Sidna also quotes from a statement given by Claude the night before his death:

“My last words to the people of Virginia are: I knew absolutely nothing of any conspiracy and do not believe there was one. I did not fire the first shot and did not shoot until my father had been shot at. I did not kill Judge Massey. Those who have wronged me I forgive and hope we shall meet in a better world where sorrow is never known. Pray God's blessing upon our dear old State and to all her people I say farewll. I am with a clear conscience. (Signed) Claude Allen.”

The brave boy has long been dead but his memory is still fresh in the hearts of many of his friends. An unfortunate victim of circumstances, his life was demanded of him for defending his father. (Allen 1929:109)

Sidna's account should probably be taken with a dose of skepticism, but it does represent an appeal to the value of filial devotion, held so dear in his society. He was not a member of a conspiracy to subvert justice, but a “victim of circumstances ... defending his father.” Over the months between the courthouse shootings and the execution of Floyd and Claude Allen, the men were tried and sentenced, and several attempts were made to have them pardoned or to have their sentences commuted. None were successful. As the executions loomed, portraits of the Allens began appearing in print that showed Claude in a sympathetic light. On the eve of the executions, the editors of *Mount Airy News* were dejected about the fate of the Allens, whom a year earlier were cast as desperate perpetrators of a massacre: “Every effort has been made to save them and yet every move has utterly failed....This makes the case hopeless.... The two doomed men are preparing in an orderly and dignified way to meet their fate. Ministers are daily with them and they are resigned to their lot” (“Floyd and Claude Allen to Die,” *Mount Airy News*,

March 27, 1913). Though Sidna Allen may be forgiven for his sympathy for the Floyd and Claude, why would the *Mount Airy News* take such a soft stance on crime? In part, the paper's editors may have been taking the side of their fellow Democrats in a feud with the courthouse Republicans. Party politics could get violent in those days: remember the “old-time fight” between Ben Jarrell and Bonus McCraw on election day 1908. Shortly before the execution another article described the prisoners:

Neither Floyd nor Claude possesses a vindictive bitterness or harbors any hostility to the world at large. It was said that the younger clansman faced his approaching fate with a calm fortitude and courage which had so far been absolutely unshaken The faculty of Claude for citing Scripture was regarded as the ore singular by reason of the fact that very probably not until his incarceration as a convicted and doomed felon had he ever directed his serious attention to Holy Writ. It is today the belief of more than one of his friends that, should the younger man regain his freedom, he would dedicate the remainder of his life, and labors to the spreading abroad of the Gospel.

Claude Allen is but twenty-three years old. Up until the time of his capture in the Carroll county hills, his mind was stored only with the traditions of local history. It is for this reason that his youthful memory, unimpaired by either dissipation or worthless learning, can be so readily stored with the wisdom of the New and Old Bible. It is said that he reads impartially from both the Old and New Testament s, and that what he reads once he rarely, if ever, forgets. (“Floyd and Claude Will Profess Faith,” *Mount Airy New* March 27, 1913)

“Allens Meet Death Bravely” was the headline in the *Mount Airy News* on April 3, 1913. Claude, after reacting with shock to the last-minute half-day reprieve, died like a man, and his and his father's bodies were viewed by vast morbid crowds of “mostly women” some of whom “carried little babies in their arms, who prattled and laughed in childish glee, all unconscious of the grim presence of Death in his most hideous and awful form”

(*Mount Airy News*, April 3, 1913). As a final bit of Allen apology, the *News* printed Claude Allen's final written statement. The picture of an unspoiled child of the mountains, uncorrupted by worthless learning is challenged a bit by Claude's statement that he attended business college in Raleigh. But Claude states that he had been raised to always tell the truth, that he knew of no conspiracy to murder anyone in the Hillsville courthouse. All he says about that day is "When I saw [clerk of the court] Dexter Goad shoot at my father I tried to shoot him and he is the only man I shot at." On the topic of conspiracy: "I have been accused of conspiring and planning to shoot up the court at Hillsville and other things which I am not guilty of. I had too much love and respect for my dear mother and my sweetheart, if there had been nothing else to keep me from planning a deed which would have separated me from them forever on this earth. No one could have persuaded me into trouble. This all came on so sudden and unexpected and I had no time to think of what was best." In printing these articles and statements, The local press was creating a picture of "Poor" Claude Allen, who loved his mother and sweetheart, was caught a moment of passion and danger, and was acting to protect his father. His last days on earth were spent in contemplation of scripture, which he was committing to memory. This is a young man that the Surry County populace would recognize as one of their own. They could see their own younger selves in him, or their young male relations or friends. He was caught in a trap between his values and the law, and that is what made him a tragic figure, fit for the ballad singer.

Several other of examples of what the *Brown Collection* called “Native American Ballads” survived into the revival era in Surry County, especially in the repertoire of Tommy Jarrell. Though he was never recorded singing the “Claude Allen” ballad, he was familiar with the story of the Allens and talked about it like recent news (Interview with Nancy Dols Neithammer). These included “The Bravest Cowboy,” “The Wreck of the Old 97,” “Little Maggie,” “Frankie Baker” (a version of “Frankie and Johnny” or “and Albert”). It is notable that Tommy always sang while accompanying himself on the fiddle or banjo.

There is no evidence of a strong tradition of unaccompanied ballad singing in Surry County, as there was in so many other areas of Appalachia. Charlie Faurot asked Kyle Creed if there was much ballad singing around the workings and parties of Round Peak: “I’ll tell you about that. Not too much of that going around in our neighborhood. Not too much. Now you know how Paul [Sutphin] sings now. Now that is more [like the old songs.] They didn’t want to listen to that singing; they wanted to hear some hot music to dance by. That’s what they wanted” (Faurot 2009-2010:29). Nor have I found any other references to unaccompanied ballad singing in the county, either at dances or in the home. It may be that ballad singing was a more domestic activity, more of a woman’s art, and so would not have been reported on in the same way as a fiddle contest.

“To Resurrect the Fiddle”: An Early Fiddlers' Convention in Mount Airy

The *Mount Airy News* in the first decade of the 20th century featured few references to musical activities in the area. A Winston, North Carolina, piano dealer's advertisement of 1901 contained a quote from Martin Luther on the ability of music to make people “Milder and gentler, more moral and reasonable.” A group of stonecutters announced their intention to give a dance before leaving town in 1908. The small items of local news that took up a page of every weekly edition of the paper were dominated by notices of visits and trips made by Surry County residents for all sorts of purposes, business, personal, and educational. These include few references to musical events, but many to meetings of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and Confederate Veterans. The *News* was heavily in favor of Prohibition and the Democratic Party. In 1908, the passage of statewide prohibition was big news, though it was noted with regret that Surry County voted against the measure. The “Old Time Fight” between Ben Jarrell and Bonus McCraw took place on the day that prohibition was voted on in the state, and the issue may have had some part in their confrontation. Edison phonographs and records were sold at F. L. Smith's Hardware Store, while the E. C. Foy Furniture Company dealt in Victor products, which they promoted through daily “Musical Concerts” at which the Victor recordings of “Hymns, Waltzes, Violin, Band, Banjo Solos, Duets, Laughing Stories, Quartets” were played. A short news item in the March 5, 1908 paper told readers of a visitor to the town: “Mr. C. Z. Whitaker was in the city this week and made all

arrangements for a Fiddlers Convention here next week. These entertainments have been given in many cities in the State and never fail to draw large crowds. An advertisement in this paper gives prices etc.” The ad took up a quarter of page, one of the largest ads in the paper that week. It announced:

At the Granite City Theatre
Mount Airy, N. C.

“Ye Old Tyme”
FIDDLERS' CONVENTION

Wednesday and Thursday
March 11 and 12, at 8 P. M.

This is no traveling troupe, but citizens of this and surrounding counties in
Grand Musical Extravaganza
Playing the music of long ago and living over their boyhood days. It makes the
old grow young and the young forget they are growing old.

Soul Stirring and Foot Moving Music

All musicians are invited to participate in the performance, but only those
of the old school will be allowed to contest for the following prizes:

First Best Fiddler, \$5.00
Second Best Fiddler, 3.00
First Banjo, 3.00
Second Banjo, 2.00
Best Dancer, 2.00
Booby, 1.00

Don't fail to “Listen to the Mocking Bird” by the “Arkansas Traveler” “Down on
the Suwanee River” says the “Mississippi Sawyer” and “Old Joe Clark.”

Prices—25, 35 and 50 cents

Benefit Ladies Aid Society

1. Z. WHITAKER, Manager.
- 2.

At the Granite City Theatre
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FIDDLERS' CONVENTION

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Don't fail to "Listen to the Mocking Bird" by the "Arkansas Traveler"
 "Down on the Swanne River" says the "Mississippi Sawyer" and "Old Joe
 Clark."

Prices---25, 35 and 50 cents,

Benefit Ladies Aid Society.

C. Z. WHITAKER, Manager.

Figure 1: Advertisement in the *Mount Airy News*, March 5, 1908.

The references to the “music of long ago” to the “old school” and to the “citizens of this and surrounding counties” proclaim that this is music from the past, but also music from this place. That it is local—rather than a “traveling troupe”—is important, but even more important is that it is old. The fiddle contest that Whitaker put on was part of an early 20th Century revitalization movement, one that tried to bring back the old fiddle tradition thought to be dying out. Articles and advertisements connected with these contests are filled with references to the times before the war, and to the way the old folks used to dance. The contests were, in short, a revival.

The earliest American fiddle contest on record took place in Virginia on St. Andrew’s Day, 1736, the top prize being a fine “Cremona fiddle” (Cauthen 1989:163-164). There is scant written evidence of such contests for much of the remainder of the 18th Century, but by the late 1800s, they were once again a popular form of entertainment throughout the southern United States. Early 20th Century contests were sometimes put on by entrepreneurs to promote land auctions, patent medicines and other products (Cauthen 1989:166). Most, though, have been small, independently organized affairs, with the proceeds benefiting a local charity or organization such as the American Legion, Elks Club, or volunteer fire department. The Ku Klux Klan has even been known to organize a few (192).

One of the most famous long-running fiddle contests was the Georgia Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention, held in Atlanta from 1913 to 1935. After the success of the inaugural contest, some attendees gathered to organize themselves into the Georgia Fiddlers' Association, an group dedicated mainly to holding the Convention every year. The prizes offered contributed to the popularity of this contest. The top prize was around fifty dollars at a time when most local contests awarded five dollars to the blue-ribbon winner. Even at this early date, the music was considered nostalgic and rural. Newspaper accounts described the contestants in broad strokes as hillbilly stereotypes (Daniel 1990:17-24). In the later years of the Convention, the organizers noticed that elements of jazz and composed music were creeping into the fiddlers' performances, and they denounced them strenuously in the press. In 1926, the head of the Association told a reporter that "we're not going to have any printed music, and we won't have any of this crazy stuff they call jazz that is plumb ruining all the good fiddling in Georgia" (41-42). The culture clash between jazz and fiddling and all that these two forms of music represented in the minds of contest organizers is one of the great and recurring themes in the history of these contests.

The Southerners who knew old-time fiddling as a living tradition in the 1920s were also seeing it changed by the contests. Fiddlers began giving serious thought to what tunes would show their talents best. A. A. Gray of Alabama noticed that a particular

competitor always won with the ragtime inflected, and chromatic popular tune “Bully of the Town” and realized that choice of tune could play a role in one’s standing. Gray started competing with “Bucking Mule”: “It’s a hard piece, but it’s snappy, and you do a lot of fancy work behind the bridge that makes the fiddle bray like a mule. I won so many prizes [with that tune] that the other fellows got to calling me ‘Mule Gray’” (quoted in Daniel 1990:37). Gray’s statement points to three of the qualities that often led to success in early 20th Century fiddle contests: difficulty, quick tempo, and novelty. Judges might be musicians themselves, but they just as often weren’t, so difficulty was often in the ear of the beholder. Rules, if there were any, were arbitrary and different from one contest to another. Fast runs of notes, large leaps, and vigorous string-crossing passages would be sure to make a fiddler stand out among more run-of-the-mill players.

The second factor, tempo (“it’s snappy”), is also geared to impressing judges who might have little musical experience. The southern repertoire is rich with waltzes which showcase qualities of tone, timing and intonation that are often glossed over in faster playing. In contests, though, these were all but unplayed. Lists of tunes played at contests consist almost exclusively of breakdowns--quick dance tunes in duple meter.

The third factor, novelty, involves many possibilities. Gray’s choice of tune involves imitating a braying mule by bowing the strings behind the bridge of the fiddle. Animal sound imitations are common in other novelty tunes popular amongst early contest fiddlers. “Cacklin’ Hen” involves staccato bowing of the top two strings for an

imitation of a chicken's cluck. "Mocking Bird" features imitations of bird calls. The more modern tune, "Orange Blossom Special," the novelty tune par-excellence, involves imitations of a train whistle with a sliding double-stop on the low strings alternating with plucking the high string to indicate the bell at a railroad-crossing gate. This section is followed by a passage of accelerating double-shuffle meant to evoke an oncoming locomotive. In some cases, fiddlers would retune to achieve striking effects, as in the tune "Black Mountain Rag" for which the fiddle is tuned A^Eac# (low to high). The double stops, drones and unisons facilitated by this tuning make the fiddle sound considerably "fuller" when in the key of A major than is possible in standard tuning. Other fiddlers won novelty points by fiddling in non-standard postures, such as behind the head, behind the back and between the legs.

One of the most famous exponents of novelty in early fiddle contests was never recorded. Lester Vernon Storer (possibly *Clifford* Storer [Wolfe 1997:94]) was a three-quarter Shawnee Indian from Ohio who was hired by a country music promoter named Larry Sunbrock to play in a tour of commercialized fiddle contests during the 1930s. Storer's stage name was "Natchee the Indian," and he performed in Native American regalia, frequently breaking into an exuberant war-whoop mid-tune. The contests were elaborately staged showdowns between Natchee and the top local fiddlers. In his travels around the country, Natchee the Indian faced off against some of the most famous, and technically brilliant, fiddlers of the early recording era: Clark Kessinger of West Virginia,

Clayton McMichen of Georgia, Curly Fox of Alabama, and Arthur Smith of Tennessee. While some remember Natchee as a great fiddler, others claim he was not exceptional and relied on showmanship to win over crowds (Cauthen 1989:197). Whether he was a great musician or not, he was a great showman, and the results of Sunbrock's exhibitions were scripted, to draw the audience in and win them over. Natchee usually "won" early rounds of competition, only to be bested by the local favorite in the finals.

Novelty relates to the first two qualities, difficulty and tempo, in some complex ways. Some of the novelty tunes mentioned above are quite challenging to fiddle, like "Orange Blossom Special" and "Black Mountain Rag." But these tunes take advantage of the idiomatic qualities of the fiddle (and in the case of the latter tune, the cross-tuned fiddle) to make music that sounds harder to play than it is. The animal and train imitations in some novelty pieces are an expansion of the instrument's idiom beyond what is called for at a square dance, but they are not particularly difficult to execute once one has the knack. In other cases, such as fiddling in unusual postures, the music can be easy or difficult, but it is the stunt that garners applause. Indeed, "Pop Goes the Weasel," a very simple tune, seems to have been a de-facto standard for these "fiddle wrestlers," as it has a pause in the melody long enough to move the fiddle and bow from behind the back to between the legs (Cauthen 1989:137, Wolfe 1997:206; see also the clip of Otto Gray's Cowboys on *Times Ain't Like They Used to Be*).

The fiddle contests of the early 20th Century had several effects on the musicians

who participated in them, and those who abstained. In addition to creating an opportunity to earn some hard currency, it was also a chance to win local fame, meet other fiddlers, and swap tunes in informal jam sessions. The competition inspired those who were inclined to hone their skills and expand their repertoires to stay in the running. This had the effect of emphasizing and disseminating the faster, more difficult, and more novel fiddle tunes. For the promoters, they were often a bulwark against modern mass-mediated entertainment, usually represented by the shorthand of “jazz.” For the promoters, jazz was modern, “crazy,” black, and fostered loose morals. Many of the fiddlers, who were at the time used to being associated with loose morals, saw jazz as good music, and if elements of it could be borrowed to improve their performances, there was nothing wrong with that.

Charles Zack Whitaker (1876-1950), had been on a campaign of running fiddlers' conventions across the Piedmont during the winter of 1907-1908, having staged fifteen known contests across the state that season. Whitaker was a Guilford County printer and amateur musician who played violin, trombone, alto horn and cello. In promoting one of his contests, he told the Charlotte News of his explicitly revivalist reasons for staging them:

I have studied the musical situation in North Carolina, especially in the rural districts and find the interest in music very much retarded. The old veteran has laid his fiddle on the shelf in the dusty cutty; the young chap has never caught the spirit.... These conventions are to resurrect the fiddle, to make him get down his fiddle, teach his boy the old tunes so there will be more music and better music in old North Carolina than has ever been before. (quoted in Carlin 2004:110)

Whitaker hoped to create a statewide fiddlers' association to preserve the art form he saw dying. The winners of his local contests would perform at an annual statewide contest, though neither of these goals seems to have been realized (Carlin 2004:108-112).

The rules for the Mount Airy contest were not printed in the paper, though other newspapers did publicize the guidelines for other Whitaker conventions. Any instrument was permitted as an accompaniment, the length of time permitted each performer would depend upon the total number of fiddlers competing. As hinted in the *News* advertisement, musicians were permitted to perform on stage even if they did not intend to compete for the prizes. Judges were usually prominent community members, and were not necessarily musicians themselves. Whitaker seems to have taken a decent profit for his efforts--\$47.95 was his fee for the High Point convention, and a portion of the over-all profits was typically donated to a local charity. At Mount Airy, it was the Ladies Aid Society. Many of these contests awarded prizes to “second” or back-up fiddlers, though the “second best fiddler” prize at Mount Airy seems to have been the more typical runner-up prize. Carlin's research found that Whitaker's contests typically awarded ten dollars to the winning fiddler, though the Mount Airy event only gave five dollars to the top performer. This may have set the precedent for the present day Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, which gives the first place fiddler twenty dollars, significantly less than the other contests in the region (Carlin 2004:112-120).

The *Mount Airy News* covered the fiddlers convention in two further issues. On March 12, the morning after the first night of the event, an article reported on the scene at the theater.

The opera house was packed last night to hear the Old-Time Fiddlers and to say that it was a blooming success would be putting it mildly. About thirty local musicians were on the stage and the way they played the fiddle and banjo carried one back to the golden days of the past when the young people who lived in the country knew what it was to enjoy life. The entertainment lasted two hours and several of the boys danced the old time breakdown to show the folks "How they cut the Pigeon wing before de war", and demonstrated it to perfection. Little eight year old Hampton Worrell of this city was on the stage with his fiddle and bow and only for the fact that his strings got out of tune he would have made music, anyway he showed what he could do. Mr. W. C. Hill of Rutherford College and Architect J. S. Zimmerman of Winston-Salem came along with the managers and showed what the real expert in their line was able to accomplish. The performance will be repeated tonight. ("Old-Time Fiddlers Last Night," *Mount Airy News*, March 12, 1908, p. 2).

The next week an article reported that the second night "was a complete success and drew a large crowd." The three judges, who included the mayor, gave S. C. Hamlin, of Cody, North Carolina, the first prize; and J. F. Flippin, of Mount Airy, the second. I. W. Bowles got the one dollar "booby" prize for worst fiddler. Edgar Willard of Brim, NC and T. W. Wolfe of Moser, NC, were the first and second place banjo players. James Brannock won the dance competition. "In awarding the prize for best dancer Mr. Brannock's age was taken into consideration and he being seventy three years old, and no mean dancer even for a young man, was easily the winner of the prize" ("Prizes Awarded." *Mount Airy News*, March 19, 1908, p. 2.).

S.C. Hamlin, commonly referred to as Crawley Hamlin, was first prize winner at the 1908 convention, and a popular fiddler during his day, though unfortunately no recordings were made of his playing. Hamlin was born July 19, 1869, the youngest of eight children of Thomas Vestal Hamlin and Sallie Askew Hamlin. Thomas Vestal Hamlin farmed land near Dobson, North Carolina, and was also a blacksmith, a fiddler, and the Surry County Clerk of Superior Court. Hamlin served as Surry County's delegate to the "Secession Convention" at the outbreak of the Civil War. Financial losses resulting from that conflict led Hamlin to relocate his family to a farm some three miles south of Dobson on the Fisher River. When he died in 1885, he left no will, but there was a fiddle in his estate. Hamlin family tradition tells of a fiddle contest at Thomas Vestal's deathbed. The Hamlin sons were playing for the honor of inheriting the old man's fiddle. After being prodded into competing by one of the family's black servants, Crawley bested his older brothers to win the prize. Crawley married Marthe "Pat" Davis in 1889 and farmed tobacco on land across the Fisher River from his father's old farm. There are tales of him traveling to Canada at times to work. The Hamlins had eleven children, and Stephen Crawley Hamlin died of diabetes in 1936 ("Study List Application submitted to the National Register of Historic Places by Kenneth W. Badgett, June 25, 1992" in the Kenneth Woltz Badgett, Collector, Papers #4692, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.) In addition to winning the 1908 fiddlers' convention, he is remembered as a regular blue ribbon winner at other local

contests (Donleavy 2004). Hamlin also took up his fiddle in support of Democratic candidates and to entertain a summer institute for teachers in Dobson (*Mount Airy News*, October 27, 1932; November 1, 1934; June 26, 1930). Hamlin's repertoire differed from that associated with the Round Peak area, and included many sentimental parlor songs (Donleavy 2004).

A second fiddlers' convention was held at the Opera House on the 10th and 11th of September 1909. There was no large advertisement taken out, as there was for the 1908 event, and there is no indication that Whitaker was involved, but some of the same references are made in the newspapers' promotional writing as were used in Whitaker's advertisements. A note in the *News* of September 9 advises the reader that “all your friends and neighbors are going to the Old Fiddlers Convention at Galloway Opera House...The greatest musical event ever held in Mt. Airy.” An evening of infectious music is promised, and several well known tunes are listed. Some of the phrases come directly from Whitaker's advertisement of 1908 and the newspaper's article on the results: “Old time, Foot-moving, Soul-stirring pieces—you will get it into your feet—you just can't help it--The kind your Grandparents made in 'befo' de war times—Such as 'Mississippi Sawyer' 'Arkansas Traveler' 'Bob Tail Mule' 'Fishers Hornpipe' 'Devils Dream' and a score of others by 50 Fiddlers and Banjo Pickers from 4 counties” (*Mount Airy News*, September 9, 1909). After such a build-up, it is surprising that the following week's paper did not contain a report on the attendance or the winners of the convention,

but rather a strange editorial on the appropriateness of the repertory performed:

“The Fiddlers Convention”

The men, both young and old, of this section demonstrated clearly last Friday and Saturday nights at the Old Fiddlers meeting in this town that they have music in their souls. Some one said that the man who has no music in his makeup is fit for spoils, treason or murder. That may not be so but it is a great gift to be able to make music. David of old was a great musician and played his harp many an hour under the stars while he watched the flock alone, and after he carved out a kingdom for himself and sat upon a throne he yet played his harp and sang praises to his God. But we have no record that he played “The Mississippi Sawyer” or the “Flop Yeared Mule.” It was sacred music that delighted his soul, and David was no saint by a long shot.

The men of this section should play their fiddles and banjos more than they do but they should leave off many of these pieces of music that are disgraced because of past associations. No man would tell a joke at a funeral or play the “Flop Yeared Mule” as part of the last sad rites.

The fiddle and banjo make the sweetest music and the instruments cost so little that they are within the reach of every poor boy, and yet the class of music commonly played has disgraced them in the eyes of the public to that extent that many churches will not allow a fiddle to be used in church service.

If the men of the country districts would play good music and leave off these old worn out breakdown tunes it would not be long before the fiddle and banjo would be used in making music in every church in the country, and a valuable aid it would be. (*Mount Airy News*, September 16, 1909)

That two articles should appear in the same paper a week apart, under identical headlines, one extolling “Soul-stirring” music like “Mississippi Sawyer,” and another condemning the same, is difficult to account for. Neither article is signed, nor are any of the articles in the *News* during this era, so it is hard to say if they were written by different people, though the first might have been written by the event promoter, as the paper often

contained advertisements that were indistinguishable from news items. Some of these ads appeared in the same spot in the paper week after week. While the first article may have been an example of what might today be called an “advertorial,” the second article is definitely the work of a writer at the paper. The *News*, as has been noted above, was the paper of the town, and of temperance, so it might be presumed that its editors would wish to elevate the music of the fiddle and banjo. The editors may have been acting from the same impulse behind the late 19th Century movement to “elevate” the five-string banjo (Linn 1991). The banjo players and manufacturers behind the classical banjo movement were trying to elide the African, slave, and minstrel associations of that instrument in order to make it acceptable to the urban middle and upper classes. The editors of the *News* seem to be calling for the fiddle and banjo to be detached from their associations with poor whites and blacks and the implicit immorality of those groups, and to be made acceptable to the church-going people of Mount Airy's middle and upper class.

There were opportunities to hear music of a different sort in Mount Airy. On the very same page as the article promoting the fiddlers convention of 1909 were two other pieces on musical activities in the town. One described a meeting of singers at the home of the Woodruffe brothers. The meeting was called to organize a “Choral society” with the aim of “self-improvement and to be prepared to assist in giving entertainments whenever they are called upon.” Though the pieces they intended to perform are not mentioned, a copy of a Handel Oratorio is mentioned as being present. The other is a

piece promoting a “Music Normal” or singing school to be held in Siloam, North Carolina for twelve days “under the management of Messrs Rubush and Redmond.” Singing schools were a venerable method of teaching vocal harmony to singers of sacred music. Ads for other “Normal Music Schools” appeared regularly in the *Mount Airy News* during this era.

A further musical event of note took place two weeks before the 1909 fiddlers convention, also in the Galloway Opera House. The “Old Song Concert” of Friday, August 27, was a benefit for a new Baptist church. This concert was plugged multiple times in the Short News Items page of the *Mount Airy News* for August 26. One item ran “By patronizing the 'Old Song Concert' you will pass a pleasant hour and assist in fitting up a room in which some of the 'little tots' of the community will be trained for future christian usefulness.” The concert received review the next week, with the full program listed. There were some “Orchestra” pieces, though the nature of the orchestra was not described, nor the pieces listed. There were also unnamed recitations and a few violin solos and duets. Most of the concert consisted of old songs of the 19th century sentimental parlor song variety. There were choral, solo and quartet renditions of “The Old Oaken Bucket,” “In the Gloaming,” “Love's Old Sweet Song,” “Old Black Joe,” “Then You'll Remember Me,” and “A Little Farm Well Tilled.”

In the early years of the 20th Century, then, there was a fairly wide variety of music being performed in Surry County, including sacred vocal music, classical choral

works, and the popular music of the time, in the form of sentimental songs. Old-time music was but one type of music among many available, and it was considered old-fashioned even then, over a decade before the first “hillbilly” record was ever recorded. Furthermore, the old-time music, though “Foot-moving” was not considered particularly worthwhile by some influential segments of society, as reflected in the dismissive editorial of September 16, 1909, cited above.

C. Z. Whitaker did not succeed in launching his statewide association of fiddlers, and his series of conventions did not inspire more promoters to follow his lead, but fiddlers' conventions continued to be held in Surry County for the following decades, though they usually did not attract anything approaching the modest amount of press attention that the Whitaker convention did. In the 1920s, there are small ads announcing upcoming contests, with no follow-up coverage or announcement of the winners. In this, the Surry County situation was similar to that in other areas of the Piedmont (Carlin 2004). What the Whitaker convention does show is the position of old-time fiddling in the Piedmont in the early 20th century. Though well before even the very earliest recordings of old-time music, it was already considered an exercise in nostalgia with designs on revival. Both Whitaker's statement to the Charlotte newspaper and his deliberately anachronistic name of “Ye Old Tyme Fiddlers' Convention” reinforce the retrospective nature of the event. The exhortation with which the advertisement ends-- Don't fail to “Listen to the Mocking Bird” by the “Arkansas Traveler” “Down on the

Suwanee River” says the “Mississippi Sawyer” and “Old Joe Clark.”--is made up of the titles of old-time tunes and songs. The choice of tunes is instructive about what was considered music “of the old school.” “Arkansas Traveler,” “Mississippi Sawyer” and “Old Joe Clark” are among the most venerable and widespread of American fiddle tunes, and would not be out of place at a fiddlers' convention today. “Listen to the Mockingbird” and “Old Folks at Home” (also sometimes called “Down on the Swanee River”) were not ancient fiddle tunes, but popular sentimental songs published as sheet music in the mid-19th century. “Listen to the Mockingbird” has made the shift to fiddle tune, and is still popular with some contemporary fiddlers as a vehicle for birdsong imitations (I do not recall ever hearing it played in Surry County, though). “Old Folks at Home” was one of Stephen Foster's most enduringly popular songs, and the melody is still widely known; but it has no currency among fiddlers.

The coverage of Whitaker's contests, which give particular weight to the very young and the very old contestants, will be familiar to those who read newspaper accounts of such events in the present day. Newspaper coverage of events like the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention usually prominently feature photographs of children with fiddles and “old folks” dancing and picking. Audiences always seem to be entranced by children playing in these contests, and the delight that “little eight year old Hampton Worrell” elicited, out of tune fiddle and all, is given special notice, while the performance of Crawley Hamlin, about forty years of age when he took first prize, is not described at

all. The septuagenarian dance champion “was given special consideration” though the paper is quick to point out that he was “no mean dancer even for a young man.” The particular emphasis on the extremes of age is also in keeping with the revivalist agenda of Whitaker—the “old veteran” and the “young chap” carrying on the tradition side by side.

Whitaker's contests and ambitions fell short of his accomplishments, but fiddle contests continued to be held in Mount Airy and surrounding towns in the decades that followed. Contest announcements appeared in the *News* throughout the 20s. Few brought much notice by the press until the Veterans of Foreign Wars-sponsored Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention took hold in the mid 1970s.

Early Recorded Music from Surry County

For fans of old-time music, the 1920s and 1930s are sometimes referred to as the “Golden Age.” This was a period when old-time country music was being recorded by record labels like Columbia, Victor, Okeh and Gennett, and when such records were sold throughout the country. Some fiddlers, like Dock Roberts, Clark Kessinger, and Clayton McMichen, became well-known and influential well beyond their home areas due to their recording activities. The 1920s and 1930s were also an era when country music radio was expanding, and many recording artists used their radio appearances to increase their popularity even further, as was the case with the Monroe Brothers, Fiddlin' Arthur Smith, and the Carter Family.

These artists and their record companies connected with each other usually through the work of record company employees who came to be called “A & R men” (for “artists and repertoire”). The A& R men were not generally from the south, or from the classes of society that produced good folk, blues and jazz musicians. They relied on local talent scouts, who were often vendors or distributors of records. The early recording industry A & R men, talent scouts and producers are sometimes thought of as accidental folklorists for the work they did in collecting and preserving indigenous rural music during the 1920s. But they were prone to follow their own habits, which created certain pathways by which talent might be discovered and recorded. As Kip Lornell notes about early recording in Virginia

The work habits of the A& R men clearly account for the spatial patterns created by the recording artists. Since they frequently located talent through established artists, the A & R men kept going back to these [known]... areas and tended not to look for talent elsewhere. If they continued to find salable talent in Henry and Pittsylvania counties, why look to some relatively remote section such as Bath County in the Allegheny highlands? Virginia is not unique in this regard... (Lornell 1989:9)

Surry County was not on the map for most A & R men or scouts. But Surry County musicians recognized the power of radio and recordings, and a few of them made an attempt at getting a piece of the action. Some time in the mid 1920s, Da Costa Woltz (1892-1941), a young banjo player, recruited two of the most talented musicians in Surry County to join him in a band, to be known as the Southern Broadcasters. Ben Jarrell and Frank Jenkins would have been among the most highly regarded musicians in the area in

those days. The band was rounded out with young Price Goodson (1913-1947) on ukulele, harmonica and vocals. In later years, he frequently placed in guitar contests at the Galax Fiddlers' Convention and once served as MC for that contest. His solo performances show him to be a powerful performer even at approximately twelve years of age. Woltz did not stop at recruiting the best bandmates, he also had a formal portrait of the band made, depicting them in evening dress, with Woltz wearing a white bow tie. This was in contrast to the route taken by most other southern bands of the days before the rise of the “hillbilly” image, who tended to pose in the sort of conservative suits and ties that they would have worn to church or for a trip to town (Peterson 1997:48; 66). The band also had elaborate stationery bearing the name of the group and its members. The name, the photograph and the formal stationery all point to the grandiose aspirations of Woltz. Joining the Southern Broadcasters on their trip to Indiana in spring 1927 was a tobacco company bookkeeper and amateur singer named Holland Puckett, raised in Ararat, Virginia. Puckett also recorded several sides for Gennett in Richmond, accompanying himself on guitar and harmonica (Lornell 1989).

The lineup of two banjos, ukulele and fiddle was unusual at the time, and is rarely emulated today. The uke was a “new” instrument at the time, having been popularized by a Hawaiian music craze in the previous decade. The banjo players had distinct styles, which enabled them to play in different registers of the instrument without clashing with each other. Woltz played in a two finger style and occasionally in clawhammer style, as

heard on their version of “John Brown's Dream.” Jenkins was a three-finger player, somewhat in the style of Charlie Poole, the most famous North Carolina banjo player of the time. His backup style is heard clearly on Ben Jarrell's recording of “Jack of Diamonds” from the Southern Broadcasters' recording session. The Southern Broadcasters only completed one recording session, for Gennett at their Richmond, Indiana studio; but their recorded output is quite varied, as if calculated to demonstrate the wide range of styles at which the Broadcasters were adept. Bill C. Malone has described the secular folk music of the South as being of two strains, the “domestic tradition” of sentimental “parlor songs,” often sung by women; and an “assembly tradition” of instrumental tunes and frolic songs for dancing and merriment (Malone 2002: 15-21). The Southern Broadcasters drew on both traditions. The recorded repertoire was a mix of fiddle tunes (“Richmond Cotillion,” “Old Joe Clark,” “John Brown's Dream”) and popular songs (“Merry Girl,” “Take Me Back to the Sweet Sunny South,” “When You Ask a Girl to Leave Her Happy Home”). Benjamin Jarrell played and sang “Jack of Diamonds.” Frank Jenkins recorded two showpieces for solo banjo, “Baptist Shout” and “Home Sweet Home.” Price Goodson contributed “Be Kind to a Man When He's Down” and the harmonica solo “Lost Train Blues.” Goodson's use of the ukulele may be attributed to the Hawaiian music craze that was kicked off by George Awai and his Royal Hawaiian's performance at the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. The trend inspired numerous Hawaiian themed hits from Tin Pan Alley

and led to a boom in ukulele sales through the 1920s. The band also recorded sacred songs like “I Know My Name is There” and “Are You Washed in the Blood (of the Lamb)?”

Frank Jenkins was also a fiddler, and he recorded a few sides with a group called the Pilot Mountaineers at about the same time. This band was instigated by Ernest V. (“Pop”) Stoneman (1893-1968), a Galax-area singer and guitarist who was the area's most successful, and determined, semi-professional musician. Stoneman and his family band had performed at the legendary Bristol sessions, a 1927 talent search recording session at which Ralph Peer signed both Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family to Victor contracts. Stoneman himself had a contract with Peer, which prevented him from recording for other labels under his own name. In 1929, Stoneman found a possible outlet in Frank Jenkins and son, Oscar, who farmed tobacco near Dobson, North Carolina. Oscar was a talented banjo player with his own unusual style of back-up. Ernest told an interviewer for the *Winston-Salem Journal* that before the trio could leave to record, they spent three days curing and putting up three barns worth of tobacco: “We cured them out in three days...we'd practice between chunking the fires” (Tribe 1993:76). After completing the necessary farm work, the string band traveled to Chicago, where they recorded two songs for Paramount under the name Oscar Jenkins' Mountaineers. On September 12, 1929, they made some better-known recordings for Gennett in Richmond, Indiana. Four songs from this session were released on the Conqueror label (a Sears

subsidiary) under the name Alex Gordon. The sides featuring Frank Jenkins' fiddling and Oscar Jenkins' banjo were released on Gennett as Frank Jenkins' Pilot Mountaineers and Supertone as Riley's Mountaineers. Three songs from this session, "The Murder of Nellie Brown," "I'll Be All Smiles Tonight" and "In the Year of Jubilo," were never released (Tribe 1993:76-77). Like the Woltz band, the Jenkins-Stoneman group recorded a mix of sentimental songs ("The Railroad Flagman's Sweetheart," "When the Snowflakes Fall Again") and fiddle tunes, mostly taken at a moderate pace. "Sunny Home in Dixie" has become a fiddler's standard, traceable back to Jenkins' recording. Frank Jenkins' "Old Dad" and the fiddle solo "Wandering Boy" are also very fine, smooth-sounding fiddle tunes.

Neither the Southern Broadcasters nor the Pilot Mountaineers would see much commercial success. Woltz's band never actually performed on the radio, and apparently made few live appearances as a formal band. The "Broadcaster" name was aspirational. In 1932, Frank and Oscar Jenkins briefly worked as voice actors and musicians on "Irma and Izary," a comedy radio series put together by Ernest Stoneman and his wife Hattie Frost. The fifteen-minute episodes parodying mountain life began broadcasting on Washington, DC area WSJV in Feb. 1932. Frank Jenkins played a fiddling character called "High-pockets." Oscar also acted, and the Jenkinses and Stonemans played musical interludes. The show failed to find an audience and the Jenkinses returned to Dobson, "leaving Ernest to play all the dramatic voices" (Tribe 1993:83-84).

Sacred music was also a big part of life in rural North Carolina. Earl Nance was among the influential sacred music performers in the vicinity of Surry County. He and his family performed religious music and taught shape-note singing schools for nearly thirty years. The schools were run as a family enterprise, with Earl's wife Maddie, and children Helen and Earl Jr. taking part and playing piano. The schools were sometimes held over a series of two to ten days, though they were more often held once a week for a month to six weeks. Nance also farmed and worked in a textile mill to make ends meet (Lornell 1989). A photograph of the Nance family taken in Yadkin County in 1925 shows the four of them posed before a Ford Model T, with Earl dressed in a professorial three-piece suit and bow tie. The Nances first recorded in 1930, as the Nance Singers. They traveled to New York City, apparently in the company of two sets of siblings: Rita and Valena Jolly and Sam and Dewey Hill. The Nances and the Jollys recorded twenty-five numbers during four sessions over five days in the spring of 1930. Sam and Dewey Hill lent guitar or harmonica accompaniment to a few cuts. Helen Nance played piano or organ on most numbers. Helen Nance also joined the Hill Brothers, who sang and played guitar, harmonica and autoharp, for "Little Darling Pal of Mine," and "My Dream." The session was organized by the American Recording Company (ARC), but only two of the tracks from that week were released--"On The Sea of Life" and "The Old Rugged Cross"--and those were on a series of less-prestigious labels (Russell 2004:424, 648). In 1931, the family left North Carolina to seek work, first in Iowa and then in Virginia,

where they settled and continued to teach singing schools. The Nance family continued to record--for Gennett and Brunswick--in the following years. Though these sides were released, they did not sell well ((Lornell 1989).

Surry County was home to Sam and Dewey Hill, who had accompanied the Nance family to New York in 1930. The Hills were a musical clan who lived on a farm some 12 miles south of Mount Airy. Sam played autoharp, while Dewey played guitar and harmonica. A younger Hill, Bill, learned to play autoharp and fiddle. Sam and Dewey's trip to New York with the Nance Singers also was an opportunity for them to record on their own. In addition to their two tracks with Helen Nance, the Hill Brothers recorded "Hallelujah to the Lamb," "The Wild And Reckless Hobo," and "Jack and Joe" as vocal numbers with Dewey playing harmonica and guitar and Sam playing autoharp. Because of the Depression, the record industry was in a cautious period in 1930, and the Hill Brothers recordings were never issued. Dewey and younger brother Bill, joined by neighbor Willie Simmons, took over the Hill Brothers name and performed in the 1930s. Bill had been too young to make the trip to New York in 1930, but in 1932 he moved to Henry County Virginia to work in a furniture factory. Bill also became a semiprofessional musician, and performed with bands and on a radio station out of Danville, Virginia. Willie Simmons learned to sing from seven-shape-note books and traveling teachers, possibly including the Nances. He is not listed as an instrumentalist but a photo of the group from about 1935 shows him sitting with an autoharp in his lap. In 1937, Dewey

requested and got an audition with the Victor company in Charlotte, North Carolina. The brothers and their neighbor practiced for several weeks to prepare and it paid off in Charlotte. The trio recorded six sides, including four sacred numbers “Just Over in the Glory Land,” “I’m Glad I Counted the Cost,” “I Am On My Way To Heaven,” and “Looking to My Prayer;” and two secular songs, “Sweetheart, I Have Grown So Lonely” and “In the Hills of Old Virginia.” Victor released two sides on its subsidiary, Bluebird, and licensed all six songs to Montgomery Ward’s record division, which issued them. The Hills continued to play music, but both started families shortly after the recording session, which curtailed their musical activity somewhat. Willie Simmons died in 1964. Dewey lived in Ararat, North Carolina, and played music locally and on WPAQ (Mount Airy) and WBOB (Galax), until his death in 1975. Bill Hill lived in Henry County, Virginia, and started an active country band after his retirement in 1980 (Lornell 1989:97-99; Russell 2004:424).

The music of the Hill Brothers and Simmons is reminiscent of the hugely popular Carter Family, with a guitar picking out the melody on the bass strings, and autoharp filling in the chords. The singing is also arranged in similar harmonies and call and response patterns to those heard on Carter Family recordings of the 1920s and 1930s.

African American Music in Surry County

There is less evidence of African American musical activity in Surry County. Though the town of Mount Airy has long had African American neighborhoods, the county did not have a large slave population before the Civil War, and consequently, there were not many black citizens. Those that were emancipated sometimes attended church with whites after the war, though they sat in separate sections. Oak Grove Methodist Church and Old Hollow Primitive Baptist Church were said to welcome former slaves (Thompson 2005:53). As noted above, one of the earliest known musicians in the region, Will Carr, was a black fiddler who performed with the white fiddler Crawley Hamlin, though I have found no evidence of him in the Surry County histories or documents that I have examined.

The collection of historical photographs of African Americans *Around Surry County* (Thompson 2005), contains photographs of a few musicians. It can be assumed that the black members of the Primitive Baptist church would have sung without instruments in the distinctive style of that faith. A member of the Mallalieu Temple Church choir, Sam Williams, is remembered playing the violin with that group in the early 20th century. One James Bowman, born in 1910 and described as a body-builder and boxer, is shown holding a guitar. Thompson's book also contains a photograph of "Neal" Sawyers, born Esquire Cornelius Christopher Columbus Sawyers in 1875. Sawyers' parents had been slaves in Patrick County, Virginia. Sawyers lived outside Mount Airy on the road to Ararat, Virginia, and lived in a self-sufficient manner very much like that

recalled by Tommy Jarrell. He had ten children and raised all his food save his coffee and sugar. He could graft trees, raise bees, make sorghum molasses, and pine tar. He was also able to make flutes out of sourwood branches (Surry County Genealogical Society 1994:320). According to a funeral card in a bound collection of funeral cards in the local history collection of Surry County Community College, he died May 17, 1966.

The intrepid Kevin Donleavy uncovered records of other black musicians in Surry County, including Wash and Harrison Cockerham, banjo playing brothers from the Little Richmond community (2004:23). If there were any black fiddlers besides Will Carr active in the area, I have not found evidence of them. Tommy Jarrell was queried about black fiddlers at a workshop in Los Angeles, and did not recall any (Workshop tape, UCLA archives). Jarrell did credit African American singers as the source for two of his fiddle tunes. “Boll Weevil” was learned from a “yellow gal” singing in an “Old Plantation Show” in Mount Airy and “Riley and Spencer” was learned from a local singer and guitar player named Jim Rawley.

Politics and Fiddling

Fiddling and politics have a kinship in the Southeast. The first recorded old-time fiddler, Fiddlin' John Carson, was known to play on the stump for various candidates in Georgia. In 1886, brothers Alf and Bob Taylor, both fiddlers, challenged each other for the governorship of Tennessee and traveled the state staging debates and playing the

fiddle. Tom Freeman of Alabama would fiddle on the campaign trail for whichever candidate appealed to him (Cauthen 1989). Surry County had its share of stump fiddlers as well, and they included two of the local legends—Crawley Hamlin and Ben Jarrell.

Lee Dix Freeman remembers his father, Ben Freeman, traveling the countryside “politicking” with Ben Jarrell on behalf of Democratic candidates. In one instance, the two were campaigning for Woodrow Wilson and they were speaking at a gathering in a “foot-washing section”—a community where the churches practiced foot-washing.

He'd kindly found out the religion before he went in to make the speech. They was out for Woodrow Wilson, and Ben Jarrells [sic] said right in the middle of his speech, he said “I'll tell you why I'm so strong for Woodrow Wilson,” said “old Granny Freeman and Granny Wilson's out a-washing feet all over this country right now.” They didn't have no news, turn on the radio, they thought that was right, you know. (Dix and Charlie Mae Freeman Interview, 1978, AFS 21667, in the American Folklife Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC)

The Democrats were also called to take up their fiddles in the early years of the Great Depression. A story in the *Mount Airy News* tells of a pre-election day rally to defeat a Republican government in Surry County:

Interspersing the program of the evening were two complete string bands which furnished old time music at intervals. Miller Brothers string band of Siloam occupied one end of the bar with its five pieces, while the band of Crawley Hamlin and [banjoist] Bill Draughn was located in another part of the bar. The musical program brought down the house and it was prolonged [sic] at the request of the audience with clog-foot dancing ... (Republican Leadership in Surry Challenged by A. D. Folger, *Mount Airy News*, October 27, 1932)

Another story from 1934 tells of a “Rally Meeting in Dobson” before election week. Congressman Frank Hancock addressed the crowd and there was dancing and music

furnished by the bands of Charlie Miller, Ben Jarrell, Crawley Hamlin, Joe George, and Wilburn East. With so many bands, there was bound to be dancing, and indeed it seems there was a dance contest. The speakers talked against the effects of high tariffs on tobacco farmers, and Crawley Hamlin was specifically mentioned by one as an example of a farmer hurt by these policies.

As in other parts of the South, fiddlers were able to give a boost to political candidates, or at least get people to show up to listen to a speech. In some cases, as with Ben Jarrell, they were able to use their local knowledge to make a case for a candidate who might otherwise be less appealing.

The Voice of the Blue Ridge: WPAQ

The generally accepted version of the history of southern old-time music includes a romantic pastoral period (1800-1920); a period of discovery and commercial recording (1920s-1930s) and a period of rediscovery and revival (1960s-1970s). According to this timeline, the 1940s and 1950s are a lost era during which talented rural musicians turned to bluegrass or more commercial country and western styles and the source musicians set aside their instruments in the face of indifference. Of course, the music did not subside simply because it was not being recorded by record producers or field recorders. In Surry County, the local musicians were fortunate to have a local broadcast outlet for old-time

music through the late 1940s and the 1950s. And the proprietor of this radio outlet, Ralph Epperson, made a habit of recording the musicians that appeared on his airwaves.

Ralph Epperson was born in Ararat, Virginia, just over the state line from Surry County, in 1921. His early years exposed him to both old-time music, through family and neighbors, and to radio via broadcasts on WSM of Nashville , WLS of Chicago and WBT out of Charlotte, North Carolina. Epperson studied radio engineering in college and worked at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC during World War II. After the war he returned to the family farm in Ararat and began broadcasting at 250 watts out of his house. In 1946, Epperson's father took out a mortgage on the farm to finance construction of a proper radio studio on a hill outside Mount Airy. Ralph's father also supplied much of the lumber used in construction of the building from trees on the family land. On February 2, 1948, the new station, call letters WPAQ, which stood for nothing in particular, began broadcasting at 1000 watts on a clear channel at 740 kilocycles (740 AM). In 1954, WPAQ was licensed to increase its signal power to its current strength of 10,000 watts (Pruett 2000). A coverage map on the station's web page (www.wpaq740.com) shows the signal reaching a radius of over 100 miles from Mount Airy, extending into parts of West Virginia and Tennessee.



Figure 2: Coverage map of WPAQ.

In his application to the Federal Communications Commission, Epperson stated that he intended to highlight the music of the surrounding region, “an outlet of expression for local talent,” including old-time and bluegrass, as well as religious preaching and music. Epperson had begun training as a minister before studying broadcasting, and he maintained his devout faith throughout his life. He was known to edit profanity out of recordings before he would allow them to be broadcast on his station. The station became a regular stop for traveling musicians who worked the upper south during the 1950s, a time when bluegrass was becoming an identifiable style. Among the musicians who performed live over the air during this period were Mac Wiseman, Wade Mainer, Grandpa Jones, Ralph Stanley, Little Jimmy Dickens, Del Reeves, Charlie Monroe, Jim Eanes, Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters, and Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs. Epperson recorded many of these performances on a disc cutting machine (Pruett 200:74).

One of the most important broadcasts on WPAQ was the *Merry-Go-Round*, a live Saturday afternoon broadcast modeled on the *Midday Merry-Go-Round* on WNOX in Knoxville, Tennessee. Uncle Jack Johnson, a musician and announcer, originated the program and served as its host. Pruett describes the format, still in use today:

The *Merry-Go-Round* adopted the same format as its much larger counterparts WSM's *Grand Old Opry* and WLS's *National Barn Dance*. The host would announce each band, which would then perform selections from its repertoire, and each tune was preceded and followed by a sponsor's message. Radio stations paid

musicians little for radio time, but they earned their livelihoods from show dates, and from merchandise offered for sale during the broadcasts. The *Merry-Go-Round* gave musicians the opportunity to promote their other live appearances at theaters and auditoriums in the area, which produced additional income. (2000:78-79)

The show was originally broadcast from the station's studio, but moved for a time to the Pick Theater in Mount Airy. Since 1998, it has been broadcast from the Cinema Theater on Main Street. The *Merry-Go-Round* is the second longest continually running live music broadcast in the country, with only the venerable *Grand Ole Opry* (launched in 1925) having a longer run. The *Merry-Go-Round* has also been the bastion of old-time and bluegrass music on WPAQ, even during the years when the station's regular programming became more eclectic (Pruett 2000)

Clyde Johnson, no relation to Uncle Joe Johnson, served s the show's announcer and talent booker from 1964 until his death in 2007. Clyde was well known as a singer and guitar player with the Slate Mountain Ramblers, and for his hosting of the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention. On the *Merry-Go-Round* and at the Convention, he would always conclude the proceedings with his signature line “Goodbye, good luck, God bless you, and don't never worry too awfully much about nothing, 'cause everything won't never be all right no how.” Since Johnson's death, the *Merry-Go-Round* has been hosted by Travis Frye and Tim Chadwick.

Bluegrass and Commercial Country

WPAQ can be seen as a part of the larger trend of powerful radio stations spreading commercial country music, and the sound that would come to be called bluegrass. Bluegrass, a version of old-time music that uses larger, more coordinated bands, and prominently features virtuosic solo “breaks” from the individual instrumentalists, became a recognizable genre of music after shortly World War II, when the banjo player Earl Scruggs joined singer/mandolinist Bill Monroe's group the Blue Grass Boys. The Blue Grass Boys were regular performers on the popular Grand Ole Opry radio show, and toured extensively throughout the South. Their sound was characterized by a mix of three-finger style banjo picking, mandolin and guitar. The vocals were often harmonized and in higher keys than most old-time musicians played in. Tempos were quite fast. This music was made to be heard over the radio or from a concert stage, rather than to be danced to.

In Surry County, dancing was never completely replaced by passive listening, but this bluegrass sound would influence the Surry County old-time musicians and effect a second wave of innovation, with the inclusion of guitars and mandolins, and eventually string basses, in their bands. Popular radio fiddlers, like Arthur Smith, who played on WSM's *Grand Old Opry*, influenced local fiddle players like Fred Cockerham and Benton Flippen, who learned Smith's tunes and incorporated some of Smith's bluesy slides into their own playing.

Paul Brown edited an anthology of live recordings from the archives of WPAQ

(Rounder 0404, 1999). Many of the musicians who played on the air were traveling professionals, like Charlie Monroe and Lee and Juanita Moore. Others were drawn from the local stock of semi-professional pickers. The recordings, most made between 1948 and 1952, show that the music was in transition, at least as represented by WPAQ's broadcasts. There are no recordings of the Round Peak greats who would make Surry County famous in the 1970s: No Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, or Ernest East. Brown's notes assert that he found none in the archives, though these musicians may well have performed on the air. Brown believes that the Round Peak sound may have been too old fashioned for regular airplay. The local old-time musicians that are heard on the compilation are those who were trying in some way to incorporate the instrumentation, arrangements and repertoire of the new sounds of country, western, and bluegrass music. H.O. Jenkins, son of Oscar and grandson of Frank Jenkins, plays a breakneck version of the traditional fiddle tune "Old Joe Clark" with back-up from an electric steel guitar. Three tracks by The Skyline Serenaders, a popular group from nearby Virginia, play with a crisply finger-picked banjo, mandolin fills, two-part harmonies and fiddle breaks between verses. They don't sound as tight and driving as Monroe's band (few bands did, or do), but they clearly have incorporated many elements of his sound. Benton Flippen, later known for his fiddling, plays a two-finger banjo style that sounds very nearly like an early bluegrass banjo style. The old-time fiddlers who appear on the compilation are those who have absorbed more influence of the radio fiddler Arthur Smith. Alfred

“Lefty” Hall, Esker Hutchins, and Pate Martin, all play what Brown calls “powerful, longer-bow, old-time fiddling” (1999:16). Their playing relies more on single notes than the droning and double stopping of the Jarrells and Ernest East. There are more “sophisticated” chordal accompaniments, with II and VI chords (in addition to the more basic I, IV and V chords), than found on the Southern Broadcasters or Pilot Mountaineers recordings. The repertoire of these fiddlers included more modern sounding numbers learned from the radio. Pate Martin's “Honeysuckle,” a ragtime-inflected number, and Lefty Hall's “Natural Bridge Blues,” both came from radio fiddlers and recordings. “Honeysuckle” was first recorded by Charlie Poole's band; “Natural Bridge Blues” was written by Tommy Magness, the fiddler with Roy Hall's Blue Ridge Entertainers, a popular group that also played in the transitional style between old-time and bluegrass.

The musicians who did not appear on WPAQ were also influenced by the sounds of bluegrass and country music, even if they retained more old-time style. The Camp Creek Boys, founded by Kyle Creed in the 1960s, included two guitars and mandolin in addition to the usual fiddle and banjo. Kyle would later include the string bass in the band he assembled for the *June Apple* LP, and a later version of the Camp Creek Boys would have string bass, mandolin and three-finger bluegrass style banjo. Fred Cockerham, who tried to make a living as a professional fiddler, also played the modern tunes “Honeysuckle” and “Natural Bridge Blues.” His fiddling was bluesy and slippery as

Lefty Hall's, but he never relinquished the intense forward momentum of a square dance fiddler.

Folk Music's "Great Boom" and Revival

"what ad would be seen without a banjo?"

What we today call "the folk revival" of the mid-20th century, was a complex and contradictory series of events and movements that had their start long before the 1960s (when it is often pegged in time) and have had lingering repercussions ever since, which Michael Scully aptly calls a "never-ending revival" (2008). It is beyond the scope of this project to offer a full and thorough analysis of this movement. Some revivalists took a special interest in the musicians of Surry County, and the community has been changed ever since. Surry County music became a central part of one aspect of the never-ending revival, the string-band revival. So some basic background on the folksong revival, "great boom" or "great folk scare" is in order.

The start of the "Great Boom" of interest in folk music in America is usually placed in 1958, when the Kingston Trio released their recording of "Tom Dooley," a murder ballad that they learned from a recording of North Carolina's Frank Proffitt. The boom, though, was a culmination of a number of other trends in American popular culture that led up to it. There was, of course, the continuing existence of music performed in the oral tradition in America; that is, something to revive. There was also

the increasing interest in the expressions of working people by leftist intellectuals and activists in the cities. The revival, which started out as an explosion of populist interest in folk-*songs* became a more wide ranging and diverse revival of the American musical traditions, including the Appalachian string band tradition. The revival started out as a song-centric music culture, and the Kingston Trio, Almanac Singers and Weavers performed vocal arrangements of traditional material. Later revivalists became interested in more carefully learning to emulate specific performances of traditional songs and tunes. The most influential of this second wave of revivalists were Tom Paley, Mike Seeger and John Cohen, the New Lost City Ramblers, a band of talented multi-instrumentalists with academic leanings based in New York City. So where the Kingston Trio used the words and melody of Frank Proffitt's "Tom Dooley" as the basis of an arrangement in three-part harmony, the New Lost City Ramblers would create a new version in the old-time idiom, based on a specific performance from an identifiable source, often a field recording or 78 rpm record. The third wave of revival involved field work, which the members of the New Lost City Ramblers were also engaged in. Going and visiting surviving players of old-time and blues music became a preferred way of learning to play, at least among some revival musicians. If you could learn a tune or song from one of these source musicians, a tune that that no one in your home revivalist circle knew, you could accrue prestige and cultural capital. One of these revivalist circles formed in the college towns of the North Carolina Piedmont in the late 1960s (Carter

1991).

Starting as a revival scene, the old-time string musicians that coalesced around the campuses of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University in the late 1960s and 1970s formed a series of bands that established a new standard for revival practice. This practice would have wide ranging implications for the small community of old-timers in Surry County. Alan Jabbour, a graduate student at Duke with classical violin training and a career as a semiprofessional violinist in his past, began traveling to the fiddlers' conventions to meet and learn from old fiddlers. On one trip he befriended Henry Reed of Glen Lyn, Virginia, then in his 80s and a fiddler of exceptional skill with a large repertory of unusual tunes. Jabbour made regular visits to Reed, getting to know the Reed family, tape-recording a large number of tunes that Reed sometimes only remembered slowly and in fragments. Jabbour was careful to learn the nuances of Reed's tunes, including ornamentation and bowing. These tunes he taught to his friends back in the Durham area, and performed with his band, the Hollow Rock String Band. Hollow Rock consisted of Jabbour on fiddle, Tommy Thompson on banjo, Bobbie Thompson on guitar, and Bertram Levy on mandolin. This approach proved inspirational to other young string band musicians who started traveling into the country in search of "source" musicians with interesting repertoires. The sound of the band was also influential. The fiddle would lead the melody, with the mandolin and clawhammer-style banjo playing as close to the same melody as they could manage. Bobbie Thompson played open-position

chords with simple scalar bass lines connecting them. This was different from the more carefully arranged instrumentals and songs that the New Lost City Ramblers played. The style of the Hollow Rock string band allowed for expansion by adding musicians to each part: there could be two or three fiddlers, two or three banjo players or guitarists, and the character of the music could be retained. This allowed for jamming as a way of learning a piece of music through performance. In Jabbour's travels he met and learned from many musicians besides Henry Reed, and one of them was a retired highway department worker named Tommy Jarrell. This man would become a central figure in the story of Surry County old-time music, and he would become one of the great paragons of the old-time tradition, recognized the world over, a guru and oracle. Tommy would record numerous albums, appear on television in Europe, teach hundreds of young fiddlers, be the subject of a popular documentary film and he was the first fiddler to receive the National Heritage Award, from the N.E.A. But when Alan Jabbour met him this was all in the future.

Tommy

The central figure in the Round Peak musical pantheon is unquestionably Thomas Jefferson Jarrell (1901-1985), known to all as Tommy. Not only is Tommy the best known Surry County old-time musician, he may be the most famous old-time musician,

period. This could be disputed depending on one's definition of “old-time,” “musician” or “famous.” I have also met several people in North Carolina named Jarrell who hadn't heard of the great fiddler. In the pantheon of Mount Airy luminaries, Chamber of Commerce version, he alone represents the old-time music heritage. He and his father Ben are among the very few old-time musicians included in William *Powell's Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*. Also rare among old-time musicians, Tommy was profiled in *Newsweek* magazine and his obituary appeared in the *New York Times*. For the national old-time music community, he is a sort of patron saint. His image is used on promotional materials for the *Old-Time Herald*; his life story is well known; his example is most often called upon to make a point in a dispute over some aspect of old-timeyness.

The most substantial sources of information on Tommy Jarrell's life are Ray Alden's liner notes, and the longer essay that first appeared in *Sing Out!* (Alden 1972); and Nancy Dols Neithammer's two collections of Jarrell's oral life story from the American publication *The Old-Time Herald* (Neithammer 1991a, 1991b). Donleavy's wide-ranging compendium also contains many passages on Jarrell (Donleavy 2004) .

Tommy's account of his family's history begins in approximately the 1830s, when his great-grandfather, Fountain (“Fount”) Jarrell (c. 1801-c. 1880), moved from Rockingham County, North Carolina, to Lambsburg, in Carroll County, Virginia, and then into the Round Peak area of Surry County, North Carolina. Fount is known to have been a horse trader and Tommy told a story in Les Blank's film *Sprout Wings and Fly* about his

self-amputation of a big toe with a chisel. Tommy's grandfather Rufus Austin ("Rufe") Jarrell (1839-1921) was born when the Jarrells were still living in Rockingham County. Rufe was a veteran of the Confederate Army, and was wounded multiple times in the Civil War. When he moved his family to Round Peak, he was known as a liquor maker, licensed by the government until prohibition, and people liked to visit to hear his war stories. Rufe's second wife, Susan Turney, gave him two sons, both of whom would be talented musicians: Charles (1874-1943) and Benjamin (1880-1946). Susan Turney had two children from a previous marriage, Dave and Mary, who were musically talented and influenced the next two generations of Jarrells. Ben and Charlie both learned to play banjo and fiddle from neighbors and were known to play for the "school breakings," end of term celebrations at the rural one-room school houses that were common in the late 19th Century. The brothers would march out of the school at the head of a line of students, playing banjo and fiddle all the way. Ben was known to play with his Round Peak neighbors Tony Lowe and Charlie Lowe and it was in concert with those two men that Jarrell developed some aspects of what came to be called the Round Peak sound and style. Ben was one of the first people in his area to own a cylinder record player, a testament to his love of music. Benjamin was also one of the first Jarrells to develop a dislike of farming for a living, and he sought alternatives, including liquor making and operating a general store (Conway 1988a). Nevertheless, the family still raised much of their own food, including cattle, corn, buckwheat, rye, beans, cabbage, sugar cane, sweet

potatoes, Irish potatoes, apples, and tobacco. Ben's grandson, Thomas Reavis Lyons (son of Julia, the oldest daughter), wrote a genealogical essay that compiles some of the family lore about Ben, while never mentioning the recording session that brought him the most fame outside the region:

Grandpa and Austin Snow operated a general store in Round Peak, NC until circa 1918. The Round Peak Post Office was in the store and grandpa was the postmaster from 4 March 1914 until 23 Sept 1918. Austin Snow was a mail carrier so grandpa did most of the work operating the store. The store was located at the intersection of the Old Low Gap Road and the Casper Stewart Road. The Ivy Green School was located just across the road from the store.

Grandpa then took an unsuccessful trip out west. He returned circa 1920 because he had built a dry good store at Cross Roads, NC (now Toast, NC) on South Franklin road where the Pantry is located now and began operating it in 1921. He also built a home nearby and Raymonds' family lived in it for many years.

On many occasions my mother has told me that Grandma would ask Grandpa why he let so and so have groceries and clothes when he knew good in well that he would never get paid. He would always say "Susie, I can't stand the thought of children going hungry or without something to wear. If I did not let them have the necessary products it would interrupt my sleeping patter." Grandma would never say another word.

...

When I first remember my grandparents, they lived on the Low Gap Road (now the Toast Road) near the Jarrell General Store. It was a big house and always a lot of people there, beside their children and grandchildren. It appeared to me that breakfast started soon after daylight and the kitchen stayed open the rest of the day. Anybody that came in and let it be known that they were hungry was always fed and most people that didn't have a place to sleep were almost always given a place to sleep for a reasonable amount of time. (Lyons in Surry County Genealogical Society 1994)



Figure 3: Round Peak mountain from the site of Ben Jarrell's general store. Photograph by James Ruchala.

Tommy, born March 1, 1901, was the first of Benjamin and Susan Amburn's eleven children (they adopted a twelfth). He began playing music on the banjo at the age of eight, and learned how to play his first tune, "Reuben," from Bauga or "Boggy" Cockerham, a man his father had hired to work on their land. Cockerham tuned his banjo in a special tuning and handed it to Tommy. As Jarrell told Neithammer: "Here, Tommy,' says, ' you can play ol' Reuben.' 'Huh!' I says, 'I ain't never could start a tune on nothin'.' 'Well,' he says, 'looky here,' says, 'ain't but one string to note right there.' Says, 'You can do that.' An' he showed me, y'know. Well, I got to foolin' with it, an' it wasn't but a little bit til I started ol' Reuben" (Neithammer 1991:25). After a while, Ben bought a home-made banjo for young Tommy. When he was 13, Tommy began learning to fiddle on an instrument that had belonged to Tony Lowe, an old friend of Ben's who died young in a typhoid epidemic. Tommy's first personal fiddle, and the one he played until his death, was an unremarkable instrument of the sort that was sold through mail-order catalogues in the early 20th century. The fiddle belonged to Tommy's mother's cousin, and Tommy paid ten dollars for it in 1915. Years later, when Tommy won the National Heritage Award, he was invited to play one of the Stradivarius violins in the Smithsonian collection. This experiment was included in Les Blank's film "My Old Fiddle" and it ends with Tommy concluding that he preferred his own well-used instrument to the Italian artifact. Ben, it seems, did not do much teaching, and Tommy had to learn by

observation of his father. He told Ray Alden, “I watched him like a hawk” (1992). He must have paid careful attention and learned quickly, as Tommy soon began playing for dances. He actually got his first gig when his father had to turn down a request to play because of a previous promise. Tommy started playing for the usual round of workings and dances, often with Charlie Lowe on banjo (Neithammer 1991).

Tommy attended Ivy Green School, but quit in the seventh grade. He learned to make whiskey in about 1918, not from his father Ben, but from his uncle Charlie. During this time Ben was on a three year trip to Oregon, where he made whiskey and spent some time in jail. Tommy said that he learned how to make “sugar whiskey,” presumably as opposed to the more traditional Appalachian corn liquor. Moonshine whiskey was a large part of the economy in the Round Peak area during the Prohibition years, being one of the few sure ways to earn cash. It was sometimes a “safety net” that farmers could turn to in the event of a crop failure. Drinking also had serious risks, as Tommy learned in 1920. As Tommy told Neithammer, he and his brother Fred became involved in a drunken fight with their uncle Charlie in a dispute over a banjo. Charlie hit Fred over the head with a shotgun barrel, and Tommy hit Charlie in the head with a pistol. After some family bystanders pulled Tommy off his uncle, Charlie cut Tommy's head and neck, causing significant blood loss. The next day, Charlie swore out several warrants for the arrest of Tommy and Fred Jarrell. Tommy fled across the state line to Lamsburg, Virginia, where he stayed with family. A doctor treated his wound and told him that the knife missed

Tommy's jugular by a fraction of an inch. After a few months of “dodgin' the law” in Virginia, Tommy and his uncle settled their dispute, and the warrants were dismissed. Tommy and his uncle reconciled, after a fashion:

[NDN: And did Uncle Charlie ever apologize or anything?]
No, it never was mentioned. Uncle Charlie, well, he was a good fellow when he was sober, but he was mean as the devil when he was a-drinkin'. What Daddy said was that Charlie always has been mean as hell when he was a-drinkin'. But if that hadn't happened, I never would have saw my wife, y'know, it all worked out. It all worked out for the best, I reckon, at last. (Neithammer 1991/1992:39)

During his sojourn in Virginia, Tommy made the acquaintance of Zack Payne, an old fiddler from whom Tommy learned two rare tunes: “Devil in the Strawstack” and “Flatwoods.” He'd gone to see Payne in hopes of learning two other tunes (“Billy in the Lowground” and “Leather Britches”), but though Payne played them, Jarrell did not remember or learn them to his satisfaction. Tommy remembered that Payne played three of these tunes in standard violin tuning (GDAE, low to high), and tuned the E string down to D for “Flatwoods.” This is one of the first of many examples of differences between the up-the-mountain Virginia fiddle tunes and that of Surry County (Neithammer 1991/1992). Tommy's early habit of seeking out older fiddlers to learn tunes from may have predisposed him to be the welcoming host and mentor to young musicians that he became in his later years.

One of the most important events of his stay in Virginia was meeting his future wife, Nina, the daughter of Charlie Barnett Lowe (not the Charlie Lowe of Round Peak),

when he and Fred went to make whiskey for the older man. The story of Tommy and Nina's courtship is one he seems to have told often, and it is well remembered by his fans and friends. The version he told Neithammer is charming enough to be worth quoting at length.

I'd known Nina about two years 'fore we ever got married. It was about two years after I first went up there til we got married. Fred talked to her more than I did. I was all the time havin' to play the fiddle, you know. Fred was a 'dancin' with her an' a-talkin' to her, course he wasn't a-courtin' her or nothin'. An', we just, you now, got to liking each other.

I never will forget—we was a-hoein' corn, by god, when I asked her about getting' married. I told her, I said, “Nina, we'll get married, if you want to. But,” I says, “I'll tell you right now, I make whiskey, I play poker, an' I go to dances, I make music, an',” I says, “I don't know whether I'll ever quit that or not. But,” I says, “If you think we can get along, now, we'll get married—an' if you don't think we can, right now's the time to say somethin'.” “Well,” she says, “I believe we'd get along all right.” Now that's the way it happened. (1991/1992:40).

The Jarrells were married December 27, 1923. This well-known story shows the young Tommy as an unrepentant rounder, but his tune changed not long after. The young couple lived with Nina's parents during the first year of their marriage, but in that year both Nina's mother and father died. The couple moved in with Tommy's parents, who at this point lived in Mount Airy. Tommy's first child, Ardena, was born on February 27, 1925, and Tommy started working for the North Carolina Highway Commission on April 1 (ibid). He continued to work there, mostly operating a motor grader, for 41 years. During this period Tommy sidelined his fiddling, a pattern quite common among traditional fiddlers (Jabbour 1981). Ardena remembered her father picking up the fiddle and playing

a few tunes after work once in a while, but for the most part, the obligations of raising a family came first during these middle years. The Jarrells had two more children, both boys. Clarence Wayne (called “Wayne”) in 1927; and Benjamin Franklin (called “Benny” or “B. F.”) in 1935.

In 1966, Tommy retired from the Highway Commission and began fiddling a little more. Just as he was starting to enjoy his retirement, Nina died in February 1967. Tommy Jarrell at this point was dealt a great blow, but he probably could not have foreseen what was in his future. He may have continued to play a little around the house, getting rustier and forgetting tunes in the face of lack of interest. Though he lived in a neighborhood with family close by, without his life partner or his job, he may have succumbed to the loneliness that afflicts many elderly people. Though he worked to maintain North Carolina's roads for over forty years, he had never got a driver's license nor owned a car, which might have compounded his isolation. That none of these things came to pass is largely the result of the national folk revival and its turn to regional folk traditions in the late 1960s and 1970s. Alan Jabbour met Tommy in 1967 at Galax after being informed about him by Tommy's son, B. F., who was working at a radio station in Durham at the time. Jabbour's handwritten notes from his trip to Galax in August 1967 include reference to half a dozen fiddlers whom he met. The notes approximate the musicians' ages, give the locations of their homes, tunes they played and whether or not they welcome visitors:

I met Mr. T. J. (“Tommy”) Jarrell, a fiddler who now lives on Franklin Rd. (crosses St. 89), opp. Franklin School, Mt. Airy, N.C. He was raised along the

Blue Ridge near the N.C.-Va.. border. He knows Granny Will Your Dog Bite, Cider (Stillhouse), & Ducks on the Millpond. Welcomes a visit. (from file AFS 13,703-13,709, Alan Jabbour--fiddlers)

That last sentence may be one of the great understatements in the history of the folk revival. Jabbour visited Jarrell, and recorded him a few times, but continued to devote most of his fieldwork and fiddling attention to Henry Reed. Jarrell would not stay obscure for long, though, and there were to be many visits in his future.

Conclusions

Old-time music in the years before the mid-1960s served various functions in Surry County, but it was almost always the province of men of the poor white and yeoman classes in the rural areas. The people of the town—and here I mean the middle and upper classes in Mount Airy—took little notice of it, except as an occasional curiosity to be reported on when there was a fiddle contest. It has been shown that fiddles and banjos were associated with slaves, criminals, drunkards and fighters since the 1700s in North Carolina, and these associations seem to have held sway even as ambitious musicians were trying to make careers for themselves as professional entertainers, as DaCosta Woltz and his Southern Broadcasters did. While women and African Americans did play banjos and fiddles, often at very high levels of ability, they are not well remembered, and did not make it into many newspaper accounts, or onto recordings. The only exceptions are the women of the Nance Family, who performed sacred vocal music,

and were led by the patriarchal father.

For the people who played and enjoyed the old-time music, it could be both a functional music, that served to bring young people together to court, and a means of expressing ideas about social rules, as in the case of the ballad “Claude Allen.” The players in the 20th Century, as exemplified by the Jarrells, were both preservers of older ways of playing music and living life, and active participants in the political and social changes sweeping the region as a whole. The music was also a link to the collective past, an echo of the times before the war, and for a young musicians like Tommy Jarrell, that was some of the appeal. During the early 20th Century, there were several forceful individuals, both within the community (like Ralph Epperson) and without (like C. Z. Whitaker), who made attempts at revitalizing society through old-time music. The musicians themselves kept their music exciting by incorporating new influences, first the sound of African American banjo music, later the sound of bluegrass and country music. Tommy Jarrell, more resistant than some of his fellow musicians to the appeal of the new, would go visiting older musicians to learn their tunes, and in the 1960s, as American society was going through unprecedented upheaval, young people would begin showing up at his home, looking for tunes, and a link to an earlier time and simpler way of life.

CHAPTER 4

SURRY COUNTY MUSIC HISTORY AFTER 1965

Introduction: Interventions and Pathways

Surry County's old-time music tradition in the early 1960s can be likened to that log cabin again—it has a core that survives from the fiddle music of the early 1800s, but it has been expanded and updated. It incorporates new instruments like the banjo, guitar and mandolin. It is still functional and in active use, ready for a nostalgic person to come by and take inspiration from it. As the log cabin's period of use as survival structure overlapped with its period of nostalgic revival, so did the old-time music. The revival in this case was part of a much larger social and cultural moment in the United States, the folk revival, or folk song revival. Initially a flurry of interest in the folk songs of rural and working people, it led to interest in the actual sources of these songs, both on out-of-print commercial recordings and as carried by living “tradition bearers” such as Tommy Jarrell.

The revival is sometimes described as an *intervention*, David Whisnant’s *All That is Native and Fine* (1983) looks at the work of folk collectors, promoters and advocates as “systematic cultural interventions” in folk culture:

By that I mean simply that someone (or some institution) consciously and programmatically takes action within a culture with the intent of affecting it in

some specific way that the intervenor thinks desirable. (13)

Such interventions are an aspect of the “politics of culture,” or “the interaction of disparate cultural systems *as* systems” (13). An analysis of a cultural intervention requires an understanding of this politics of culture, “especially the role of formal institutions and forceful individuals in defining and shaping perspectives, values, tastes, and agendas for cultural change” (15). In the case of Surry County old-time music, there were several interventions that happened beginning in the mid-1960s. The agents of intervention were more often “forceful individuals” like record collectors and field recordists than formal institutions, though there were a few institutions, too, and they included record labels, radio stations, and periodicals. The interaction of these systems with the system of traditional old-time music will be the underlying theme of the following chapter. But several of the intervenors were not outsiders, but people within the folk culture who were inspired by the revival activities and undertook their own interventions—in one case founding a record label and in another reviving the home square dance tradition.

I find the idea of the *pathway* to be useful in thinking about the ways that musicians navigate their social and artistic worlds. The concept was developed by Ruth Finnegan in the groundbreaking book *The Hidden Musicians*, her study of the many local music scenes of a London suburb. Pathways are “a series known and regular routes which people chose—or were led into—and which they both kept open and extended through

their actions” (1989:305). Pathways are also *part-time*—people can follow one or many musical pathways, and may leave and return to them over the course of their lifetime. They can also overlap and intersect with other musical and nonmusical practices.

These pathways did more than provide the established routines of musical practice which people could choose to follow: they also had symbolic depth....The impression given ...was that their music-making was one of the habitual routes by which they identified themselves as worthwhile members of society and which they regarded as of somehow deep-seated importance to them as human beings.

This leads on to a second point. These local musical pathways were established, already-trodden and, for the most part, abiding routes which many people had taken and were taking in company with others. To be sure, none were permanent in the sense of being changeless, nor could they survive without people treading and constantly re-forming them; new paths *were* hewn out, some to become established, others to fade or be only faintly followed, others again to be extended and developed through new routings by the individuals and groups who patronized them. (306-307)

Finnegan's study has been cited and used as a model for scholars of musical “worlds” and “scenes” for some time, but for some reason the pathways model has not been as influential on previous work as I've found it to be to mine. This is perhaps surprising, as my historic scope and rural location are quite remote from the site of Finnegan's research.

The pathways model was a way to think about contemporary activity in an urban setting. I have found that it is also useful in thinking about historical activity and about life in the semi-rural contemporary South. Lornell's observations about the work habits of A & R men in the 1920s and 1930s is an example of a pathway that explains why some musicians were recorded but not others, and why the ambitious musicians of Surry County had to take the initiative and travel to Indiana to make themselves heard (1989).

The rural musicians that I've studied were following established routes. They have been hewing new pathways for as long as they've been playing music. Some have become established, such as the Round Peak style, or bluegrass, or the addition of guitar and bass to the string band. Some have vanished, such as the play-party. Some have faded and been taken up again in recent years, such as the use of the ukulele in the string band. Others have been taken up intermittently, such as the two-banjo lineup of DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters.

The revival brought a wave of young people through Surry County, mainly to Tommy Jarrell's house, but some took paths to other musicians, and apprenticed themselves to them. This attention led to a higher profile for the local musicians, who were often neglected in their home area. The revival also showed a way to make money from music, and several locals became active in revivalism themselves. The revival was also affected by Surry County, in that the music that was made there became, for a time, a *lingua franca*, a “default mode” for old-time music around the country and around the world.

Most significant for this work, the folk song revival of the 1950s and 1960s, and the old-time string band revival that followed it in the 1970s, contributed to the revitalization of the community tradition of old-time music and dance in Surry County. Though many local traditions were celebrated by the string band revival, Surry County's is one of the only ones that has seen a lasting impact, and that retains its character as an

important part of local life. The agents of this change were, as in the early 20th Century, forceful individuals, including musicians, record collectors, broadcasters, and amateur researchers.

The Revival Comes to Surry County

The popular culture movement called the folk song revival had several important effects on the old-time music of Surry County. The revival involved several components and activities. Among the most relevant for the present work were: record collecting and connoisseurship; amateur field recording; the learning of traditional and rural musical skills and repertoires by educated and/or urban youth; the trend by some of these people to try to live in a more traditional and rural way (the “back-to-the-land” movement); the move from learning a general body of folk songs transmitted by urban recording artists (such as Pete Seeger and Joan Baez) from a large geographic area to the more intensive study of regional traditions transmitted by authentic tradition bearers (Tommy Jarrell in Surry County, Jean Ritchie in Kentucky, Melvin Wine in West Virginia, etc.). These will all be taken up and explored in the following chapter.

The 1965 album *Clawhammer Banjo* (County 701) was a landmark in at least three ways: in the world of old-time clawhammer banjo playing, it demonstrated a new range of idiomatic possibilities; for the then-new enterprise of County Records, it proved that there was a market for field recordings of living old-time masters. Though it did not

distinguish the Surry County style of playing from that of Galax, it brought the unique banjo sounds of Kyle Creed and Fred Cockerham to the world for the first time.

County 701 was produced by an amateur banjo player from New York City. Charles Faurot (b. 1935) grew up in Chicago and took up the banjo while an undergraduate at Yale (class of 1958). His contemporaries there included John Cohen and Tom Paley, who started a bi-weekly “Hoot,” short for “hootenanny,” or jam session, on campus. In addition to these jam sessions, Faurot was influenced by albums of bluegrass and old-time banjo music on the Folkways label, and by Pete Seeger's *How to Play the 5-String Banjo*. The New Lost City Ramblers were also influential, as they were for many other musicians at that time. He'd started making home recordings of musicians, including Tom Paley, John Cohen, Fleming Brown of Chicago, Illinois and Buell Kazee of eastern Kentucky. Faurot also recorded live performances of bluegrass bands when the opportunity presented itself (personal communication).

Faurot had a kindred spirit in David Freeman. Though based in midtown New York, Faurot was well-acquainted with the area around Surry County from his collecting expeditions. In the early 1960s, he often travelled to the Southeast in the company of other record collectors, Loy Beaver and Joe Bussard, in particular. He found that Virginia and North Carolina were the most fertile areas for this activity and became acquainted with the fiddlers' conventions and some of the living old-time musicians who had recorded in the 1920s, particularly members of the Red Fox Chasers. When Faurot

produced his first County LP, an anthology of old-time 78s (*Mountain Fiddle Music*, County 501), he knew that the Galax-Mount Airy area would be a good outlet for the album. As time went on and he issued more albums, he spent a fair amount of time in the region restocking stores. He remembers Surry County being one of the key areas for sales of his early reissue LPs (personal communication March 11, 2009). The LPs, an indirect product of the folk song revival, became an example of what has recently been called cultural repatriation (Fox and Sakakibara 2008). Kirk Sutphin, a young performer with Surry County roots, recalls becoming interested in old-time music when his father brought home County's reissue of Da Costa Woltz's *Southern Broadcasters* (County 524) (interview May 2007).

Freeman travelled in other regions of the south, but found that—in addition to finding more old records in the Galax-Mount Airy region—the active musicians were better there too:

Though I had traveled extensively in the South by the mid 1960s, there were a lot of areas that I had never been to but had heard were rich in traditional music (The Ozarks, some mountain areas around Asheville, some areas of West Virginia, etc). But upon traveling to those areas and hearing the experiences of other collectors & musicians, I soon became convinced that none of them had as active a scene and the quality of musicianship as the Mt. Airy-Galax area. For instance, there was beginning to be somewhat of a revival of old-time music around Mountain View, Ark., but though there were quite a few musicians there, the music played was basically not nearly as strong as Surrey, Grayson & Carroll counties—I think this was because in Arkansas the music was being “revived” after many years being pretty dormant, while in the Virginia/North Carolina border area the tradition had never stopped (maybe because of the many fiddlers contests and the abundance of weekly square dances, as well as the influence of WPAQ radio and a few other radio stations). (Personal communication March 11, 2009)

Freeman's hypothesis about the reason for the quality of music in the Surry County area is reasonable, and it aligns with many of the themes in the current work: continuity of tradition, and the number of outlets available for musicians and dancers.

Charles Faurot and Dave Freeman met each other the early 1960s. Freeman had been working for the Postal Service while he was engaged in his collecting activities. He recalls:

When I met [Faurot] he was going out and recording these guys just as a hobby—he worked in a bank—and played a little banjo himself, and was interested in banjo, and had recorded ten or twelve banjo players from different parts. It wasn't on a big scale, but he had a few nice tapes, some things on Kyle Creed, and asked if I would be interested in doing an album of new things, and we did.” (Wolfe 2004:160).

With the promise of an LP release, Faurot traveled to the Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention in August 1964 to make inquiries and scout talent. While there he introduced himself to Kyle Creed, George Stoneman, and Fred Cockerham, who competed in the contest, and to Wade Ward (1892-1971), who did not. Stoneman was the first place winner in the then-new Clawhammer Banjo category that year. This would not have been a surprise, as Stoneman, a Galax resident and brother of country music pioneer Ernest V. “Pop” Stoneman, had won first or second place every year from 1960 to 1965 and had been among the top performers at the convention since the 1940s. In 1949, he came in second to Round Peak legend Charlie Lowe. Wade Ward had an even longer history at the

convention, having won first place at the second Convention ever held, in 1936 (Williams n.d.). Faurot visited Ward at his home the following week and recorded him for the record. Ward was known to folk music fans at the time from his appearance on the Alan Lomax produced *Anglo-American Shanties, Lyric Songs, Dance Tunes and Spirituals* (1943). Mike Seeger and Eric Davidson followed in the mid 1950s. Davidson became a regular visitor to Ward's home and produced several albums of Ward and the musicians Ward introduced him to in the 1960s (Folkways 02363, 1962; Folkways 03811, 1962; Folkways 03831, 1968; Folkways 03832, 1967; Folkways 02380, 1973) (R. Carlin 2008). Ward was perhaps the most well-recorded traditional five-string banjo player of the early 1960s. Faurot thought that Ward's performances of "Chilly Winds" and "Old Joe Clark" on Lomax's collection were "two of the best clawhammer performances ever." Ward appeared on several collections of mountain music in the early 1960s, and attained the status of a guru to aspiring clawhammer banjo players. In going to Galax and seeking out Wade Ward in particular, Faurot was following the trail blazed by Alan Lomax, who had recorded Ward playing solo and with the Galax area string band the Bogtrotters starting in 1937. Like the early A & R men who settled into patterns of recording artist from certain areas or certain field scouts, the field recorders of the early 1960s often sought the same artists that they knew from previously released LPs. Ward was featured on at least nine LP compilations by the time Faurot met him. Faurot remembers the visit to Ward's:

Wade invited us to come over the Monday after Galax. Spent a couple of hours with him talking and recording. I let him play and only when there was a pause would I suggest songs. After a couple of hours when he was more-or-less played out and it was lunch time I got up to leave. He insisted that I, wife and daughter stay for lunch. While he showed us around (he had a small – 3-4 cows- class C dairy), his daughter prepared fried chicken, mashed potatoes, beans (I think) and fresh made biscuits.

We remained good friends and I recorded him several times more, once with Glen Smith (some of that came out on CO-2718). (personal communication)

While at the Fiddlers Convention, Faurot had made arrangements to visit and record Creed, Cockerham and Stoneman at a later date. In October of that year, the recordings were made using an AKG D24 and Tanberg.

My approach with all four was to encourage them to play as many of the tunes they knew before making any suggestions of my own. I was interested in their music and not a Northerner's perception of what their music should be. This became one of my basic goals in getting the music on tape. Even at these first recording efforts, a second goal was to get their performance as good as possible. With K[yle] C[reed] and F[red] C[ockerham] I even had them do second takes in some cases. (For example, endings would always be a problem.) For better or worse I was always looking for songs that had not been recorded before --- or at least which I didn't know had been recorded before. (personal communication)

The resulting album was called *Clawhammer Banjo* (County 701, 1965), and was the first in County's new 700 series of albums of music by living musicians. The original album had a striking line drawing on the cover depicting a fiddler and a banjo player sitting on wooden chairs, getting in tune. The banjo player, based on a photograph of Wade Ward, is leaning over towards the fiddler, twisted to the side a little. He is sitting sideways in his chair but his substantial, workboot-clad feet are planted firmly on the ground. The

drawing is, to me, a wonderful illustration of the role of the banjo in the banjo-fiddle duets of the Blue Ridge: A little bit askew from the fiddle melody, but still rooted firmly in the underlying pulse of the dance.

Faurot had created a new kind of album, the banjo anthology, that would become a staple of the string band revival of the later 1960s. Earlier anthologies included a variety of traditional forms and genres--ballads, fiddle tunes, banjo songs--with the order of tracks arranged to showcase variety. These albums were not aimed exclusively at banjo players, and often they included much non-banjo material, but for developing banjo players, they were essential listening. One of the reasons was that it was a lot easier to hear what the banjo was doing, on these LPs, than on LPs of full string bands, where the banjo part might be difficult to distinguish from the guitar and fiddle. *Clawhammer Banjo* was joined in this category by *High Atmosphere* on the Rounder label (a collection recorded and produced by John Cohen of the New Lost City Ramblers), and two “sequel” LPs on County. Mike Seeger, who was also fascinated by the three-finger style popularized by Earl Scruggs, produced the anthologies *American Banjo* and *Mountain Music Bluegrass Style* (Folkways). Eric Davidson, as noted above, released several LPs of Wade Ward's banjo playing and other music from Grayson and Carroll Counties in Virginia.

County 701 opened with Wade Ward's “June Apple” and “John Lover's Gone,” two Virginia favorites. Then, a bold contrast, comes Kyle Creed's “Darlin' Nellie Grey,” a

banjo solo based on a popular song written by one Benjamin Hanby in 1856. Wade Ward's banjo performances are driving, rhythmic powerhouses, with a twangy, echoing timbre. Ward plays the main notes of his melody, and brushes across multiple strings to play chords in between the melodic phrases. Creed's performance displayed all the hallmarks of *his* style—melodic more than rhythmic, with a frequent use of the fifth string as both a drone and a melody string, many slides and open strings, very few chords. Creed brushes across multiple strings, too, but does so more slowly than Ward, creating the effect not of a chord, but of a melodic grace note. But what really stands out after Wade Ward is Kyle Creed's mellow timbre, reminiscent, perhaps of a xylophone or some other percussion instrument. This full and round timbre was what he called “plunky” and it would come to be an influence on players and builders of banjos, as will be shown in chapter six. “Darlin' Nellie Gray” is followed by “Ducks on the Millpond,” an old dance tune popular in Virginia and North Carolina, and Kyle uses it to demonstrate the lick that would come to be known, inaccurately, as the “Galax lick.” This move involves brushing across the long strings of the banjo before plucking the fifth string squarely on the beat to play a melody note, usually the high A. Three tracks of Fred Cockerham's wild fretless banjo playing follow Kyle. “Pretty Little Miss,” “Long Steel Rail,” and “Little Maggie” show Fred's bag of inventive tricks: bluesy slides, wild intonation, very low drone strings for some tunings, strange noises and “clucks” that defy notation, and Fred's low-pitched and expressive singing. If Kyle was the precise and

plunky side of what would come to be called Round Peak banjo, Fred was the bluesy and inventive side.

County 701 was the first vehicle for hearing what would come to be recognized as the Round Peak sound outside its home area. The music of the Galax area was known to aficionados through the large and historic Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention. Wade Ward had become known through his appearances on several Library of Congress, Folkways, and Prestige anthologies. The music of nearby North Carolina was more obscure, and the notes and arrangement of this album reflect the then-Galax-centric view of string-band music. Faurot introduces this record, assuming that his audience apprehends a clear distinction between “folk” music and “traditional” music:

One facet of the current preoccupation with folk music (what ad would be seen without a banjo?) is, encouragingly, growing appreciation of traditional music. Part of the credit for this must be given to the New Lost City Ramblers (and their progeny). Their authentic interpretations of the old tunes, via concerts, records, and tapes, have been for many the introduction to this intense music. But a substantial portion of the credit must also go to the music itself. The qualities that have kept it so very alive in the Southern Highlands have kindled in the citified folk musicians a similar enthusiasm. And this isn't surprising—the songs, while not as slick or as smooth as some might like, more than compensate for this by their inherent beauty and virility. Unlike its rarefied cousins, the music, more akin to rough gold than to polished silver, endures.

It is difficult to imagine a world in which the question could be asked “what ad would be seen without a banjo?” But this album was introduced into a world where the Kingston Trio and their epigones were popular entertainers and hootenannies were broadcast on

network television. That the names of Kyle Creed and Fred Cockerham were unknown to a world where banjo players could be considered pop idols is unimaginable today. But Faurot made his case for these “intense” and “virile” performances. Of special note is the fact that Faurot distinguishes between “folk music,” which is the popular material of the early revival, and “traditional” music, which is/was performed by rural musicians “in the Southern Highlands” and brought to the attention of urban appreciators by intermediaries such as the New Lost City Ramblers.

Clawhammer Banjo and its two sequels *More Clawhammer Banjo Songs & Tunes from the Mountains* (County 717, 1968) and *Clawhammer Banjo, Volume 3* (County 757, 1978) were among the biggest sellers in County Records' catalogue and showed David Freeman that there was a market for new recordings of string band music. Thus the 700 series became one of the great success stories of the label.

From Record Collectors to Field Recordists

The old 78-era recordings were still important, though. A small but dogged community of record collectors were interested not only in LP reissues such as County's 500 series, but in the original shellac records. After exhausting whatever record, antique and junk stores may have existed in their hometowns, these collectors typically took to the road in search of more. One of the major collectors, Joe Bussard, tells the story of his initiation, aged about eleven, into this group in an biographical essay on his web site:

In 1947, he heard Jimmie Rodgers for the first time and his passion for collecting was unexpectedly born. His local record store didn't have any recordings of Rodgers, and Joe's quest began. He started asking old folks around town if they had any of Rodgers' music.

A woman gave him a box of records. Not only did it have two of the sought-after Rodgers' 78s, but lots of other material that sparked his interest.

When Joe was old enough to drive, his searches expanded and he really began to gather treasures. He traveled the back roads of Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Virginia, knocking on the doors of homes and following tips passed on from the strangers he met. "I could look at a house and I could smell the records inside," says Joe. "It was best to go to the kitchen door." His heart would beat faster when he saw an old "Victrola" in a house.
(<http://www.fonotone.com/>, accessed November, 2008)

The folklore of record collectors is full of triumphant stories of dusty out-of-business general stores that still hold unsold dealer stock; and tragic tales of finding rare old 78s worn down to nothing or melted into unplayable shapes to be used as flower pots.. Many of the great record collectors would eventually become producers and editors of reissue LPs. David Freeman of County Records, Joe Bussard of Fonotone, and Richard Nevins were among this group.

The records of Woltz, Jarrell and Jenkins attracted the attention of some of these record collectors. Charles Faurot, again was part of this story. He tells of how a record collecting trip led to the first records of Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham and Oscar Jenkins.

At the 1967 Galax Fiddlers Convention, Rich Nevins and Dave Freeman, both avid collectors of 78's, ran into Oscar Jenkins. Because Oscar's father, Frank, was one of DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters, they asked him if Oscar thought

Tommy Jarrell, also a son of one of the members of the Southern Broadcasters, might have some 78's.

Oscar replied, "I don't know."

They asked him, "Do you want to take a drive over there?"

He said, "Why not."

And off they went. Shortly after arriving at Tommy's house, Dave and Rich asked, "Got any 78's?"

Tommy answered, "No. Say, Oscar, got your banjo in the car?"

"Sure do."

"Get it and we'll play some tunes."....

When Rich and Dave found me back in Galax, they were raving about the live music they had just heard. In the days that followed, Rich and I spent a lot of time recording Tommy and Oscar together....

During a break in one of the early recording sessions, one of us mentioned we knew Fred Cockerham. Tommy perked up and said, "You know Fred? I grew up with him." We wasted no time going to Fred's house and bringing him back to Tommy's. When they got back together again for the first time in a number of years, it was as if they had never been apart so tight-knit was their playing. (Faurot 2004)

These 1967 recordings led to more sessions, and later a concert tour of the northeast.

These albums were varied, with a mixture of recordings from different sessions and visits, utilizing different personnel. Some were recordings of Tommy and Fred playing banjo-fiddle duets, some were of Tommy and Oscar. Some had Oscar fiddling with Shag Stanley on guitar. The recordings of Tommy on fiddle with both Fred and Oscar playing banjo are some of the most unusual, though.

The "Recreation"

The two-banjo recordings on the County LPs, with Tommy fiddling, and Fred and

Oscar on banjo, are often thought to have been an attempt at recreating DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters. The debate over the quality and authenticity of these recordings reveals the attitudes of various locals and revivalists about representation, intervention and the responsibilities of the field recordist.

Many old-time music enthusiasts find the two-banjo tracks too busy and find Oscar's loud two finger banjo a distraction. This seems to be an opinion that has attached to these recordings in recent years (since the Cockerham-Jarrell -Jenkins recordings have been reissued on CD in 2004). Early reviews that I have found were wildly enthusiastic.

Tony Russell wrote of the second album with this lineup:

[Cockerham and Jenkins play banjo] together behind Jarrell on “Christmas”, “Old Joe Clark” and “Let Me Fall”, and these three pieces, not surprisingly, remind you strongly of the wonderful old DaCosta Woltz recordings, in which Tommy's father Ben and Oscar's father Frank took the fiddle and banjo roles. The newer recordings come as extremely moving echoes of the old, but you need no acquaintance with the latter to know that County's tracks are performances of the highest order. And, as of old, the tension of the two banjos interweaving round each other creates a gripping effect... (Russell 1971:28)

Nevins seemed to invite the comparison in his notes to County 713:

Of those traditional elements handed down from father to son, none was more vital than their music. Without any question at all the strongest influence on Tommy was his Dad, Ben Jarrell, and on Oscar, his Dad, Frank Jenkins. As the aware reader will immediately recognize, these are not just two names, but two of the all-time great performers of country music history. They were the framework around which was built the one and only Da Costa Woltz's Southern Broadcasters, playing fiddle (and vocal) and first banjo respectively. The selections presented on this album are very reminiscent of the performances of that group. (Nevins 1968)

Somehow the striking similarity became interpreted as a conscious attempt at recreating

the earlier band. Sometimes they are even thought to be a failed intervention. A recent discussion of these recordings on the internet Listserv Banjo-L rehashed some of these ideas. One "Wild' bill" wrote to inquire:

Date: Mon Nov 26 13:39:19 EST 2007

From: wcjo@vol.com wcjo@vol.com
Subject: oscar jenkins banjo?
To: banjo-l@list.mail.virginia.edu

Is oscar jenkins banjo style properly considered a "roundpeak" style.

This is a serious question so please, no off the wall responses.

William Rodgers replied with the received wisdom about Jenkins and the Woltz recreation:

Date: Mon, 26 Nov 2007 11:31:25 -0800 (PST)

From: WILLIAM ROGERS <rogers-roberts@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: Re: oscar jenkins banjo?
To: wcjo@vol.com, banjo-l@list.mail.virginia.edu

No. As I understand it, Oscar Jenkins did not use the 5th string, playing in a 4-string chordal style. The main reason he was even recorded was an attempt by the young guys doing the recording to reconstitute the Da Costa Woltz Southern Broadcasters with the sons of Frank Jenkins and Ben Jarrell. Misguided, IMO.

To this, Gail Gillespie, then editor of the *Old Time Herald* and an expert in non-clawhammer old-time banjo styles, replied with a defense of Jenkins:

From: Gail Gillespie <gailg64@mindspring.com>

Sent: Nov 27, 2007 12:52 PM
To: banjo-l@list.mail.virginia.edu
Subject: Re: Oscar Jenkins banjo

Whoa, I must step in with few words in defense of Oscar Jenkins:
Bill, you're right about the awkwardness of the Jenkins, Jarrell & Cockerham ensemble on the County LPs. For obvious reasons, it seemed like a good idea & I don't fault the producers for coming up with the supergroup concept. Those County LPs were great records & we are lucky to have them. The 1920s DaCosta Woltz band, on the other hand, on whom this idea was based, had 2 banjos but they were well-coordinated. Though opinions vary, the general agreement is that the two-banjos were: straightforward 2-finger low banjo (Woltz) & more complex 3-finger high banjo (Oscar's father, Frank.) Check out "Yellow Rose of Texas," & "Washed in the Blood," for example. (You can hear Ray Alden & Bruce Molsky duplicate this double-banjo effect on the Chubby Dragon CD MountAiry.usa, and groups like the Canebrake Rattlers have done it for years.)

Oscar Jenkins had a slightly different finger style, but he was an UNBELIEVABLE banjo player in the right context, namely as the only banjo in a band with a powerful, bluesy, long-bow style fiddler. I have heard some hair-raising recordings of him playing at fiddlers conventions with the likes of Esker Hutchins, Leake Caudle, and John Ashby. He cooked. He snapped it out smartly. He "raked" it ahead of the beat. He was dancing right on top of things with 2 fingers & no picks. It wasn't bluegrass, it wasn't Charlie Poole style (which a lot of those guys in his generation also did very well), nor was it similar to his father Frank Jenkins' intricate old-time 3-finger style. Oscar's playing was its own thing, but it was flat-out KILLER banjo playing.

Right, it was not Round Peak clawhammer--though the repertoire & driving rhythm were the same. After the big fiddlers conventions like Galax separated the band & banjo categories into old-time & bluegrass, a lot of these wonderful & eccentric old-time 2- and 3-

fingerstyles died out. Clawhammer became the only game in town if you didn't want to get yourself or your band disqualified. You can hear enticing tidbits of Oscar's amazing banjo playing with a band on the wonderful Field Recorders Collective Esker Hutchins CD.

G

PS If there's anyone out there with an interest in this, send me an email & I'd be happy to send a current version of my discography.

So Gillespie eloquently defends Jenkins' playing, while perpetuating the story that the County LPs were a conscious re-creation of the DaCosta Woltz band and that this recreation was a mistake. The relationship of the Jarrell-Jenkins-Cockerham group to the Southern Broadcasters remains part of the lore in Surry County. The Southern Broadcasters had a unique sound with the two banjos playing in different styles. Even before Jarrell and Jenkins were known to field recordists like Faurot and Nevins, the New Lost City Ramblers found the sound of the Southern Broadcasters exciting enough to record two of the older band's numbers, "Take Me Back to the Sweet Sunny South" and "Old Joe Clark," with two banjos in the early 1960s (on Folkways 02399 in 1962 and Folkways 02395 in 1963). Several people I interviewed, including Ray Alden and Alan Jabbour, also believed that the two-banjo performances on County 713 were an attempt to recreate the sound on the old Gennett 78s. One local fiddler told me that, while Jarrell and Jenkins were friendly, "Tommy didn't like to play with Oscar" but he did it for the recording (Andy Edmonds, Interview July 31, 2007). For his part, Richard Nevins categorically denies any such attempt. I asked Nevins if the Southern Broadcasters were

the model and he told me: “Not at all. Not in the slightest.” I asked if he was aware of the Southern Broadcasters when he made his recordings for County and he told me:

We were record collectors looking for records. We were collectors of old hillbilly records. How could we not be interested in the DaCosta Woltz Records? That's how we met Tommy. I don't remember how we met Oscar originally. We were talking to Oscar saying do you think Ben's son has any old records. He said “Let's drive over there and see.” That's how it all started, because they started playing music together, and we said “wow, incredible.” So let's make a record. (Interview April 9, 2009)

Charles Faurot also denies any such intention, though when I asked him, he was a bit more circumspect.

You know I'm hesitating. That clearly never was Rich's intention. And I think it got into the folklore because Ray Alden thought about it. On the other hand, I did, but I wasn't going to argue with Rich over it. And that's why we have a wide variety of combinations. You've got Tommy solo on the fiddle; Fred, that great “Reuben”; Oscar playing with Shag and some with Oscar and Tommy and some the three of them. And eventually you look at it and [performances by] the three of them together is way in the minority. It's clear that Tommy and Fred fit. The best fit was Tommy and Fred, no question, because they'd grown up together. And that's the combination that they were most comfortable with. On the other hand I think some of the best stuff on the [records] was the three of them together. I thought the sound worked out, but it wasn't the end-all and be-all. (Charles Faurot Interview January 2009)

Nevins also hinted strongly at the connection in his notes to County 524, the first re-issue of many of the Southern Broadcasters recordings, in which he concluded: “Ben and Frank both died around 1945, but their musical legacy was handed down to their sons Tommy and Oscar respectively, both of whom have kept this great tradition alive. Tommy and Oscar, along with Fred Cockerham, can be heard on County 713, 723 and 741” (Notes

accompanying County 524). The truth may well be somewhere in between.

This debate demonstrates the value that various aspects of the old-time music community place on continuity of tradition. A pathway can become neglected for some decades, and be picked up again, perhaps under the influence of an institution, like County Records, or a forceful individual, like Richard Nevins. In their view, they were continuing the tradition of a band from the Golden Age era of the 1920s. The position taken by William Rodgers (a revivalist) and Andy Edmonds (a young Surry County native), that Oscar was included as a misguided experiment, is an example of a purist streak in the revivalist worldview. This purism might hold that the Round Peak community was a sort of ecosystem, from which the old-time music sprang organically, and the combination of musicians who would not ordinarily play together was unnatural. Tommy and Fred had played together in their youths, so that was acceptable. County Records and its producers, Nevins in particular, were major purveyors of this representation of the old-time music community as a survival from earlier times, which it was. The varied interpretations of these recordings in the 2007 exchange quoted above demonstrates the enduring importance of the question of continuity. Continuity of tradition is valued, but forced continuity is an abomination, or at least “misguided.”

It is possible that Nevins didn't intend to recreate the Southern Broadcasters while Faurot did, but as the Banjo-L discussion quoted above demonstrates, many very knowledgeable people view the two bands as linked both genetically and conceptually,

even if many find the latter band's sound to be a musical dead-end. While the Round Peak sound heard in the Jarrell and Cockerham banjo-fiddle duets are a model for many revivalist musicians, the two-banjo sound is a rarity, and I can think of no groups that spend a lot of time working on and expanding upon that sound. I believe that the later albums of Tommy Jarrell playing solo (County 748 and 756) and in smaller groups (County 779 and 791, Mountain 302, Heritage X and 044) established a leaner standard for what Round Peak music should sound like, with the a banjo playing single notes in a heterophonic duet with the fiddle.

Nonetheless, the Jarrell-Jenkins-Cockerham recordings have become a minor tradition in themselves and have been “recreated” on occasion. At the 2009 Tommy Jarrell Festival, Kirk Sutphin, Kevin Fore and Tom Mylet played in a similar configuration, and Mylet (who played two finger banjo) told me afterwards that they were playing in homage to the County recordings. Kirk Sutphin, Bill Dillof and Pat Conte also recorded two tunes with this type of string band on Sutphin's CD “Grandpa's Favorites” (Old 97 Wrecords #002).

Releasing Round Peak

Nevins, Faurot and Freeman would release three LPs of this trio playing together and in various combinations: *Down to the Cider Mill* (County 713) in 1968, *Back Home in the Blue Ridge* (County 723) in 1971, and *Stay All Night and Don't Go Home* (County

741) in 1973. Paul Brown remembers: “If you knew about County Records, you started to listen to some of the people that they recorded. I felt some of his recordings were more interesting than some other recordings of old-time music that I had heard” (Interview with the author, August 26, 2008). Nancy Dols Neithammer was studying ethnomusicology at UCLA when she encountered these records and she remembers their impact vividly:

At that time, there wasn't near the access to old-time fiddling. All the Library of Congress recordings were all locked up in the archive. You could pay an exorbitant price to get copies made or you could go there in person and listen, but you couldn't copy What you had available was LP records and every time one came out it was a big event. I still remember when the Fuzzy Mountain record came out. Everybody just learned every tune on the entire thing. It was a huge event. The first LP records of Tommy Jarrell were like that too. Those LPs made a huge impact on people. You can imagine—never having heard anything like that before. When I first started fiddling, my ear was more tuned in to smoother fiddling, like Clark Kessinger, more technical, closer to classical, fiddling. And Mike Stringer got me into listening to Tommy's fiddling and some other fiddlers that were less polished in that sense. Sounded more archaic. Just got my ear tuned into that. I became a big fan of Tommy's fiddling and started trying to copy his bowing from those records. I started out writing my thesis on Clark Kessinger and switched to Tommy Jarrell. (Neithammer 2008)

Neithammer was among many who were struck by the power of the Jarrell, Jenkins and Cockerham sound. Eventually she would travel east for a summer of fiddlers' conventions and ended up staying in North Carolina to learn from Tommy first hand for two years. Her interviews with Tommy have appeared in *The Old-Time Herald*. She was not the first, as she indicates. The Fuzzy Mountain String Band, whose album was “a huge event” in Nancy's world, were part of a community and a movement that would have a

major impact on Round Peak music, and the old-time string band at large.

Tunes into Power: The Durham-Chapel Hill Revival Scene

The scene that gave rise to the Fuzzy Mountain String Band first came together in the mid-1960s, with a weekly party and old-time jam session at the home of Bobbie and Tommy Thompson in a small community called Hollow Rock that is between Durham and Chapel Hill. The hosts, and many of the guests, were graduate students and faculty at Duke and the University of North Carolina. Some older locals also attended. (Hicks 1995). A smaller group of the more talented musicians from this scene formed the Hollow Rock String Band. The hosts, Tommy and Bobbie Thompson played banjo and guitar, respectively. Alan Jabbour, then in grad school at Duke, was the fiddler. As noted previously, the unusual Henry Reed tunes and the ensemble style of Hollow Rock, with fiddle, banjo and mandolin playing the melody together while the guitar played simple chordal accompaniment, combined to make the band a popular model for other string bands in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Carter 1991; Hicks 1995).

The scene at the Thompson house produced another influential band after Jabbour and Levy graduated and left town. In addition to the Friday night jam, a smaller set of more serious musicians began holding closed jam sessions during the week. This group would become the Fuzzy Mountain String Band (FMSB). For most of their repertoire, the FMSB used the fieldwork-to-practice-to-performance model established by Jabbour and

Hollow Rock. Fieldwork became part of the expectations for a revivalist musician. Tunes, as Thomas Carter, a member of the FMSB, recollected, served two purposes. First, facility with a basic community stock of tunes gained one entry to the social and musical scene. Second, bringing good new tunes to the circle, especially if they were obscure and learned through fieldwork, allowed you to “influence the musical direction of the circle... tunes were a source of status and power within the community” (Carter 1991:85).

In their search for new tunes, some of the FMSB found their way to Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham. Bill Hicks, Tom Carter and Blanton Owen in particular, were frequent visitors to Surry County. The FMSB recorded Tommy Jarrell's “Sally Ann” which will be considered in Chapter 6. They also worked up a version of the Round Peak favorite “John Brown's Dream” and played it in competition at the 1972 Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention. The band won first place for their performance. The group must have been very faithful to their source. Bill Hicks, the fiddler and singer with the group for that performance, wrote of his satisfaction in an article for the *Old-Time Herald*: “And the best 'prize' Union Grove could give us came later, when they sent the 1972 festival record, with our 'Brown's Dream' to Tommy Jarrell, thinking it was him playing. And, hot damn! Tommy thought so too, though he knew he hadn't played on stage at the contest, until (as he told me later) he heard me singing” (Hicks 1995:21). Blanton Owen, the primary banjo player for the later period of the FMSB's run, was one of the first young people to visit and learn the from Tommy and also from Fred Cockerham. Own first

visited Fred Cockerham while still in the Navy. Blanton was successful enough at learning the Round Peak style that he became Tommy Jarrell's banjo player of choice. He toured the West Coast and mid-West and at the Mariposa folk festival with Tommy and Mike Seeger in 1975 and 1976 (Hicks 1995). At the University of California at Los Angeles, the trio gave a concert and a more informal workshop, where the audience was encouraged to ask questions. Judging from the audience questions, Blanton Owen's Round Peak banjo style and technique were just as interesting to the attendees as Tommy's fiddling and singing (UCLA Archive, D.K. Wilgus Collection 2002.03: Box 62 Item 200203laff569-75). Nancy Dols Neithammer remembered Tommy Jarrell's appearances on this tour as being a big influence on the fiddlers at UCLA. Blanton Owen's banjo playing must have been influential in spreading Round Peak style banjo as well. Blanton Owen went on to play with Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys and earned an MA in Folklore from Indiana University in 1977 (Hicks 1995).

Ray Alden, the Visitor

Not all the revivalists who visited the Round Peak musicians became band-mates. Ray Alden's contribution was as an intermediary, a guide and explainer of Surry County for outsiders. Alden was a high school math teacher and native New Yorker who had been playing banjo in a Pete Seeger mode when he saw the trio of Jenkins, Jarrell and Cockerham at a house concert at the home of Loy Beaver (an undertaker and record

collector who sometimes accompanied Freeman on his expeditions) in New Jersey in the late 1960s. On the strength of their County LP, the three North Carolina men were booked at the Newport Folk Festival and introduced as a band “from Galax, Virginia.” They stopped at Beaver's home on their return trip. Alden found himself captivated by Fred Cockerham's style. He was attracted to the passion he heard in their playing: “I knew his style was different from what I was hearing in New York City. It was night and day. Tommy and Fred, I heard a real passion in those guys. And, to me, that means a lot. Whereas the stuff I'd hear around the city would be kind of bland and also competitive” (Alden 2007). He wrote to Cockerham asking for lessons. Cockerham replied that Alden should come on down to Low Gap, North Carolina. Alden made his first visit in the summer of 1971. It would be the first of many visits, and Alden would have an enormous impact on the old-time string band revival, and on the local scene. More than anyone else, he was responsible for making the name “Round Peak” stick to the style of old-time music played in Surry County. He would write the articles that established the important players of this music and the parameters of the style. As will be shown in Chapter Six, he also has a good claim on being the inventor of an innovation in banjo set-up—the “scoop”—which facilitates the plunky timbre associated with Round Peak.

Lessons with Fred went according to the usual arrangement in this part of the world, which is to say, more like a visit, where the “teacher” might show the student something, but mostly would just play tunes and let the student watch and try to play

along. Fred would sit and play whatever tunes came to mind and Alden would sit and watch, picking up what he could. Tommy Jarrell, remember, never had a lesson from his father, but learned by watching him carefully. In this the old-time system of learning is akin to many other aurally transmitted traditions. Timothy Rice observed that in these traditions, the accomplished musicians possess “the cognitive categories, strategies, or schemata necessary to produce music, although these categories ... were tacit, nonverbal ones” (1994:66). Alden had been learning from Pete Seeger's widely circulated *How to Play the Five-String Banjo*, which made use of tablature and explicit verbal description of the moves involved in playing, but found that he “had to unlearn everything” to catch Cockerham's style.

Since his time in North Carolina was limited, Alden realized that he'd need a reference when he returned to New York, and so he began taping his visits to Fred from the beginning. He also realized that Fred's style was not just more passionate, but technically different from the folk-revival mode of banjo playing as well. As for payment, Ray had noted at the New Jersey house concert that the North Carolinians had purchased a stash of special whiskey for their return trip, so he brought along a bottle to present to Fred. This was, Ray soon realized, a big mistake, as Cockerham and his son made short work of the liquor once the bottle was opened. Fred's wife, Eva, told Alden that he might go and visit Tommy Jarrell, while Fred slept off his intoxication. Alden did so, and remembered to bring a bag of groceries rather than liquor on his subsequent visits to the

Cockerham home in Low Gap. The visit to Tommy Jarrell's was the first of many also. "In those days, nobody was visiting [Tommy], he was all alone. His wife had died and so the company was really nice. Because the people in the community, they paid no attention to him whatsoever. ... back then nobody could have cared less about this old guy who played the fiddle, but he doesn't play bluegrass" (Interview 2007)

What drew Ray Alden to this particular sound in old-time music? The sound of it was the attraction, particularly what he refers to as the "passion" that he heard in the music. The culture of visiting and telling stories that went with the music kept him returning to Surry County year after year. Alden would make several visits, often staying for much of his school-teacher's summer off. Though he almost always recorded his visits, he never thought of himself as a folklorist or researcher. He just wanted to share the music he heard with other interested people. Alden brought other interested musicians from New York on his summer trips. One of them, Dave Spilkia was a student of Ray's at Stuyvesant High School, who became a partner in fieldwork. Spilkia described the team's approach in the liner notes to *Heritage XXII*, an album of music by two musical families in Virginia:

The first night we visited the Shelors, a few phone calls were made and a band quickly formed. Just as quickly, we set up our equipment to record the informal family session; no thoughts of an album had crossed our minds as yet. The same thing would happen with the Kimbles; an informal visit with some tunes being taped so that, months later, a few people in New York City could pass around the "latest" fiddle tunes. Again, we entertained no ideas for an album. (Spilkia 1979)

Of course, an LP record allowed the latest tunes to be passed around a larger circle of

fans than those in New York City and Meadows of Dan, Virginia. Perhaps because of Ray Alden's nature, perhaps because Bobby Patterson's Heritage Records provided an established model and an outlet for local music, but private home tapes often became LP records during the 1970s.

The sharing impulse that led Alden to make albums of his field tapes also inspired him to write articles on his Surry County mentors. The first of these articles was a cover story for the folk song magazine *Sing Out!* in 1972. Though framed as a humble description, “Music from Round Peak” is in some ways a foundational document in the national discovery of Surry County music. He begins by explaining his reasons for visiting the musicians in their homes and for writing this article: “I had met some of them previously at the Galax Fiddlers Convention, but spending time with them in their homes, away from the hectic conventions, turned out to be the beginning of a very rich personal and musical experience. I'd like to try to share some of that experience with you” (Alden 1972:1). What follows is an introduction to the four great Surry County fiddlers of the day: Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, Kyle Creed, and Earnest East. Much of the article consists of long quotations in the musicians' own words. Alden guides the reader through the migration of Scots-Irish to North Carolina, the farming life in the country, the flu epidemic of 1918, and workings, rockings, house dances. Jarrell's voice is by far the most prominent in the article. But Kyle tells of learning to play banjo in Winchester, Virginia; Fred talks about a near-fatal car wreck, and almost beating Arthur Smith in a fiddle

contest. The late banjo player Charlie Lowe (1878-1964) was introduced as one of the great stylistic geniuses and exemplars of the area. Tony Lowe and Baugie Cockerham are also cited as great players from years past, and Tommy tells of how the Lowes and his father “jazzed up” “Sally Ann.” Tommy tells the stories of traveling to learn tunes from Zach Payne, and of learning “Boll Weevil” from a “yellow gal” in a traveling show.

Alden ends the article with another invocation of his “visiting” metaphor, and goes on to invite readers to follow his path down to Round Peak:

It's as difficult to end this article, with so many stories left untold, as it is to end a visit in the Round Peak area. I hope I've managed to convey some idea of the richness of the mountain culture and values. A good friend once told me that involvement with music should heighten one's sensitivity towards people. In the Round Peak community it seems to do just that. Tommy is still encouraging young musicians to learn. Fred, in all the bands he has worked with, has always felt that they should work together and pull for each other. Ernest is as kind as could be. Kyle, always busy, is constantly hospitable. We've included here transcriptions of some of their tunes, and you can hear some of the music on the enclosed soundsheet. I hope you will learn some of this powerful music; and I hope we all can assimilate some of the spirit in which it is played. (Alden 1972:11)

Many others would take up this invitation over the years and visited the Surry County musicians, especially Tommy Jarrell, who is universally remembered as a gracious host and an encourager of fledgling musicians. Ray's invitation to travel was part of his ethic of sharing and sociability. He never thought of himself as a folklorist or music researcher.

To tell you the truth I never considered what I was doing folklore. To me it was part of a social thing with music as part of it. And to me if you really consider that, then you've got to be interested in the people and their story, their families. This has happened to them. That happened to them. To me, if all you are is interested in the tunes, I don't know, it's wearing blinders, somehow. But some

young people in the revival, I never saw the slightest interest in visiting the old people. And I could never understand that. (Ray Alden, Interview with the author November 23, 2007)

Many revivalists did take an interest in visiting and accepted Ray's invitation.

When Ray republished this article in the British magazine *Old Time Music*, he deleted the closing paragraph quoted above with a few paragraphs on the revivalists who did so, mentioning several by name. He notes that “Almost all the young southern banjo players have taken up the bluegrass style. In so far as there are virtually no country clawhammer banjo players, several urban clawhammer banjoists ... have played with Ernest East and the Pine Ridge Boys. Steve Roberts, their current banjo player, is originally from Ohio” (1975/1976:16). Ray also added a discography of available Round Peak recordings, a “family tree” of the Camp Creek Boys and later bands (of which more below), and some ethnographic observations on the old-time musical life as it was circa 1975. This includes bands, fiddlers' conventions, and the practice of visiting on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons. Alden observed that the bands were “family-like,” with members visiting and playing together on weekends, “while the wives enjoy each other's company” (16). It is observed that members of different bands tend not to play with each other often and that “some wonderful possibilities are lost this way” (16). Certainly the revivalists liked to visit and play with members of different bands, and it must be said that the band members must have had limited free time in which to pursue their musical interests.

In these two slightly different essays, Alden seized upon two aspects of southern

culture that made the musical life he found in Round Peak distinct from the revivalist activities he knew back home in New York: the family and the visit. It goes without saying that there are families and visits in the North, and that people visit one another, but these concepts take on different meaning in the South. As Ted Ownby has noted, while southerners like to think that the strength of the family is one of the defining characteristics of their region, their definitions of family have varied widely. One constant is that the concept of family is used to “think and argue ... about who they are and who they want to be.” One of the possible definitions offered by Ownby is “an expectation of shared work and resources and the goal of living up to the family name” (2006:55). The Surry County family was more than a collection of people related by birth and marriage—they were often an individual's main social and occupational group. The “plain folk” of Owsley's history learned what they knew from their parents and did what they did in conjunction with their siblings. The southern fascination with history and with genealogy is another facet of the southern idea of family. For many in Surry County, history *is* genealogy. Surry County has an active genealogical society that has published two volumes of family histories (Jackson 1983, Surry County Genealogical Society 1994). In many cases they are correct: the names that appear on the earliest maps of Surry County include many still common to this day, including Snow and Creed. Lowe, Flippen, Cockerham, Holder, Freeman and Jenkins are also widespread names with long histories. The Surry County Community College Library has a large collection of family

history books in its local history collection, including a massive volume detailing all known descendants of Fountain Jarrell, great-grandfather of Tommy. Genealogy is far from a curious hobby here, as it was in my family, but something that people, including musicians, used and still use to place themselves in a web of relations. Nancy Dols Neithammer remembers visiting with Tommy and listening to him reminisce with some of his local friends:

They knew everybody in their whole area. They knew everybody's family history and genealogy. Every name that came up, it wasn't just a name, it was somebody's brother's cousin's wife. ... like they had a genealogical map of the community in their heads. And going back for generations. And they would talk about things that happened years and years and years ago. ... They were still talking about the Hillsville shootout, which happened about 1912. (Interview December 12, 2008)

Tom Mylet's interview with Kyle Creed reveals how talk about music flows seamlessly into family history and back to music, when Creed demonstrates a unique lick in the tune "Fall on My Knees": "You ever heard it done like that? She's the only one I ever heard do it. Sadie Scott. She's dead and gone now. She was Paul Sutphin's mother's sister's daughter. She was a Scott. She played the 5-string banjo. That [tune]'s on that old Camp Creek album" (unpublished field recording, 1979).

As the family concept was flexible, it could be and often was figuratively extended to include groups that were united in work, worship, or recreation (Ownsby 2005, Hall 1987). Alden noted that old-time bands could be thought of as families of a kind, and he engaged in some genealogy of his own with his "family tree" of the Camp

Creek Boys. Though the bands have no generations, no fathers and mothers, they are groups of people that spawn other unique groups of people over time. Though there is no “father figure,” a “band,” as a named collection of individuals who regularly gather to make music together, is “led” or “managed by one individual to whom the band's name is informally attached. This leader is usually, but not always the fiddler. Thus the Smokey Valley Boys are Benton Flippen and whatever group of backing musicians are with him at the time; The Pine Ridge Boys were Ernest East's group; the Camp Creek Boys was Kyle Creed's band, with which he played fiddle or banjo depending on who else was a member at that time. Alden's tree shows how a band can continue in this way while spawning other bands out of it, as the original “family,” the “Camp Creek Boys I” leads, via various members departures to the Smokey Valley Boys, the Pine Ridge Boys, the New Ruba-Tonic Entertainers, and two more iterations of the Camp Creek Boys. The unstable position of the banjo player in the Pine Ridge Boys is noted, and no one ever gets married or dies, though four musicians do drop off the chart with the terse note “(bluegrass band)” (1975/1976:16).

As Alden says, these bands are like families, and they like to visit each other like family members. Visiting, like family, is a universal human activity that southerners think is more central to the culture of their region (Cook 2006, Taylor 1982). The older locals carry on the tradition of hospitality, or implied hospitality, to this day. The expression “Y'all come and see us some time” has entered the lexicon of stereotype, but is often

heard. Some, as a visit draws to a close will say, “why not stay all night.” Mac Snow often quotes Tommy Jarrell's “Next time we'll by-God play all night.” The visit is essentially the paradigm in which Alden thought of his work in Surry County.

I remember [a northern fiddler] said to me, this was way way back, he said “Why do you bother going down South for? You could just listen to a record and hear the tune.” I tried to explain it to him, but it just wasn't making sense. I just said, “look, you listen to the records. For me it's important to go South.” I couldn't make him understand that to me it was more than just the music, but the whole culture, the sense that the music was involved with the community, that it was all an ecological system rather than just “I play music, look how good I am.” (Interview, 2007)

He explicitly did not think of his activities as fieldwork, and the commercial releases of his recordings usually contain bits of talk before or after tunes to give the feel of what it was like to be sitting in a living room as Fred and Tommy passed an afternoon together.

I really like to give, aside from the music, a little bit of the feel for what was it like being down there. In fact, there were more stories than music. They'd play a tune, then for ten minutes, you know, “You remember this.... oh, yeah...” and that's really the difference between this and bluegrass. among other things, it's a home music. It's people communicating with each other, memories. Bluegrass is let's impress people, play on stage.

The Southern practice of visiting was one that made some of the extroverted revivalist pilgrims comfortable with the locals. Others were more reluctant to just drop in on Tommy, who had no telephone, thinking they might be imposing. For those who were more outgoing, or those who overcame their shyness, they found new ways of relating to people whose backgrounds, families, and world views were likely very different from their own.

Places and Names

Most of the musicians associated with the Round Peak sound were not living in that community by the 1960s. When Charlie Faurot was writing the liner notes to County 701, he found it most exigent to say that Kyle Creed and Fred Cockerham were “raised in Lowgap, North Carolina, just over the Virginia border from Galax” (1965). In part because of its long-running and well-known Fiddlers Convention, and in part because of the number of Galax-area musicians recorded by Library of Congress researchers (Emmet Lundy, Wade Ward, Charlie Higgins, the Bogtrotters), Galax was at the time the best known referent for folk music fans from outside the area. Both Creed and Cockerham were from the Round Peak community. The Jarrells were also a Round Peak family, though Tommy was a resident of Toast, on the outskirts of Mount Airy. Frank and Oscar Jenkins were from the area near Dobson, in central Surry county. Yet when Jarrell Jenkins and Cockerham played at the Newport Folk Festival in 1969, they were introduced as a band “from Galax, Virginia” (Live recording of performance streamed at <http://www.wolfgangsvault.com/jenkins-jarrell-and-cockerham-string-band/concerts/newport-folk-festival-july-16-1969.html>). Carter and Owen, in their survey of the Piedmont and Blue Ridge string band micro-regions, also included Surry County in the Galax region (1978b). One group that was based in the Round Peak area at

the time was Ernest East & the Pine Ridge Boys. In his notes to their County LP, Richard Nevins notes that “Ernest learned his method of fiddling primarily within the Round Peak, N.C. tradition he was born and raised in” (1969). This is the earliest reference to a “Round Peak tradition” I have found. Another influential essay was Ray Alden's aforementioned “Music from Round Peak” in *Sing Out!*, which introduced the geographic locus “Round Peak” to a national audience of revivalists, providing a convenient label to encompass a group of musicians, and the style that they played. The stories in the article have become part of the mythos of Round Peak music. Most of the musicians I've spoken to do not remember when they first heard the term “Round Peak” used to describe a musical style. I asked Ray Alden if he ever heard the locals refer to a Round Peak style:

I don't think so. No. they spoke all the time of living around Round Peak, the Round Peak community. I don't know. “Music from Round Peak” just made sense to me, because that's how they called the community. Every once in a while you'll hear somebody refer to it as Beulah community. And it's the strangest thing, because Round Peak [Mountain] itself, it's not that big a deal. You really have to look out for it.

Kyle for example came from Skull Camp, which is a much bigger mountain to the south of Round Peak, so I don't know why they don't call it Skull Camp community.

The thing that really looms is Fisher's Peak. Sometimes I've heard people equally call it Galax style, and when I hear the old Galax style which is so much more sedate than Round Peak, to me there's a tremendous difference. But look, how many times have you come across people and you try to explain what kind of music you play, and they go, “oh it's bluegrass”? Forget it—it's a lost cause. (Interview November 23, 2007)

The older local musicians are aware of the term, and recognize that they play differently from other old-time musicians, but don't make much of a fuss about it. Tom Mylet, a New Jersey-bred banjo student and protege of Kyle Creed remembers the evolving musical map of the area:

Well, there for a long time, before the Round Peak came in people referred to it as the "Galax sound." Which I don't know how that happened. I think that the Galax sound was, you know, the Mountain Ramblers, the Foothill Boys, Ted Lundy and the Southern Mountain Boys. Hot old-time almost bluegrass; playing fiddle tunes with roll [bluegrass-style] banjo. And somehow it jumped over onto the Camp Creek boys and all that stuff. And then someone started saying, "oh, that's not true; actually it's Round Peak." I think that's really where it came from: somebody correcting that mistake It could be Ray [Alden]. Ray used to come down for the summer. He would rent a trailer and be part of an Earnest East band. (Mylet, interview with the author March 7, 2007).

I believe that Mylet is correct about Alden. His *Sing Out!* article is the earliest example of the Round Peak name being attached to a style of music. In later chapters I will discuss how the Galax sound, which the Round Peak players were once thought to be a part of, has become a handy example that the latter-day Surry County musicians have of what they *don't* sound like.

Ray Alden and the Field Recorders' Collective

Beyond the Round Peak recordings, Alden visited and recorded Surry County fiddler Esker Hutchens, the Kimble and Shelor families of Patrick County, Virginia, and dozens of other old-time and traditional musicians across the country. After he retired

from the New York City public schools system, he devoted much of his time to a new enterprise, the Field Recorders' Collective, LLC, an independent company that released historic field recordings on compact disk. Often these were recordings of major old-time musicians that had been in academic archives which carefully guarded access to them. Institutions such as the Library of Congress and the Southern Folklife Collection were favorite depositories of field recordings by amateur and academic fieldworkers, but these institutions were difficult for the casual old-time music enthusiast to deal with, and either forbade copying of their materials or charged prohibitively high fees for copies. Sometimes a copy would be in circulation, dubbed from one cassette tape to another for decades and passed around like samizdat among aficionados. Between 2004 and 2008, Ray released four CDs of his own field recordings from Surry County: FRC101, *Fred Cockerham: Recordings from the Collection of Ray Alden*; FRC102, *Band in Transition: Camp Creek Boys to Smokey Valley Boys*; FRC 107, *Esker Hutchins: fiddle and banjo*; FRC109, *Round Peak Volume 1: From the collection of Ray Alden*; and FRC110, *Round Peak Volume 2: 15 Years in North Carolina*. He also released two CDs of Jerry Epstein's field recordings of Tommy Jarrell's visit to a northeastern folk music camp: FRC211, *Tommy Jarrell at Pinewoods Camp, Volume 1: from the collection of Jerry Epstein* and FRC212, *Tommy Jarrell at Pinewoods Camp, Volume 2: from the collection of Jerry Epstein*. The Field Recorder's collective released about ten CDs per year, starting in 2004. Many were recordings by other collectors, but Alden did the lion's share of the work in

mastering the recordings and running the label. The releases of Round Peak musicians were some of his best sellers, which he was grateful for, but he expressed some regret that people were not buying the recordings of some of the more obscure musicians (Interview 2005). After one last summer of visiting in the South, Ray Alden died of cancer in the autumn of 2009.

Mountain and Heritage Records

The attention that the County recordings brought to local musicians made an impression, and some of the more entrepreneurial of them decided that they would try their hands at making records on their own. Bobby Patterson and Kyle Creed co-founded Mountain Records sometime between 1969 and 1970 and recorded music in a studio on Piper's Gap Road outside of Galax, Virginia for a few years before Patterson split with Kyle to found Heritage Records. Mountain and Heritage demonstrate that revival and intervention are not necessarily unidirectional. The tradition bearers are capable of taking the lead and producing their own products, presenting, packaging and distributing them in their own ways.

Bobby Patterson, a guitarist from Virginia, had made the acquaintance of Surry County native Kyle Creed in the early 1960s when Creed bought a country store in Carroll County, VA. Patterson, then a young bluegrass musician, encouraged Kyle to play again after several years' break. Kyle would tell Patterson about his North Carolina musician friends, and eventually the two started making visits to Surry County, first to

Fred Cockerham's, then to Earnest East's, and then to Tommy Jarrell's home in Toast. Patterson called his first visit to a party at Tommy's: "The ultimate, with Tommy, Kyle, Fred, Earnest, Paul [Sutphin] and Verlen Clifton. If that combination and caliber of musicians couldn't make a convert out of you, then there's no hope left. All of them were great old-time musicians in their own way and were just beginning to emerge on a musical scene that would trigger a resurgence of old-time music as never seen before" (Patterson 2000:2). Patterson and Creed both noted this "resurgence," and realized that they could play a bigger role in it. Patterson told me of the impetus behind Mountain Records:

Course Kyle, he was kind of an independent fellow, he liked to do his own thing. Didn't like people butting in on him, so after they started recording them—and they did do an album of the Camp Creek Boys—and Kyle and Ernest and Fred had done a couple of 45s—Kyle decided, you know, if they could come down to record and make records, we could too. So he and I made a mutual agreement that I would build a studio there at my dad's house and start recording and making records ourselves.

Kyle Creed had been born in the Beulah-Skull Camp-Round Peak area in 1912 and started playing banjo under the influence of an uncle in Winchester, Virginia. Creed is remembered as a man who liked to go his own way and it was this independent streak that led in part to the creation of Mountain Records. As a youth, Creed played in a group called the Round Peak Band with Fred Cockerham and Verlen Clifton. The Camp Creek Boys was his idea of a reconstituted Round Peak Band.

Patterson had been living at his parents' home and found a place on their land built

the studio on, and out of, this old home-place:

So my dad showed me a little piece of land there that I could build on and said, “go ahead and build” so I started building and Kyle, of course, was a good carpenter, block layer and everything. He came down and laid all the blocks for the foundation and got that done. My dad had timber on the place and he had some timber sawed, and we got the wood for the foundation, and the floor and everything. Actually, the whole building was built out of wood sawed off the place there. And we put a two-story building—cinder block basement and wood framing overhead. And we built a two-story building. I think it was sixteen by twenty four. And the upstairs was turned into a recording studio. I furnished the building, built it myself, and Kyle, he furnished the equipment. I think the only piece of equipment I had was a tape recorder that I'd bought. It was a quarter track reel to reel machine. Kyle said he would put up the money to buy a mixing board and equipment like that. So what I did, I bought the best I could get at the time, that was small, what I got was a Shure mixer, what radio stations used. They were real good equipment, but they only had, like, 4 inputs in them.

So we bought—I think we got two mixers that would handle four mics each. and they would handle the low impedance mikes. I made a little rack to put them in, hold them side by side. We got two mixers, 2 of the Shure M-67s I believe what it was. And then we got a couple of audio controls to go with them , I think that's what it's called. They control the frequencies, kind of balance everything out. We got two each of them and hooked them up to that reel-to-reel. And then we suspended—

By the standards of the early 1970s this was not a particularly primitive set-up. [It would have depended a lot on the quality of the tape recorder, too; a ¼ track recorder was a consumer format.] They'd heard of multi-track recording, but it was out of their financial range at that point. In many ways, a studio was a big enough change for the most of the Round Peak musicians, most of whom had been recorded by visitors like Faurot, Owen, Hicks and Cohen who showed up at their homes with a reel to reel and one or two

microphones. Patterson soon found that having the studio on the second story of a wood-frame building presented problems when recording string bands: “I suspended the microphones from the ceiling, because on the wood floor, when you pat your foot, it'd vibrate and go through the mic stand. So I devised a way to hang it with conduit from the ceiling to keep that foot noise out.”

Once the partners had built their studio they scheduled their first recording session, word of which spread around the neighborhood.

So the first recording we done, we done one called *Blue Ridge Square Dance Time*. Kyle was on the fiddle that time and I played the banjo and that particular night. All the neighbors knew about it, knew we was going to record an album, and we got James Lindsey, I believe, to come up and run the mixing board. So all the neighbors knew, so they all come to see that recording take place. And I had old couches and chairs that mama'd discarded in the studio. And we had a whole studio full. Dave Freeman's—I don't think he was married at that time—his girlfriend was with him, his wife, later. And a couple of his friends from New York was there. Dave played the mandolin on it and Roy Russell, guitar and Katie Golding, the bass, and I played the banjo. And they were all sitting around the walls and when we got ready to actually cut a piece of music to be included on the album, we instructed everybody to not make a sound. They had to be extremely quiet. SO that's the way we did it. We done the whole album like that: everybody'd just have to hold their breath and be quiet while we was recording. And at that time we used reel-to-reel quarter inch tape. It was mixed live—mixed down to two-track. We had all the mics individually controlled but they all was mixed into two track stereo. So if we cut a song and didn't like the mix, we had to go back and play it again. so we played it over and over and over until we got it right. And at that time we didn't like to back the tape up and erase it. We saved all the bad cuts and all the good ones—we just kept running tape. Reels and reels of that. Then we'd sift back through that and pick out the best cuts. And if we had to, we'd splice. Put in a beginning that was better or something. (Interview March 30, 2007)

About the technology, Patterson remembers that he and Creed knew about multitrack

recording technology, but that it was too expensive for them. They used two-track reel-to-reel recorders: “We done it the old-fashioned way.”

Blue Ridge Square Dance Time (Mountain 301) is remarkable for being the first of the Mountain LPs, but it has not been reissued on CD and is difficult to find. The next LP would be considerably better known, and has been reissued on CD. *June Apple* (Mountain 302) was recorded in December 1972 and featured the fiddling of Tommy Jarrell, Kyle Creed on banjo, Bobby Patterson on guitar and Audine Lineberry on bass. There was no audience this time, and the fledgling producers were beginning to work out a workable system for “mixing” their recordings as they were made:

We done it without anybody mixing or working the board. What we done, we got everybody placed on the floor where we was going to sit. And set the mixers up and we recorded a sample and if it sounded alright, we recorded. Once we got it set like we wanted it we could just turn it loose and play and play and some people say that's the best old-time record ever made. Cause it was live, and nobody mixing. We just mixed it the best we could by placing the mics.
(Interview March 30, 2007)

Though Patterson did upgrade his equipment (he was using an eight-track system by 1982), this system works well for recording a band made up of acoustic string instruments, and it is still used by some recordists today to replicate the feel of an informal jam session (field notes, summer 2006). Mountain 302 is one of the few recordings that feature Tommy Jarrell and Kyle Creed together, and Patterson says that it is one of the best selling records he has put out. Patterson is quick to say that it was never his intention to make hit records: “we just wanted to get the music out there.” He has

found that new bands sold well for a brief period of time, but that *June Apple*, in its various reissues (Mountain 302, Heritage XXXVIII, HRC-CD-038) have been the biggest sellers over the long term. The band sound on *June Apple*—led by a fiddle, with a clawhammer banjo playing a clear, plunky heterophony, accompanied by straightforward chording on the guitar and a bass playing on the one and three—was one of the most elegant ever put on record, and an excellent example of how a Round Peak band should sound. Jeff Titon says, "That record, to my way of thinking, went a long way to precisely defining the string band sound that most revivalists wanted to emulate if they could, in the 1970s--more than the Fuzzy Mountain or Highwoods or Hollow Rock LPs--because of the sound of Tommy Jarrell's fiddling paired with Kyle Creed's banjo, and because of the groove that this group was able to achieve"(Jeff Titon, personal communication, March 30, 2011). This LP showed that the outside interventionists from County Records had no monopoly on the ability to produce and distribute a great record that would reach the audience that wanted it. From another perspective, Creed and Patterson were doing some intervening of their own, as Tommy usually did not play in the context of a Camp Creek Boys style band with guitar and bass.

Patterson and Creed did not stay partners for very long. Patterson remembers recording The Pine River Boys with Maybelle before they split, some time around 1974. Creed built a studio in a spare room at the back of his store and Patterson bought some more equipment for the original studio. Kyle kept the Mountain name and Patterson

launched Heritage Records. The split seems to have been relatively amicable. When a band expressed interest in making a recording, the two would discuss which label was a better fit for that group. For a time at least, the division was based on genre.

Kyle, he wanted to do all old-time music and I was a bluegrass man. I wanted to do some bluegrass. So in order to continue recording, separate the labels, I included bluegrass on mine. And I set up a different number series for old-time. ... I numbered all of mine roman numerals 'til I got up to where it got complicated for people to read. So then I switched over. But then I did set up a numbered series, 600 series was for bluegrass. And the roman numeral series was for—it was supposed to be local musicians. ...

We got so many people coming to record that we didn't want on either Mountain or Heritage, so we set up different labels to put them on. They were kind of custom jobs. ... My name for that was Frontier Records. (Interview March 30, 2007)

As Patterson remembers it, the split also enabled them to record twice as much music with their two studios.

Some sense of what the Heritage operation was like can be gleaned from a record review essay written by Mike Fenton for the British magazine *Old Time Music* in 1975. Fenton met Patterson during a visit to the Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention in August 1975. He recounts Patterson's history with Creed, and his local fame as a musician and contest judge. He then describes the Heritage studio:

Built of timber above a garage, its atmosphere is very relaxed and friendly – bluegrass LPs for sale stand on several racks, chairs and a couch run along one side, a desk is neatly arranged with correspondence, covered microphones hang from the whereabouts of the ceiling, and a jug of spring water stands surrounded by beakers for musicians to lubricate their vocal cords during sessions Now this little studio is the home of Heritage Records. Bobby has come to master his

equipment to a high degree of accomplishment, and the relaxed air of his studio, fostered by his polite, easy-going manner, may result in this being the venue of some of the best country recordings of the future. Now a little more than 18 months old, Heritage has released six albums. (Fenton 1975/1976:29)

The studio was indeed the location of some great recordings, and Fenton's article reviews the first six LPs on the new label. Fenton's reviews are most positive for the bluegrass band the Highlanders and an album of old-time recorded live at the first Brandywine Mountain Music Convention. He was less enthusiastic about the Pine River Boys or the New River Ramblers, though he does bestow the unusually back-handed descriptor of “useful” on the fiddlers for these bands. The Galax band of the Whit Sizemore and the Shady Mountain Ramblers is described: “There's nothing sensational here, just plain, good old-timey” (29).

Heritage and Mountain records were originally distributed by David Freeman's County Sales. Freeman also supplied the producers with a list of college and public radio stations that would play old-time and bluegrass music. They would send copies of all their releases to all of these stations. They also sent review copies to the magazines *Sing Out!*, *Bluegrass Unlimited*, *Pickin'* (now defunct), and the British *Old Time Music*.

Most of the records were sold via mail order or by the musicians in person. The company seems to have had no formal agreements with its musicians, and paid little if anything in royalties. Patterson claims to have put any proceeds from record sales towards the production and promotion of newer records (Interview March 30, 2007). Musicians seem to have made money from Heritage records if they sold them to fans

themselves at performances. Few royalties were paid. (field notes, December 2010).

The two labels were reunited in the early 1980s. When Creed was diagnosed with lung cancer, he sold the rights to his masters and the Mountain label to Patterson, who has reissued much of the old Mountain material on LP, cassette tape and CD. Kyle Creed died in 1982. Patterson remembers him as “a good neighbor and a good fella. We had a wonderful time together. We played a lot of fiddlers conventions... We just had a great time together. He's just like another father to me even though my father was living and played music” (Interview, March 30, 2007).

Recording Round Peak: County and Heritage Compared

County and Mountain/Heritage both recorded and distributed a lot of old-time music from Surry County, but they packaged their material differently. Neither was part of a large recording corporation or government agency, and both had relatively inexpensive packaging, giving primacy to the music over the looks of the album cover. County 701 (“Clawhammer Banjo”) had an attractive line drawing on the front cover and a back cover with several paragraphs of explanatory notes in relatively small print. Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, the single-artist albums on County's 700 series had a somewhat standardized appearance. The front cover of the jacket would have a black and white photograph of the band, posed outside with their instruments, taking up the entire cover, with the band name and album title in a brighter color. The County logo

and release number appear in the upper right hand corner. Some various artist albums feature images of “rural” or “mountain” scenery. County 717, *More Clawhammer Banjo Songs & Tunes from the Mountains*, for example, feature a photograph of a field full of conical haystacks sloping away into the distance with a split rail fence in the foreground. Mountain and Heritage albums had a similar aesthetic. Most of their LPs had photographs of the artists, posed outside with their instruments on the cover, or a piece of artwork representing rural life.

Faurot's later albums continued this pattern, with details on banjo tunings and techniques for each piece. Basic biographical details are sometimes included, as on the notes to the two “Clawhammer Banjo” sequels (County 717 and 723). Faurot also briefly notes, in the notes to County 717, that this music has outlasted other types of Blue Ridge folk art and that it is still performed at regular dances in the region. Faurot is given to occasional brief forays into poetic metaphor--see the “rough gold” quote from the opening of County 701. An example of the Faurot style of liner notes is his paragraph on Tommy Jarrell from County 717, written in 1969:

Tommy Jarrell was born and raised in Surry County, N. C., just across the mountains from the Myers. In fact, although distances seemed greater then than now, the three of them would often meet halfway and trade dancing sets with one another. Like the Myers, Tommy has never made it a practice to play at contests and the like: rather his music has always been for his neighbors and relatives. It's not at all uncommon to stop by his house and find all sorts of people there listening to him play. Among these people Tommy is primarily known for his fiddling and singing (see County 713 “DOWN AT THE CIDER MILL”), yet his banjo pieces here will rank as two of the all-time greats. The more commonplace versions of CRIPPLE CREEK are much more sparse than his; Tommy's is almost

exactly the way it would be fiddled—or rather, the way HE would fiddle it. Both CRIPPLE CREEK and JOHN BROWN'S DREAM are played in the key of “A”; however, for the latter, Tommy tunes his banjo a-AACsharpE, the fourth string being tuned an octave below the third. It functions as a drone, somewhat like the fifth string, and really accentuates the third part, which is played primarily on the third string. In both songs Tommy gets excellent mileage from his left hand: the extra notes in the second part of JOHN BROWN'S DREAM are made by hammering down rapidly with his left index finger. As with all his performances, he employs techniques like this to make each song indelibly his. The great thing about the clawhammer style is that it is flexible enough to allow each musician to do this. (Faurot 1969)

This last point is one of Faurot's frequent themes—the variety of approaches to clawhammer banjo. The paragraph as a whole is representative of the Faurot liner note style, which is enthusiastic and detail oriented and constitutes a kind of amateur scholarship of some seriousness. The audience he must have imagined would have been folk music enthusiasts like himself, but more importantly, they would have been aspiring banjo players. The details of Jarrell's tuning and what he does with his index finger would be primarily of interest to someone learning the banjo, secondarily, perhaps to a folklorist or music scholar.

Richard Nevins supplied the liner notes for more Round Peak-related albums than anyone, and his writing is informed, forceful, opinionated and sometimes romantic. Though not a performing musician, he demonstrates knowledge of musical principles, though he sometimes struggled with terminology. Nevins opens his notes to County 713 with a reflection on the personalities of great men and women: “the ironic combination of two contrasting personality traits, strength and sensitivity.” The truly great, in Nevins'

estimation, Lincoln, Churchill and Will Rogers, have large amounts of both. “What may perhaps be surprising is that of all art forms, nowhere are equally high degrees of both these elements more evident than in old-time country music. The people who created those performances led hard, basic lives—lives which demanded strength and which could not help but to heighten their sensitivities to the feelings of other men and to the frailties of life” (Nevins 1968). In retrospect this sounds like hyperbole. Perhaps it seemed so at the time as well. And how can Nevins claim such knowledge of “all art forms”? Are all the mountain folk who live these “hard, basic lives” possessed of the strength and sensitivity of the Great Emancipator?

Nevins was a fierce enthusiast. He also was able to single out some of the musical traits that were most salient to the Surry County Style, and he was able to concisely lay them out. All three men, Jarrell, Jenkins and Cockerham exhibit “striking intensity balanced by the beautifully moving notes and phrases around which they are built.” The styles of the banjo players are succinctly explained and differentiated. The fiddle styles of Tommy Jarrell and Oscar Jenkins (the only two who fiddled on this LP) are contrasted as well. The banjo styles seemed to be easier for Nevins to get a verbal handle on than the fiddling. “Tommy's performances of the high parts of fiddle tunes are overwhelming—each note moves directly into the next with an unrelenting tension that seems to suggest that if they were pushed any further they would burst. Yet while his notes manifest this forceful quality, they also display very emotive traits through drawn out, plaintive

inflections.” The details of Tommy's fiddling are difficult to describe in words. Nevins seems to be describing the strong element of rhythmic anticipation in Tommy's fiddling and use of left hand slides. Though it is not a word commonly used among old-time musicians, “inflection” gets at his left hand technique quite well. Though its use in music studies is most common among scholars of early Church music, Grove gives a secondary definition of “inflection” as “the bending of pitch for artistic purposes, especially in vocal music” (Frere n.d.). This describes well the use of left hand slides in Tommy's fiddling, and in Fred Cockerham's banjo playing for that matter.

In 1969 Nevins produced an album of Ernest East and the Pine Ridge Boys (County 718), the notes to which demonstrate more romantic ideas about life in the Blue Ridge that many revivalists held. The band was a sort of last stand against the encroaching waves of inevitable musical and social change. Comparing Ernest East's “nuances of inflection that communicate distinct elements of mood and energy while the rest of the band complements and heightens this effect with its playing” to other string bands, he writes

the performances of the more modern regional string bands, which all display strikingly similar technique in their approach , are characterized by a distinct lack of this expressive inflection as well as by extremely fast pace and considerable license with the melody. The Pine Ridge Boys play their tunes “straight” without adding to or otherwise altering them and though their breakdowns are lively and intense they are tempered with a syncopation noticeably absent in the newer styles. In their attempt to adopt a Bluegrass format the other good area groups have lost these bits of inflection, melody, tempo which tie this music to its rural past and imbue it with the engaging, unaffected sound that is heard throughout this album. (1969)

According to this account, The Pine Ridge boys bore the mantle of true old-time style, but also of the older function of the music. While other writers note that the older functions of old-time music included the by-gone “workings,” Nevins has a different idea:

the function of this music now is only entertainment and no longer that of self expression, and even if it were, the performers as a whole are modern men whose more sophisticated feelings would not be as naturally emotive as those born of the hard, lonely lives led by past generations of mountain people. Ernest at 52 is a member of the last generation to learn its style of playing primarily from traditional performers who did lead such lives, rather than from the mass culture of radio and records. And that he still retains exceptionally strong ties to this older sound is not just a matter of accident but one of distinct choice. He and the other Pine Ridge Boys all have a deep and sincere attachment to the old tunes played the old way, as well as to many other aspects of mountain life and culture which are also passing from the scene. For example Ernest, Gilmer, and Mac have all chosen to live and raise their families in very rural surroundings (near Mt. Airy, N.C.), and although Mac has a job in town he still plants tobacco (as did Ernest until just recently). Also indicative of old mountain ways, the lives of all four center around their homes and their values around their churches. It is within the context of such fundamental living that old-time country music fits best and that is one of the reasons The Pine Ridge Boys perform it so naturally and with such feeling.

Nevins' romantic vision of Appalachia is of a piece with that of Cecil Sharp and the settlement school founders (Whisnant 1983), and it nearly creates a fantasy of noble Appalachian savages. But nonetheless, he notes that old-time music and rural life in the mid 20th century are choices among many available, even for those born into these fundamental ways of life. The music and the life complement each other and there are

choices to be made in both arenas. If we want we can read a moral dimension into these choices: Rural surroundings versus the town, oral tradition versus radio and records, expression versus entertainment, old-time versus bluegrass.

These romantic ideas about mountain life, if hyperbolic, were well calibrated to the ideals of the time in which they were written. The youth counterculture that was taking hold in America had a large measure of idealized longing for rural and pastoral ways of life. The desire to “get back to the Garden,” to use a line from Crosby, Stills and Nash's song “Woodstock” led to a contemporaneous back-to-the-land. Those seeking a simple, rural way of life would find an expressive outlet in the homemade rural music.

For Cockerham, Jarrell and Jenkins' “Back Home in the Blue Ridge” (County 723), Nevins wrote a longer essay than would fit on the back of an album cover and his notes were printed on an insert. With room to write more expansively, he produced a very insightful essay that opened with a discussion of the tune “Sally Ann” and used it as a starting point to ruminate on the variability of fiddle tunes over time and space. More details on the lives of the musicians are offered, and purple prose about lonesome mountaineers. He talks about the “double-noting” of Fred's banjo style and the “expressive double stops” and gliding bow arm of Tommy's fiddling. Oscar's style of fiddling is called mellower, and Nevins associates mellower, less rhythmic fiddling with flatter areas, towns, and the deep South. Tommy gets the lion's share of the attention in these notes, as usual, as he usually got the lion's share of attention in any discussion of

Surry County music. Folklorist John Bealle, writing about the old-time string band revival scene in Bloomington, Indiana during this period, pointed out that Nevins' liner notes, which literally enfolded most recordings of Round Peak music between 1968 and 1975, were more important and influential on the old-time music revival than any book or article (2005).

The authors of County's LPs needed to explain the music and culture of the Southern mountains to the revivalists whom they assumed were buying the records. The insiders who founded Mountain and Heritage, by contrast, tended to favor terser liner notes for their releases. They rarely bothered with the tunings of instruments or the keys of tunes. Typically, the band would be lauded for their local popularity, and the number of fiddlers' conventions they've won. For example, the notes to *June Apple*, written by Zane Bennett, an Assistant Manager at a Hillsville, Virginia radio station, include this typical passage:

Kyle Creed of Galax, Virginia is featured on the banjo and offers the true old time claw hammer method of picking. Kyle, originally from Surry County, N.C. Practically grew up in old time music and is gifted with the ability to play a number of musical instruments. Kyle's "Camp Creek Boys" are well known throughout the entire area through records, personal appearances and participation in a number of contests, including the famous Galax Old Time Fiddler's Convention, the Grand-daddy of them all. The band has won a number of awards as a unit and several individual music categories. Kyle and his wife operate a country store near the Blue Ridge Parkway. (1972)

Kyle's banjo playing is called "true old time claw hammer," but there is none of the detail of set up or tuning or technique that Faurot would give in the *Clawhammer Banjo* series.

Specific performances are not glossed in any way, but the history of Toe Nail Gap, a local geographical feature mentioned in the song “Sugar Hill” is related. The notes are celebratory, but straightforward. They reflect the perspective of someone living in the area and writing for someone else living in the area, not for New Yorkers or others from away.

Like many musicians, Kyle Creed's knowledge of music was vast, but what he thought he could explicitly say about it was limited. He was in the habit more of playing music than talking or writing about it. But as a producer of recordings, he was aware of the expectation that an album would have notes, and so he tried his hand at writing some for his 1977 banjo album *Liberty*:

Some of my friends ask me to do a banjo record, this one is in answer to their requests.

I grew up knowing most of the tunes recorded here and really didn't learn them from anyone in particular. I did learn Sail Away Ladies from Otis Burris, a fiddler from Galax and Nellie Grey from Baugha Cockerham. My uncle, John Lowe, showed me Roust-A-Bout.

Most of the tunes are in A, D or G. Shady Grove is in minor tuning with a capo on to make it G# and Big Liza is capoed to D#. I don't really like a capo but used it to get the singing where it sounded best. While we were in this tuning we went ahead and did Liberty there also.

Emily P. Spencer did most of the vocals and guitar and her husband, Thornton also played the guitar. They're part of Albert Hash's Whitetop Band. Brian Yerman, who generally plays with the Cedar Springs String Band, sang and played guitar on Cumberland Gap. It's in an E tuning (EBF#CFG#).

Here's how to tune for it:

1st string at 4th fret: 5th string

2nd string at 5th fret: 1st string open
3rd string at 5th fret: 2nd string open
4th string at 5th fret: 3rd string open

Thurman Pugh, of the Mountain Ramblers, also helped out some on the bass.

Here it is—Mistakes and all. Hope you like it! (1977)

These notes show that Creed was familiar with liner notes, and knew that they tended to contain information on keys and tunings, as well as the provenance of tunes, even if this information didn't always make sense within his context. The voice is conversational and casual, and it is difficult to imagine him making a pronouncement on the cosmic awesomeness of this unique music as Nevins might. Later reissues of *Liberty*, after Creed died in 1982 contained a somewhat longer essay by Dale Morris that discussed Kyle's life, music and personality. This is more in the style of the appreciative essay, akin to that written by Zane Bennett for *June Apple*. Boosterism for some local musicians, rather than explanation of an exotic tradition, is the goal of such notes, and among the main differences in presentation between the Heritage/Mountain LPs and the County Records.

The different producers profiled here had different standards for their records. Faurot wanted to capture interesting banjo styles and tunes. On his early releases he was especially determined not to release tunes that were already available on other LPs. Nevins was similarly motivated, with his added celebration of what he thought was a vanishing way of life. Ray Alden wanted to present a picture, also romanticized, of a welcoming scene with music and conversation and good humor. All three men usually

operated as field recorders—they visited and recorded musicians at home, using portable equipment. Creed and Patterson were putting out albums for musicians they knew personally, and who would sell them to promote their local careers. Since they were running record companies, they were also running recording studios. Sometimes, the field recorder ideal would clash with the recording studio ideal, as when Ray Alden brought Fred Cockerham and Tommy Jarrell to the Heritage studio to make the *Music from Round Peak* album (Heritage X). On one track, Patterson added a little reverb from his spot in the control room. Alden remembered being irate once it was done: “He was behind the thing and did it and we didn't even know that he did that. And once it's done, you can't get it off. And boy I was pissed. What are you gonna do? My ears were ringing” (Interview November 23, 2007).

While other labels have put out a few recordings of Surry County old-time music since the 1960s, the majority of albums have been on Mountain, Heritage or County. Rounder and Folkways, two of the most influential labels of the folk revival era and after, released comparatively little of this music. Though the two labels took different approaches to packaging and annotating the music, the both served to get the sounds of Surry County abroad in the world, which has kept the music alive and prominent.

Surry County Music Overseas

Though the musicians of Round Peak did not, as a rule, tour much outside the

United States, their music was carried abroad via the County and Mountain/Heritage albums. David Freeman's County Sales—a separate operation from the County record label—was one of the chief conduits through which American country music records reached British fans. Freeman started County Sales in 1965 as a service to readers of the British publication *Country Music News & Views* (Wolfe 2004:161). Sales to the United States came later. This distribution business gave Freeman's record label a ready-made audience.

I was a reader of the British magazine “COUNTRY NEWS & VIEWS” whose editors were Rodney McElrea of Northern Ireland and the late Charlie Newman of Lowestoft. Through correspondence with them they knew that I ran periodic auctions and had a number of collectors as customers. I think I had just started selling a few LPs to my 100 or so auction customers. Rodney & Charlie meanwhile had a supplier in Nashville who filled orders of country LPs for Country News & Views’ mail order service, which enabled British readers & fans to purchase LPs that were never available in the U.K. When the fellow who ran the Nashville business retired, Rodney & Charlie Newman approached me about taking over the fulfillment service. This was in October of 1965, just after Rodney and I made a month long trip through the South looking up and interviewing various country and old-time musicians. I had been on leave from my job with the Railway Post Office—with Rodney’s encouragement I turned in my resignation and decided to try making a full time business of selling records; the small but steady supply of orders from England enabled me to survive until I built up my USA business. So in actuality I started out in business (in October of 1965) as a US retailer, an exporter and a record label, as well as continuing my auction service. I figured—and still do today—that the only way I could make a living with records was to be involved in several different aspects of the business. (Personal communication March 11, 2009)

Freeman's County Sales is still a leading distributor and retailer of old-time and bluegrass recordings, and County Records continues to release new and old material on compact

disk.

The British magazine *Old Time Music*, edited by Tony Russell, was a source of information on the US folk music scene for fans and record collectors in Great Britain. The magazine ran from 1971 to 1989, with increasing delays between issues, especially in its later years. However, it became a leading publisher of in-depth articles on the lives and careers of many hillbilly recording artists from the 1920s and 1930s. Russell's magazine opened with an editorial statement in its Summer 1971 debut:

OLD TIME MUSIC has come into being to inform and entertain its readers and, we hope, to be of some service to the musicians who make old time music what it is. We say 'make' because old time music is a living music. Though many of our articles will be about artists of the past, just as many will describe the performers of today. As for our interpretation of 'old time music': well, this should become clear as the magazine progresses. What we can say now is that we intend to cover a lot of ground: string bands and Western Swing bands, cowboy and cajun, blues and bluegrass – and a great deal more.

We welcome assistance of every kind: contributions, written or photographic; suggestions and comments; agents, salesmen and advertisers. The more help you can give us, the more we shall be able to do for you. (unsigned editorial *Old Time Music* 1, Summer 1971:3)

Despite the promise of balance, the magazine's early issues are strongly slanted towards articles of a historical nature, interviews with radio and recording artists from bygone days, and discographies. There were also reviews, most by Russell, of reissue LPs and books on old-time music. While the list of genres to be covered is wide with respect to US music (with the exception of the Hispanic elements of American traditional music), there is no mention made of British folk music. The 78 rpm record collectors were well

served by *Old Time Music*, which regularly published discographies and notes from discographers in its early numbers. This first issue featured historical articles on Frank Hutchison, Clayton McMichen, the Musical Brownies, a 1945 interview with John Carson, and discographic work on the Scottsdale Boys, the Library of Congress Recordings and the Okeh 45000 series. There were no in-depth articles on any currently-active musicians. The second issue's opening editorial addressed this complaint, saying "As for the old time music of today, we shall of course be covering that wherever we can. Readers can help us here, by keeping us informed of any musical activity around them" (unsigned editorial *Old Time Music* 2, Autumn 1971:3). By Spring 1974, a quarterly publication schedule was established and the editorial was exhorting its readership to participate in the work of oral history.

[I]t is still possible to dredge comparatively detailed and informative accounts – of events 40 years past, and more – from sources that are by no means locked away from the curious researcher. Newspaper files , amplified by interviews with the people whose names they reveal, or their relatives, can yet yield fascinating stories. From these we get a better understanding of how the records we cherish came to be made, how they were marketed, how they are remembered. Even more important, we discover who made them – and not infrequently this leads us to people who are making music yet. (unsigned editorial, *Old Time Music* 12, Spring 1974, 3)

The early interest in discography was not sustained long and the two discographic series begun in Issue 1 were discontinued. An Autumn 1974 Editorial states that the material left a lot of readers indifferent and that it took up too much space. "And finally, we reckoned it wouldn't be long before all that information was incorporated into a

comprehensive discography” p.3. Russell himself did publish such a comprehensive work, the mammoth *Country Music Records: a Discography, 1921-1942*, but not until 2004. He had promised it for decades. Articles on active and younger musicians were still not forthcoming, though, and the Summer 1974 editorial saw fit to reiterate its request for such material: “The historical emphasis of OLD TIME MUSIC is not based on a policy or philosophy of Nostalgia First, but a consequence, simply, of vigorous activity on the part of actual contributors and virtual silence on the part of potential ones” (unsigned editorial, *Old Time Music* 13, summer 1974, 3).

Looking back on the genesis of *Old Time Music*, Tony Russell hoped from the outset to serve an international readership. Admitting that it seemed “perverse” to start a fanzine about country music several thousand miles from its source, he recalls that in the early 1970s, Europe was rife with similar enterprises: small magazines devoted to antique American music (Email communication, January 22, 2008). He had a co-proprietor, Simon Napier, who also edited and published a magazine for British blues fans, *Blues Unlimited*, and the two hoped that the two audiences would converge—that the blues fans would take up an interest in American old-time, bluegrass and country music, that the magazine would create part of it's audience. While the blues and old-time audiences have probably remained mostly separate, *Old Time Music* did succeed in becoming an important trans-Atlantic nexus of communication on old-time and bluegrass music. Russell wanted articles to be well-researched and substantial, but he did not envision *Old*

Time Music as a strictly scholarly publication, a role he saw being filled by the *John Edwards Memorial Foundation Quarterly*. The large number of record reviews demonstrated his commitment to being responsive to new developments in traditional country music. Although Russell wrote the lion's share of reviews in early issues, his stable of reviewers eventually included many American writers living in the UK, including Duck Baker, Claudia Gould, Tom Paley and Woody Haut. Furthermore, many of the contributors were researchers living and working in the United States, including Charles K. Wolfe, Ivan Tribe, Wayne Daniel and Bob Coltman. Circulation of *Old Time Music* generally hovered around 1250, including about fifty university libraries, with a steady stream of back-issue sales. Russell estimates that about 60% of his sales were to the United States, 10-15% to Australia, Japan and Continental Europe, with the remaining 25-30% staying in the United Kingdom (Tony Russell, email communication, February 10, 2008).

Russell also remembers first recognizing the Round Peak style of old-time music in connection with the Cockerham, Jarrell and Jenkins LPs, probably starting with County 713, *Down to the Cider Mill*. The first mention of the Surry county musicians in *Old Time Music* occurred in the second issue. Russell's review of County 723 *Back Home in the Blue Ridge* gives an idea of the audience he believed he was addressing. The discussion of the music is enthusiastic, nearly rabid, particularly when discussing Jarrell's fiddling. In the meanwhile, Russell has no qualms about drawing distinctions and judging

the relative merit of Jarrell's fiddling *vis a vis* Jenkins'. Also striking is the familiarity with the Da Costa Woltz recordings that Russell takes for granted.

This is one of the very finest records it has ever been my pleasure – no, my delight to hear. It reaffirms, loudly and clearly, the strength of the old time tradition, and if you ever feel depressed about the music you care for, a single playing of this album should serve to lift you out of those blues. And yet ... these three men are no youngsters; what will we have when they and their contemporaries are gone? Time enough, I suppose, to worry about that when we're really faced with it. One thing's for sure: it isn't easy to maintain any lugubrious speculations while you're listening to 'Back Home in the Blue Ridge'.

A restless, nervous energy characterizes Tommy Jarrell's fiddling, but you perceive no strain; his is the nervousness not of doubt but of excited confidence. You have only to compare his "Sally Ann" with Oscar Jenkins's; Jenkins is by no means a despicable fiddler, but Jarrell, uniting audacity with a firm respect for the tradition, shows what the truest fiddling is made of. The unaccompanied "When Sorrows Encompass Me 'Round" is another instance of his sensitivity and depth of emotional recall.

Jenkins has fiddle features in "Rustic Dance" and "Dan Carter Waltz", both with Shad Stanley on guitar; they are angular, distinctive performances. Fred Cockerham also plays busy fiddle in "Cabbage" and "Traveler". Those tracks apart, Jenkins and Cockerham confine themselves to the banjo. They appear together behind Jarrell on "Christmas", "Old Joe Clark" and "Let Me Fall", and these three pieces, not surprisingly, remind you strongly of the wonderful old DaCosta Woltz recordings, in which Tommy's father Ben and Oscar's father Frank took the fiddle and banjo roles. The newer recordings come as extremely moving echoes of the old, but you need no acquaintance with the latter to know that County's tracks are performances of the highest order. And, as of old, the tension of the two banjos interweaving round each other creates a gripping effect; and Tommy Jarrell's singing of "Let Me Fall" is particularly magnetic.

I shall add only that recording quality is excellent; Richard Nevins's pamphlet-notes are perceptive and illuminating; and this record must make strong claim to belong among the classics of American traditional music. (Russell, Tony. 1971. Review of Cockerham-Jarrell-Jenkins. *Back Home in the Blue Ridge*, County 723. *Old Time Music* 2, Autumn 1971. p. 28.)

By the third issue, an article appeared in which Ian Sharples reviewed a large number of albums by still-living musicians, including County 713 (*Down to the Cider Mill*) and County 718 (*Old Time Mountain Music* by Earnest East and the Pine Ridge Boys).

Old Time Music 11 featured a review of the the Mountain LP *June Apple*.

Nothing Tommy Jarrell could do would fail to be worth hearing, but it is rather a shame that so much of this record repeats titles already collected by County on their two sets of Jarrell-Jenkins-Cockerham music. What's more, County's policy has steered Jarrell away from this sort of group format, and enabled us to hear him play a little more freely than he does in a steady-rhythm band like the one here. But, for all one knows, Tommy Jarrell may prefer this kind of setting; and, as I started out saying, he produces fine music just the same. It has more of the Galax-band sound than anything he has recorded before, and is much more of a dance music record than either County LP – with lilting tempos that don't alter much from track to track, and a reliable, if gentle, anchorage in the guitar/bass lines. It all makes for uncommonly easy and delightful listening. (Russell, Tony. 1973-1974. Review of “June Apple” by Tommy Jarrell and Kyle Creed. Mountain 302. in *Old Time Music* 11, Winter 1973-1974. p. 28.)

By this time, Russell assumed that his readership was familiar with Tommy, and did not need to be sold on the value of his music. This album was notable, for Russell, because of the “Galax-band” setting. For some reason, Kyle Creed's banjo playing is not mentioned in the review. It is also interesting to note that Russell ascribes the format of the Jarrell, Jenkins and Cockerham albums to a County Records policy—though what that policy might be is not made explicit. This is typical of Russell's approach to record reviewing. In addition to discussing the performances and the quality of the recordings and notes, he

often discusses the effect of an LP of reissued 78s as a work of selection and the effect that such selection achieves. Discussing County 532, a reissue of recordings of the Leake County Revelers, he writes that “County's collection treats them as a dance band, or at least fiddle band, and on those terms does the group justice.” However, he ends by noting that the album is “not quite a full picture of the group. They had other tempi than waltz and breakdown, and were much more given to vocal numbers than this LP implies” (Russell 1975:22).

British old-time music enthusiasts eventually began making field trips to the US to hear and study music, and *Old Time Music* frequently published their articles and reflections on the experience. Russell himself spent several months in the United States researching his discography. Mike Fenton, an autoharp player, published his reflections on the Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention and his visits to the Heritage Records studio, where he would eventually record his own music. Mike Yates made a field recording trip to Virginia and North Carolina, which he dutifully reported in the “News” column of *OTM*:

Collector Mike Yates was in the Southern Appalachians in summer 1983. He reported: 'Mt Airy continues to be the centre of a thriving stringband tradition. Station WPAQ puts out a two-hour live show every Saturday and has featured such artists as Tommy Jarrell (with Mike Seeger, Frank Bode and Paul Brown), The Grayson Ridge Runners, Benton Flippen & the Smokey Valley Boys and Robert Sykes & The Surry County Boys. After recording Tommy, Benton and Robert I moved south to stay with Stanley Hicks and his sister Hattie Presnell. Stanley's hand-made fretless mountain banjos have an indescribable tone and I couldn't resist buying one. (No author [Anonymous], “News,” *OTM* No. 39,

Spring 1984, p. 4)

Yates' recordings from this trip were released on the compact disk *Far in the Mountains*. Janet Kerr, a fiddler who played in the New Deal String Band with Tom Paley, had a particular affinity for North Carolina fiddlers like Posey Rorer and Lonnie Austin. Her trips to the US led to several LPs on the UK label Leader including LED 2053, *Virginia Reel*, by a version of the Camp Creek Boys that included Bobby Patterson on three-finger banjo and Kyle alternately playing fiddle or banjo. He fiddled on tracks with the full band, and played clawhammer on duet tracks with Patterson's bluegrass-style picking. This LP is little known in the US, but it was advertised and reviewed in *Old Time Music*. The reviewer Ron Gould seems to have been unfamiliar with Creed's style, and describes *Virginia Reel* as “a good example of a modern country string band” but also thought it “a little bland,” speculating that the band “were all on their best behaviour for their English audience” (Gould 39-40).

More Visitors and the never-ending revival

Ray Alden asked me if I knew that Tommy Jarrell had jump-started the klezmer revival. As Scully (2008) has observed, many who were drawn into the folk revival via the urban sounds of the Weavers or Joan Baez were drawn deeper into music, eventually discovering old-time music from a more authentic source, such as the Mount Airy and Galax area. From here, many came to explore other aspects of traditional music, both

American and foreign. Often the search for the roots of American folk music led searchers to explore the music of their own ethnic roots. Tommy Jarrell did not really revive klezmer music, but one of the young American Jews who would have a role in the klezmer revival was a regular visitor to Jarrell's between 1973 and 1977. Henry "Hank" Sapoznik wrote an account of breakfast at Tommy's into his history of klezmer in America:

On a trip during the summer of 1977, I was staying at Tommy's house. Earlier that year I had begun a vegetarian diet. One morning for breakfast he offered me scrambled eggs fried in bacon fat, the bacon itself, and biscuits drenched in bacon fat gravy. The only thing not made with bacon was the coffee. Politely demurring, I opted for coffee.

The genial Tommy pressed me with, "Come on, Hank. Eat up!"

"No thanks," I told him.

We parried and thrust with Tommy acting more like a Jewish mother than a hillbilly fiddler until, getting more and more exasperated, he blurted: "What's the matter with you Hank? What're you, a damned Jew?"

Well *that* sure got my attention. I'm still not sure if I was more startled by Tommy's use of the term "damned Jew" or his unanticipated knowledge about pork products being taboo under kosher dietary laws. In any case, I stammered out: "Why, yes, Tommy. I am."

Hearing this, Tommy immediately launched into a story about a Mount Airy Jew named Cohen, who was approached on the street by a local anti-Semite leading a dog on a leash.

"Hey, Cohen," he yelled out. "This is my dog. He's half Jew and half son-of-a-bitch."

"Ah," Cohen retorted. "I see he's a little kin to both of us."

Jarrell got a kick out of telling that story. Suddenly, out of nowhere, here we were talking about Jews! Touched and impressed as he and Fred were by the boundless enthusiasm we had for their music and culture, they were still puzzled by the proliferation of Jews playing old-time music. After all, their own people took nearly no interest in their music, preferring the jazzier styles of bluegrass or more popular modern country music. Why should Jewish musicians from northern cities take such an interest?

From the framework of this experience, Tommy had a question: “Hank, don't your people got none of your own music?”

Until this moment I hadn't thought about it quite that way. Well, of course we had our own music. But where were the Jewish Tommys and Freds? Where was *my* traditional music? I didn't know, but I meant to find out. (Sapoznik 1999:180-181)

The story of how Sapoznik found his traditional music, with the experience of visiting Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham as a model, is recounted in the following pages. The tale parallels the story of the string band revival, which started out with players emulating old commercial recordings on 78s or reissue LPs and advanced as a bold few ventured into the field to learn from living masters. Sapoznik likewise found a cache of 78-rpm records of klezmer music in the basement of a scholarly society in Manhattan. He then found some suitable violin teachers in New York City's vast immigrant population, eventually meeting his “Jewish Tommy Jarrell” in violinist Leon Schwartz. The legendary clarinestist Dave Tarras was similarly sought out by Andy Statman, another young New York Jewish musician on an old-time-to-klezmer trajectory.

Tommy's story about the Jew and the dog can be heard on Field Recorders' Collective CD 109, *Round Peak Volume 1*, but on the recording Tommy give's the Jew's

name as Schaeffer and he voices Schaeffer's line in a vaudeville version of a Yiddish accent, pronouncing his “w”s as “v”s. Though Sapoznik gave his fullest account of the “don't-you-people” conversation in the book quoted extensively above, it had become part of the folklore of the klezmer revival long before then, having been included in some of Sapoznik's other writings on klezmer (Sapoznik and Sokolow 1985). The incident is also centrally depicted in a complex drawing by Phil Blank entitled “Why Do So Many Jews Play Old-Time Music?”

Coming Home to Surry County

After my initial year of fieldwork, I returned to Providence to work on this project and to be a Teaching Assistant in the music department for an academic year. Late in the spring I received an email from a local friend who had also moved to Surry County, drawn by the music and the community. She wrote: “I saw Andy the other day and he said you are coming home to Surry County May 1. Isn't that a nice thought? Coming HOME to Surry County!” It was a nice thought, an exciting thought, and in coming home to Surry County, I was following this friend, and a long line of others from “away” who had learned about old-time music, gone to North Carolina to hear more, and decided to stay—some for a year, some for a lifetime. Ray Alden found a path into Round Peak music through his visits, writing and recording, but he always returned to New York to pursue his career as a math teacher. He expressed some regret that he was never able to

stay in North Carolina and make music with his friends. Nevins and Faurot made their recordings and moved on to record and produce traditional music from other regions of the US. Some decided to stay for a while.

Paul Brown was one who settled in the community for years. Brown was raised in the New York City suburb of Briarcliff Manor by a first-generation immigrant father and a mother from an old Virginia family that migrated north after the Civil War. Paul's mother was sent down south to spend summers with family in Virginia, and she in turn sent Paul. It was from his mother that Paul first heard many old traditional songs and it was on his summer visits that he was exposed to Southern culture more broadly. Paul became enamored of the sound of the banjo at an early age as well: "It's hard to describe, but it used to just make my heart jump when I was a small child. I just thought this was the most amazing sound and it got me at a very deep, spiritual level and it just would excite me in a way that's hard to describe." Paul saved up money to buy his first banjo at age ten and began picking out tunes on his own. At this time his parents had a collection of folk music LPs, both field recordings and revivalists, but Paul says he was unaware of the broader phenomenon of the folk music revival until he arrived at Oberlin University in the 1970s. It was an auspicious time to be there, as his classmates included Brad Leftwich, Dave Winston, David Molk and Rodney Miller, all of whom have become well-known performers of traditional music. It was with these college friends that Brown began traveling to southern fiddlers' conventions in the summer. Like Ray Alden, Paul

Brown did not think of his activities as research or fieldwork, but he felt drawn to the older people he saw at the conventions and wanted to know them and their music better:

I decided that I wanted to find out more about playing my banjo from older people. I occurred to me from listening to stories that my mom would tell and starting to read a little bit, that it would be a great idea to try to pursue this some more before these people were gone. It was clear that there was a historical shift happening. That is to say, it was apparent to me that there were people alive who I could learn from who had learned their music from sources that pre-dated telephones, telegrams, automobiles, radio, recordings, all of that. And before too very long, that wouldn't be the case anymore in the South. That day would be gone. And it would be a really cool thing to hear some of these people and try to understand what they were doing physically with their instruments and the environment from which they had come and from which their music had sprung. (Interview, August 26, 2008)

The interest in the music and the environment led Paul to travel down South, as did many young musicians in the 1970s and 1980s. Paul was different in that he moved to rural Surry County and stayed for several years, working at factories and truck stops during the week, playing dances and going to fiddlers' conventions on the weekends. Why Surry County and not some location further up the Blue Ridge or in southside Virginia? It was the sound of the Surry County area that stood out, even on recordings. Paul found it more intense, and therefore more interesting:

And here's why: both my parents were very passionate people, and most of my family is that way and they were also really intense about music. Neither was a great musician, but if you played music in their house, you had to play it with power and intensity and you had to be a good musician... They didn't like anything that didn't show somebody's full commitment to it. So when I heard some of the music from around Galax and Mount Airy and this lower Blue Ridge area, I heard some really intense stuff. (Interview with the author August 26, 2008)

This intensity--which Ray Alden also heard and called “passion” or “fire” and related to Tommy Jarrell's expression about Surry County dancers “going at it with a ven”--was one of the chief attractions of the Round Peak sound. While living in Mount Airy, Brown came to befriend a member of the generation that came after Tommy Jarrell's, an enigmatic and brilliantly original fiddler named Benton Flippen.

Benton was born on a farm near Dobson, North Carolina in 1920. He grew up in a musical family and his first instrument was the guitar, then banjo. Flippen took up the fiddle—with which he is most often associated—at about age 18. His biggest influences were his uncle John Flippen and the musicians in the Dobson area of Surry County: Leake Caudill and Esker Hutchins. Benton worked for decades sorting socks in a Mount Airy mill and playing dances and fiddlers conventions on the weekends. He played banjo and fiddle for several bands at different times, including the Green Valley Boys, the Camp Creek Boys, the Dry Hill Draggers, and his own band, the Smokey Valley Boys. There is no Smokey Valley that Benton is aware of, but he got the name from the way the Piedmont valleys fill up with fog. When I visited him at home he gestured at the living room window and the view is of Interstate 74 going past rolling hills that do look smokey. Benton's style of fiddling is unique to himself. He started out using only one of the long fingers on his left hand to note the strings, but gradually added the other three. His style still relies on many unusual placements of his fingers, and many bluesy slides.

Though his eccentric left hand work is most striking, Benton's bowing is equally important to his sound. His supple wrist provides wonderful syncopation. In any event, he is usually content to let his music speak for itself. On my visit Benton admitted that he is “not much of a hand to answer questions ... never have been” (Interview July 25, 2007). For all the local renown that he has, Benton Flippen is a quiet and shy man, almost a cipher. But also—with his long fingers, thick glasses, narrow-brimmed fedora, and lean “American Gothic” face—an icon of old-time individuality. Paul Brown thinks of himself as a quiet and shy person as well. He was not one to drop in on a stranger and greet him as an old friend and, setting up a tape recorder, start requesting tunes. Paul takes time to warm up to people and get to know them. This shyness necessitates patience, which has its rewards. Paul was able to get past the shyness and the image to come to know Benton as a person as no festival sojourner or transient fieldworker could.

Some folks won't be able to relate to a Benton Flippen, because he's so quiet. Whereas someone like me will take the ten years that's necessary to get to know him. For me that's the easiest thing in the world. I have the patience to do that. I'll sit there and be completely silent with him for a few hours. It doesn't bother me... So I actually got to know Benton and almost no-one had got to know him. So I got to know him, and make recordings, and it was because I took the time and made the effort to do that. (Interview with the author, August 26, 2008)

Paul's patience and persistence led to a long-lived partnership that continues to the present, even with Brown having moved to Washington, DC where he now works as a news reporter for National Public Radio. Although Benton has used a number of local banjo players over the years, Brown still joins to play banjo when the Smokey Valley

Boys play in the DC area.

The Finnegan pathway model can illuminate Paul Brown's life in Surry County. He found an existing practice that appealed to him, playing the banjo, and he found he had an aptitude for it, and the requisite “intensity.” He moved far from home, and became part of the community, following the same part-time paths as other local musicians did, working in factories and gas stations, playing banjo on the weekend, and thereby establishing himself as a “worthwhile member of society” (Finnegan 306). The pathway of the banjo player had “symbolic depth” for Brown and was among the most “high value” of the various paths in his life. It was also an “established, already trodden and ... abiding route” which he could take in the company of others. The banjo player's pathway was long established in Surry County by players going back to Charlie Lowe and Baugus Cockerham and before, and it was abiding to the time of Brown's arrival. He found that he could travel along these pathways in the company of people he found musically attractive and personally interesting, like Benton Flippen and Verlen Clifton.

Many other revivalist pilgrims formed strong connections with one or another of the older local musicians. Blanton Owen toured with Tommy Jarrell and Benton Flippen; Andy Cahan was a member of Ernest East's band; Tom Mylet was so close to Kyle Creed that Creed introduced him as a son to his (Creed's) own daughter. Paul Brown became a musical partner and close friend of Benton Flippen. Tommy Jarrell became a mentor--“Uncle Tommy”--to dozens of younger musicians. The length of their stays and

the impact they had on the local music varied, of course, but music served as a pathway into a community that they would not have found themselves in otherwise. Once there, music was the pathway that enabled them to be people of worth in the community—to play an established role in a rural setting to which they otherwise would have been alien. In establishing themselves in Surry County, either for a year or for decades, they became part of the sustaining community of Round Peak music, and a major reason that the music has held on so tenaciously in this place while it has languished in others.

Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention

While the record companies and folk music magazines were documenting and publicizing Surry County old-time music on a broader scale, local organizations were working to keep the music going and to use it to strengthen community at home. The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, begun in 1972 by the local post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and continuing to the present day, is one of the most notable and enduring of these projects. Though it has been criticized in recent years for changes implemented by a new generation of leaders in the VFW, it remains a beloved event among the old-time diaspora community. The quality of the music, the low cost of attendance and the laissez-faire approach of the organizers set it in contrast to its nearest peer events, the Galax Old Fiddlers Convention in Galax, Virginia, and the Appalachian String Band

Music Festival (commonly called “Clifftop”) in Clifftop, West Virginia. The Convention started off small, but was well-situated to grow in the wake of the failure of another, larger, convention at Union Grove. The Fiddlers' Convention has become a pathway into the community for old-time music revivalists and one of the events that sustains the local interest in old-time music.

The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention is a relatively new event, as fiddlers' conventions go. There were fiddlers conventions held in and around Mount Airy for the decades. Most of these were small one-day events held at schoolhouses. There were “schoolhouse conventions” at Low Gap, Beulah, and Mountain Park, among other locations. The Surry Arts Council held at least one convention in Mount Airy, in 1968. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion of Mount Airy run the current convention. Verlen Clifton credits the late G. F. “Ronald” Collins, a VFW member who played with the Camp Creek Boys, as a driving force behind the decision to start the event (Davis 1996; Interview 2007). The first one was held the first weekend of June, 1972. The *Mount Airy News* for June 9, 1972 carried a small article listing the winning bands of the first event: Ernest East and the Pine Ridge Boys were first; Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys were second; and the Shady Mountain Boys, third. The bluegrass band winners were also listed, but the individual category winners were not. Tommy Jarrell, who as a personal rule never entered competitions, played a set to entertain the crowd at Veterans Park, which numbered a modest 200 (“Fiddlers Meet

Winners Listed”). The second annual event was also covered in the *Mount Airy News*. The top three bands were the same as in 1972, with only the first and second place bands reversing positions. No attendance numbers were given but “A Legion official noted that the event is growing rapidly and the large crowd enjoyed the string music, flat foot dancing and good food” (“Fiddler's Event Winners Listed,” *Mount Airy News*, June 8, 1973). Based on these reports, the early Conventions at Mount Airy seem to have been typical of the small schoolhouse conventions, with modest crowds watching small numbers of local bands. Verlen Clifton remembers that in the early days there wouldn't be more than 15 to 20 bands in competition. Admission prices were low, and so was the prize money. An advertisement for the convention in the June 6, 1975 *Mount Airy News* announces \$700 in prizes and sets admission at \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children. Newspaper accounts of the event through the 1970s are generally brief and describe the event as a success. The top three old-time and bluegrass bands were always listed, and sometimes the individual category winners were listed. The Smokey Valley Boys, Pine Ridge Boys and Shady Mountain Boys are often in the top three. The Convention added a second night, on Friday, in 1977, and the prize money advertised was up to one thousand dollars. The ad for this convention is the first to announce that there are “10 acres of shady woods for camping and picnicking.” The local press coverage became more in-depth as the years passed. In 1979, there were 3,500 attendees and the prize money was up to \$1,215. An article in the *News* that year contained many interesting figures. It listed

the five bands that placed in each of the two band categories and mentioned that Glen Beamer won a 635 pound beef, presumably in a raffle. The winning bands listed were all from Mount Airy or nearby towns in North Carolina and Virginia, with—strangely--two old-time bands from Bluefield, West Virginia, placing. In total there were thirty-six bands and seventy-three individual contestants. G. F. Collins is quoted: “It was very orderly and everyone attending had a good time and enjoyed the good music. Our attendance is growing each year.” He also said that Florida and Ohio were “represented” (“3,500 persons attend fiddlers convention” *Mount Airy News*, June 6, 1979).

The Ninth Annual Convention in 1980 received more press coverage than any to that date, with a front-page article by Tom Joyce and a photo of Ernest East and the Pine Ridge Boys jamming in the parking lot. Joyce relished the opportunity to flex his reporter's local-color muscle. The article gives a sense of what the scene was like in 1980, and merits extensive quotation.

Mobile campers, tents and activity as far as the eye can see. People mingling about, some staggering about, in a grassy parking area, stopping occasionally to hear impromptu performances by a seemingly endless array of impromptu musical groups congregating at the back of pickup trucks.

Small-town motorcycle gangs convene amidst their makeshift shelters of chrome and wheels and every car seems to bear license plate from another state.

Moving right along, we reach a heavily-lighted and more crowded area, a virtual sea of lawn chairs and people. An elevated stage appears in the distance. On the stage is situated a group of mountain musicians who are farmers and fruit-pickers for 364 days of the year, but on the 365th day they are in the limelight, doing what they like to do best.

The humid night air is filled with a lively, but soothing chorus of string instruments, accompanied by harmonious vocals.

Near the stage, several people flatfoot to the music, stirring up clouds of dust with each enthusiastic shuffle.

To the left of the stage, a lighted refreshment center appears like a beacon on the horizon, emitting smoke and the aroma of fresh french fries.

A group of policemen congregate to one side, trading stories and chuckling about their experiences on this special night.

These are but some of the sights and sounds of the Ninth Annual Blue Grass and Old Time Fiddlers Convention, held this past weekend at Veterans Park here.

The convention got underway Friday evening at 7:00, resumed early in the day Saturday, and continued until the wee hours Sunday morning.

In all approximately 55 bands and 313 individual performers picked, grinned, strummed, stomped and clogged during the two day competition.

And as many frequent convention goers noted, the activities continued long after the lights were killed and most of the crowd departed Saturday night.

Indeed, fine old-time music was played on the ground as well as on the stage. In fact many true-blue performers were not content with just their appearances on the stage, but chose to mingle about in the spacious parking lot, joined in with other assorted musicians on a bluegrass tune.

And a good time appeared to be had by all.

Everywhere one looked, one saw people enjoying themselves, with the common demoninator [sic] of sweet old-time music bringing strangers together for mutual enjoyment.

It was what you might call a festive atmosphere.

Judging from the sweaty brows of the hard-working musicians and the smiles of the listeners, one could easily assume that the participants really weren't bothered by the hostage situation in Iran at the time, nor with the fact that Russia had

invaded Afghanistan.

That comparatively small expanse of land along West Lebanon St. was a world apart from the rest of the world for two days.

Convention promoters felt afterward this was the biggest Mount Airy convention yet, which indicates that almost everyone connected the event was pleased with the festivities. [sic]

A complete rundown of convention winners and top finishers will be included in Wednesday's edition of the News. ("A Fiddlin Time's Been Had" *Mount Airy News*, June 9, 1980, p. 1, 6A)

Clyde Johnson, the WPAQ announcer who served as master of ceremonies for the Convention for many years until his death in 2007 remembers the attendance taking off in the mid 1980s (Davis 1996). The exceptional popularity of the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention may be due to the decline and cancellation of the once-great Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention around this time.

The big old-time music event of the spring in the late 1960s, though, was the Union Grove Fiddlers Convention, established in 1924 and held in a small piedmont community 45 miles south of Mount Airy. Union Grove attracted some of the area's finest old-time and bluegrass acts to perform in a green and yellow circus tent at Easter each year. As early as 1960, it was attracting talented and curious revival musicians from the northeast (see Folkways (LP) 2434 and Shelton 1961). The festival was covered in the *New York Times*, *Newsweek* and on the Today Show (Wishnevsky 2007). By the late 1960s, Union Grove had become an attraction not only to musicians and music fans, but to hippies and motorcycle gangs who took full advantage of the relaxed rules at the

campground. Steve Wishnevsky, who attended many Union Grove conventions during the 1970s, describes a scene of old-timers mixing with naked hippies openly selling drugs and moonshine: “a hundred thousand crazed hippies pretending to be rednecks and about that many crazed rednecks trying to learn to be hippies” (2007:37). The wildness led to a schism in the family that ran the festival, and for several years, a family-friendly, drug and alcohol free Fiddlers' Grove festival was put on a month after Union Grove by the brother of the Union Grove organizer. The last Union Grove was held in the mid 1970s, while the squeaky clean Fiddlers' Grove continues. Fiddlers' Grove is a popular and successful event, but it is perceived of as a bit too straitlaced for many in the old-time music world, and it does not draw visitors from outside the region. The parts of the old-time community that once came to Union Grove for the old-time music *and* the party scene needed a place to congregate in the springtime, and Mount Airy's fiddlers' convention filled the bill. Though there were no motorcycle gangs, and there was no official vending of beer or open selling of illicit drugs (all of which were noted at Union Grove), the management of the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention does not aggressively police the campground, and people are left to themselves.

Another of the reasons for the popularity of the Convention is the popularity of the local musical style. Frank Bode, singer and guitarist for many of the local bands, told Amy Davis:

I'd say probably what made Mount Airy Fiddlers Convention what it is today as far as old-time music goes is people like ... Tommy Jarrell, and Fred Cockerham.

People that were in this part of the country and the people away from here that had a real interest in old-time music, they just found out more and more about Mount Airy Fiddlers Convention, and the history of old-time music. And I think that is really what has made Mount Airy grow more than anything else. Because of what they learned here from the old people that's gone on, you know, passed on, but their music just still lingers on and on and on. (Davis 1996:21)

The geographical accessibility of Mount Airy, its timing in early summer, connection to a popular style, and the low prices and hassle-free campground scene made the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention one of the big draws for old-time musicians across the region and for the string band revivalists across the country.

Checking Back in with Tommy Jarrell – old-time String Band Revival

The Round Peakers, and Tommy Jarrell in particular, were attracting the attention of young people who'd heard the County and Heritage albums, and who'd read Alden's articles and Faurot's liner notes. Many of them were enchanted by the music, many others found that it fit in with other evolving aspects of their lives. While the Tommy Jarrell disciples were often of the urban/educated/northern/hippie caste, some rural and local young people were taking an interest, as well. Their paths into old-time music were varied. Some came from musical families, some not. Once they became skilled at the basics of old-time music, the southern youth took many of the same routes through it as the revivalists: some were detail-oriented traditionalists who sought to wring every

nuance of bow-stroke out of a Tommy Jarrell performance. Others just wanted “the tunes”--or as much of the music as they could apprehend—and eschewed the finer points of execution, preferring to find their own style. Yet others were there for the fun and sociability. Three southern musicians who spent time at the little home of Tommy Jarrell on Franklin Road were Kirk Sutphin, Richard Bowman, and Joe Thrift. All still live in the region, and are highly respected fiddle players, but their paths to Tommy Jarrell's door, and the lessons learned there are markedly different. As Ray Allen noted, studies of the old-time string band revival have tended to focus on the urban and suburban people who took up music of the Southern tradition; and on the communities and scenes (college towns and cities) where they lived. These three musicians are three of many from North Carolina and Virginia who came of age during the same era, and who were involved in the revitalization of Round Peak music just as much as the field recordists and record producers.

Kirk Sutphin, born in 1968, was one of the youngest of Tommy's students. His grandfather Sidney Sutphin had grown up in Surry County, played fiddle and was a friend of Tommy Jarrell's in his youth. Kirk's father Wayne fan of old-time music and a guitar player. Given such a heritage, it is surprising that Kirk first heard old-time music on a County LP, number 505, of Charlie Poole reissues. That and County 524, the Southern Broadcasters reissue, were the young Kirk's favorite albums. On a visit to grandpa Sid's house, he heard his grandfather fiddling and “was real captivated right then. I thought

that's what I want to do, right there. Just like somebody just whopped me upside the head. That's what I want to do right there.” Kirk's two older brothers also became enamored of the fiddle and soon the young Sutphins were all sawing away. His grandfather had told Kirk stories about square dances and the drinking and fighting that accompanied them. He also told Kirk that “one of the best fiddlers around when he was a young man was Tommy Jarrell and if he were still around that he would be worth hearing” (Sutphin, notes accompanying Old 97 002). About a year after Kirk first heard his grandfather playing the fiddle, the older man died. “I remember seeing Tommy Jarrell at the funeral. I'd been listening to him a fair amount at that point, in 1976, 77. But I couldn't fiddle for squat at that point. I didn't really have a style, I was just trying to get the mechanics at that point.” After a few more years of working on mechanics, Kirk was ready for a mentor.

I sort of straddled the fence [between old-time and bluegrass] when it came to the style to begin with. I guess I got more into the RP, I guess it was about 1981. And I remember reading Fred Cockerham's obituary in the paper. I told dad, I'd only be 12, I think, in 1980. And so we went down to Stokesdale, to the funeral home. I thought, I bet Tommy'll be there. And there was Tommy. I thought that by that point I was getting a better grasp of tunes and trying to emulate a style. And Tommy said, “yeah, come on up.” And maybe a year later we finally got up there. Then just kind of got hooked into it there. At that point I was almost on the edge of bluegrass, because I didn't think there was anybody really playing old-time stuff. I think it's 1983, I finally went to Mount Airy, the fiddler's convention. The same year Riley Baugus came. He's just a little way. We grew up riding the school bus together and everything. (Interview June 12, 2007)

With his initial interest in bluegrass fiddling, Kirk was also drawn to Tommy's troubled

son, B. F. Jarrell, who played fiddle and lived with Tommy.

BF was up there the first time. He was, what I call coming off of a drunk, he was sort of shaky and sweating and stuff. He was. Tommy was sitting there, didn't have a whole lot to say, just talking a bit about grandpa and my great grandpa. They all grew up there near Fisher's Peak. And the next time we went there, Tommy said, "BF's gone off. I'll be glad to show you what I could." I just got to talking and got acquainted. He cross-tuned my fiddle up and got me started. And that was it.

Jarrell also encouraged Sutphin to learn to play the banjo.

[Tommy] said, 'You won't always get to play [fiddle] where you go, you might need to play banjo. Might have three or four fiddlers—it'd be good to do both.' So he set me down, played a little bit of 'John Brown's Dream' think it was. Bass string tuned real low. I met Kyle [Creed] when I ordered a banjo. He had cancer at the point. And we went back and got it about a month before he died. He refused to play the banjo at that time. he'd play fiddle all day long.

A theme that recurs in most "visits-to-Tommy" stories is the non-musical activity.

Kirk's version: "He might be watching a program on TV or something. Just hang out.

Talk about the weather for a little bit. It wasn't always just playing music. About as much socializing as it was music." Discussing the social aspect of visits to Jarrell's, Sutphin remembers meeting "a whole yard full of people" at the little house in Toast, and lists several well-regarded revivalist old-time musicians. One of these musicians inspired Kirk to take his study of Jarrell to a deeper level.

Nancy Dols Neithammer. Met her at Tommy's way back. That's sort of what inspired me to try to get as close to Tommy's way of playing as I could. I thought, well, if this Yankee woman can come down here and do that, I thought, well, shoot...

[J. R.]: So you were pretty carefully trying to get the way he played it, not just the

tune.

[Kirk Sutphin]: I was just trying to learn it. But some of the little intricacies and stuff—I guess you could just play at the tune and not really play all the little essences and to me that's important. I know a lot of people who say they learned from him, but they don't sound like him. I could name some people, but I know you know who I'm talking about. They just play the bare structure of the tune. It's not really the tune.

The method of instruction at Tommy's was based on close visual and aural observation, as well as a close para-familial social bond, as Kirk's description demonstrates:

Yeah, I couldn't figure out what he was doing when I first listened to the record. It was like the bagpipe, when he's catching the drones. I thought, ain't no way without seeing him. Then after I saw him play, I thought, still no way!

Tommy's sort of like a grandpa to me. Took me under his wing. He'd sit me on the couch, set next to me. Kind of figure out, Try to get my bow in synch. Some of it is a lot to do with that: ending up on an up-stroke, coming back on the down, a little oomph. ... Tommy's, like I said, kind of like a grandpa to me, so I wanted to do it like he did it. So I stuck in there, and finally got to where I didn't even have to look or think about it. I could just once in a while, look, our bows'd be just right together.

As Rice observed, older musicians from aural traditions do not necessarily have explicit terminology that they can use to explain the music that they make. The way to get the “essences” is to try to do it by aping the physical motions, as Sutphin did, and as Rice did when learning the Bulgarian bagpipes (1994). Sutphin learned those “essences” and bowings better than just about anyone. His devotion to detail is one of his great distinguishing characteristics as a musician.

Beyond the aural details of Tommy Jarrell's style, Kirk also plays a fiddle that

resembles Tommy's old mail-order fiddle, with dark stain, six diamond inlays on the back, and geared tuners. He also plays a banjo that resembles the instrument that Kyle Creed lent to Fred Cockerham, and that is presently in the collection of the Smithsonian. But Sutphin also famously owns Oscar Jenkins' old Gibson banjo.

I was in a music store in Greensboro, 7 or 8 years ago, looking for an older Gibson-type banjo, something to finger-pick. I described what I was looking for, and he said, "yeah, you ever hear of a fella, Frank Jenkins?" Said "yeah." Says "hold on a second. I got his banjo back here in the back." I think my mouth hit the floor. He came out, bringing this old banjo here, and the case was all to pieces, all that.

[gets banjo out and opens case]

Top half was even flopping, the case had come apart. He brought this out, had three strings on it, the original head, it was just sunk in.

[strums the strings]

So I looked at that, and I remember seeing this picture here. [takes photocopy of picture of Jenkins, Jarrell and Cockerham from case] that later had on Peach's [Kevin Donleavy's] book, *Strings of Life*.

But before that, I thought, "I don't know if that's his banjo or not." I ended up talking to Dave Osborne. Dave said, "I think his son's moved to Pfafftown." So I looked him up [H. O. Jenkins, son of Oscar and grandson of Frank Jenkins] and he said, "yeah, come on out some time." So I went and met him. He said, "yeah, Dave's got Dad's old banjo." There just wasn't nobody playing it, wasn't doing nobody any good, so he sold it for his mom.

So I bought it. I wouldn't have bought it without verifying that it was the banjo. Some of these music store people could blow things up. Fabricate things. So that's how I came by that. I played with him a time or two. He's played down some. He's had some health problems, but he's back to playing some tunes.

On my visit to Sutphin's he shows me a photograph of Tommy performing with Fred

Cockerham and Oscar Jenkins on banjos and says “It's a shame there's not three of me. I've got the fiddle, that banjo, I've got the Fred banjo.” Kirk has managed to recreate the sounds of some of the old bands on his recordings, sometimes using overdubs, but more often by calling on like-minded musicians. His first solo CD, “Old Roots and New Branches,” CO-CD 2711, 1994, includes notes on the sources for each of the 18 tracks. He performed “Baptist Shout” and “John Brown's Dream” in banjo renditions based on the Frank Jenkins and Da Costa Woltz recordings. He played two of Tommy's fiddle tunes accompanied by Paul Brown on fretless banjo, the classic partner to Round Peak fiddling. He even reconstructed the sound of a 19th century dance before banjos and fiddles were common in a two-fiddle recording of “Virginia Reel.”

Sutphin's other big influence was the sound of Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers, who he heard on County's reissue LPs. He was able to make the acquaintance of Lonnie Austin, who played fiddle on Poole's later recordings, and he has learned to render the more smooth fiddle styles of Austin and Posey Rorer, another Charlie Poole accompanist. Kirk Sutphin's second CD, “Grandpa's Favorites” (Old 97 #002) includes recordings of him with the New North Carolina Ramblers, a band that recreates the sound of Charlie Poole's group. It also included four tracks by the New Camp Creek Band, a reformed version of the Camp Creek Boys that included Paul Sutphin and Verlen Clifton from the original group, and Kyle Creed's protege Tom Mylet on banjo. This group played four songs from the Camp Creek Boys repertoire.

The instinct to play stylistically accurate versions of Tommy Jarrell's tunes was what characterized Kirk's apprenticeship. But scores, if not hundreds of young musicians passed through Tommy's house without absorbing those essences, as Kirk notes. For many of them, the tunes and the sociability were the thing. One of these was Richard Bowman.

Richard Bowman says "I was borned exactly at the right time to be around all the good fiddlers that was around this area. If you liked old-time music. It was just the perfect place to have been borned and the perfect time to have growed up." He was born in 1953 and was raised in Ararat, in Patrick County, Virginia, where he lives today. He took up the fiddle in his early 20s, after hearing a broadcast of Tommy Jarrell on the WPAQ Merry-Go-Round. He was immediately struck by the sound and managed to get an instrument from his cousin. Music quickly became his main leisure activity, supplanting the sporting activities typical of many southern men.

I thought that was some of the prettiest music I ever heard. And my first cousin that was with me that day that we was hearing this, he played the guitar and I didn't realize that he had a fiddle. And he give me that thing, we went over to his house and he went upstairs and got that thing and he give it to me. And I learned to play it by myself before I ever got to going around where any of the fiddlers was at. When I got interested in it and got to inquiring around, there was a bunch of good fiddlers that lived right around here in this area and I got to going around to their houses and went from there. That's been about 32 years ago I guess now, but it's been about every weekend since. All the fishing and hunting come to a screeching halt. (Interview, June 17, 2005)

Though there were several talented fiddlers in the up-the-mountain community of Ararat,

Virginia, Bowman made his first musical visit to Tommy Jarrell's house, about twelve miles away. He remembers that there was always someone at Tommy's house in the late 1970s, when he started visiting. He noticed that many of the visitors were revivalist “hippies” from outside the area, and he recalls the impact that they made on the local music scene, bringing in new talent and unknown tunes to the area:

Years ago, they was hippies is what they was. You'd of had to been there to see what they looked like to know. But they was hippies. The ones that we knew come here for the music. That's what they were here for. And I don't know where they picked all those tunes up or where they learned to play. The most of them that I got acquainted with could play before they come here. They was good musicians. They didn't have the swing on the tunes that the local people had, but they was a lot of people moved here and was good musicians when they come. But they played different tunes. And I picked up some tunes from them. Tom Carter, Blanton Owen, they come here back in the 70s and stayed around and recorded people like Tommy and the Kimbles and the Shelors ... I learned a few of their tunes. Like “West Fork Girls.” I don't know where that tune came from, but there wasn't nobody around here that played it that I know of until Blanton and them came here. (Interview, June 17, 2005)

On the details of what happened on visits to Tommy's Richard Bowman says he was exceptionally patient, and would slow down and demonstrate details of his tunes for those who wanted to learn. This was different from his experiences with other local fiddlers, who did not have as many visitors.

Tommy, he showed me a lot. He would sit there and play a tune over and over. He wouldn't just play it through like one time and just let it go, you know. If he'd seen that you caught part of it and wasn't catching the other part of it, he'd say, now “Goes like this, here, when you get to this part.” He would set there and play it two or three times if need be. I remember when I was trying to learn to play “Rockingham Cindy,” there was a little part of it, of course, in there, a little

crooked. And we'd get to that part, and I wasn't putting some of the little jigs in there that's supposed to be in to keep the tune going. And he let me do that about twice, and he got to that part about that third time and stopped. He said, "Now it goes right there, it goes this -a way." And he'd pull the bow to get me to notice where he was putting it in there, you know.

He was patient. And it wasn't only me he was patient for. He was a patient person.

But Ernest [East] and all the other fiddlers, they would just go on and play the tunes. I could pick 'em up. I may have to go back a time or two. They'd just sit there and play. Tommy wasn't like that. If you needed to get a note in there, he would sit there and show you where the thing went. It's just the way he was. But the other folks I don't think ever had to show folks how to play. (Interview, June 17, 2005)

While Bowman learned a lot of tunes from Tommy, he admits that he does not play just like Jarrell. His left hand technique is different in that he mostly uses his index and middle fingers to note the strings, occasionally the third finger, and never the little finger. Tommy, who used all four, gave him some good-natured ribbing about that.

I don't never use my little finger. It kind of sticks up there in the way. And I don't know why. I never did learn to use it, and I guess it's a good thing, because I don't think I could learn to use it now. The note that you would get with your little finger I just slide it up there to get it. Tommy said, one time I was over there—I'd been over there several times, and he had noticed I wasn't never using my little finger. Was over there one day and he was showing me something. He reached over there and took hold of my little finger sticking up and he said "You might as well cut that off if you ain't going to use it. (Interview, June 17, 2005)

His bowing is also different. Many people liken Richard's bowing to that of Ernest East, a comparison that Bowman is aware of, though he did not consciously model his bowing after East's. Tommy's distinctive bow-rocking technique eluded him, though.

I don't think nobody ever got it but maybe Kirk Sutphin. I don't think nobody ever could do that little jig but Kirk. Kirk can take some of his tunes that he played a lot and play them just about identical to Tommy. But none of the rest of us. I never did work at trying to do that. I was just working trying to learn how he played them tunes. But Kirk was working at playing them *like* Tommy played them. And *did*, I mean Kirk can play them tunes just like Tommy. 'Course he can play like Posey Rorer, too. He was just gifted enough to do that.

The tunes and the style in which they are rendered are distinct in Richard Bowman's mind, as they are to most old-time musicians, revivalist or traditionalist. Bowman learned his tunes from Tommy Jarrell, but he renders him in his own style. He is aware of some who can copy a style more faithfully, and he admires this skill, but it is not something he seeks to achieve himself.

The lessons that Bowman got from Tommy Jarrell have influenced his subsequent career as a fiddler. He claims that almost all the tunes he plays in the key of A came from Tommy, and several D tunes, too. Socially, he got his patience and inclusiveness from Jarrell. Bowman and his wife Barbara and daughter Marsha have been regular winners at the local fiddlers conventions, both as individual musicians and dancers, and as the Slate Mountain Ramblers old-time band. While some of the more successful local fiddlers hold themselves apart from the average musician, or strive to only play in small, tightly controlled jams, Richard's camp at the fiddlers' conventions usually has a lively jam session going, where anyone is welcome to sit down and join in. He was the first old-time fiddler to invite me to play on my first visit to the region in 1999. I've often heard him quote Tommy Jarrell on the principle of jam inclusiveness: "There's always room for one

more!”

Joe Thrift is the final visitor to Tommy under discussion here. Thrift is five years older than Richard Bowman, but he seems to be of a later generation. He was raised in the Winston-Salem area of North Carolina and his parents were involved in classical music. His mother was an organist, his father a pipe organ builder. As a youth, he played classical clarinet in the state high school orchestra. His first encounter with old-time music was not auspicious:

The first time I heard it was in Elkin [North Carolina]. Me and another guy came up to see what was going on and there was a fiddlers' convention going on in the ball park there. We had all been drinking and we were pretty drunk and I remember seeing these hillbillies playing on stage and somebody was clogging and I thought it was the funniest thing I ever saw in my life. I fell on the ground laughing. I thought it was the funniest thing. Bunch of damn hicks! I didn't connect with the music or any of that stuff. That whole *Hee-Haw* TV show and all that stuff—I hated all that crap. (Interview, July 25, 2008)

It was not long after this that Thrift saw a bearded mountaineer building dulcimers at the State Fair in Raleigh and decided to try his hand at instrument building. His unsuccessful first efforts led him to seek out knowledgeable luthiers, and subsequently Dave Sturgill's musical instrument building shop in Alleghany County. Sturgill built string instruments and sold them at fiddlers' conventions. Many of his employees were young counterculture apprentices, interested in learning to build instruments and play old-time music. Sturgill's apprentices at the time had a band “money back band”--that is, a group that formed for the express purpose of playing on stage at fiddlers' conventions so the members could get

their admission refunded. Joe got his first taste of string band music playing mandolin with this group, and later became one of its fiddlers. His travels to festivals and fiddlers' conventions introduced him to the Green Grass Cloggers and the Highwoods String band, the standard-bearers for counterculture youth in the realms of old-time dance and music. Seeing people he could relate to, people like him, led him to give old-time music a second chance:

I think it was exposure to it and also getting in the middle of it and seeing that it wasn't a bunch of rednecks and ignorant hillbillies that were necessarily playing it. They were just normal people who discovered the music and loved it. At some point I got so bit by it that it's all I could do. I could play every Neil Young song that he ever wrote. When I discovered old-time music, I went "That singing's a bunch of shit!" I quit singing, quit playing the guitar ... I sort of got bit by it and couldn't get enough of it. (Interview, July 25, 2008)

After being introduced to Tommy Jarrell by Rich Hartness, Thrift began visiting the little house in Toast on a regular basis. His visits were often more social than musical.

When I first started going there, there was always people. You couldn't get any real private time with him, so one night I said, "Tommy I really want to start coming more often but is there a night when people don't come?" He said, "Well, most of the time people don't come on Mondays." So I started going on Monday night and hanging out with him. And I'd go other times. And a lot of times we didn't play a tune. We'd sit and watch TV and drink beer, or whatever. His favorite show was *Bonanza*. (Interview, July 25, 2008)

During these visits they did play tunes together, but, like Bowman, Joe was less interested in the technical details of Tommy's technique than in the tunes themselves. Thrift believes that this approach is truer to Tommy's musical *modus operandus* than the obsessive bowing study of some of Tommy's acolytes.

I wasn't trying to learn his technique. I loved his technique, but I'm not the type of person that wants to sit there and get every up and down stroke and figure of eight and circular whatever. He was happy to teach it, but he didn't really understand the logic of it. He'd say "aw, I never could play it the way " somebody else "did, I just play it the way I play." And I adopted that kind of attitude. I wasn't interested in learning his licks. I learned tunes off him. And the other thing I was interested in learning was the feel of the music. I think I probably got some of his licks in my bowing just from being around him.

Tommy also got a lot out of the visits, and he seemed to have a special appreciation for Southern visitors:

[Tommy] loved it when I came around, and Kirk Sutphin and people from this area came and sought him out. Because for the most part, it was people from New York and California... Cause not that many local people were seeking him out in that same way.

Joe also believes that his North Carolina raising was part of the reason he got along with B. F. while many other visitors did not.

Joe was a founding member of the Red Hots, a high-energy string band not unlike the Highwoods String Band or the Plank Road String Band who inspired him. The Red Hots do not play in Surry County or its surrounding area much, preferring to perform for dances at eclectic music festivals like the Grassroots Festival in Trumansburg, New York or Shakori Hills in Silk Hope, North Carolina. These festivals attract a counterculture crowd to hear and dance to eclectic "world" music and alternative and jam rock.

Joe Thrift's pathway into old-time music demonstrates that old-time can be a way to connect with different types of community in Surry County. Joe does not seek out local

opportunities, nor does he play much from the Round Peak repertory—"I never learned 'Sally Ann.' I never learned 'Old Bunch of Keys.' I never learned a whole bunch of those songs because everybody in the world played them and I wasn't interested in learning them because of that." He is rather indifferent to local repertory in general, drawing his favorite tunes from a wide-ranging geographic area. He names his favorite tune sources as: Luther Strong from Kentucky, the Skillet Lickers from Georgia, Carter Brothers and Son from Mississippi and Dykes Magic City String Band from Tennessee. These are all great musicians from the Golden Age of Hillbilly Music, but they represent widely divergent traditions and regions of the South. They do share a great deal of what old-time musicians sometimes call "drive": fast, but still danceable tempos, rhythmic anticipations and a certain feeling of wild abandon. All of this can be found in the local Surry County sound, which Joe acknowledges, but he prefers the tunes from outside the area, in part because of their rarity. Joe Thrift was a regular visitor to Jarrell's for about a year, and his example is something of an instructive counter-example to the typical story of a Tommy Jarrell visit. He was as happy to watch television as to play tunes; he did not fuss with the details of bow-rocking; he was a local than a traveler; he enjoyed B. F. rather than being intimidated by him.

The three musicians under consideration here were each North Carolina natives, and each found the pathway to Tommy Jarrell's door, and through it made fiddlers of themselves. Their approaches were different, and what they have ended up doing with

their music has been different, but traveling the Round Peak pathway has brought them to share many things in common, including very strong senses of rhythm and timing, and an appreciation of the value of hospitality and helpfulness. These last are not strictly extra-musical, but are essential parts of what it means to be a fiddler. They all love to tell their Tommy Jarrell stories, as Tommy loved to tell his own stories. When they tell stories about tunes, or giving up farming or giving up drinking, or visiting older musicians, they are creating a “temporal synecdoche” as the anthropologist Michael Jackson calls it, which makes the “present ... continuous with the ancestral past” and “brings the wider world within a person’s grasp *in the here and now*” (1989:155, emphasis in original). Their world and lives are connected to a past, perhaps an idealized past, through the stories, and it gives them sustenance and support in the present.

Round Peak Music as Local Heritage

Frank [Bode]: ... it took them [people from outside the area] to come in here and to learn it to make us appreciate what we had. I mean that's really what happened. There's Paul [Brown] and Andy [Cahan], and Mike Seeger, and Alice [Gerrard], and just people like that. Boy you could go to Tommy's house on a Saturday night sometime and there'd be 75 people there. The yard sitting full and they were coming to learn that music. And they made us appreciate what we had. We didn't appreciate it. Is that right Verlen?

Verlen [Clifton]: That's right, exactly right. (Davis 1996:24)

While the outsiders, and a handful of more local young people were seeking out

Tommy and Fred and Kyle to learn music, the local community seems to have taken little notice during the 1960s and 1970s. Frank Bode, a singer and guitar player who made one LP record with Tommy, sums it up rather well in the foregoing quote. Ruth Minick wrote a local history column for *The Mount Airy News* for a number of years. In three consecutive columns, she wrote about Tommy and his influence years after his death, and relayed (some might say plagiarized) an interview with Jarrell that ran in *Fiddler* magazine in 1979. Minick writes: “Tommy was known to musicians all over the United States, even in Alaska, before many of us even knew about him, which included yours truly. You know the saying, 'a prophet is not without honor save in his own country’” (1999a:6C). In her second installment, Minick introduced Tommy as “probably the best known country music fiddler in the United States, a country fiddler who received a national humanities award from the government and whose fiddle rests in the Smithsonian” (1999b:6C). Someone must have remonstrated with Minick over the course of the following week. She notes in the third and final installment of the *Fiddler* interview:

This writer found that she was so ignorant of that of which we should be so proud that she decided that you, too, should not be so ignorant. And, incidentally, this writer learned that Tommy did not play country music, he played old-timey music. There is a difference. Country music is the modern version which evolved from the traditional old-timey music. Old-timey music is pure, like the music the old-timers played a hundred and more years ago. (1999c:6C)

Minick's confession of embarrassment at her ignorance of Tommy Jarrell is charming.

Most of the people of Mount Airy remained ignorant of or indifferent to the wealth of old-time music outside of town until it was taken up and promoted by outsiders. Even WPAQ, locally admired as an old-time music standard-bearer, turned away from the local music for several years, though this story is rarely told today.

WPAQ Returns to Local Programming

Among the most notable and long-lasting local impacts of the revivalist interest in the musicians of Surry County was the return to old-time and bluegrass music by WPAQ. Though the *Merry-Go-Round* has been a mainstay on the air since 1948, the station changed its daily format in 1961, abandoning local and regional music for a mix of commercial country, pop music, jazz and classical. Ralph Epperson was persuaded to change this in 1976, when Tommy Jarrell turned 75 years old. Epperson had Jarrell appear as a special guest on the *Merry-Go-Round* that day and began to receive positive feedback from the audience. That evening there was a birthday celebration at the Franklin Ruritan club, near Tommy's home. In an interview with Jack Bernhardt for *Bluegrass Unlimited*, he remembered that it was so crowded that he couldn't find a place to park, and that once inside, it was so crowded that he couldn't get near the musicians to record them. He was also approached by Barry Poss about using some of Epperson's recordings for an upcoming LP (Bernhardt 1987:21). Epperson said:

Well, I thought it was great. And I saw an interest and was taken with the number of people, young and old, who were playing the old-time music. This total

experience turned me on. I'd fallen to the psychology of everyone else, you know, this is great music but no one ever listens to it. Then suddenly I decided that maybe someone *would* listen to it. (Bernhardt 1987:22)

In 1961, when WPAQ changed its format, Tommy Jarrell was still working for the Highway Commission, playing a little fiddle, but completely unknown. By 1976, he'd attracted a following of both locals and visitors, had appeared on festival stages from San Diego to Washington, DC, and recorded several albums of traditional old-time music. Epperson was shrewd enough to recognize the opportunity, and humble enough to recognize that he'd made a mistake in following the "psychology of everyone else." Bluegrass and old-time music were gradually reintroduced to the WPAQ schedule and the listening public responded with enthusiasm. Since 1976, the schedule has remained unchanged, even after Epperson's death in 2006. Traditional music in the early morning, followed by Christian programming until noon, then more traditional music until the evening, when a short hour or two of big-band jazz is broadcast before the station signs off at sundown.

The station continues to feature local acts on the *Merry-Go-Round*, usually two bands per week. The performers play on stage at the Cinema theater, and there is an open jam session in the theater in the morning before the performance. The performances are open to the public and free. Sometimes the bands on stage will have a large audience, and sometimes there will be fewer in the audience than on the stage. Bands are scheduled months in advance, and a recent calendar lists upcoming performances for nine months.

Bands on the schedule include local old-time bands: the Slate Mountain Ramblers, Zephyr Lightning Bolts, Pilot Mountain Bobcats, H.O. Jenkins Band, Kevin Fore, Round Peak Ramblers, the Mountain Park Old Time Band, the Red Hots, Backstep and the Snow Creek Old Time Band. Other acts listed perform bluegrass, bluegrass-gospel and traditional country music. Old-time bands from outside the area also are welcome to play on the *Merry-Go-Round*, provided they are willing to wait for a spot in the schedule.

Round Peak Backlash

The record albums and informal apprenticeships and summer visits to Union Grove and Galax helped spread the music of Surry County around the United States. It became a kind of lingua franca for old-time fiddlers. Bob Cohen, a klezmer musician and scholar, wrote the following about the New York City old-time scene in the 1970s:

I got my start playing American traditional folk music back in the 1970s. New York was a magnet for folk music, and there was a very active scene of people playing traditional Appalachian fiddle music Many of the musicians who became the backbone of the east coast Klezmer revival, such as Henry Sapoznik and ... Andy Statman, were regulars at the old-time music jam sessions that were held at the Eagle Tavern on 14th Street. Young New York musicians would make the pilgrimage south to North Carolina or West Virginia to learn to play at the feet of some of the old masters of traditional folk fiddling, like Tommy Jarrell of Toast, North Carolina...Tommy's style (generally known as "Round Peak" style) became the New York City default mode for fiddling. (Cohen 2006)

The counter-culture, with its countervailing values of collective action and individualism, was bound to see the presence of a “default mode for fiddling” as a boon and a bane. The revivalist preference for the Surry County sound led to a back-lash. Some began to feel

limited by the Round Peak style and repertoire. Walt Koken, a former fiddler for the Highwoods String Band and a virtuoso banjoist says that he developed his style partly in reaction to Round Peak style: “The almost exclusive acceptance of 'Round Peak' style and tune selection was leaving me a bit dry. I couldn't help feeling that playing 'Step Back Cindy' with one finger on the left hand, no chords, and only an occasional 16th note was a bit pretentiously primitive and un-challenging.” (2006/2007:37). Mac Benford, the banjo player in Highwoods was initially influenced by Creed, Cockerham and Jarrell in the 1960s. He, too, began to feel limited by them. He told Ken Perlman “[I] eventually became turned off by the many imitators who felt this was the only way to play banjo. I really started to consciously work on my own style in the early 70s” (Perlman 1989:119).

While Koken felt the technique and tunes of Round Peak were unnecessarily limiting, and Mac Benford wanted to differentiate himself from the “many imitators,” others asserted that Round Peak's popularity siphoned attention from other, equally worthy, musical styles. For example, John Harrod wrote of his friend and fieldwork companion Gus Meade: “While so many young people were pouring into North Carolina to camp out on Tommy Jarrell's front porch, Gus was traveling back to Kentucky in his spare time to ... seek out the lesser known bearers of another great tradition” (1997:[5]). Meade was a dedicated collector and cataloguer of country music records and a dogged field recorder of Kentucky fiddlers, but his projects were large in scope and slow to come to fruition, or at least publication. While Rich Nevins and Charlie Faurot released their

field recordings on influential and well-distributed LPs within a year of their visits, Gus Meade and his collecting partners, Mark Wilson and John Harrod, did not release their recordings until the late 1990s, when Rounder released two volumes of wonderful music by fiddlers who had been long gone (Rounder 0376 and 0377). *Kitty Puss*, an earlier Meade and Wilson-produced LP of the great Lewis County, Kentucky, fiddler Buddy Thomas was more timely, but was still released over a year after Thomas' untimely death in 1974 (Rounder 0032). Bruce Greene was another revivalist fiddler who traveled the backroads of Kentucky, learning from and recording an astonishing variety of great old-time fiddlers. But he preferred to release recordings of his own exceptionally fine renditions of the tunes he learned, rather than to get into the business of producing field recordings. There have, of course, been recordings released of living Kentucky fiddlers. Clyde Davenport, for one, has attracted a stream of visitors over the years (Titon 1995). West Virginia also had a strong and varied fiddling tradition that was accessibly documented. Burl, Sherman and Maggie Hammons, Melvin Wine, and Lester McCumbers were similarly revered source musicians in that state. Wine, especially, became a focus of attention for his very rare repertoire and for his exceptionally warm personality (Beisswenger 2002).

The Legacy of Tommy Jarrell

Tommy Jarrell has been the guiding spirit of much of the foregoing chapter. He

has also been a paragon of old-time music for people in Surry County and abroad in the world. Some who never met him are adept at mimicking his fiddle style, singing and even spoken mannerisms. Though an obscure figure by the standards of the music business, he achieved a level of visibility in the mainstream media that has yet to be surpassed by any other old-time fiddler of the postrevival era. When he died in 1985, his obituary appeared in the *New York Times*. He had appeared on the BBC. He had been the subject of two half-hour documentary films by the director Les Blank and he had recorded more LPs than any other old-time musician. After the film premiered, he was asked if he thought it would be popular in Mount Airy and he replied that the people in town were too “high-falutin’” to watch it (Winston-Salem Journal). He was profiled in *Newsweek*. In 1982, he received one of the first round of National Heritage Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. His receipt of the award was covered by the NBC morning news (Burrelle's transcript, November 21, 1983) Quite a list of accomplishments for a man who made his first record as a 67-year-old retiree. The high-fallutin' folks of Mount Airy town have embraced him with an annual festival at the time of his birthday. His image appears alongside Chang and Eng and Andy Griffith in tableaux of famous sons at the Chamber of Commerce, the Museum of Regional History, and the Surry Arts Council. But the legacy of Tommy Jarrell is not completely uncontested. He is often invoked to bolster arguments in the subculture of the old-time revival. Some who knew him remember him as always supportive and welcoming to new players, while others remember him driving

off an incompetent guitarist, say, or avoiding a banjo player with a style he found incompatible. Many of the locals who knew and played with him felt overshadowed by his influence in his time, and will tell you today that he was nothing special as a fiddler, though they will usually tell you not to write that they said that. The old-time musicians in Surry County were known to be competitive, and Tommy told an interviewer that Ernest East “couldn't handle a bow too good.” Steve Mason often tells a story of visiting the fiddler and banjo player Dix Freeman. Freeman asked the young Mason to play fiddle tune. Mason played “Rochester Schottishe,” a Jarrell specialty. Freeman said, “You've been over at that God-damn Tommy Jarrell's house, ain't you?!”

Lee Dix Freeman: Another Life in Round Peak

Mason was visiting Freeman because he was a noted old-time musician. He was one of very few revivalists who did visit Dix, who had a reputation for orneriness. Ray Alden never visited Freeman, and the Faurot-Nevins team seems not to have ever recorded him either. His one release was a self-produced cassette tape on the short-lived Spudchucker label. Yet his legacy is still felt in Surry County old-time music. His son-in-law, Chester McMillian, is a favorite guitarist, and a revered figure on the local scene. Chester and his son Nick have a string band called Backstep, with Nick's girlfriend Kelley Breiding on a fretless banjo once owned by Dix. Backstep play many tunes in the style of Dix and are frequent winners and placers at the fiddlers' conventions. The life

story of Dix Freeman is not well known, and it offers an illuminating counter-narrative to the Tommy Jarrell story.

Lee “Dix” Freeman was born in 1908, one of six children of Ben Freeman, who owned a sheep ranch, farmed, and engaged in local politics. The Freemans moved into the old homeplace that Ben built when Dix was two. His father did not play music, but loved to dance and to call square dances. This house still stands on Richards Road in the Round Peak area. Like Jarrell, Dix learned his first music on the banjo from a neighbor, and “old man Slater” (Leftwich 1999). Dix got his first banjo at about the age of ten. Though it is not at all clear if he is talking about this same man, he told a Library of Congress researcher about his first banjo “lessons” and his first banjo. Charlie Mae, Dix's wife, prods him to remember certain details:

Charlie Mae Freeman (Dix's wife): Tell him about your first banjo and the way that you learned to play.

Dix: I still have not learned. Well, there's an old man lived right over here ... there's a log cabin back on that ridge over there. I'd go over there every night, before night, and he'd pick for me. I can't remember his name, it's been so long. I know he had one finger off. He had this old banjo and it had a homemade neck. And I'd come back about eleven o'clock, scared to death. I could see everything when I'd cross that bridge down there. But the next night I was right back over there. And so I finally asked him what he'd take for it. He said three dollars and a half. And boy I got me three dollars and a half and I went over there and got it.

CMF: You were just a kid then.

Dix: Yeah, about ten years old. And I kept fooling with it. And I got this 49-bracket banjo. It was a good one. ...

But there wasn't anything to do then. Try to make a little music and go to square dances. They'd make us go to church, of course. They'd give us so much work to do, and if we got it done by Saturday at twelve, we was off. And if we didn't get it done, we worked til sundown. (AFS 21666 and 21667. Recordings in the American Folklife Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Interview with Dix and Charlie Mae Freeman, 1978)

Dix remembers music as being a part of the normal routine in his youth. His stories of learning the banjo or playing music in his youth, like this one, transition seamlessly from music to work to church to hunting and drinking and other activities.

Dix remembered music and dancing at his family home from an early age, as well. The Jarrells and Lowes would have been close neighbors, and they showed up to provide music.

When I was just real small I remember one time they danced in two rooms down there. They moved all the furniture out and Ben Jarrells and Charlie Lowe; Tommy Jarrells and ... Jake Norman, and they made music over there and they danced in two rooms. That was 60 years ago, I guess. (AFS 21666 and 21667. Recordings in the American Folklife Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Interview with Dix and Charlie Mae Freeman, 1978)

A hallway in between the two rooms separated the sound enough that the musicians could play different music for each room. Dix's father must have known of the tendency for violence to break out at dances, but he seems to have been confident of his ability to prevent trouble, as the following anecdote demonstrates.

I remember one time they wanted to have a square dance and down below here, there's two neighbor boys. One was a constable and one was a deputy sheriff. And they used to call him Uncle Ben. They said, "Uncle Ben, if you'll have a dance,

we'll police it for you. You won't have no trouble." He said, "you just leave your damn guns at home. I'll police it" [laughs] They did have some good dances.

There were some dances where whiskey flowed freely, at least among the young men.

I had a cousin lived across the river over here. And he run a saloon in California for 20, 30 years and he come back to this country. A fellow lived across the hill over here and he come over here one Christmas day and got me out of the bed, said "I've got a five gallon keg of liquor over there." Said, "Come on over." Said, well, "I will in a little bit." And I had a little Western horse I got on this horse and rode over there.

We went out to the keg and drewed us out a gallon, and about the time we got to the house with it my cousin come along and he had a big bay horse and he come along on it. So another fellow come along and said, "there's a dance on at Greely Holder's." There's a dance all evening and all night, you know. Started at twelve and danced right on. We rode up there. Took us a gallon of whiskey with us and we's all feeling pretty good when we got there.

So this fellow, Greely Holder that lived there, he come out and he kept pulling on this big bay horse's tail. And my cousin said "Christ, he'll kill you, Greely." And he just give him another tug and he hit him with both feet right there and we took him in and laid him out. We thought he was dead. And in another thirty minutes he started moving around [laughs].

So along about sundown a fellow rode up there on a horse and told this fellow that had the whiskey that the sheriff is captured your whiskey down there. So he left. Well, sometime or other, I don't know, I got separated and I left. And I come in and next morning I got up and went over there to see if my cousin was in. See, he's about a fifty year old man, and I was about 17 years old. And he hadn't come in. So I got on my horse and I back tracked to find him. And he was up at old man Lum Martin's. Lum said that he's setting up on the porch and he rode up and said "whoa" and said he went right over that horse's head. [laughs] So I got him in. They used to have some times.

(AFS 21666 and 21667. Recordings in the American Folklife Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Interview with Dix and Charlie Mae Freeman, 1978)

There were no regularly scheduled dances, but they would happen in homes, and be advertised by word of mouth. Christmas was remembered as a time for many dances out in the country. “And it went on for about a week. There's a dance somewhere for about a week every night.” The repertory of tunes was relatively small, as Dix remembered it.

When I was a boy, there wasn't round this mountain there wasn't many tunes. They didn't pick many tunes, but they was good at what they picked. Now it seems to me—I don't know—it seems to me that the old-time music now is farther reaching. They're not sticking close enough to this old original music around here, see? Trying to pick up new tunes. And some of the bluegrass seems like it's gotten mixed up trying to go every which way.

But they'd take, around here, if the dancers liked 'Sally Ann,' they might play 'Sally Ann' two, three times for them. At the same dance. I'd say there was about a dozen tunes that was popular around here and they stuck to them. They didn't try to learn many new tunes. (AFS 21666 and 21667. Recordings in the American Folklife Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Interview with Dix and Charlie Mae Freeman, 1978)

The local repertory of dance music has certainly expanded, but Dix had a reputation for favoring a small number of local tunes, played well, over a broad selection of tunes, possibly learned from the radio. Chester McMillian, Dix's son-in-law, carries on Dix's habit of calling non-local old-time fiddle tunes “Australian tunes.”

Like many old-time musicians, Dix quit playing music for several years in middle life. Dix left the Surry County area at the age of 17 to run produce and chicken operations in South Carolina. He sold his banjo, along with a Model T Ford and a shotgun, when he left town. In Mullins, South Carolina, he “met his Waterloo” as Charlie Mae called their

wedding. Freeman worked trucking live poultry up to the northeast. Later he ran a supermarket in Bluefield, West Virginia for nineteen years. “We had too much business. Got to where we couldn't hardly handle it. Then they kept striking, coal strikes, and it finally, for a few years just about put West Virginia out of business. When they put in the machinery, when they filled the mines full of machinery.” While running the market in the late 1940s, Freeman sponsored the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers, an early bluegrass group, who would play a 2 p.m. show at a radio station across the street from the market. Dix eventually developed an ulcer, and decided to move back to Round Peak and farm. In all, Freeman remembered being away for about 45 years, from the mid-1920s to the early 1970s.

Upon his return, Dix renewed his musical activities by taking up the banjo again. In fact, he took up playing the very same 49-bracket banjo he sold when he left North Carolina.

And it was the only one I ever saw like it. And so when I left, I had an old Model T Ford. I sold my Ford and my old banjo and I had a double-barreled shotgun, that I'd accumulated. I sold that and left. So when I come back, got to hunting this banjo, couldn't find it. And traced it down to one man, he said he didn't know what happened to it. So I found one hanging in Mount Airy. Forty-nine bracket, had a wooden tone ring in it and I walked in. I had a hundred-fifty, two hundred dollars in my pocket. I'd of give it all for it. And I said “What do you want for that banjo?” He said, “Twenty-five dollars.” I said, “Pull it down!” [laughs] So I've got it now. It was in bad shaped, but I wanted it. And I'm satisfied with the same banjo.

With his old banjo back in his hands, it was not long before Freeman began attending dances again and thinking of ways to recreate his memories of dancing at the old

homeplace.

Well, they had a little dance or two up in round peak and we went and so I kindly liked it and hadn't been to one in so long and decided to start having them down here. ... We started with a banjo, a fiddle, and a mandolin. I was playing the fiddle and Chester [McMillian] was on the mandolin. Buck Barker was on the guitar. And Buck's good and Chester was good on that mandolin there.

Charlie Mae: Didn't have a banjo.

Dix: Didn't have a banjo. I was fiddling and we run it for about four years. Once in a while we'd have a banjo picker. Sometimes a bluegrass banjo picker would help us.

The dances at Freeman's old homeplace became a regular affair, but not a business. It is worth noting that Dix, a lifelong entrepreneur and trader, refused to charge people to dance at his home. His refusal to “charge a neighbor to come to a little square dance” led to a rift with at least one member of his regular band, who quit over the issue. After a while Dix rejoined the “rat race” and started running a wholesale business in Mount Airy, leaving less time for dances. Chester—an exception to the rule of old-time musicians giving up music in middle age—left to join Ernest East's band, and Dix got Tommy Jarrell to come and join him on fiddle, while Dix returned to the banjo. “If I could have got me a old-time banjo that was fair, I'd've never went back to picking a banjo. I'd stay with the fiddle. I'd rather do it. I'm not real good at it, but they like to dance by it.”

In the 1970s, Dix made a recording—called “Step Back Cindy”--with Chester McMillian on guitar and Kirk Sutphin on fiddle. The self-produced album was only released on cassette tape on the one-off Spudchucker label. Dix was very excited to make

a recording like all his friends in the area, but he clearly wanted it to be an LP recording, as the record format was the older and more respectable format, in his view. Freeman physically threatened one of the recordists involved in the creation of this album over just this issue. The recordings on this tape have never been re-issued, and there is some doubt as to the location of the master tapes. (Interview with Nick McMillian and Kelley Breiding, June 2008). It may be that the combination of irascibility and the scarcity of available recordings have kept Dix Freeman from being a recognizable figure on par with Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham. While he was a sponsor of the music, and a reviver of the local house dance tradition, he could also be prickly. Ray Alden never visited Freeman. Though he devotes some pages to Freeman as a banjo player, Brad Leftwich admits that he never met Freeman either. A story from the Steve Mason demonstrates the challenges and rewards of getting close to Dix. As a young revivalist student of fiddling, Mason had spent time learning from Tommy Jarrell. On his first visit to Freeman's he said Dix asked him to play a tune, "let me hear your best tune!" Mason started off on "Rochester Schottische" a Jarrell specialty. When he'd finished, Dix told him: "You've been over at that god-damned Tommy Jarrell's, ain't you!" Clearly, Dix had respect for Jarrell's playing, and recognized it's influence on the younger fiddler, but he also was expressing his boredom with Jarrell's endless line of acolytes. Mason later became a different type of apprentice to Freeman when he bought property in rural North Carolina and began farming bell peppers. Freeman was generous with his knowledge from a long

career growing and selling produce. He told Mason what time to plant the peppers, what kind of tractor to buy, what kind of fertilizer to use and when to apply it. (Interview, Steve Mason, November 2008).

Dix Freeman's career was shows how one Round Peak musician lived through the revival era, and effected some revival of his own. He makes an illuminating contrast to Tommy Jarrell. Both men grew up in the Round Peak area, and their fathers were close friends and partners in Democratic Party politics in the early 20th Century. Both men learned music locally and gave up playing for several years while they earned a living. Tommy became something like a folk music celebrity, while Freeman remains obscure. Tommy was a gregarious host, as was Freeman. Tommy welcomed outsiders, while Freeman opened his family homeplace to dancers by invitation only. Tommy's acolytes are legion and his life and music are celebrated at an annual festival, while Freeman's reputation is promoted mainly by his grandson, Nick McMillian and the band Backstep. Their story is a part of the next chapter.

Conclusions

The folk music revival had several important effects on the old-time music of Surry County, but conversely Surry County was well-suited and situated to take advantage of the revival. The story is one of circumstance and personality combining to create a phenomenon that carried a local sound to the far corners of the world. The local

musical style was both distinctive and relatively accessible, making it appealing to listen to. The presence of several great living musicians in an area reasonably easy to access, made Surry County an appealing place to travel to, promoting the pilgrimages. Ray Alden, Charles Faurot and the other early field recorders recognized the beauty of this music and had the will and the means to make it available on commercial recordings. David Freeman had the means and the vision to release these records. Kyle Creed and Bobby Patterson had the gumption to create their own record label, putting more music onto the soundscape. The importance of Tommy's gracious personality and showmanship is undeniable, but sometimes overstated. His musicianship was powerful and unique. He was also known and knowable.

Earlier in this chapter, I contrasted the healthy, ongoing revival in Surry County with what I found in Kentucky, where the once lively and exciting fiddle tradition of Lewis County has all but vanished. How does Surry County and Round Peak compare to Lewis County and the northeast Kentucky style, and what can be learned from the contrast? Northeastern Kentucky along the Ohio River was exposed to a wide array of music from the southern tradition, but also from northern and midwestern musicians who traveled the river for commerce. Professional entertainers also traveled this route. As a consequence the music is there was in the region "a cosmopolitan combination of southeastern breakdowns with a northern tune tradition." The traveling entertainers "left their mark in an elegant dance music that to some extent resembled that of Pennsylvania,

Ohio, the northern midwest and even New England: a heritage of jigs, reels, hornpipes, schottisches, and the like, as well as a tradition of note reading and book tunes (Titon 2001:18). Fiddlers in this region “developed a smooth, even style that did not show much of the African American or Scottish influence that was apparent, say, in south-central Kentucky fiddler Isham Monday or southeastern fiddler Manon Campbell. Rather there seemed to be a mixture of styles, including northern ones that came down the Ohio” (20). The fiddlers in this region favor a tune type that Titon describes as “elaborate with long melodic lines” and “rhythmically restrained” (21). This music was not so well suited to being played on the five-string banjo, and there were not many banjo players in the region. The music of northeastern Kentucky, in short, was not very easy to access. It was technically more challenging to play on the fiddle. The lack of a strong banjo tradition probably put off the set of revivalists who entered old-time music through Pete Seeger's banjo advocacy. The lack of African American influence, too, made it seem perhaps too rhythmically straightforward. For a generation that grew up with Rock music, the African American element would be sorely missed, as would the excitement of the full band sound heard in Mount Airy and Galax.

While Surry County has had the Fiddlers' Convention since 1972 as a main attraction on the old-time revivalist calendar, northeastern Kentucky does not seem to have had any such attractive event. Roger Cooper told me of the structure of an old local fiddle contest. All the fiddlers would have to play the same tune, selected by the judges.

Anyone who didn't know the tune, which might be "Fisher's Hornpipe' in two keys" would be automatically disqualified. No doubt the organizers thought this was one way of making the contest "fair," but it also would prevent the contestants from playing their best material, and it probably made for a rather dull performance (Field notes, January 2007).

Surry County also benefitted from the advocacy of several enthusiastic and forceful personalities, including Richard Nevins, Ray Alden and Paul Brown among many others. These advocates recorded and promoted the music generously. Ray Alden always spoke of his desire to share the experience of visiting Round Peak and making music and conversation. Kentucky had enthusiastic and forceful personalities as well. John Harrod, Gus Meade and Mark Wilson were a group who traveled extensively through the area recording and documenting fiddlers, but they may have been less generous than the partisans of Round Peak were. Alden talked about hearing Buddy Thomas perform at a festival in Washington, DC, and loving Thomas' ornate, yet forceful style. He asked one of Thomas' "handlers" how he might find the fiddler at home, and was met with evasive comments about the remoteness of Buddy's place:

Like they didn't want anyone else to know where these guys lived. But we found Buddy on our own and had a wonderful time with him. I've seen some people, not necessarily folklorists, and they start treating some of these people like possessions. These are their own little possessions and, boy, you go to record them, you're stepping on "my territory." I've seen it, and it ain't pretty. (Interview November 2007)

Finally, there are non-musical factors that must be considered. Tommy Jarrell lived rather

comfortably on a regular state pension, and could afford to be hospitable. Even if you couldn't call Jarrell on the phone, his address was in the local directory and he lived right outside of town, in a part of the state that was well mapped and roaded. Buddy Thomas often lived far out in the country, at times far from paved roads, and in fairly hard-scrabble conditions. Thomas had health problems that prevented him from steady employment (Thomas 1998). Perhaps not knowing the depth of Ray Alden's enthusiasm, Buddy Thomas' handler in the above anecdote may have been trying to save him from a long trip into a remote area where he would be faced with an uncomfortably stark situation.

Comparing the socioeconomic data of Lewis County, home of Buddy Thomas and Roger Cooper, to Surry County reveals some more contrasts that may be illuminating. In 1980, the Poverty rate in Lewis County was 31.2%, and in Surry it was 13.7%. In 1990, Lewis County's population density was 26.9 people per square mile, compared to 115 in Surry County and 106.1 in the Appalachian region as a whole. The hard-scrabble situation extends to much of northeastern Kentucky, the counties of which are classified as either “Distressed” or “At-Risk” by the Appalachian Regional Commission, while Surry County is “Transitional” (www.arc.gov/ accessed February 2011). There simply may not have been enough of a local population in Lewis County to sustain the institutions—the dances, the convention, the frequent fiddle contests and the radio station--that supported old-time music in Surry County. The people there would have had

fewer dollars to spare for a dance or a festival. Without an entrée into the community such as the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, revivalists would have overlooked the area. Those who would “come home to Surry County” would have had a much harder time of it trying to homestead in northeastern Kentucky, where work is scarce and the land is not easily farmed.

Old-time music in Surry County survived long enough to be revived. And once the local tradition was “discovered” it was revitalized locally and in the wider string band revival for several reasons. First, Surry County was well situated to appeal to revivalists, being easily accessible by major highways, and near the established “points of entry” at the Galax and Union Grove fiddlers conventions. Second, the music had a sound, a syncopation and drive, that appealed to people who wanted folk music, but grew up with rock music. Third, the local population was large enough to sustain—if barely for a time—the dances and fiddle contests that were the main venues for old-time music, even while the popular culture was turning to more mass-market entertainments. Fourth, a coterie of forceful individuals and institutions—both local and revivalist--worked to share, explain, and promote the music of the region to an international audience that was ready to hear about it.

CHAPTER 5

SURRY COUNTY OLD-TIME MUSIC IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Round Peak in Space and in Time

As noted at the beginning of Chapter 4, the musicians of Surry County are acutely aware of the history of old-time music in their location, and this history makes their experience continuous with the past in a temporal synecdoche. Whether born and raised or a transplant, just about every musician I talked to expressed a connection to the musical place and the musical past of Surry County. Those who do not play music, but wish to promote the area to potential visitors, also invoke the presentness of history. In this they are like many small southern towns looking to get some money out of heritage tourism. But Surry County's Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce has an exceptional variety of heritage draws, summed up by their tourism tag-line: "Mountains, Music, Mayberry."

If you play old-time music in the early 21st century, you know of a few important Surry County institutions, even if you've never been to the place. The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, and WPAQ are two of the central institutions that give musicians the things they need: places to play and people to play for. The small local square dances are a third institution that connects the musicians to the broader community in the most

direct way. In this chapter I examine these venues and institutions to see how they work, what use they have for old-time music, and the ways old-time music uses them. In deciding how to order these institutions I've made the somewhat arbitrary, but not unprecedented decision to address them roughly in the order that I encountered them on my multi-year journey to Surry County (see Simonett 2001). The Fiddlers' Convention comes first, followed by WPAQ and the local dances. Depending on one's point of view, this might also place these three institutions in the order of accessibility to outsiders. As will be shown, many, many old-time revivalists travel to the Fiddlers' Convention at least once and have a good time and feel welcome. While traveling to the fairgrounds, they may tune in to WPAQ in the car, but until the station started streaming their signal on the web in 2007, it was only accessible to people in a small area around Mount Airy. The dances are open to the public, of course, but are small, not well advertised, and probably offer little to entice tourists. I never went to one before I moved to the area. I follow these with an account of the Tommy Jarrell Festival, an annual event sponsored by the Surry Arts Council in early March of each year. This is more of an insider's event, attracting a crowd of mostly locals and extended members of the Jarrell clan. The entertainment consists of dances and concerts and workshops by musicians who have a personal tie of kinship or apprenticeship to Tommy Jarrell. As Jarrell is the most famous Surry County Old-timer, and the only one honored with such a festival, the Saturday evening concert becomes a forum for musicians to contest and amend the

official story. After looking at these institutions and events, I will examine three key groups of musicians: the older generation of locals, those who grew up in the area and learned from the traditional masters; the older generation of revivalists, who made their homes in Surry County and adopted some of its traditions as their own; and the younger generation, mostly the children of the first group, who have learned the traditions and either carry them in new directions or conservatively guard them.

Up and Down the Mountain: Surry County Senses of Place

In recent conversations, none of the older Surry County musicians I spoke to remembered “Round Peak” as being a meaningful description of a musical style when they were young. I believe the field recordist Ray Alden was the first to refer to this music by that label in a series of articles in *Sing Out!* and the British magazine *Old Time Music*. Round Peak, the place, is a small mountain that rises only 2000 feet above sea level, just east of the blue ridge's sharp rise. There was a community named for it at its base where the Jarrell family settled. Several other prominent Surry County musicians lived in the nearby communities of Skull Camp, Camp Creek, Pine Ridge, Beulah and Dobson, but these articles and albums made Round Peak the imagined wellspring of this music, even though the community was no longer on most maps.

One of the more concise summations of the intersection of music and place comes from ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes, who wrote: "I would argue ... that music is

socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (Stokes 1994: 5). Indeed, one of the ways of identifying a round peak musician is by the sound of his or her music. I will address the sound of the music in Chapter 6, but first I will situate and describe the bounded location in question.

There are many boundaries that a person in Surry County is aware of. There are five North Carolina counties and three Virginia counties that border Surry. There are four big towns with city limits within the county. Out in the country, boundaries are less obvious, with the names of old "communities" preserved on the sides of defunct country stores, or on roads. History is inscribed on the land in the names of roads and "old" roads. Every road longer than a mile or two seems to have at least one section of its former route peeling off in places—Old Pinnacle Hotel Road splits from Pinnacle Hotel Road, makes a little quarter-mile loop past two or three trailers and rejoins the main Road, the hotel itself long gone.

The Round Peak "community" or "section" is not within the city limits of Mount Airy, the largest town in Surry County, but most of that community has a "Mount Airy" address. Besides revivalist old-time enthusiasts, Round Peak is remembered by older citizens, and in the names of "Round Peak Church Road" and the Round Peak Tree Farm. Round Peak Vineyards was founded by some retired Winston Salem businessmen a few years ago. They learned of the area's musical history from a friend and began hosting

occasional musical performances in the tasting room. Their operation on Round Peak Church Road has a stunning view of a mountain, which is reproduced on some of their labels. Oddly enough, it is Skull Camp Mountain, not Round Peak.

This county is located at the northwest corner of the North Carolina piedmont, with the escarpment of the Blue Ridge rising along its sparsely settled western edge. To anyone in Surry or the neighboring counties, the Blue Ridge is a bright line, demarcating not just another topography, but a world of important differences. North and West of this line is “Up the mountain”; south and east is “down” or “under the mountain.” If I were planning a trip to somewhere in the Blue Ridge—Galax, Virginia, say, about an hour away--People in Mount Airy would invite me to stop in to visit on my way up the mountain. In a conversation with some musicians in the mountain town of Sparta, my home would be referred to as being “down in the lowlands” or “on the flat plain.” The down the mountain areas of Virginia are in many ways closer to Mount Airy than the up the mountain areas of the same county. Tommy Jarrell, who was a prolific composer of verses for old-time tunes, memorialized a steep pathway up the mountain in a verse set to “Sugar Hill”: “If I had no horse to ride, I'd be found a'walkin'/Up and down old Toenail Gap, to hear that gal a'talkin”.

Old-time country music has been and often still is called “mountain music” even though many of its paragons and practitioners were from places outside the mountains. This point was well made by Bob Carlin's book-length study of string bands of the North

Carolina Piedmont. Unfortunately, this study leaves out Surry County, probably because it is partly in the mountains.

The distinction between “up the mountain” and “down the mountain” has implications for musical practice. To most players and listeners, the Round Peak sound is most identifiable by the banjo style. The Round Peak players were clawhammerists. This technique involves plucking downward with the back of a fingernail and pulling the short fifth string with the thumb. Though it is similar to the method called “frailing,” in Surry County, there is a definite difference, and frailing is not what is done. Frailing is described by current Surry County banjo players as a style that uses only chords, or mostly chords, rather than the more melodic style they call clawhammer. These labels are not universal, and many present-day banjo players do not distinguish between the two terms, using them interchangeably for any style in which the index or middle finger of the right hand picks the string in a downward motion. There is evidence that even in Surry County these terms are not universally agreed upon. Gilmer Woodruff used the term “clawhammer” for the style in which the banjo plays mostly chords (“When you hit every string as you go down”) and says he first heard the term “clawhammer” in the 1960s. He called his style “the old-timey way” or “thumb-cocking”: “In thumb-cocking, by God, you pick it out, pick the tune” (Donleavy 2004:52). Despite the confusion over labels, the local preference for single notes that follow the line of a fiddle melody is clear, and for the musicians I talked to the terms clawhammer and frailing represent different

locations on a continuum between all melody down-picking and all-chord down-picking. Furthermore, the more melodic style is always associated with Round Peak, or down-the-mountain music, and the the frailing stye is associated with up-the-mountain. The distinction is locally chauvinistic, and the great banjo players of Galax and Grayson and Carroll Counties (up the mountain) used plenty of melody—Wade Ward, Sidna Myers and Glen Smith, among them.

One distinction between up and down the mountain players that does hold true is that the down-the-mountain players preferred fretless banjos and their style was influenced by that, even on fretted instruments. On a fretless banjo, playing chords with more than one finger held down is impractical and playing in higher positions is inadvisable. Finally, the fifth string, normally sounded as a ringing drone, was frequently struck as a melody string in Round Peak, perhaps because it allowed the player to keep his left hand down near the nut where it did most of its work. Even banjo players who had fretted instruments, like Kyle Creed, based their technique on the fretless's limitations.

As noted above, Thomas Carter and Blanton Owen included Surry County in the Galax subregion, based on a shared repertory of tunes, and the strength of the banjo-fiddle and string band traditions in both regions. They also found that the older musicians in the Galax were more likely to travel down the mountain to Surry County for recreation, than to go to the neighboring mountain counties in Virginia (1978). Though they spent a

lot of time visiting and recording in Surry County, and were well acquainted with the Round Peak players, they did not include any of the musicians from Surry County or the North Carolina parts of their Galax subregion on the *Old Originals, Volume 2* LP dedicated to that area as they thought (reasonably enough) that those musicians were already well represented on record (Thomas Carter, personal communication, March 7, 2001). In comparison with the Hillsville and White Top regions with which the Galax area is contrasted in the *Old Originals* project, the Galax and Surry County styles share a kinship. However, in the years since, musicians in Surry County have come to think of themselves as distinct from the Galax musicians, indeed from any musicians from up the Blue Ridge. The distinctions are small, but small distinctions are often central to identity formation. Freud's concept of the "narcissism of small differences" describes such a phenomenon, in which neighboring communities will engage in feuds and mutual ridicule over their differences, even though they share much in common (Freud 1961 [1930]). This very phenomenon is useful to subcultures, like Round Peak banjo players, looking to distinguish themselves in a postmodern consumer world of sameness and uniformity (Hazell 2009).

In Surry County, timbre is a marker of regional banjo style. The up-the-mountain sound involves a bright timbre. This sound is striking and exciting, but the Round Peakers dismiss it as "frailing". The less charitable call it "thrash," "wang chang up-the-mountain banjo" or "tumbling garbage can banjo." Chester McMillian remembered

Tommy Jarrell as being insistent that his banjo playing accompanists play “clawhammer” and not “Frailing.” David Morley has written of a phenomenon he calls “reterritorialization,” a process in which “borders and boundaries of various sorts are becoming more, rather than less, strongly marked (Morley 2001:427). This is a process that runs against the power of globalization to make places less distinct from each other. Kiri Miller has found that sacred harp conventions have the power to enact this process for the revivalists who travel to them (2008). In Surry County, music has been a force for this for process too, for both the traveling revivalists and for the local community. Round Peak, once a nearly forgotten crossroads community, is a place that people are proud to call home. Mount Airy, a town in some ways indistinguishable from dozens of former textile towns across the Piedmont, is a pilgrimage site during the Fiddlers' Convention.

Learning from the Dead

Suppose you were a young man from Surry County. You've decided to start playing the banjo. How do you learn? Whom do you emulate?

Kevin Fore was born and raised in Surry County but didn't take up the banjo until his doctor told him to quit his previous hobby: auto racing. But when he started, he started with a vengeance, intensively studying the style of the late Kyle Creed. He told me “people ask who learned me to play the banjo. I tell 'em 'dead people’”. Using a combination of field recordings and visits to people who remembered Kyle, Kevin was

able to re-create the style quite convincingly. After playing only a very short time, he won first place at the Alleghany County Fiddlers' Convention. Kyle Creed was also known for his banjo building, and Kevin has set up a shop behind his house where he is building instruments on the Creed model.

Kevin's wife, Trish Kilby, is a wonderful banjo player in her own right. She took up the banjo after a broken leg forced her to stop playing soccer. Trish, though, grew up in Ashe County, North Carolina, two counties to the west, high in the mountains. Her style reflects the tradition established by pickers like Ola Belle Reed. Though she insists that what she does is “Not Frailing,” most Surry county musicians would disagree. I asked them about the differences in regional style:

Trish Fore: I would call the way [Kevin] plays Round Peak style. I would call the way I play Grayson County style. And I think the big difference being he plays the way they play in this area, which they also call “down the mountain.” and I play the way they play up in that area, which is “up the mountain.” That's how styles were differentiated, up the mountain and down the mountain.”

Kevin Fore: Oh yeah.

TF: Different regional styles

KF: That's the way I describe it. Or “over the mountain” and “under the mountain.” I've heard that too.

TF: I didn't understand for a while what Round Peak meant. And I don't know, I kind of looked down on that music a little bit. There I said it. I looked down on it a little because if you're playing your music, you feel like it's the best. Cause it's your style. And I never thought I'd be living in Low Gap.

KF: One thing I can say about her banjo playing, if people who really don't know the different regional styles would rather listen to her because it's a little bit

louder and it catches your attention more.

TF: I do want to make the point. Some people call me a frailing banjo player. I'm not a frailer. I play with a lot of drive, but I've got a lot of melody. It's not Grandpa Jones style! A frailer is someone who doesn't play any melody.

TF: We have come up with some characteristics of Round Peak banjo. It's more delicate, it's more precise playing melody to match with the fiddle. (Interview March 12, 2007)

Kevin and Trish both say that they are drawn to the banjo style of their native county, and that they consider it natural and right to play in that style. Kevin says "If I was born in Ashe County, I'd probably be playing like that, too."

This up and down the mountain distinction is just one of the ways in which Surry County old-time musicians hear their landscape. In this part of the country, band names are preserved as well as place names, and sometimes the bands keep the memory of these places alive. Often a band will take its name from a place, as in the "Pilot Mountain Bobcats" or the "Zephyr Lighting Bolts" or the "Slate Mountain Ramblers." Sometimes the band names serve the purpose of preserving the place names, as in the Round Peak Ramblers. Some bands chose to pay homage to earlier musicians by adopting an older band name, as in "The New Pilot Mountaineers" or "New Ruba-tonic Entertainers." Sometimes in preserving an old band name, they also preserve an old place name, as in "the New Camp Creek Band." Others preserve a more general sense of the landscape, as in the "Green Valley Boys" or the "Smokey Valley Boys."

Surry County old-time musicians take many approaches to their music, but almost all keep the classic Round Peak style at the center of their music. By maintaining their distinctive banjo and fiddle sound and preserving Surry County band and place names, they distinguish themselves from their close-by neighbors. In doing so, they continually map their sound onto their place and bring the history of the region into their daily musical life.

The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention

"Don't worry too awful much about nothing, cause everything won't never be alright no-how" (Clyde Johnson)

The central annual event for the Surry County traditional musician is the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, held the first full weekend in June every year. The festival has been run by the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a fundraiser since 1972. In the years since it began, the ample camping space and relative lenience of the management have made the Convention one of the most popular festivals among revivalist musicians as well as regional players. According to accepted practice among old-time musicians, everyone refers to the event by the name of the town where it takes place. Thus the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention is commonly called "Mount Airy." Of course, if you happen to live in Mount Airy, this appellation is meaningless. Are you "going to Mount Airy?" Well,

sure; you live there. I will thus refer to the convention in this section as “the convention.”

Official activities at the convention are limited to Friday and Saturday, but people begin arriving at the park as early as the Sunday before. The festival reaches a critical mass of campers on Wednesday. At this point, the vendors have opened for business and people are jamming in their campsites at all hours. The organized activities of the festival are contests in bluegrass fiddle, old-time fiddle, bluegrass banjo, old-time banjo, guitar, mandolin, dobro, autoharp, dulcimer, and bass. Any contestant can register for one (and only one) of these instrumental categories. They may also compete in the folk song and dance contests and play in a bluegrass or old-time band. The bands will play one tune each on Friday evening, and a second tune on Saturday night. Individual instrumental and folk song contests take place on Saturday morning and afternoon. The dance contest takes place after the last old-time band plays in the contest on Saturday night. This can sometimes be very late at night. Usually, a late performing band will be asked to play for the dance contestants. This job involves playing a fiddle tune one time through at the same tempo for however many dance contestants there happen to be. This job is thus seen as something of an honor and something of an imposition. Since each dancer performs for only a short while, this is a fast moving and popular attraction. By the time the dancers are competing, other musicians will have started to wander back towards the stage to hear the results of the contests, which are announced shortly after the end of the dance contest. The contest winners are announced, usually after some delay in tabulating

the dance contest winners, and then the convention is over for another year. Until his death in 2007, a singer, guitar player, and WPAQ announcer named Clyde Johnson was the master of ceremonies for the closing of the convention, and he would end with his signature country-stoic sign off: “Don't worry too awful much about nothing, cause everything won't never be all right no-how.”

Though the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention is considered a prestigious convention, the prizes are among the smallest of any in the region. Individual categories award cash prizes of \$20, \$15 and \$5 to the top three places and ribbons to fourth and fifth place. The first place bands get \$300 to split among their members. While the prices for camping and admission have been increasing in recent years, the prizes awarded have remained the same. This has not caused too much resistance, as, even though many take an interest in the winners, only a very few expect to place in the band or individual contests.

Since the convention is put on by the same organization that owns the park where it is held, some of the money collected at the gate goes towards improvements in the park. The management of the convention has been changing in recent years, and has implemented a number of updates to the park facilities, including the purchase of a new stage trailer to replace the ramshackle cart that had served for years. A new electric sign at the entrance to the park augments the typical southern sign-with-arrow and removable

letters.

Like most other festivals and fiddlers' conventions, the attraction for the musicians in attendance is not so much the contest as the informal playing and socializing that takes place out in the campground. The campground, called Veteran's Park, is located north of the town center of Mount Airy, on West Lebanon Street. The first entrance is marked with a vintage tank and a sign. The large field around the tank usually serves as a parking lot for most events at Veterans Park. At the end of the parking field is an old turnstile and ticket booth, but most visitors enter by car and pay at the auto entrance. A collection of small buildings at the north end of the park proper contains offices and storage, as well as a grandstand used in event of rain, and the limited shower and toilet facilities. Two concession stands are operated by the VFW and the American Legion. These stands are opposite each other across a group of picnic tables under a metal shelter. The concessions sell almost the exact same menus of hamburgers, hot dogs, fries and pulled pork barbecue with the typical North Carolina condiments: slaw, mustard, chopped onions, and chili. Across the field from the concessions is the stage trailer. The judges sit at a table in front of the stage and there is a small wooden dance floor, but no bleachers or other supplied seating. Spectators bring their own folding chairs and blankets. Also near the performance area are vendors of instruments and recordings. Some are established regulars, who do a brisk business year after year, and others are fledgling vendors and

instrument builders, hoping to publicize their wares as much as to make sales. Wayne Jarrell has claim on a special spot on the porch of the cinder-block office building. There he sells tapes and CDs and a dwindling number of LPs of his father, Tommy. He's happy to talk to anyone, and to try to get them to buy some of his daddy's music. If you happen to have a complete collection, he's happy to sell you duplicate copies, and why not?



Figure 4: Fiddlers' Convention Vendors: food, souvenirs, and Tommy Jarrell's son, Wayne. Photographs by James Ruchala



Figure 5: Fiddlers' Convention contestant and judges. Photographs by James Ruchala.

Beyond the area of buying, consuming and contesting is the campground. A large, flat area with no trees spreads out in front of you, with trailers and campers lined up between fire-lanes. To the west of the flat field, a hill rises steeply, with some more groups camped in tents and under tarps on the slope, and then, at the highest reaches, in the precious shade of a small grove of trees. In the middle of a June afternoon in North Carolina, the difference in temperature between the hill and the field is striking. Over years of attendance, some people and groups have established themselves in certain locales. Most of these people live nearby, or have (or make) the leisure time to arrive early and stake their claims. The long, slow build-up of the week of the Convention means that there is no frantic land-rush when the gates are opened (as is the case at Galax). Up on the hill, a group of pickers from the Asheville, North Carolina, area set up under an enormous gray tarp suspended by an ingenious set of ropes and wooden poles. Along the western pathway on the field, next to the hill is where many of the Surry County immigrants set up—the Bobcats, the Appalachian Americans, the Red Hots. On the broad slope between the field and the hill, there's where a contingent from Charlottesville, Virginia, sets up.



Figure 6: Up on the hill: Jamming and square dancing. Photographs by James Ruchala.

With time and experience, this alternate geography becomes known to the camper, though most years there are subtle changes and shifts. People are free, of course, to camp wherever they can find a space for themselves, so these are by no means strict bantustans of musicians. In some cases, these regions will become known by the region of origin of the campers. One might say they're "going up to Charlottesville" if they're headed up on the slope to seek out an old friend from central Virginia. (At Clifftop, probably the largest gathering of old-time musicians, this substitute geography is also evident, and in greater numbers. There will be aggregates of campsites, often with state flags prominently displayed, referred to as "Kentucky," or "Florida," for example.)

The physical geography has an aural component as well. That Asheville camp will probably be cranking out high-energy cross-A tunes late into the night. Because of the eclecticism of the Charlottesville scene and the influence of the late mandolin virtuoso Kelly Perdue, the Charlottesville area may feature more accordions, harmonicas and mandolins than most other regions. Down on the flat plain, you'll encounter large jams centered around the direct and forceful playing of Richard Bowman, maybe, or Bill and Janice Birchfield. In the Surry County area, you'll hear more of the local standard tunes, "Rockingham Cindy," "Big Eyed Rabbit," "Ducks on the Millpond," "John Brown's Dream." You're also likely to hear more of the common tunes: "Soldier's Joy" and "Sugar in the Gourd" and "Mississippi Sawyer." Do people make much of these differences in

repertory? Different ways of having a jam? Yes, they do. “Those Yankee technocrats are just trying to show off how many obscure crooked tunes they know.” “How many times do you want to hear 'Sourwood Mountain'?” Does this ever erupt into open confrontation? No, not that I've seen. There seems to be an unspoken rule that you will agree with whichever interlocutor is making such statements, and then change the subject: “So how long have you been playing the banjo?”

As seen in chapter 3, The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention is not particularly old, as Fiddlers' Conventions go. The Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention, which calls itself the “Worlds Oldest and Largest” began in 1935 (Williams nd). The Johnson County (Tennessee) Fiddlers' convention traces claims to be the heir to a famous contest put on by the Ku Klux Klan at Mountain City Tennessee in 1925; and Fiddlers' Grove traces its history back to 1924. By contrast, the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention as we know it was started in 1972. There had been similar contests held in Surry County before, though. There was the 1908 convention put on by Whitaker and described above. Kevin Donleavy has found an advertisement for a “Fiddler's Convention In Form of Band Contest” held at White Plains School in November 1936. Admission was fifteen or twenty-five cents and several bands were listed as promised to come, including a “Jenkins' Band” from Dobson, Georges' Band, the Carolina Melody Boys and Martin's Band from Mount Airy; Virginia Ridge Rollers from Hillsville, Virginia; Hill Brother's Band from Ararat and McGee's Band from Pinnacle. “Also three other bands have

promised to come” (in Donleavy 2004:17).

The Convention is an example of a relatively “old” tradition in the Blue Ridge, and as such it is in many ways resistant to change or augmentation. People do create subsidiary traditions within the framework of the Convention, though. The Bobville Cocktail Party is one such event. This takes place on Saturday at 5 p.m. in an abandoned chicken coop halfway up the hill behind the livestock stalls. One ambitious local gets the key every year and sweeps the place out before the convention. Ice, mixers, limes, vodka and gin are brought in on Saturday and a big volunteer string band forms in one corner of the coop. A makeshift bar is assembled, and tended by volunteers. The libations are free, but donations are accepted to defray the costs. Not everyone goes to the “Bob-dome,” though anyone who likes that kind of party is welcome. Though the Convention is officially alcohol-free, this flagrant bacchanal is tolerated.

Another of the ancillary traditions, and another one promulgated by the “Bobville” contingent, is the Bobville Brunch, a party at the home of Bill and Nancy Sluys that is open to all and takes place the Sunday after the Convention closes. More than a few people end up staying over at the Sluys' for a few more days of visiting and playing. Meals are potluck, with Nancy providing an array of homemade quiches.

The late night square dances, which started happening unofficially in 2003, are another volunteer tradition in the larger realm of the Fiddlers' Convention. These will be discussed in more detail in the section on dance.

One final ancillary tradition, and one that did not take root, was the event informally called “the second Mount Airy.” Others I heard after the fact were, “the tiny Mount Airy,” and “the four-man Mount Airy.” Officially, it was called the Labor Day Fiddlers' Convention at first, and then the Ralph Epperson Memorial Fiddlers' Convention. Most learned of this around the time of the Fiddlers' convention in 2006. The new generation of VFW leaders were planning to hold a second fund-raising fiddlers' convention on Labor Day weekend, three months in the future. Though it was known as early as May, scant effort was made to promote the Labor Day festival during the regular event. Many felt that the VFW was being greedy by trying to schedule another event. Some already had long-standing plans for that weekend, and resented the timing. When the date came, there was a very small turnout, which wasn't helped by bad weather.

The next year, the event was publicized in advance, with flyers distributed to those entering the park at the regular fiddlers' convention. More important, in the opinion of some, was that the organizers gave the new convention a name, the Ralph Epperson Memorial Fiddlers' Convention. This served to honor the founder and guiding light of the local radio station, WPAQ, and to give the convention a distinct identity of its own. Though I was not able to attend the second annual event in September 2007, word is that the crowds of spectators and pickers were not much improved, despite the new name and advance notice. After two years, the VFW gave up on the second festival.

The fact that people would attempt to expand a tradition, to use a traditional event

as the staging and framing in which to attempt to create a new tradition demonstrates that this tradition is considered fertile ground in which other, new traditions can—sometimes--take root. These ancillary traditions may be thought of like volunteer plants springing up unbidden by the gardener, but flourishing nonetheless. To extend this metaphor somewhat, the volunteer tradition, like the plant, cannot come from nowhere. The seeds, or the human impetus to create and participate, must already be present in the location. The soil in which the seed of a new tradition lands must be amenable and supportive of it.

The audience and contestants at the fiddlers' convention are distinct groups. The audience is mostly local, the contestants are locals and those from farther off. The audience parks outside the gates and walks in with folding chairs and blankets, while the contestants drive in, set up camp, and stay all night, often for several nights. While many of the audience members are likely to attend only one fiddle contest in a year, the contestants and campers are likely to be regulars at a number of fiddlers' conventions though the summer.

Fiddlers' conventions were more numerous in the Southern Highlands in the recent past. Although it is still possible to go to an event of some kind every weekend of the summer, they are more spread out geographically. Among the defunct Surry County conventions that people remembered from the 1970s and 1980s were events in Low Gap, Beulah, Mountain Park, Elkins and Toast. Mount Airy attracts campers and competitors

from near and far because of its friendliness, its timing at the beginning of summer, and its connection of a popular style of old-time music. Amy Davis' interview with Verlen Clifton, Clyde Johnson, and Frank Bode contained the following exchange, demonstrating the “local” understanding of the attraction:

Amy: I guess, coming from outside—I think Mount Airy got put on the map with Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham and those folks, and people are striving to learn that particular style, the “Round Peak” style.

Clyde: That's exactly what made the Mount Airy convention so big was Tommy and Earnest [East], Fred Cockerham, and Benton Flippen. Rafe Brady Kyle Creed, and people of this caliber. (Davis 1996:24)

...

Efforts have been made in recent years to get more of the camper/contestants to leave Veterans Park and travel the mile or so down the road to visit downtown Mount Airy. A shuttle bus runs semi-regularly between the park and Main Street, and in recent years, flyers have been posted beckoning visitors to the Museum of Regional History, with its display of Tommy Jarrell-owned instruments, but in general these attempts are not hugely successful. Festival visitors prefer to remain in the buzzing hive of festival world.

As noted above, few expect to win or place at Mount Airy's contests, but many compete for the fun of playing on stage in front of an audience and for the joy of bonding with a small group of musicians. The fairness of the judging is often a topic of conversation, as is the auxiliary topic of “why does it matter who wins a contest anyway”. The winners at Mount Airy usually include a predictable group of local old-time bands. In the early years of the festival, these included the Smokey Valley Boys. The

Pine Ridge Boys and the Shady Mountain Ramblers. In recent years, the frequent victors have been Backstep (Chester McMillian and family), the Slate Mountain Ramblers (Richard Bowman's family band) and The Round Peak Ramblers (Mac Snow and his son and friends). The winning groups are anchored by local players of long solid reputation. Individual categories are often won by members of these bands, as well. Though most would probably agree that these bands are all fine and worthy of winning, the consistent slighting of out-of-town groups is off-putting to some. In 2007, however, an unexpected upset occurred when the Carolina Chocolate Drops won the Old-time Band category. Many people that I spoke to in the aftermath felt that they were given the award out of a misguided sense of racial tokenism, as the Chocolate Drops were the only all-African American band that played (probably the only one ever to appear at Mount Airy). In the years since then, the Chocolate Drops have become a popular touring band known for blending old-time and folk with more modern pop and rhythm and blues music. But at the time, they were known mostly as a band that specialized in recreating the rough and ready old-time style of Joe, Nate and Odell Thompson, three black old-time musicians from central North Carolina. The Thompson style is infectious and rhythmic, but the range of tunes that they played was small and tended towards the repetitious. While recreating Joe Thompson's fiddling is challenging, it is not as technically challenging as most other old-time styles. For these reasons, some thought that their musicianship was not on par with the other bands that played. Some, seeing the award as a type of

“affirmative action,” felt that the Chocolate Drops were trading on their identity more than their skill. Some others that I spoke to were glad to see a different name, and a different type of musician, win for a change.

The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention, despite its youth, has the feel of a venerable tradition, in part because of the long and well-known history of old-time music in Surry County. This reputation draws visitors from further afield than many other similar events. The Convention is a sort of homecoming and reunion for old friends and new, but also a pilgrimage site—by going and camping and staying up all night, you demonstrate to yourself and those who care just how dedicated you are to old-time music and to being an old-time musician.

There are moments when things we think we know become suddenly strange to us. I remember quite clearly wandering off from a jam session at the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention one very late night and thinking it very strange that so many people were camping in a field, staying up late to play music for dancers that weren't there. I knew, as most old-time musicians know, that this music was created mainly as an accompaniment to dancing, but everywhere I looked, people were playing in little introverted circles, playing for their own pleasure. Something I'd been involved with for years, something that I thought I knew, suddenly struck me as ineffably strange, like cooking a stew only to photograph it in the pot and throw it out. This was before I had lived in Surry County, and found out just how indispensable dancing is there, though you

might not guess it from the Convention.

One might attend the Mount Airy Fiddlers' convention and watch the bands and individual contestants play all evening; might wander through the campground listening to jam sessions big and small, sedate and lively; might stay to the very end of the Saturday night band contest and watch the flatfoot competition and the awarding of prizes, but still miss the centrality of dancing to the old-time tradition. As represented at the Fiddlers' Convention, there is music of both kinds (old-time and bluegrass), and there is also dancing. Dancers are accommodated during the music contests with a large wooden platform on which to flatfoot, or dance individually, but there is little mention of the old tradition of square dancing and couple dancing, nor are there any official events that celebrate or allow for these activities, though some few “volunteer” traditions have sprung up, and will be discussed below in this chapter.

Dances in Surry County

Dancing is of central importance to old-time music in Surry County. Dancing is not just something that people do at officially sanctioned events called “dances” but the inevitable accompaniment to any event where good old-time music is being played. The way you show your appreciation for the music is by dancing. The way you can tell that you're playing it right is that there are dancers. A band may be playing on a stage in a concert, and people will climb the steps and dance on the stage behind them.

Most forms of American vernacular country dance--that is, dance where two or more couples dance coordinated figures--have their origin in English country dance. This type of dance became popular during Oliver Cromwell's reign and was further popularized by Playford's *The English Dancing Master*, originally published in 1651. These "longways" dances spread to the continent, where they were taken up in France, Spain, Germany and elsewhere. "Country dance" became "contredanse" in France, and under that name it seems to have reentered currency in England again, now called "contra dance." Another important French innovation was the evolution of the cotillion, a variation on contra dance done in square formation (Blaustein 1995:193-195).

In the United States, all kinds of country dancing, contra and square included, were popular until well into the 19th Century. Square dancing was still done by members of polite society into the 1860s, but by the 1890s, it had all but disappeared, except in the countryside. Longways, or contra, dances declined in popularity even in most rural areas, save for New England, where they have persisted into the present day (Blaustein 1995:196-198). The square dance was revived in other regions of the country as part of a Folk Dance movement starting in the 1940s and continuing through the 1950s. Contra dances were also revived during the 1960s, first in New England and later all across the United States, including in many of the larger cities of the South.

H. E. Taliaferro remembered young people's love of dances in the 1820s: "... the younger ones preferred the sound of the "fiddle," a "seven-handed reel," and "Old Sister

Phebe” to a log-pole schoolhouse.” (1859:18) In addition to the fiddling and “seven-handed reels,” Taliaferro remembered one John Senter as one who “loved apple brandy, and danced the 'double shuffle’” (185). Drinking and dancing are always associated in Taliaferro's account, though he seems to have restrained his Baptist preacher's training for the writing of *Fishers River*, and his descriptions have a tone of wistful nostalgia rather than of moral outrage or condemnation. The most extensive discussion of music and dance in *Fishers River* attaches them to local courtship rituals.

There were endless ways of getting the “young folks” together. In the spring there would be “grubbings” and “log-rollings;” in summer, “reapings;” and in the fall, “corn-shuckings.” On all such occasions the girls would always manage to have “quiltings” and “sewings.” As soon as night came, or the work was done, the fiddle sounded, and they danced and courted all night. Christmas was a great festival. They felt grateful to and blessed the man that invented it. With the “young uns” it was a generation from one Christmas to another. For a whole week they would dance from house to house day and night, “sparkin” going on at a “big lick” all the time. The old fashioned “seven-handed reel” was the only go. A brainless, barrel-headed dancing-master (for all are such) was a perfect lion; a fiddler was next in repute; and the parson was “nowhar.” (1859:114-115)

The dance historian Ann Wagner noted that opponents of dancing at the time in which Taliaferro wrote opposed dancing in its practice in contemporary society more than in its essence. Though Baptists were among the most stridently anti-dance of American sects during the 19th century, Taliaferro seems to have shared Martin Luther's view of dance, that it was not inherently evil, and that if well-chaperoned, a dance could be an appropriate occasion for young single people to meet (Wagner 1997:150-151, 388).

The “sparkin”--or courtship—that motivated the square dances was also an aspect

of the play-party, a form of dance-like group activity thought to have arisen as a less licentious substitute for square-dancing. Play-parties consisted of fairly simple choreography that acted out the words to fairly simple songs. While play-parties are a memory in Surry County today, they were most likely a popular activity in times past. Taliaferro mentions “Old Sister Phebe” (18), a play-party that was more commonly collected in the midwest. In Indiana, “Old Sister Phoebe” was called a “kissing game” and had the following words:

Old Sister Phoebe, how merry were we,
The night we sat under the juniper tree,
The juniper tree, high-o, high-o,
The juniper tree, high-o.

Take this hat on your head, keep your head warm,
And take a sweet kiss, it will do you no harm,
But a great deal of good, I know, I know,
But a great deal of good I know. (Wolford 1916:80)

The dance that went with this verse involved a ring of boys and girls circling a single girl who held a hat. As the second stanza was sung the girl in the middle would choose a partner from the ring, draw him into the center, place the hat on his head and give him a kiss. She would then join the ring and the play-party would start again with the boy in the middle. (Wolford 1916:81).

During the early 20th Century, play parties and dances were still often associated with “workings.” These were cooperative efforts undertaken by a community to help an individual with a job too big for his own family to undertake. Most often workings

involved the processing of some agricultural crop: apple peelings, bean stringings, corn shuckings and pumpkin peelings. Sometimes dances were organized in connection with fund-raising activities like box suppers, school breakings and ice cream suppers. If a working was held, the farmer who was the beneficiary would be responsible for supplying drink or a band as reward once the work was done. After the work, couples would go into the house, move the furniture, and dance. Some music and dance lovers would hold dances without a working or fund-raiser, just for fun.

Ray Alden's informants reconstructed the history of dances as follows

At first cotillions were the popular dances in the Round Peak area; dances such as the "Circle Four" or the "Adam and Eve" (where "the ladies start out and they swing old Adam"). Later the Virginia Reels came over the mountains with names like the "Single and Double Whirleygig", "Green Corn", "Half Moon", "Chase the Squirrel" (with the woman in the lead) and "Promenade" (with the woman behind). Fred Cockerham told me that nearly everyone could call a reel, and that sometimes one dance would last an hour and a half. [Alden 1975/1976:8]

By "one dance" I take it to mean that Cockerham remembered a single session of dancing to a single tune, rather than a whole evening of dancing. Contemporary practice, and common sense suggest that he was exaggerating. Tommy Jarrell remembered old dances lasting up to 25 minutes, still quite a long time. A videotape of a dance held at Dix Freeman's house in 1978 for the benefit of Library of Congress researchers shows a single square dance with four couples dancing two separate figures in turn. This dance lasts approximately nine minutes and that is rather long for common contemporary practice. However, the dance may be shorter than it could be because of a low number of

couples. At one point in the tape, as a dance is about to start, the caller, Ed Norman, is heard to say “we won't have but four couples.” I interpret this to mean that the caller seems to think this is a small group, rather than the expected number for a square dance, as is the case in many areas of the South then and now (AFC 1982/009: V06, V07, V08).

The sound of a Surry County square dance caller in the early 20th Century can be heard on the Southern Broadcasters' 1927 recording of “Richmond.” The calls, which were called by Ben Jarrell are:

Hands up and circle to the left
Break and swing
Promenade

First lady swing to the right
Swing your partner
On to the next and gent follow

Ladies to the center with a right hand across
Step back, right hand to your partner

Fall back one
Fall back two
Fall back three
Fall back four.
Break and swing and swing on the corner.

Gents to the center with a right hand across
Step back
Right hand to your partner
break and swing and [put on] your corner.

Ladies to the center with their backs together
Swing your partner
Pass her one time and swing

The Southern Broadcasters included nearly identical calls on their recording, from the same session, of “John Brown's Dream.” At the end of the introductory break--the first few lines that end with the call to “Promenade”--comes the reminder “When you meet her, don't forget to swing.” This is followed by a new call:

First couple out, swing on the left
Swing Eve
Swing old Adam before you leave
On to the next

Then the rest of the calls follow the same pattern as those on “Richmond.” These calls are for square sets of four couples.

Another unusual dance tradition was recalled by one of Kevin Donleavy's consultants. Otis Holder reported playing, along with his brother Davis and Fred Cockerham, for a “straw dance” in Round Peak:

"They had a straw dance. Now I didn't believe you could dance on straw. But they had one up there at Round Peak, and we went up there"....

"I'm not lying--wasn't anything but a few lanterns around, hung up in trees. It was out in a field, wide open. They'd strowed straw all over a great big area. Saturday night, I guarantee you they CUT UP! We played that music and they danced by the moonlight. Everybody got wound up, and that music floating all over the county, and everybody tried to give you a drink of liquor.

"I believe they had a half-gallon jar under every pine shrub within a radius of fifty feet of that whole circle.

"That straw dancing--ain't nothing wrong with it to run the reels. They just danced like nobody's business!" (2004:40)

This dance probably took place in the 1930s. There must have been more than the usual

amount of liquor, since Holder remarks on it's ubiquity. Fred also had a regular gig playing at a Veterans of Foreign Wars hall in the Fairview community. Mac Snow remembers that Fred would spend a lot of time visiting with the dancers before getting on stage to play and the dance would sometimes not start until after nine in the evening.

These house dances began to die off in the early 1920s. Tommy remembered that automobiles enabled people from outside the community to come to dances, which would cause friction and fights. The people gradually stopped hosting dances at home (Alden 1975/1976:10).

Dances did not die out altogether, but moved to public buildings, such as Ruritan clubs and community centers. During the 1970s, Richard Bowman remembers there being several dances in his area:

Back then about all the organizations, Ruritan Clubs and things, if they had a building big enough to dance in, had dances. Just community things, fund raisers, mostly. And we played at all of them some time or another.

It's just getting less people doing the dancing. The dances haven't changed. They're still doing the same dances, they still run the reels the same way, you know, they still call the reels the same way. They's getting less people calling reels and people dancing, but that's just the way times is, I guess. In some places it's still real strong. In this area most of the places, they're still having dances. The local Ruritan Clubs and the Community Centers. And there's young people coming on and learning to do that stuff. (Interview June 17, 2005)

During his sojourn in North Carolina in the 1980s, Paul Brown often played dances with Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys. He remembers dances at Ararat, Fancy Gap, Stuart, and Fairview in Virginia and at Beulah and the Franklin Ruritan in North

Carolina. The Fairview Ruritan dance south of Galax was the largest in the area in those days. Brown describes the scene.

It was really a fun dance.... At one point that was the biggest dance in the area. It was very popular and they would get some of these old -time traditional bluegrass bands that were popular in the area and then Benton's band, and sometimes Ernest East and the Pine Ridge Boys would go up there and play and then Whit Sizemore would play with the Shady Mountain Ramblers. And the New River Ramblers from Independence would play sometimes. It was really a kick to go up there and play with those bands. And we would stand up, James. We would stand up for hours and play like maniacs for the dancers. Nobody sat down. We all stood up most of the time. (Interview, August 26, 2008)

The Fairview dance, and the other larger dances have ended, but small dances are still held on the weekends at the Beulah Ruritan Club and the Alleghany Jubilee in Sparta and in Ararat, Virginia.

A night at one of these dances can be fun and engaging, a way to meet neighbors; it might also be confusing and somewhat alienating. I sometimes felt that I might be viewed with unspoken suspicion when I attended. One dance where I was greeted warmly, and learned a lot, was the Alleghany Jubilee. A lightly edited excerpt from my field notes follows. It is my hope that it will give some of the feeling of experiencing one of these dances as an outsider, and will convey many of the details as I initially encountered them.

Alleghany Jubilee, Sparta, NC, Nov. 25, 2006

Drove up the mountain to Sparta for the Alleghany Jubilee. On the way up

Rt 21, every other car had at least one Christmas tree tied to it or sitting in the bed of the truck. Turns out it was the day of the Sparta Christmas parade, and a big day for selling the trees that they farm in the Alleghany county countryside.

Once I arrived in Sparta, I found I had several hours before the Jubilee opened at 6:30. Wandered around the main street of Sparta, visited the friends of the library book store and the teapot museum preview gallery.

I noticed that some cars were parked on the street in front of the Jubilee, an old converted movie theater, with couples waiting for it to open as early as six p.m. An old couple were sitting in a vintage Ford Ranger pickup. Him in dark blue bib overalls, ball cap and black broughams; she more modern, in pants and a pink sweatshirt. I later learned that she was 87 years old and a fine dancer, the winner of the first annual Possum Queen contest, a talent show held in September. She won by coming on-stage with a cane, which she threw off to the side before doing a spirited flatfoot dance.

Admission to the Jubilee is \$4. Snacks, water, coffee and soft drinks are sold for fifty cents. A sheet of paper on the wall lists the rules, which include, no alcohol, drugs or smoking on the premises, and no obscene gestures or language.

The proprietors, Ernest and Agnes Joins, opened the doors at about 6:30 p.m. and let in the three early arrivals, plus myself. We sat around talking. Much talk was about the Christmas parade that afternoon, and about the turnout for the Whitetop Mountain band the night before. Ernest was interested to learn that I play banjo and fiddle, and, without ever having heard me play a note, insisted that I play a few tunes with the band that night.

Ernest told me that he opened the Jubilee with a partner in 1994, and that he originally intended it to be a regular concert venue, featuring country music every Saturday evening, for a seated audience. The partners were unable to draw big enough crowds to make a profit and pay bands. Six months later, They started opening on Fridays, and featuring country/bluegrass/oldtime music for dancing. Ernest at first removed four rows of seats closest to the stage to make room for dancing. As it became more popular as a dancing venue, he removed more rows. "If you can get the dancers hooked, they'll keep coming back." He worries about the future, as his clientele are very old and "the young people aren't interested in square dancing." He says that Tuesdays, when they start early (7pm) are more popular, because his crowd prefers the two-stepping country music to the hard driving old-time. The Whitetop Mountain Band, which has long been the Friday night regular band, does not draw as big a crowd as it used to.

It's a long, narrow space. Today, there are only about ten rows of seats and a big wooden dance floor, with folding chairs along the walls. There's a stage, about two feet high, with large speakers. Drop ceiling. A counter at the door, which is opposite the stage, is where Agnes sells tickets and refreshments and

greet new arrivals. The walls are covered with photos of regular attendees and musicians, posters and tickets from the venue's previous life as a movie theater. A large section of wall is devoted to photos of the Alleghany Jubilee Line Dance team, which has won some awards. There are some framed photos of George Jones by the entrance, and a manikin wearing a Jubilee t-shirt over a short denim skirt. As I take a photo of it, a portly old gent says, "that's my dancing partner!" I ask if she can keep up with him and he says, "I can't keep up with her!"

Ernest tells me that he plays mandolin and bass. Played with Benton Flippen's band for four or five years, but that it "wore him out" playing bass for one hard-driving fiddle tune after another for so long. Benton needs someone who can sing in his band, he tells me. Otherwise it's just endless fiddle tunes, and that wears out the backing musicians, and the dancers, who like to two-step to slower country songs. Ernest also writes songs, one of which was apparently recorded by George Jones, who, Agnes says, says he intends to come to the Jubilee when he can, though he hasn't made it yet.

At around 7:30, Agnes puts on a tape of classic country songs, so that the early arrivals can start to dance, and a few couples start to two-step on the floor. The band, called Talk of the Town, starts arriving and setting up on stage. Ernest is the mandolin player. There is also a bluegrass banjo picker, a bassist, Roger Stamper, a fiddler, and a white-haired man who plays guitar and sings. At about eight o'clock, the band is ready to go. The lights are dimmed and Roger kicks off the dance with the standard "four potatoes" shuffle and "Soldier's Joy." The dancers go onto the floor and start to flatfoot. Over the course of the evening flat-footing tunes -- old-time fiddle tunes -- alternate with two-step and waltz tunes. The two-step tunes are generally classic country numbers, which the singer sings in a rich voice, with a few instrumental breaks from the fiddle, banjo or mandolin. The flat-foot tunes are performed in bluegrass style as well, with the fiddle playing lead the first time through, then mandolin and banjo playing a time through each before the lead returns to the fiddle for one last time. Tunes include "Liberty," "Billy in the Lowground" "Sally Ann," and "Old Joe Clark." The flat-footers mostly dance alone, though occasionally a couple will dance together arm in arm, and a few do some rudimentary line-dancing. On two numbers, the band played in a stripped down rock-and-roll style and the dancers did versions of the twist, rotating the hips with the feet on the floor, pivoting. These were not as popular.



Figure 7: Dancing a two-step at the Alleghany Jubilee, Sparta, North Carolina. Photograph by James Ruchala.

The two-step is a partner dance, where the man leads, taking two steps forward with the left foot, in one direction, then one back. In this way, the crowd of dancers slowly progresses around the floor in a clockwise manner. Waltzes are also done to this step. Eula, a nice old widow who befriended me, told me that when she was growing up in Sparta, they would take two steps forward and then two steps back. She spent much of her life in Florida, having moved there with her husband. After her husband died and her parents left the family farm to her and her sister, she moved back. She found that in the meantime, the dance had changed to the present two-forward, one-back. She talked about house dances, and says that everyone in Alleghany county had a musician in the family. Her own mother and father played banjo and guitar, mother fiddled a little, too. They would have house dances: clear out a room and put the musicians in a corner and dance all night.

Over the course of the evening, there were three “called” dances: the “Georgia Alabam,” and “Golden Gate,” which are running set square dances; and the “Shuffle” which some call the “Alleghany Shuffle.” The dances were called by the singer/guitar player from the stage. These dances were not taught first, but just launched into, and had only one figure that each couple would do with each other couple in turn until the whole thing ends with a promenade and swing. The Golden Gate ended with the caller leading everyone into a sort of “grand march” formation, then “winding up the ball of yarn.”

The band played for an hour, then took a fifteen minute break, during which I went up to talk to the band.

The audience of dancers was about fifty at its peak and some started going home as early as the first break at 9 p.m. By the end of the second set, around ten, the crowd was much smaller, and the third set ended early, around ten thirty. Ernest told me they go until 11pm, usually.

The last song of the evening was a Gospel number, “I’m using my Bible for a Road Map.” The singer called the remaining dancers onto the floor and told us to join hands in a circle. We did and they played. No dancing for this number--just subdued foot tapping, some with heads down, some singing along softly. On the note before the final cadence, all in the circle raised their arms together, and let them down at the cadence. (Fieldnotes, November 25, 2006)

Dancing Today

The Alleghany Jubilee is not the only dance venue that survives in the area.

Dances in Surry County take place at least once a week at the Beulah Ruritan Club.

Ararat, Virginia has had a dance on and off in recent years. Cana, Virginia also has the Applewood Music Park, a purpose-built dance hall that hosts dances three days a week, 52 weeks a year, with exceptions only for Christmas and the Saturday of the Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention. The Alleghany Jubilee is about an hour's drive up the mountain. All these small dances are run in a similar way to that described above.

Bands are usually well known to the regular dancers, and dancers will make a special effort to attend if a favorite band is playing. There are generally three different styles of dance performed at these events: flat-foot, square-dance and two-step. Of these, the first two types are done to faster tunes, the last type to slower tunes and songs. Contra dances are never done, and some of the older musicians I've spoken with have never heard of them. Some relatively young people will be seen doing modern country line dances at the back of the dance hall on occasion.

Flat foot dance is done solo, to a mid tempo or fast tune, always to a duple meter. Flat-footing is the local term used for dancing by making music with the feet. This dance can be done in any kind of footwear, though some older folks prefer shoes with taps attached to them. Many musicians dislike playing for audiences dancing in taps, finding that it can throw off their rhythm. The Applewood Music Park in Cana, Virginia, specifically bars dancers from wearing taps.

Many dancers, and women in particular, practice a kind of dancing that is based

on stepping in a loose pattern and lifting the feet up rather high, though never above the knee level. Professional dancer and dance teacher Ira Bernstein told me that he's noticed that Surry County flat-foot dancers tend to dance in patterns based on odd numbers. Study of a videotape made of one dancer at a dance at Round Peak Vineyards in 2007 shows one version of such a pattern. She is moving around a relatively limited area, and stepping in the following general pattern:

1. First beat, left foot steps back.
2. Second beat, left foot steps forward.
3. Third beat, steps either forward or backward with the right foot.
4. Fourth beat, left foot steps back (beginning of repeat of pattern).

I have observed similar patterns on other occasions, and it mostly seems to be a practice of older female dancers. This is similar to the three-against-two pattern of the country two-step discussed below. Generally the steps themselves are quite light, with no real percussive impact.

Square dances were called “reels” in turn of the century Surry County (Neithammer 1991:27; Donleavy 2004:40). The present day square dances are done in a big circle, with visiting couples. Dances are not taught before they are done. Typically they will begin with a “Break” (called a “grand right and left” by some callers) in which everyone in a big circle goes to the left, then back to the right, then breaks and swings and promenades. There will usually be one figure only per dance, and each couple will

dance it with the next one in line as they progress around the circle. The figures I've seen danced are:

1. Georgia-Alabam: the figure sometimes called "the reel" (in West Virginia) or the "Georgia Rang-Tang."
2. The Lady-round-the-lady.
3. The Golden Gate.

During the promenade, the lady will be moved to the gent's left. Often the gents will then fall back two or three positions and swing and promenade with another lady. This will continue until the original couples are re-united.

Dances in which couples progress around a circle of as many couples as wish to join are called "big ring" square dances and are different from the four-couple dances familiar from folk dance class and so-called "Western club" square dancing. Some recent scholarship suggests that big ring dances originated in the African American tradition and that they were once widespread, particularly in the deep south (Jamison 2007). But they are all but extinct outside the central blue ridge today.

Two other social dances are also done. The Virginia Reel, which is done with at least three couples, and seems to be well known in most parts of the US. The dance called the "shuffle" or "Beulah Shuffle" or "Alleghany Shuffle" or "Toast Stromp" depending on the location is an interesting and very simple dance. This is one of the few dances I know of in which the number of men and women can be uneven. In fact, it is preferable if

they are uneven as this ensures that the men and women will actually be “shuffled” and dance with a new partner each time they reach the top of the line.

Aldon Harris (b. 1918) told Donleavy that “People would get out there and two-step that [“Fisher's Hornpipe”]. That's the kind of music they played back years ago” (244). Locally “Two-step” designates any slower tune to which couples dance. This term is interchangeable with the term “waltz” in this area and local people will do the same step whether the tune is a slow number in waltz time or some duple meter.

The two-step as it is performed in Surry County and environs is done in regular ballroom-style couple-dance position. The man leads by stepping to the side with his left foot, then following with his right on the upbeat; taking a second step with his left foot, and following with the right foot; then taking one step back to the right. The woman will mirror these steps. This two-steps-forward-one-step-back motion will carry the couple in a large circuit around the dance floor. The ballroom position is usually maintained throughout. Some more adventurous dancers may do different steps, but this basic move is sufficient for most. The tripartite nature of the basic step creates a cross rhythm when it is done to a tune in duple meter, like “Faded Love,” for example. This choreo-hemiola is a charming feature of Surry County dances, though one that takes some getting used to if you count beats in your mind as you dance.

I have not been able to locate any reliable information on the advent of the two-step in the Blue Ridge. Bob Carlin relates that some forward-thinking couples

demonstrated the modern “one -step and the hesitation” at a dance in Siler City, North Carolina in 1914. Wayne Jarrell, son of Tommy and an experienced dance caller remembers the two-step as always being part of the local dances (Interview June 2006)

Most dances begin at 7 p.m. and run until 10 or 11 p.m., though many will have left earlier. The admission fee is usually four or five dollars, with a discount for couples. Bands are usually left to arrange for breaks whenever it makes sense for them to do so, though usually a band will play for 40-50 minutes and then break. Most bands alternate fast numbers for flatfooting with slower waltzes and two-steps for couple dancing. Most married couples dance all the couple dances together. People at the dances are generally older, most are over fifty, some quite a bit over fifty. There will be the occasional teen or younger and a few children. Inexpensive snacks and drinks are usually sold, including a few homemade cakes and hot dogs.

If a someone who knows how to call a dance is present, he may approach the band and ask to call one. Then the call will go out for a square dance (or Virginia Reel, etc.). Couples will form a big circle (or line up for a VR). There are typically no more than four or five square dances called per night. Sometimes it is difficult to get dancers to participate in one of these, particularly for the Virginia Reel. It may not be possible to get three couples together to dance one.

The aging of the population has led to the need for more slower dances. This has led musicians to add more songs and waltzes to their repertoires. The songs are often

older commercial country songs and bluegrass songs. The Pilot Mountain Bobcats supplement their fiddle tunes with waltzes and Carter Family songs and ballads. “Willow Garden” is a popular song, as is “Green Valley Waltz.”

There are some people who dance every dance of the evening, but most attendees will spend some of their time sitting in the folding chairs and visiting with friends.

The musicians are often the youngest people at a dance. In my experience, people come to dances as partners; it is unusual for a single individual to show up at a dance. A younger person is a rarity. On the occasions when I attended with a dance partner, the dancers were noticeably more friendly. I seemed to fit in as half of a couple, but not as a single man.

The Beulah dance was started in 2005, largely due to the requests of the community members. It draws between 25 and 50 people on a Friday evening, and the bands that play there are some of the best in the county, including the Smokey Valley Boys and the Pilot Mountain Bobcats. It was “something the old people wanted” I was told on my first visit. Admission is four dollars or seven dollars for a couple, and many people come week after week.

Dancers are generally over fifty years of age. Some of my interview informants tell me that the dancers have always been “old people,” while others claim that there were large numbers of young people still attending the in 1980s. The dancers that I've talked with usually learned to dance in their youth, not as seniors, and often have returned to

regular dancing after a long period of not dancing.

Lucille is a regular figure at the dances, a compact lady of 83 with tight gray curls who comes to the dance every week with her 90 year old gentleman friend. I once asked her if she'd been dancing long and she told me, no, only since she became a widow. which was nearly twenty years previous. I asked how she thought the dances had changed since the 1980s when she started and she told me "well, the old folks have passed on." She told the story of meeting her friend at one of the first dances she went to and how he courted her by offering her a seat.

This pattern is not unusual. At the Alleghany Jubilee, I also met widows and retirees for whom the dance was their newfound social scene. An extreme example, perhaps, is Dick and Mary, a couple who started dancing about 13 years ago, when they were in their sixties. Dancing at a street festival in Mount Airy one afternoon, Dick told me that they'd been at another festival the night before, dancing to cajun music until three am. They got home to bed at five am and got up and drove two hours to spend the afternoon flatfooting in the sun.

Dancing and Sociability

In *Paths Toward a Clearing* (1989), the anthropologist Michael Jackson compares bodily movement to musical techniques.

since both transport us from the quotidian world of verbal distinctions and categorical separations into a world where boundaries are blurred and experience

transformed.... In this way, movement and music promote a sense of levity and openness in both body and mind and make possible an empathic understanding of others, a fellow-feeling, which verbal and cognitive forms ordinarily inhibit. (132-133)

This is followed by the story of how Jackson learned to build a fire in the same way that Kuranko women did. By acquiring the bodily skills of the Kuranko women, he achieved an “*empathic* understanding” (134) of the value of their way of building a fire. Rather than participating in order to observe and draw generalizable conclusions from the observations, the participation becomes “an end in itself” (135). This view, that a culture can be understood through participating in it is a cornerstone of much ethnomusicological thought. Mantle Hood, the promulgator of bi-musicality, eventually embraced something very much like this. Reflecting at the end of his life on the value of musical performance as a means of understanding culture, he advised:

know the culture by becoming part of it to the best of your ability. You know it through music; you know it through dance; you know it through rituals. In these ways you know it better than people who struggle with language, often a superficial struggle. (Trimillos 2004:287)

In studying Old-time music in North Carolina, I had to become a participant as musician, which was easy for me, but also a dancer, which was harder. It became somewhat easier when I met a friend who was a good dancer and would go with me to the little dances. In her company, I came to view the three dances—flatfoot, two-step, square—as metaphors for the different ways in which an individual fit into their society. As we take different paths, social, musical, professional, religious, we also take different roles in life. As a

flatfooter, you were the individual, independent and able to “do your own thing.” There are no rules to flatfooting, but there are good dancers and bad ones, and the distinction hinges upon whether or not you know the style, what is commonly done and what is not. A person could be eccentric, but there were limits, and it was possible to transgress. The two-step is the dance for two people to do together, based on the paradigm of the (heterosexual, married) couple. This is the standard mode in traditional Surry County society. As a man at a dance with a woman, I was approachable, and sociable. Widows and widowers were acceptable, but bachelors were suspect, as I felt I was when I went to dances alone. Nor was this new: Taliaferro wrote about the dances as a way to “get the young people together” but it was understood to be the young people from a small area. Stories abound in Tommy Jarrell's reminiscences and Fred Cockerham's of single men being attacked when they went to dances outside their home communities. This is memorialized in the verse sometime sung to “Sally Ann”:

Who in the world, in the *dog-gone* nation
Throwing them rocks at *me*?
All a-them rocks, *all* a-them rocks
All them rocks at *me*?

A single person can not two-step (it takes two to two-step), nor could a single person be fully realized in this traditional world. This was brought home to me when I bought my house. At the signing, the lawyer asked if I was married. I told him I wasn't, and Nellie, the wife of the seller said, “well, maybe now that he's got a house, he can find him a

woman.” The square dance is the couple, or by metaphorical extension, the family, in society. The dancers cooperating to make a frolic in the way families would come together in the old agrarian system to get a bunch of corn shucked or a field cleared. Just as there were unspoken rules and expectations that the 19th Century yeoman farmer had to live by, but he might not have been able to tell you in words what they were. The square dances have rules, too, but they are not taught, you and your partner are expected to know what to do in response to the minimal calls. Being able to participate in the rather tricky in-and-out weaving of the “Georgia Alabam” showed that you were people who knew the ways of the dance. Finally being able to do that figure was an exhilarating feeling.

I quite distinctly remember a feeling of exile after my “dancing partner” and I parted ways. I was at the opening dance of the Tommy Jarrell festival, sitting in the audience and watching a square dance on stage. Square dancing of the sort done at Surry County's Ruritan buildings is not a thrilling spectator activity. In the audience alone, I was reminded of other dances at other times and places, and in other company. History, my own and the history of this music in this place, mingled together and overwhelmed me with a sense of dual nostalgia felt both for better times not so long past, and for hazy imagined dances out in the countryside some decades ago. I briefly felt stranger to everyone in town than I ever had.

Dancing and Pathways

Though traditional music and dance are venerated parts of folk culture in Surry county, the way that these activities fit into the life cycle have made some revealing shifts. As I've discussed, the earlier pattern, the one revealed in accounts from the 1820s through the 1920s is this: Dances held at homes, for workings or just pleasure. The dances mostly enjoyed by young people as an aid to "sparking." Drink is a common accompaniment. Today dances are held at community buildings and Ruritan halls. The dancers are mostly in their sixties and older. Drinking is prohibited.

Thinking about the pattern of learning to dance in youth, then quitting and taking it up again in old age, I have found it useful to think of traditional dance in connection with its accompanying folk art, fiddling. During the 1960s, Alan Jabbour was visiting older Appalachian musicians to learn music and life lessons. He found that several of his mentors had quit playing for a number of years and had only recently taken it up again. The reasons for this varied, but Jabbour concluded that this pattern was part of "a larger rhythm to their life, and to their art." The pattern was that fiddling was something learned and perfected in youth, set aside, during a middle period from about age 30 to 55 and taken up again later in life. In other words, "old age was precisely when one played the fiddle" (1981).

This has changed. My experience at dances in the Blue Ridge tells me that the fiddlers are more often middle aged and the dancers are the ones in either youth or old

age. Square dancing and flatfooting have become, and perhaps have been for a long time, folk arts that are learned in youth, but that flower in old age. And the community square dance has become the gathering place for the retired and lonely, and the “sparkin” ground for widowers. Ruth Finnegan's concept of pathways in urban living offers a clue to this change in rural folk arts.

Writing about amateur music in suburban England, she wrote:

“The participants in local music... followed a series of known and regular routes which people chose...and which they both kept open and extended through their actions” (1989:305). An activity remains vital and viable if its path is kept clear by people participating in it. The interceding folk revival saw many revivalists move into the area and join local string bands. These people did not move to the rural south to **not** play music, so they kept playing through the middle period. This had the effect of opening a pathway for fiddlers to carry on through middle age. Most revivalists that I've interviewed did not become regular attenders at dances, though. The older pathway of middle-period neglect held sway in the realm of dance, and for the most part continues to do so. There were exceptions during the 1970s and 1980s era revival, of course, with the young clogging teams like the Green Grass Cloggers being the most obvious. But even they were dancing in their own realm, on stages as a performance, rather than as participants at small community events like Beulah or Alleghany. The younger old-time musicians, the ones in their 20s and 30s now, whether they are from traditional old-time

music backgrounds or not, are enthusiastic dancers as well as fiddlers and banjo players. They will likely keep dancing as long as they fiddle, and there has been a corresponding resurgence of interest in square dancing. These changes have taken place mostly in college towns and the counterculture bastions of old-time music like the Clifftop festival or the Portland [Oregon] Old Time Gathering.

Traditional dance in North Carolina has been a folk art mostly learned in youth, but today its most avid participants are senior citizens. This is the pathway that has been established in this rural community. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pathway of traditional dance has largely been lost in most other southern communities, but there is hope for the future in a new generation of dancers who take to southern regional dance with the enthusiasm with which an earlier generation adopted southern old-time music.

Dancing Everywhere and the Midnight Square Dance

Though I've separated events designated as dances from other musical activities in this chapter, dancing is an integral part of any live performance of old-time music in Surry County. Any live concert, at the WPAQ or a street fair, will have boards in front of the stage for flatfooters. At the Tommy Jarrell Festival, held in an auditorium without a suitable dance floor in front of the stage, dancers are welcome to dance on stage along with the bands. Organized square dancing, though, is usually confined to these regular dances. A flatfoot dance contest has been the closing event of the Mount Airy Fiddlers'

convention since the event's beginning. There is also a large temporary dance floor on the field in front of the stage where anyone who cares to can get up and dance during the various contests. This floor can become quite crowded during the evening band contests, and many people will meet each other and comment in a friendly way about dancing in this space. For many in the audience the show on the dance floor is a bigger visual attraction than the scene of musicians competing on the stage. The judges, too, are likely to watch the dancers.

In recent years an unofficial square dance has been held on Friday and Saturday nights of Mount Airy, once the band contests are over and the crowd has left the field.

This dance was first organized by caller Nancy Mamlin and fiddler David Bass in 2004.

Mamlin posted about the first dance to a USENET group devoted to folk dancing:

Well, I just got back from the Mt. Airy Fiddlers' Convention, which aside from the rain all day on Friday was a great time as usual. There was music all around, and several parties to attend (or stay away from depending on your perspective!) I kind of wish I had played a few more hours, personally, but here's why I missed some good jamming time:

At the end of the band contest on Saturday night is the "adult dance" competition, which is of course the flatfooting contest. It was surprisingly tame this year, with all the usual suspects competing and winning. Anyway, I was backstage before the contest, and David Bass (who came in 4th in the dance contest) said to me: "Last night after the contest, there were a bunch of kids who wanted to square dance and we couldn't find a caller. So, we're going to do it again tonight after the prizes are awarded. Be there." Now, by kids, we're talking "people who haven't been in the scene as long as the two of us have" - people in their 20s and 30s mostly.

Being obedient, I was there when the prizes were being given out, and though the ceremony ended at 2am, there were indeed a bunch of people

wanting to dance, and a bunch of musicians who wanted to play for us! It took a little to get it going, so we just flatfooted for a while. I called about 3 - 4 dances, with a square of folks or better the whole time (maybe up to a six couple circle?). Around 3:30 another caller (Mary from Blacksburg) showed up to call, and I gladly handed it over to her. Calling without a PA in a huge field with an eight-person band can wear a voice out! I think the dancing went on at least until 4am.

The next day, as I was leaving, I thanked David for his energy in getting this all happening. He told me that he talked to the folks who run the Convention, and they told him that the dance floor is up around Tuesday before the weekend, so next year, we definitely hope to get things going again! At the very least, if musicians go down there to play, we'd have a nice big flatfooting board!

I totally loved this unexpected feature to the weekend. I'd hate for it to get too organized, but if more folks had known we were doing it, we could have gotten a bigger circle dancing even at that early/late hour. It also made me reminisce about dancing with David 20 years ago in NE Ohio/Pittsburgh!

(Nancy Mamlin rec.folk-dancing posting, June 7, 2004)

The dances have kept up, usually held on both Friday and Saturday nights at around 2 or 3 am, and they have proven a popular activity for the young folks who are awake and energetic enough to dance at this late hour. They have not gotten "too organized" and they continue to be ad-hoc, unofficial activities with band members and callers trading off as they come along. The dances called at these events are not the usual Surry County running sets, but rather four-couple squares of the sort popular in West Virginia and lately becoming the basis for the national traditional square dance resurgence (Dalsemer). The caller will most often dance as he/she calls, and callers will take turns.

At a late-night dance in 2006, the band was an organized touring group called the Forge Mountain Diggers, with Dave Bass on fiddle. Their banjo player Allison Williams

had her first dance calling experience at the 2004 midnight dance, and by 2006 was an experienced caller. Many more dances were done on the dance boards, and several fiddlers and banjo players sat in and played. Among the dances done were the Texas Star, Grapevine twist, and several others.

The midnight square dance demonstrates the fertility of the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention as a field for “new” traditions to take hold. This was also a case of an older tradition being revived by younger people and some middle aged people. If the dances were not the usual Surry County big circles, they were more traditional than the Contra dances that dominate in urban centers or the Western Club style of Square dancing.

WPAQ: Old-Time Music on the Air

As I noted in the historical chapters, WPAQ was founded by Ralph Epperson, a native of Ararat, Virginia in 1948. In 2007, the station began streaming over the internet from <http://www.wpaq740.com>, and the station received phone calls from old-time music enthusiasts around the country who were now able to hear Mount Airy's hometown station in their own homes. A statement on the new web site explained the mission of WPAQ as envisioned by Ralph Epperson:

Fortunately for his friends and neighbors, Ralph Epperson believed in individualism and he had a mission in mind: to serve his community. In his application to the Federal Communications Commission, the young man pledged to reflect the cultural and musical values of the people in his station's listening area. He said he would present local talent, and he made good on that promise from the start. Unlike many other station owners, however, Epperson largely

stuck to his mission over the next six decades. (P. Brown 1999)

Also unlike many other station owners, Epperson stayed in the radio business, running WPAQ as a family business until his death in 2006. His voice can still be heard over the air on rebroadcasts of his Saturday afternoon “Blueridge Spotlight” show. His station continues to represent certain cultural values of the Blue Ridge through regular broadcasts of fundamentalist Christian preaching, but for many the station is beloved for its regular support of local old-time and bluegrass (and bluegrass gospel) music.

WPAQ broadcasts from sunrise until approximately sundown every day, and the programming is a mix of Old-time music, bluegrass, Christian programming and, for the final twilight hours of the day, swing music. The signal is 10,000 watts and can be heard as far away as West Virginia, Tennessee, and Charlotte, North Carolina under good conditions. The disk jockeys are given free rein to play what they like from the station's extensive collection of music on LP, CD, cassette and archival recordings. For most of his years at WPAQ, Epperson recorded most of the live performances that were broadcast. These recordings have been deposited at the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina, and some have been collected into a CD release produced by Paul Brown for Rounder (Rounder 0404, 1999). These ‘live’ recordings are surprisingly light on music that most would associate with the Surry County sound, but feature a pleasing variety of mid-century country music and bluegrass, with a few old-time pieces by local performers mixed in.

WPAQ supports local artists by consistently playing their music on the air and reliably identifying them. They also promote local fiddlers conventions and dances. They do not, however offer much in the way of pay, either to on-air personalities, or to musicians who perform on their programs. The Merry-Go-Round is an annual gig for many local bands, but the station pays no money to the bands that perform on it, even though some of them travel a great distance to be there. Musicians that I've spoken to about it consider it a labor of love, and a way to give back something to a station that consistently plays their music. WPAQ also sponsors a stage for local music at the annual Autumn Leaves street fair held in downtown Mount Airy each October. The bands are a mix of local old-time and local bluegrass bands who play 30-40 minute sets in between announcements by WPAQ's disk jockeys. Bands are paid around seventy-five dollars for these appearances, no matter how many members they have. There is not a lot of money in old-time music today.

Arts and Commerce Organizations

In present day Surry County, the local chambers of commerce and visitors bureaus are keen to play up the Mayberry connection most of all. The town of Mount Airy has two major cultural organizations which are often in competition with each other for resources and influence. These are the Surry County Museum of Regional History and

the Surry Arts Council.

The museum is dedicated chiefly to the history and geography and geology of Surry County. There is scant reference to Andy Griffith, and a small exhibit dedicated to Tommy Jarrell, one that includes one of his fiddles and a banjo he played for some time. The director of the museum told me that they had decided quite explicitly not to dedicate their resources to Andy memorabilia, but that she found that in doing so they'd "shot ourselves in the foot." The modest Tommy Jarrell collection was augmented by donations from some locals, but none of the museum staff was very knowledgeable about music, and none felt competent to expand it.

The Arts Council runs and programs two venues, the Blackman Amphitheater, an outdoor venue, and the Andy Griffith Playhouse, an indoor theater. The community holds a number of festivals throughout the year, including the Autumn Leaves festival, the Tommy Jarrell Festival, and Mayberry Days, the most popular, and expensive of all. For one weekend every September, the quiet post-sprawl downtown is transformed by the multitudes from the Andy Griffith Show Re-run Watchers Club. Surviving cast members show up, impersonators walk the streets and vendors sell pork chop sandwiches at inflated prices. Traditional musicians are hired by the arts council to perform at the outdoor venue, and bigger name acts play for the paying public in the Playhouse.

Tommy Jarrell Festival

The Tommy Jarrell Festival was initiated for Jarrell's 100th birthday, in March 2001. The festival is run by the Surry Arts Council and takes place at their facilities, the Cinema Theater and the Andy Griffith Playhouse. The schedule has been relatively consistent for most of the history of the festival: There is a dance on Friday evening, flatfoot workshops and informal jamming on Saturday afternoon, and a big multi-act concert on Saturday evening. During the afternoon, videos and films of Tommy, including *Sprout Wings and Fly* and *A Visit with Tommy Jarrell: Solo Fiddle and Stories*, are screened at the Cinema. On my first visit to a Tommy Jarrell Festival, in 2007, I wandered into the theater to see the videos and found a children's movie being screened instead. I asked the ticket seller about the Jarrell films and he offered to play a video tape on a small television bolted to the wall of the lobby. He told me that there was another screening already scheduled, and that not many people had come by to see the Jarrell films anyway. Many who attend are relatives of the Jarrell family, and the festival is something of a reunion. Others are among the usual crowd of dancers who take advantage of the invitation to get up on stage and dance, even during the formal concerts. Some few are fans of old-time music. The Arts Council does not keep records that break down attendance, but personal observation leads me to believe that the Tommy Jarrell Festival does not draw large numbers of visiting old-time music enthusiasts. The reasons for this will be considered below.

There is always a dance at the Festival, and I have seen them held in two

locations: in the winery of Round Peak Vineyards in 2007, and at the Andy Griffith Playhouse's main theater in 2009. The winery was a rather odd location for a dance, being a cavernous industrial space with fluorescent lighting, a high ceiling, concrete floors and corrugated metal walls. The Slate Mountain Ramblers played their mix of fiddle breakdowns and classic country, sung by their then guitarist, the late Clyde Johnson. Wayne Jarrell led a balky group of dancers through his repertory of three square dances, and there was the usual flatfooting and two-stepping. I attended and videotaped the dancing and the pre-dance performance of Backstep in the retail tasting room. In 2009, the dance was held at the Andy Griffith Playhouse, in the only space large enough for such activity—the stage. The Smokey Valley Boys and The Slate Mountain Ramblers shared the musical duties for a small group of dancers, again led by Wayne's calling.

The concert is the cornerstone of the festival, and gets the largest turnout. Admission is ten dollars and Wayne Jarrell sells his father's recordings and Willard Gayheart sells prints of his pencil drawings of mountain musicians. The lineup of musicians is relatively stable, with a few changes from one year to the next, but there are usually about five or six acts who perform, and the audience is invited to get up on stage and dance should the so wish. Wayne will organize a square dance or two on stage also. I attended the concert in both 2007 and 2009. What follows is a description of the 2009 concert, held on Saturday, February 28, at 7:30 in the evening.

Wayne Jarrell kicked the show off with a welcome and thanks to the audience for

coming out to honor his daddy. Then there was something we had not seen before. He called Kirk Sutphin out on stage with his fiddle. Kirk launched into “Drunken Hiccups,” one of Tommy’s showpieces, and Wayne began singing the words that so many of us knew so well. It was his singing debut—at 82 years of age—and he did well. His timing was not exactly in sync with Kirk, but the younger musician ably accommodated him. Kirk ended the tune twice, only to be told to start up again, as Wayne remembered another verse. The small, mostly non-revivalist audience was charmed, of course. His aged voice had the some of the grain of his fathers, and we gave him a big round of applause.

Lew Bode was the master of ceremonies for the evening. He did not hold forth much, but introduced bands in a workmanlike fashion. First up was the Slate Mountain Ramblers, the square-dance favorites from Ararat, Virginia. Richard Bowman, the fiddler of the band, remembered visiting Tommy to learn tunes. Before playing “Rockingham Cindy,” he recalled the difficulty he had learning the tune, and the surprise Tommy expressed when he finally got it. Richard also made the evening’s first overture to a deceased local musician. Clyde Johnson, a well-loved local figure who booked and hosted WPAQ’s *Merry-Go-Round*, served as master of ceremonies at the Mount Airy Fiddlers’ Convention, and, recently, played guitar and sang with the Slate Mountain Ramblers, died in 2007. Richard acknowledged one of Clyde’s daughters in the audience, said a few kind words about his departed bandmate, and introduced one of the classic

country songs that Johnson sang with the group: Hank Williams' "Your Cheatin' Heart." Several couples got up on stage to do the local two-step. After the song, sung by Richard's daughter and banjo player, Marsha Todd, Richard asked the audience to give the dancers some applause: "If it weren't for them, there wouldn't be no reason for us to play. Wouldn't be nobody to enjoy it." Having said that, he invited Wayne Jarrell to return to the stage and call another square dance. Wayne emerged from the back of the hall, calling out for folks to "get them coats off and dance." A Georgia Alabam was danced to "Soldier's Joy." Richard again put in a word on dancing after this number: "I want you to know that that sort of thing goes on every Friday night up at the Beulah Ruritan building. Y'all come if you don't get enough dancing somewhere else." The Slate Mountain Ramblers are among the favorite dance bands in the area, and had dancers on stage for every number they played. They even have Ardena Moncus, Tommy's daughter, and Wayne dance together when they play "Rockingham Cindy," a sight which gets many amateur photographers out of their seats to get a picture.

As much as this was an audience that loves to dance, they won't dance to anything. After the Slate Mountain Ramblers left the stage, Riley Baugus and Ira Bernstein came on. Riley grew up in Walkertown, outside Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and was exposed to mountain culture during visits to his grandmother in Alleghany County. As a youth, he made many visits to Tommy Jarrell's home, and played in the traditional Old Hollow String Band and the groove-centric Red Hots. Riley plays

banjo, fiddle, and guitar and has a powerful singing voice. Ira is a native of Long Island, and one of the most famous dancers in the world of old-time music. In addition to dancing and teaching in the mountain flatfoot and clogging styles, he is an able practitioner of modern tap dancing and European step dances. Ira is also a fine fiddler. The pair have been touring as an educational and entertaining partnership for several years. Their act is a combination of both of their skills—Riley sings unaccompanied ballads; Ira flatfoots to Riley's banjo playing, the two of them play banjo-fiddle duets and trade off relating bits of mountain culture and lore. Ira introduces their first tune, consciously breaking the unspoken primacy of the local: “If you'll forgive us, we'd like to start with a tune that's not from around here. It's a Kentucky tune, 'Jenny Get Around.' You can dance to it anyway—they dance in Kentucky also.” Ira also invokes the name of John Morgan Salyer, the source musician for “Jenny Get Around,” a variant of the well-known, “Poor Liza Jane.” The duet launch into a respectable and spirited rendition of this slightly crooked tune, Ira on fiddle and Riley on banjo. They play for a good three minutes and get polite applause, but not one person gets up to dance. Perhaps no one wants to dance next to Ira Bernstein? Perhaps no one finds their playing very danceable? Maybe the large contingent of local music fans resents—in a small way—the breaking of the unspoken expectation that this is a night for local music. The rest of Baugus and Bernstein's segment proceeded in their usual manner, a skillful and moving demonstration and representation of Appalachian music and dance, but at no point were

they joined by dancers on the stage.

The musicians and dancers have been sharing the stage with a professional cameraman all evening. Lew Bode introduces David Holt, who is on hand not to perform, but to tell the crowd of his project to make a show on Surry County's old-time music for *Folkways*, his North Carolina public television show.

Backstep was next, and presented the most conservative portion of the evening, playing a series of local standard fiddle breakdowns, with no songs or slow numbers. The dancers did join them occasionally, but not as many as joined the Slate Mountain Ramblers. Nick McMillian serves as the “voice” of Backstep and announces tunes and introduces the players. After “Mississippi Sawyer,” Nick confessed to getting a little emotional while playing, “we lost a member of the musical community a few days ago: Whit Sizemore--'Big Howdy.’” Sizemore was a Galax-area fiddler who had died during the previous week. Both Nick and Chester McMillian spent time playing in Whit Sizemore's Shady Mountain Ramblers and he was remembered for his driving fiddling and his friendliness. Nick remarked: “musicians used to be thick around here but a lot of great players. Thank god people still play.” Nick also took time to mention his grandfather, Dix Freeman, from whom much of Backstep's repertory is derived. Freeman was a contemporary of Tommy Jarrell, and sometimes felt put out by the attention Tommy received relative to his own comparative obscurity. Backstep is partly dedicated to correcting this, and to keeping Freeman's name out there as another of the Round Peak

greats. They do this by telling the audience when they play a version of a tune learned from Dix and by playing his old instruments.

Kirk Sutphin, Kevin Fore and Tom Mylet were next. Kirk, often thought to be the younger person who came closest to capturing Tommy's fiddle style, and Kevin, a dedicated preserver of Kyle Creed's banjo style, would seem a natural combination. Mylet was a student of Creed's as well, and is also a multifaceted musicians, who is playing guitar tonight. Lew Bode introduced them as a band, but Mylet was quick to point out that they are really just friends and neighbors who like to get together and play. In this, he is invoking the visiting paradigm of Tommy's music making. Jarrell, who never played in a "formal" band (i.e., a band with a name), enjoyed having people come to his house to play with him as a social activity. The visit is further invoked when Mylet asks us to imagine the trio as people having a visit with Tommy, with Kirk as the stand-in for the departed man: "Imagine Kirk sitting in a brown naugahyde chair down low. And imagine Kevin and I sitting across from him on a green naugahyde couch, with a big dog with leaning its head against your leg and drooling on your foot." Mylet is setting an imaginary scene for the audience, trying to recreate in a mental picture of the experience of seeing and interacting with Tommy Jarrell, as well as hearing him. When they play "Rockingham Cindy," Tommy's daughter Ardena again is led onto the stage to dance. Tom remarked afterwards--"It was great to see Ardena dancing, and she was doing it behind us, about where the kitchen would have been if we were at Tommy's!" This was

meant not as a sexist comment about the place of women, but as another invocation of the authentic experience of a visit to Tommy's where dancers usually did their flatfooting on the linoleum floor of the kitchen, as seen in *Sprout Wings and Fly*. Again, many people come up from the audience to flat foot, and Wayne calls another square dance.

The Smokey Valley Boys are one of the great venerable bands that played. Benton Flippen, as noted, has included many local pickers in his band over the years. This time out, it is Andy Edmonds on banjo, Frank Bode and Chester McMillian on guitar, Verlen Clifton on mandolin. Bode also sings and serves as announcer. Bode also appears to be directing Benton's tune choice this evening, saying, "Play 'John Brown's Dream'" or telling the banjo player to change keys and saying: "This'll be a surprise for all of you, including Benton, since he doesn't know what I'm going to tell him to play... someone should get a basket to gather the eggs, 'cause Benton's gonna play the 'Cacklin' Hen.'" Benton does play that old showpiece. Bode proudly points out that he's sharing the stage with two winners of the North Carolina Heritage Award—Benton and Verlen. Bode is also proud to tell us that Surry County was home to two other winners of the award—Ernest East and Paul Sutphin. The band then invokes another absent friend, Fred Cockerham, when Andy Edmonds leads the band in a performance of Fred's banjo showpiece, "Roustabout." This is a band that has played for local dances for years, and sure enough, they get people on stage to flatfoot throughout their set.

There is a special guest for this Tommy Jarrell Festival. I've been hearing all

weekend that Mike Seeger is in town for the festival, but have not seen him. He's been watching from the wings, and Lew Bode introduces him. Seeger's performance is brief—just two tunes. He remembers Tommy and remembers learning “Sweet Sunny South” from his father's singing with the Southern Broadcasters. Seeger sings this song to his own banjo accompaniment, then performs “Hop High Ladies” on the jew's harp, and says goodnight. His music does not draw dancers, nor is it intended to, being more quiet and domestic. He is clearly tired, and this was the last time I saw Seeger before he died.

Oddly enough, the final act of the evening is the furthest from Tommy's tradition--Willard Gayheart and Scott Freeman. Willard is well-known as a pencil artist who specializes in detailed renderings of musicians and other Appalachian subjects. Scott is a bluegrass fiddler and mandolinist. Willard admits right off the bat: “We've been searching to try and come up with some old-time music to play, since Scott and I usually play bluegrass. But bluegrass comes from old-time music, so we can go back a bit.” That said, they launch into the most non-old-time tune of the evening, “My Curly-Headed Baby,” a jazz-inflected number with vocal harmonies. This is followed by a song Willard wrote to laud Wayne Henderson, the great guitar builder of Rugby, Virginia. After this bluegrass excursion, the two invite a friend, Michael Fox, inventor of a three-stringed diatonic banjo-dulcimer hybrid, the dulcijo. Michael explains his instrument, which has a banjo head, and a neck with gapped frets and a short drone string. Then the newly-formed string band plays a string of old-time fiddle tunes: “Fisher's Hornpipe,” “Whiskey Before

Breakfast,” and “Mississippi Sawyer.” Tommy did play “Fisher’s” and “Mississippi Sawyer,” but he’s never explicitly invoked during this segment of the concert, by which point the crowd had thinned considerably. The music was appreciated and enjoyed, but there was no dancing, and indeed there were few people there listening.

With the last act off the stage and people heading for the exits, Lew Bode returned to the stage one last time to invite us back: “Come again next year. We’re going to keep that old-time music alive and our tradition alive right here in Surry County.”

The concert and festival are intended to be a destination for Tommy’s admirers, but it does not draw large numbers of visitors from out of town, and with its small budget, it is not well advertised or promoted in the places where his fans might learn of it, such as the *Old-Time Herald*. Nor is it promoted on free email discussion lists or bulletin boards. As the organizers at the Surry Arts Council are not well-acquainted with the national or regional old-time music scene, they are not aware of such venues for promotion. Another reason for the lack of attendance might be the format of the festival itself. It is very much for the locals, and the possibilities for participation are based on the local patterns of music appreciation, not the patterns that appeal to the old-time revival diaspora. For a revivalist, a “festival” as a gathering, usually outdoors, where you can stay overnight and meet, visit and jam with other musicians. Such gatherings, as has been shown, are usually called “fiddlers’ conventions” and are held throughout the

summer in this part of the country. If it is held during the winter in a cold climate, it may be held somewhere with lodging nearby or on site. Such gatherings are rarer, but serve as a welcome mid-winter “fix.” The Portland Old-Time Gathering in Oregon and Breaking Up Winter in Tennessee are two such festivals that create some semblance of fiddlers' convention action during the winter. The Tommy Jarrell Festival is not calibrated to appeal to the people who go to these festivals. The local modes of old-time music consumption are encouraged: listening from the audience, flatfoot and two-step dancing, and open jamming. This last is one of the less popular activities of the festival, but jams are scheduled over the two days in the afternoons, usually at the Cinema theater or the Good Life Coffee House on Main Street. A visitor from the old-time music diaspora might find these activities charming for a while, but would not enjoy them as much. It can be difficult for an old-time picker to sit still and watch other people playing old-time music on a stage without being able to play themselves. At revival gatherings and festivals there are dances, too, but they tend to be dominated by square and contra dances, with a few waltzes and flatfoot numbers interspersed for variety. The Surry County dances flip the ratio, with most tunes being for flatfooting or two-stepping, with occasional squares. The jams that are held around town are more on the model of the gatherings held at community centers and fast food restaurants, and have little resemblance to the scene at a fiddlers' convention. The local jam, as practiced at the Andy Griffith Playhouse on Thursday evening is dominated by singers with guitars. Others join

in on bluegrass family instruments: mandolins, banjos and fiddles. Everyone gets a turn to lead a number, and much of the repertory is drawn from classic country and bluegrass. If there are fiddlers present, they will usually lead the only old-time numbers played. At a typical fiddlers' convention jam session, most tunes will be fiddle tunes, and will be selected by the fiddle players in the jam, though they might welcome suggestions or requests from their jamming partners. There might be a song or two sung, but the standard is one breakdown after another. Those who are accustomed to this type of jam will likely find themselves frustrated by the more open, song-dominated jams that take place in Mount Airy.

Mount Airy Festivals Considered

Both the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention and the Tommy Jarrell Festival are organized by groups that are not primarily concerned with old-time music and that do not employ old-time musicians in their ranks. The musicians who participate must serve as the experts and do a certain amount of educating, not only of the audiences, but of the festival organizers. They do this through various interventions that have been described above. At the Convention, several musicians thought that there should be a time and place for square dancing, and one was organized, and has become an unofficial part of the festival that is eagerly anticipated by many attendees. The dancing that is done is not the local style of big circle reel, but the four-couple dances popular with a more recent square

dance revival.

The closing concert of the Tommy Jarrell Festival is a way to showcase the wealth of local musical talent, but within limits. Certain bands are not invited to perform, and the general perception is that they are not invited because they have no direct connection to Tommy—that is, none of the members spent significant amounts of time learning from him directly. Those who do play on stage use the opportunity to remind people of their own connections to Tommy, and to tell favored stories about him. But they also make use of their situation to remember the larger community of old-time musicians, and especially those who have died. At the 2009 concert, Clyde Johnson, Ernest East, Paul Sutphin, Fred Cockerham, Dix Freeman, Whit Sizemore and Ben Jarrell were memorialized from the stage in one way or another. Tom Mylet's evocation of a visit to Tommy's house emphasizes the non-performance nature of the music and man being celebrated by the performance. The performers likewise took time to pay tribute to the importance of dancers to the continuation of the musical tradition. Richard Bowman asked the audience to applaud the dancers, and throughout the evening, musicians would make other comments like, "It sure is great to see those dancers up here." All of this is to say that the Jarrell festival is a vehicle for promoting a less Jarrell-centric version of Surry County's old-time heritage. As musicians have taken the lead in educating from the stage, more local musicians have been recognized by the council and the history as presented to visitors has become more complete. In 2010, an old-time Music Heritage Hall was added

to the Andy Griffith Playhouse, with large portraits of the lesser-known masters of the local style flanking a stage and dance floor.

The Convention and the Tommy Jarrell festival are two different versions of what an old-time music festival might be. The Convention is an old southern tradition, the fiddle contest, modified by the addition of extended camping and all night jamming, as favored by the revival diaspora. The Jarrell Festival is an example of a more modern invention, the Arts festival, adapted to a local heroic figure and used as a venue for participants to promote alternate versions of the local history. In both cases the event organizers, whether Veterans of Foreign Wars or the Surry Arts Council, are laypeople; the musicians, whether locals or visitors, are the experts and they intervene where they can to make these events reflect their own versions of Surry County's music history.

Three Ages of Old-time music

As was shown in the Introduction, writers on the Folk revival were very interested in devising categories for the various participants. Steckert, Slobin and others found that the categories of insider and outsider, imitator, old master, and tourist were useful in explaining the various ways people used the music under revival. In those models, the “named system” being revived was rooted in a place and time physically and temporally separated from the outsider revivalists. This created a need for the stories and tunes, and the physical proximity to an old master that created the temporal synecdoche that made

desirable aspects of the revitalized culture present in the here and now. Surry County's old-time music is a special case, though. Because its tradition survived long enough to be revived without vanishing first, there were several generations of old-time musicians available for revivalists to meet and learn from when they started making their pilgrimages there in the 1960s. The old masters (Slobin's term) were a varied lot, as the cases of Dix Freeman and Tommy Jarrell demonstrate. There are still some remaining musicians of the older generation, along with some revival-era immigrants and a younger generation of Surry County-born musicians who have taken up the music. This creates a mixed community of revivalists and traditional musicians all working on the common project of making Surry County old-time music.

Kara Thomas has devised a taxonomy for the old-time musicians in the mixed revival/traditionalist community in Asheville, North Carolina. A *traditionalist* was raised “in the culture and worldview that produced the folkloric forms they actively perpetuate” (2004:277). A traditionalist musician may be *continuous* if they learned to play at an early age and continued to do so, or *non-continuous* if their music-making lapsed later in life or if they took it up later in life. Non-continuous traditionalists may be either *tradition-inspired* or *revival-inspired* depending on whether they took up or renewed their music making under the influence of local tradition or some outside revivalist. *Revivalist* musicians grew up in another culture from the one that produced the music that they make. Revivalists may be *rural* if their musical revivalism is accompanied by a version

of the rural lifestyle that they associate with old-time music—farming, homesteading, back-to-the land activities. *Transplanted* revivalists are musicians from outside the area who play old-time music, but do not strive to live a rural old-time lifestyle (2004). All of these types of old-time musicians may be found in Surry County, and most will be accurately described by more than one label at different points in their life cycle. As Alan Jabbour observed, many old-time musicians, Tommy Jarrell included, grew up traditional, but set their music aside in mid-life before taking it up again after retirement (1981). Upon taking up the fiddle again, Jarrell would be a *non-continuous traditionalist*. The community of old-time musicians in Surry County contains many traditionalists of both types.

The section that follows contains oral history from three members of each of the three most prominent categories of old-time musicians in the Surry County scene: old master/continuous traditionalist, immigrant/transplanted revivalist, and the young generation of people born in Surry County in the 1970s and 1980s. Their stories demonstrate various pathways into and through Round Peak music; various ways of being a musician and a member of this community.

The Older Generation: “We didn't call it no style. Just playing music”

Since the first field recordists began knocking on Southern doors in the 1960s, there has been a great value placed on the elders, the tradition bearers, the source

generation. The older generation—by which I mean those of retirement age or older in 2010—are mostly *continuous*, having learned before the activities of revivalists had any impact on the area. The musicians who still perform somewhat regularly are a fascinating group of old gentlemen, but often difficult to interview. Most are not given to talking about themselves, or reflecting on their instrumental styles. But there is a range of personalities, of course, from the outgoing Chester McMillian to the mysterious Benton Flippen. Generally, though, they are happy to answer questions about their music, even if, as Benton said, they are “not much of a hand for questions.” Most of these men learned their music from their families or neighbors, they may have listened to records and broadcasts of the Grand Old Opry, but they generally did not emulate the music they heard there, preferring the old-time music. Verlen Clifton entered the music scene in the Round Peak area, and was part of the mid-20th Century transition to a bluegrass-influenced big band sound. He played mandolin, a rare instrument in this area, with the popular Camp Creek Boys, a band that absorbed the influence of bluegrass and epitomized the string band sound of Round Peak. Music was a part of his social life during his younger days, but with most of his old musical partners gone, he rarely plays anymore. Benton Flippen is one of the most idiosyncratic fiddlers in old-time music, but his playing shows the influence of radio and recording fiddlers like Tommy Magness and Arthur Smith who incorporated jazz and blues influences in their flashy fiddle styles. The oldest active old-time musician in Surry County, he still plays pretty regularly, and is a

symbol of old-time authenticity. For many, a jam with Benton has become the authenticating experience that a visit to Tommy's used to be, and an experience to treasure and boast about. Chester McMillian, the youngest of my set of old masters, is in some ways the most musically conservative. He played guitar on two of Tommy Jarrell's LPs, married Dix Freeman's daughter, and plays traditional Round Peak tunes in a band with his family. A friendly and generous man who will talk to anyone, when it comes to music, he prefers the straight-up Round Peak material that he's played since the 1950s.

Verlen Clifton

Verlen Clifton, born in Surry County in 1928, raised in Round Peak with the great fiddler Ernest East as a neighbor, is the only surviving original member of the great band the Camp Creek Boys. Verlen remembered listening to the Opry on a battery-powered radio, and listening to his parents records of the Stoneman Family, Riley Puckett and Roy Acuff. His first instrument was a four string banjo that he played with finger-picks. He began playing mandolin on a borrowed instrument while in the Navy as a young man. His story of the Camp Creek Boys is somewhat elliptical:

I played with Fred Cockerham, Kyle Creed, Paul Sutphin, Ronald Collins. Ernest. We had a band called the Camp Creek Boys back in the middle 60s. Me and Ernest had been playing before that, but we decided to form a band. Kyle Creed he was... we elected him as manager. Old Kyle worked it to. He liked that old-time music. He was a good picker too.

Really I started out messing with a banjer. When me and Ernest started out I was picking a banjo. But really the banjo I had was a four string banjo. [I was playing with a] finger and thumb pick. I messed around with it until the Camp Creek boys. I could play a mandolin. We had guitar players and we had fiddle players and we had banjo players and they wanted me to play the mandolin. That's when I started. (Interview, May 15, 2007)

Like many of the older generation, Verlen is a bit nonplussed by folkloristic questions of style. That musicians from different parts of the country should sound different is natural. The music was called by no name—it was just “playing music.” The names and styles were something that people recognized and talked about only later.

I guess there's a little difference in it. In different communities. Maybe in Round Peak, maybe a little different timing from over in the Galax area. Some people play the same name tune, and different tunes. It's just the style these communities have got. Just like there's difference in the language in different parts of the country.

We didn't call it no style, just playing music. But in later years, the way we played our music up there, that's the reason they called it “Round Peak style.” And I think the Camp Creek Boys was the one that kindly was the forefront, you know, of that sound. We played Round Peak, we all lived there. And Tommy [Jarrell, not a member of the Camp Creek Boys], he's got the Round Peak style—he's raised in Round Peak. That's where they got the Round Peak style. Different fiddlers from different part of the country play different style. (Interview, May 15, 2007)

As one of the very few mandolin players from the Round Peak area, Verlen was free to develop his own way of making the mandolin an old-time instrument.

The way I learnt, I just learned my own way of picking. Ernest used to say, I'd ask him, 'how do you want me to do this?' He'd say 'just do it the way it sounds the best to you.' That's what I did. I just chord it and keep the rhythm. Well, I just got my own style. It caught on pretty good. A whole lot of the boys try to copy me now. Some of them beat me at copying me.

My mandolin picking I try to support the band, just be a rhythm picker. I don't try to do a whole lot of lead work. I'm not a pick it out and take the lead, too much. I used to in bluegrass; we just don't play it that way in old-time music.

Verlen doesn't play much music anymore, nor does he listen to it in his leisure time. “I got some [recordings of old-time music], but I hardly listen to it. Once in a while put some on in the car when I'm going somewhere. As far as sitting around and listening to it, I don't do none of that. Don't play too much anymore—don't have time. Got other things to do.” He has kept up his skills though, and he performs a few times a year with Paul Brown in the Toast String Stretchers. Many musicians of his generation likely have similar stories and no longer play very much. Verlen is the only surviving member of one of the greatest recorded string bands, but music is only one aspect of his life.

Benton Flippen

One of Verlen's sometime music partners, and a more active musician, is Benton Flippen, the reigning old man of Surry County old-time music. Flippen, born in 1920, has been slowing down a little since his wife died in 2007, but he continues to perform with his band, the Smokey Valley Boys, and to win fiddle contests. Though his father and uncle were a talented banjo player and fiddler, respectively, he started out on a guitar, and later took up the banjo. Like most of the older musicians, he says he was “taught” very little, but picked up the basics of playing by watching and listening. “I just learn't what I learnt from what I listened at. Same way with the fiddle: I just learnt by listening to other

people” (Interview July 25, 2007). Not a Round Peaker, Flippen grew up in the area around Dobson, and he learned from the older generation of players around there, which included his family, and Esker Hutchens and Leake Caudill. At 18 he took up the fiddle. Paul Brown, who knows Flippen as well as anyone, says that Benton's poor eyesight forced him to rely on his ears more than his eyes to figure out the mechanics of playing the fiddle, which partly explains his unusual technique (Brown 2008).

Flippen, like Tommy Jarrell, tried to make money farming tobacco early in his life, but found it unprofitable. His story parallels one told by Jarrell (Dols):

Farmed till I was 23 years old. I had 5 acres of tobacco and 12 acres of corn. This old man lived right outside Franklin School. And I had his farm planted in tobacco and corn. But I didn't get to take care of it. Hail-storm got it. Beat it all to pieces. Broke half, seventy-five percent of it all, just broke it over. I never got but thirty dollars out of that. Five acres tobacco. I seen it was gonna be a job pulling tobacco and it laying on the ground. And there's a guy lived out front of where I had it there, said, “I'll give you thirty dollars for cutting the flue wood, and I'll take the tobacco.” And I said, “You bought some tobacco. I ain't gonna fool with it no way.” I already had a job. Didn't want to quit the job. But he never got but three hundred dollars off it, was all he got.

JR: Did that make you decide to stop farming?

BF: That's when I quit. I never did go back. I went working at public works.

(Interview)

The “public works” he speaks of is work for the private industries that were the hallmark of the New South that had been replacing the old farm-based economy since the turn of the century. Benton worked for a while at a furniture factory, but mostly was employed in the clothing mills around Mount Airy, first pressing sweaters and shirts at the Pine State

Knitting Company, later boarding socks at the Boston Oakdale hosiery mill, the job from which he retired.

Benton played music his entire adult life, never taking the hiatus common among the generation older than his. In the 1940s he played in bands, such as the Green Valley Boys, that skirted the edge of the new bluegrass style that was then emerging. The Green Valley Boys, in fact, were the first band to broadcast live on WPAQ in 1948. For a time Benton played fiddle with the Camp Creek Boys, and with the Virginia-based Dry Hill Draggers. He is most often heard with the band that he leads, the Smokey Valley Boys. In local tradition, a band name typically is considered the intellectual property of a particular musician, who might use it to name any group of musicians that accompany him. The “Camp Creek Boys” was one such band name, being the “property” of Kyle Creed, and applicable for entirely different groups of musicians. Music, for Flippen, was an important supplementary source of income, and according to Paul Brown, he regarded it as a side business, even investing in a sound system to bring to square dance gigs. This may in part explain his competitiveness. While he is in no way unique among the old-time musicians in wanting to be well regarded and to win contests, he does seem to value his ribbons and statues more than most of them. This was made evident to me on a visit to his home in 2007. As I asked about his musical influences and experiences, most of his answers were brief and elliptical. He admitted to me that he was “not much of a hand at answering questions.” A casual remark about his trophy case full of blue ribbons and

prizes, though, brought forth a stream of enthusiasm:

BF: I have another table full sitting in yonder. I got the world's champion fiddle trophy in there somewhere. All them big ones up there's from Union Grove or from Charlotte, them big ones is. You can see them hanging on the wall over there. I got over a hundred of them. A lot of them packed in a box up in the attic. See we [the Smokey Valley Boys] won the Union Grove eight times, first place, and I won the fiddle seven times at Galax. And then they, well you win so long they quit letting you win anymore, you know.

JR: Do you remember the first time you won a fiddle contest?

BF: It's been a long time. I don't remember where it was at that I won the first fiddle prize. I won so many. When I was young I went to every one I heard of. And they used to have a bunch of them around here. Now they've just gone to having one at Galax and one at Sparta and one at Jefferson and there's some more. I can't think all of them.

JR: Mount Airy.

BF: Yeah, there's Mount Airy but I never did think much of that.

JR: You don't like that festival?

BF: No. They got, they gonna use the same judges every year and the same band wins it every year. Don't make sense. I won the fiddle prize down there about twice. Outside of that they went haywire with it. They get the same judges every year and they pull for the same bunch. All the fiddlers' conventions is crooked now. Crooked as a barrel of fish-hooks. Galax don't even use the judges' scores. I don't know why they pay them 500. They get 4 or 5 judges and pay them \$500 a piece, for the week and then takes the scores up on top of the hill and then gives them to who they want to have it. That's the way it goes. I stayed in the top ten for 25 years. I won first seven times and then the second place, third place, fourth place, fifth place. There's a lot more competition now than it used to be. There's some little kids can play so make the hair stand up on your head playing a fiddle. (Interview)

Flippen is here voicing a common opinion that the Galax Fiddlers' Convention results are

ultimately decided by the senior members of the Moose Lodge who run the event, despite the judges scores. What's more, his discourse demonstrates the seriousness with which he regards fiddle contests, which runs counter to the “all for fun” attitude of most revivalist musicians. Some other musicians were alienated by his competitiveness, particularly during his younger days (Tom Mylet Interview). This is another aspect of the semi-professional nature of Benton's music making. It's not a weekend vacation in the country, but a way to maybe pay the electric bill.

Flippen has also been a more prolific recording artist than any other Surry County musicians save Tommy Jarrell. Though the 1960s era field recordists did not include Flippen in their projects—perhaps he was too young or his style too modern for their tastes—he began making records in the 1970s. He and the Smokey Valley Boys recorded an early LP on Rounder (Rounder 0029) in 1974, and he recorded two tracks on a various-artists LP produced by Kinney Rorer in the same year (County 746). The Smokey Valley Boys also played on *Through the Ears*, a record commemorating the Green Grass Cloggers in 1986. In 1994 Paul Brown compiled and produced the Rounder CD *Old Time, New Times*, which is Benton's best-known recording, a collection of radio, field and home recordings of Benton with various groups that stretch back to his 1940s appearances with Glen McPeak on WPAQ. In the 21st Century, Benton has been recording more frequently, with three CDs in the first decade. Flippen recorded *Beware of Dog* (HRC 135) for Heritage in 2006. 2003's *Fiddler's Dream* and 2010's *270*

Haystack Road were released by Music Maker. Benton has also played on Kevin Fore's two CDs. A live recording of the Smokey Valley Boys from 1984 was released in 2009 on 5-String Productions. Benton, like many other professional musicians, uses in-person CD sales to make money. While the numbers barely register in the world of mass-market entertainment, these sales are a significant lifeline, and they usually fly under the radar of the cultural industries.

Benton's two CDs from the Music Maker Relief Foundation (MMRF) are part of that organization's Musical Development Program. The founders of the group, Tim and Denise Duffy, were folklorists documenting blues musicians in the North Carolina Piedmont in the mid 1990s.

In seeking performance and recording opportunities for the artists, Tim and Denise came to realize that gigs barely paid them enough to cover expenses and record companies were only interested in young acts that could sell millions of CDs. The music industry just was not working for these artists. The prospects were even bleaker for artists too old or infirm to travel and perform. Something needed to be done quickly to preserve the music and the musicians. (Music Maker Relief Foundation website: <http://www.musicmaker.org/history/>)

MMRF is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 to help “the true pioneers and forgotten heroes of Southern music gain recognition and meet their day to day needs. We present these musical traditions to the world so American culture will flourish and be preserved for future generations” (Music Maker Relief Foundation website <http://www.musicmaker.org/mission/>). Their record label and CD program are intended to give traditional musicians an opportunity to document their work, and to make money

selling the product.

The CDs for Artists initiative gives artists an ongoing stock of CDs to use for promotional opportunities to get gigs, radio play, media exposure and to supplement their income at performances. For every dollar MMRF spends giving an artist a CD to sell, the artist can make up to \$15 in income. If an artist sells 20 CDs at \$20 each after a performance, a \$500 gig becomes a \$900 night for the artist. (<http://musicmaker.org/musical-development>)

I have never discussed the economics of his music making with Benton Flippen, but he was grateful to Music Maker for their support. In 2008, he recorded a public service announcement for MMRF, posted on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4eF7F8qmxs>. The clip opens with the sound of Benton fiddling “Soldier's Joy” and a shot of him sitting in his brick carport, fiddle in lap and a pile of ribbons and trophies all around him. A close up of Benton's face: “I'm Benton Flippen and I'm eighty-eight years old and I'm still winning these ribbons.” A shot of Benton fiddling with a blue “First Place” ribbon in the foreground. “But they don't pay for my medicine.” Benton lifts a plastic tray covered with prescription bottles. More shots of fiddling. “Please support Music Makers—they help me buy this medicine.” The camera pans across a display of contest ribbons and fades to black as “Soldier's Joy” plays on.

Flippen occupies a special place in Surry County's old-time music world today, as the oldest and most recognizable of the fiddlers. His iconic appearance—a thin frame, a face reminiscent of “American Gothic,” an old-fashioned hat—is only part of it. His style of fiddling, and the very un-Jarrell-like shyness of his personality make him a bit of a

mysterious figure. How is he getting those sliding notes? How does he make his bow snap back and forth so smoothly? What, above all, is he thinking? He is a hard man to know. Paul Brown is one of a few “outsiders” who has got close to Flippen. Flippen considers Brown the best banjo player. Brown considers himself to be shy as well, and he never felt entirely comfortable with the field collector paradigm of the earlier recordists Charles Faurot and Richard Nevins, in which visits were short, and mainly for the purpose of recording, after which the recordists packed up and left town. Brown liked to take time to develop more of a relationship.

In addition to being the most famous living Surry County old-timer, he is also the most distinctive, having developed a style of noting with his left hand that originally depended on using one or two fingers where other fiddlers used three or four. He also prefers to keep his instrument in standard tuning. His style uses a lot of left hand slides, creating a bluesy sound. His right hand and wrist, while less unusual, are equally impressive, and they drive the bow in fascinating syncopations.

Chester McMillian

Chester McMillian is the youngest of the three men I'm discussing. Though often thought to be “Surry County born and bred” as one person put it, he was actually born over the border in Cana, Virginia, in 1942, making him the next generation after Flippen and Clifton. His family moved to North Carolina around the time Chester was ten years

old, and lived in the Mount Airy area. He moved to the Round Peak section when he married Polly Freeman, daughter of the banjo player Lee Dix Freeman. Chester's uncles on both sides were banjo and fiddle players and his father was an old-time banjo player. Chester plays several instruments, including banjo and mandolin, but he is mostly known for his guitar playing. As a youth, he played bluegrass, gospel and rock music. Chester has played with almost every one of the great old-time musicians: "So I got into the [Freeman] family and Dix had the fiddle and banjo and all that. So I was playing a little bit at that time with Johnny Vipperman. Played with Melvin Slaydon before that. I played with bout everybody in this country I recon." He knew Tommy Jarrell casually from the town, but didn't begin playing music with him until after Tommy's wife died and Chester went to try to learn fiddle from the older man. Tommy, usually an encouraging person, warned him not to take up the fiddle:

Well I was going to. Tommy thought it'd be best not to. Play the fiddle. Said I was such a good guitar player. He said fiddle players was a dime a dozen. Said there weren't no good guitar players. But it was right around the other way, cause guitar players was a dime a dozen. It's pretty hard to find a real good one. They say; I don't know.

In the late 1960s and 1970s scene, it seems that there were fewer fiddlers, and a jam or a band would frequently have multiple guitarists, as the Camp Creek Boys did. In my experience of the current old-time music scene, good guitarists are scarce, due to a kind of aspiration that takes hold of old-time musicians. There is an implicit hierarchy of instruments, with the fiddle being on top. The fiddler leads the music, decides which tune

to play, sets the pace when he starts it, and decides when to end it. The banjo, as the other melodic instrument, is next in the hierarchy. Guitar comes third. Often the guitar player wants to learn the banjo and the banjo player longs to be the fiddler. Chester has learned banjo and mandolin, and knows quite a bit about fiddling, but he almost always plays guitar in public, and he's played with many of the old musicians:

That Tommy's something else. I played with Melvin Slaydon and I played bluegrass in the '60s with Johnny Viperman. And i played mandolin with him. And then I played mandolin some with Jeff Collins. But it was all bluegrass. And at the time I played guitar some with Tommy Jarrell. And then I start playing, in 72 or -3 I started playing with Ernest East and them. Played mandolin with them till 1980. But all during that time I played with Tommy. We traveled a whole lot, with old man Tommy. And then I went to playing with Whit Sizemore and them. Played with them, about 1980 to about 90, I guess.

But '86 we started Backstep band with Greg Hooven and all of those. And we stayed together up to '91. Then we busted up. Then when Nicholas got old enough to fiddle and everything, we started Backstep again. And so it's still been going, but meantime I played with Benton a little bit, you know. I played with several different , just help em out, you know. But we have been all over the country playing. (Interview March 6, 2007)

Chester spent a lot of time at Tommy's house in the 1960s and 1970s, and remembers the influx of “folk people” who would stay for weeks at a time. He says that he saw many people around the Jarrell place, but he objects to some of the common boasting about “playing with Tommy”:

You know, talk to em now, everybody played with Tommy. But very few people played with Tommy. If you couldn't play you didn't play with him. I mean, that's just the way Tommy was. But everybody you talk to now, “Oh, yeah, I played some with Tommy.” But I never did see em down there. We went to Tommy Jarrell's regular. But there's a lot of people that I hadn't saw down there that claim that they played with. They could have, but I didn't see it.

He also says that Tommy wasn't so accepting of any and all musicians as he is often made out to be. He had definite standards for who he would play with, and what kind of accompaniment he wanted to hear:

Chester: He didn't like nobody that frailed a banjo, Tommy didn't.

JR: Frailed?

C: Yeah. That's it. So like 2 finger or clawhammer, but you don't go frailin' around him. He just didn't like it at all.

JR: So frailing is like when you strum...

C: Yeah, that Galax stuff. Enoch Rutherford, you know.

JR: Like Enoch Rutherford.

C: Like he played. They called that. I don't know what you call that style of pickin' but we called it frailing.

JR: And they call the style around here...

C: Clawhammer around here. And they's two or three different styles of clawhammer. Round Peak style is a little bit different.

JR: What's round peak style clawhammer?

C: Well that's more like Dix Freeman style than Kyle Creed's was like. And Charlie Lowe played clawhammer style but it was a little different from Dix's. Course I don't know Dix learned it from Charlie I guess. But Charlie, when I listened at Charlie, see he passed away at 55. When I heard his record, he was real quick. You know. And it sounds more like they's playing with Tommy, like more like the banjo was in the lead. That's the way it sound to me. But it's supposed to be right to where the fiddle's supposed to be the lead in old-time music.

McMillian and Tommy and Mac Snow would sometimes travel to Fred Cockerham's in Low Gap and “we would go up there and play till the morning. You couldn't never stop, you know, when you get playing.” Chester learned enough about Fred's style from watching him fiddle to teach the Cockerham style to Greg Hooven.

Chester: He started out--Whit Sizemore helped him a little bit. And he told me, he said “I want to learn to play like Fred Cockerham.” I said “Well you have to get your mama to come down to the house.” So one winter she brought him down here. About once a week for a while. I had some recordings of Fred. And so we'd, when he'd get here, we'd play that and listen at it. Then he'd, we'd play like him.

JR: So you'd sit there with him and he'd try to copy what was on the record.

C: You can't..I mean if you listen at him and know how to use your bow and everything

This led into a discussion of his lifetime of giving music lessons to local kids.

JR: So you know a little bit about bowing?

C: Oh, yeah I teach fiddle all the time now.

JR: Now how do you do that?

C: Well you know you just get on it. I taught—Erika could play a little bit when she came over here. She'd been taking lessons from Jimmy Vipperman, but she couldn't play a tune, I don't think. And so it didn't take too long when she got it real good. Worked with her about a year I guess. Just one night a week. And I got another little boy that plays the fiddle . He gonna play in church on Sunday. He gone find out how good he really is. But he plays real good. He knows about fifteen tunes, but all of em's gospel tunes.

JR: But how do you teach him to play the fiddle?

C: Well it's just I got a knack with kids. I could show em how to play. Same way

with guitar. Any instrument they want to play. I believe Steven Snow would credit me and Nicolas with getting him to play the banjo. Yeah he does. He used to come over here and I'd show him some on the banjo. I don't know how many people I've taught how to play. Several I guess.

JR: Did you make part of your living that way?

C: No it's just something to help kids out. Some of them I charged them, if they had any money I'd charge them. Ones that didn't have no money I didn't charge them. I had kids come from down town up here and everything. I see some of them now, they still playing. There's a couple of boys I've taught they both play rock now. But you gotta get started some way. you know. I have no idea how many kids I've taught how to play. Still doing it.

Chester has “helped out” as an accompanist on several LP and CD recordings. He played guitar on two of Tommy Jarrell's albums, two of Whit Sizemore's albums and the Dix Freeman tape.

McMillian founded the band Backstep with fiddler Greg Hooven in 1986. That band's one recording, a cassette on Heritage, featured Chester's young son Nick on mandolin. Backstep broke up in 1991, and reformed in 2000 with Nick on the fiddle and Kelley Breiding on a fretless banjo once owned by Dix Freeman. As stated above, Backstep very consciously plays music in the Round Peak tradition and is partly dedicated to keeping Dix Freeman's name and tunes in circulation as one of the Round Peak greats. While Nick and Kelley are often seen playing honky tonk music in another band, Chester, who recently retired from a long career as a truck mechanic, plays old-time music almost exclusively. He can frequently be seen at the local fiddlers' conventions, smiling broadly and playing the old Round Peak tunes he still loves. The

McMillians, though they may play other styles, stick to a “narrow-but-deep” approach. They work on their small set of tunes and play them well, rather than trying to dazzle with eclecticism. Dix Freeman before them was known for playing a small set of tunes and for disparaging tunes from outside the area as “Australian tunes.”

These three surviving members of the older generation are models to those who have come after. They have lived in the country, played with the departed greats, and they play music with an effortlessness that the rest of us cannot access. For them, it was “just music,” even if it was in the process of being changed by new genres being disseminated by the mass media. Whether they know it or not, they are authentic. This slippery characteristic, so important to the folk revival, was a large part of what attracted the revivalists to the area. The revivalists who stayed, and the issue of authenticity, are the topic of the next section.

Coming Home to Surry County, Part 2

The Surry County old-time music world is only partly dominated by the elder statesmen like Flippen and McMillian. There is also a significant population of people from outside the area who moved there in their youth—with the music as a main attraction—and continue to fiddle the local music, often with great success, as measure in prizes at fiddlers' conventions and invitations to play at dances and festivals. The producers and recordists of the 1970s have mostly moved on, but bands like the Pilot

Mountain Bobcats, the Red Hots, and the New Pilot Mountaineers have had an impact, playing the local dances, winning the fiddlers' conventions and playing on WPAQ. These musicians may play in bands with the older and younger natives. Often they are not invited to represent the music in organizationally sanctioned heritage presentations like the Tommy Jarrell Festival or the Fiddlers' Convention, but they are sometimes favorites with dancers and contest judges. Most of these people were raised outside the South, and were born roughly during the baby-boom era. In most ways they fit the profile of the folk and string band revivals—suburban, educated, from comfortable backgrounds. They are revivalists, though some dispute that term. Their life stories and present situations belie the rural/transplant distinction, though. All the people in Surry County are interested to varying degrees in the rural lifestyle, but almost none are fully immersed in a back-to-the land situation at present. Local situations may be relevant in this difference. Thomas' research took place in Asheville, North Carolina, a small but cosmopolitan city in the mountains. Asheville has a history as a resort and as a retirement community. This is the sort of location that would attract the educated and sophisticated for its outdoor activities and alternative culture options—yoga studios, ethnic restaurants and small music venues abound. Surry County is mostly rural, and the retired folks there are mostly people who spent their working lives there. The tourism is centered around Andy Griffith nostalgia, not something likely to attract urban sophisticates who might decide to relocate. Asheville does exert a powerful pull for nontraditional revivalists, and there is a large

community of them in that area. During the course of my fieldwork I played banjo for a large and popular contra dance in Asheville, and the band was put up at the home of a couple who relocated to Asheville from New York State after retirement. The husband is a fine musician with a comprehensive collection of old-time music recordings and a room full of fine banjos and fiddles. They were living in the woods, in a dramatic setting, but it was a home and lifestyle that would be familiar and comfortable to any upper-middle-class retiree. These were not homesteaders. In a casual conversation with his wife she mentioned that they considered their move to Asheville a “move to Mecca” for old-time music. I told her that some of my Surry County friends might dispute that title. We were engaging in a little round of the authenticity game. She was giving voice to the romantic quest for authenticity that so many revivalists are engaged in. I was saying that where I lived was more authentic. This is not to say that people who move to the Asheville area do not engage in homesteading or rural lifestyles—many do (Bruce Greene, for instance)—but that someone might go there for the music, but otherwise live much as they would in Rochester, Boston or Long Island. In Surry County, you'll never forget that you're in the country. Those who relocate like something about the rural life. They may not farm, keep chickens, cut firewood, or garden, but most of the natives don't do those things either. They might just like the simple fact that they can live at the end of their gravel road in a little trailer and not be bothered by anyone. The most significant group of revivalist immigrants to Surry County are those of the “baby boom” generation, born in

the 1940s and 1950s. They all have their own stories, but they share certain common traits and motivations, and various degrees of back-to-the-land impulse. Robert Cantwell considered the original folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s to be more than just a musical fad. Rather it was a reaction to the conformity and expectations of post World War II middle class life. Their musical activities were accompanied by “rejection of authority, the dismantling of regimented structures, and pleasure in warm, informal association and casual fun, the idealization of folklife and identification with the past” (Cantwell 1996:331). The romantic quest for community and authenticity was carried over from the folk revival to the old-time string band revival of the 1970s. Thomas Carter writes extensively about the desire for community that motivated participants in the Durham-Chapel Hill string band scene. They were looking, he says, for roots and community:

And it did not matter whose roots they were particularly, for we were looking for a whole new life-style, one that differed from the one of our parents' generation. We were looking for alternative roots ... that suited our needs at the time, and we found them in the music and what the music stood for, and this was rural life. The music was a first step back to the land.... One other thing we were looking for was a sense of community. More than anything the music was our attempt to reach out, to find a place for ourselves in the craziness of the nuclear age. (Carter 81-83)

I've chosen to tell the story of the Surry County immigrants through the individual stories of three of my musical friends: Steve Mason, Nancy Sluys, and Jacki Spector. All three were on their own search for roots and community during the 1970s and 1980s. All moved to the area in the early and mid 1980s, all were drawn to the area in part by the music scene. All have remained active old-time musicians to the present day. I made the

acquaintance of all three of these people at about the same time in my life, on my first visit to Surry County for Bobville New Years (more on that below) in 2001. Over the years I've had many conversations with these musicians and more than a few jam sessions. I've also interviewed them at length, and I quote them in their own words extensively below.

The obvious beginning to the story is their inspiration by some aspect of the folk music revival. Jacki Spector, a native of Pennsylvania first encountered folk music during the 1960s from an older sister who studied folklore as a college English major. Spector's sister married a musician, and the two became involved in Philadelphia's folk-music scene in the mid-1960s. When Jacki went to college in Boston, she became involved in that city's vibrant folk revival scene, singing and playing guitar, playing piano for country dances and seeing many of the legendary blues musicians on their tours through the northeast. Some slightly younger members of her generation were introduced by later products of the revival. Steve Mason and Nancy Sluys, two old-time fiddlers who moved to the County in the 1980s, both cite the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's album "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" as a big piece of their early knowledge of old-time music. Sluys, also a great fan of the Grateful Dead, explains the process connection:

I guess through the Grateful Dead is where, how I got kind of more into acoustic music and stuff, cause back in that time when we were getting interested in bands, they were doing some acoustic sets back then. And also the New Riders of the Purple Sage were kind of connected with then and just different. Country rock, sort of different bands besides Led Zeppelin, you know, that people were listening to back in that time. Anyway, I guess because I liked all the bands like the Flying

Burrito Brothers and the things that bordered on acoustic or towards bluegrass or country flavor. I was definitely a Deadhead back then.

Well, I always sort of liked acoustic music and then I got started in old-time I guess in early 70s, when the “Will the Circle be Unbroken” album came out and it had a clawhammer banjo and a bluegrass banjo playing “Soldier’s Joy” on it and...got me...I was interested in bluegrass and then that sort of somehow drew the bridge to finding out about old-time music.

(Interview March 15, 2005)

Steve Mason also cites “Will the Circle be Unbroken,” but he had a different introduction, through dance rather than music. His motivations were also quite different. Mason was born in east Texas, and his family moved to Washington, North Carolina, in the eastern part of the state, when he was a boy. As a young man he was out dancing at a club in the near-by college town of Greenville, North Carolina.

Some ladies came up and asked me where I learned to dance, and I said that I didn't learn anywhere, I'm just dancing. And they said, “well you're clogging, you're flatfooting.” And I had never heard those two words before. But come to find out that these ladies were with a group called the Green Grass Cloggers and asked me if I would like to come to one of their practices to see what they do and so forth and I said sure, 'cause they were nice young ladies. So I ended up joining this group of cloggers and that is where I got introduced to bluegrass music initially, because that's all there was in that neck of the woods for live performances. And then we started traveling and I heard my first old-time music and just went crazy over it. I just loved it the first time I heard it. (Interview November 19, 2008)

This clogging group, the Green Grass Cloggers, was one of the central old-time music institutions of the eastern North Carolina area, and they were mainly a revivalist affair, founded by college students, and employing young people with a counterculture look.

Dance historian Phil Jamison summed up their origins and influence:

The Green Grass Cloggers is a clogging team founded in 1971 by students at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. Inspired by seeing traditional mountain-style clogging teams, but more influenced by older flatfoot and buck dancers met at fiddlers' conventions, they developed an original, eclectic style which was a radical departure from the traditions of NC team clogging of the time.

Unlike the 'big-set' mountain square dance figures of the traditional freestyle clogging teams, the Green Grass Cloggers used choreography based on four-couple Western square dance figures, in short energetic routines, consciously designed for audience appeal. While the group's footwork was synchronized, as in precision clogging, their free-spirited performances included head-high kicks and other unconventional steps. (Jamison 1988)

This dance group would eventually lead many of its members into old-time music and rural lifestyles, and Greenville would become a center for the countercultural fascination with old-time music and dance. Steve Mason was one of these people, and he joined the Green Grass Cloggers and performed with them for several years, earning, as he says "tens of dollars." East Carolina University was at the time "a real party school. Tons of hippies there and some really nice music venues. There was a very vibrant musical, dance type of situation." For one reason or another, many of the current Surry County old-time musicians lived there in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Greenville was where Mason met his first fiddle teacher, Rich Hartness, who was attending ECU at the time. For Mason, the exposure to first bluegrass and then old-time music through dancing with the Green Grass Cloggers led to a strong desire to play the fiddle. He told me how it happened:

Then I got to the point where I really focused on old-time music and I liked that

on a really soulful level. Not just because of the dancing. And I got to the point that I said, 'I know I could play the fiddle if I just had one.' So I started putting out these feelers for to get a fiddle. And eventually my mother was talking to some friends of hers that were elderly down in eastern NC and lived in this huge mansion that used to be a plantation house and the man, who was in his late 80s, said "well I played violin when I was a boy and I bet that's still up in the attic." So they eventually went and looked for it and sure enough found it. The problem was that it had been in an attic for 60 or 70 years. All the glue had come unglued and a family of mice had eaten out one of the f holes and was living in it. So I took that to Rich and said do you think that could be fixed and he said, "Sure. A good friend of mine from Winston-Salem just got back from England. He's been at violin making school for four years."

So we boxed it up and sent it to him and his name was Joe Thrift. And so I sent this thing to this guy named Joe Thrift in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and a month or two got it back and it was in perfect working order and so I started to get Rich Hartness to teach me fiddle tunes. Not lessons, just teach me a tune. And of course it was all by ear. And so I just tried to start sawing out fiddle tunes one at a time.

At that point I had no clue about anything. I knew that there was bluegrass and old-time music and that I liked the old-time music better and so he was just teaching me fiddle tunes that I had heard and liked.

For Nancy Sluys, the banjo was her main instrument for a long time, to the extent that she earned the nickname "Nancy Banjo." She went through several other instruments and musical styles before settling on clawhammer banjo, though.

The first instrument I played was actually the guitar and when I was getting interested in bluegrass and stuff I started playing mandolin. The way I got to be playing the banjo was, at the time, it was actually upstate New York, when I first started playing banjo. I was going to an alternative school and this guy built a banjo from a kit, a Stewart Macdonald kit, and I was sort of intrigued and watched him make him a banjo and then he had different books. He had Earl Scruggs' bluegrass book and he had the *Frailing the 5-String Banjo*. He had several of those books from back then and I just he started playing both and he started gravitating towards clawhammer because it was easier for him to do

somehow and I got interested in it and I sort of borrowed his banjo and learned how to play it in like a day [laughs]. I learned how to play a tune, I learned how to play “Shady Grove” in a couple of hours and it was like wow, this is cool and then I built a banjo, like at that same time, I was like, I gotta do this too. And that was probably like '73 or 4.

At this same time Jacki Spector was living and working in Boston, Massachusetts, playing guitar and singing folk music in her free time. Though far from the Southern mountains, Boston was a center of revival activity, and there were many venues for the performance of old-time and other traditional musics. There were also institutions set up to teach traditional instrumental music. While the source musicians like Tommy Jarrell had to learn mostly by observation, the revival, being to some extent an activity of the educated classes, established more formal means of imparting instrumental technique, including classes in things like clawhammer banjo. In some places, formal “Schools of Folk Music” were established, such as the Old Town School of Folk Music, founded in 1957 in Chicago, or the Augusta Heritage Center, which offers week-long traditional music “camps” at a college campus in West Virginia (Frisch 1987). In addition to being an important avenue for disseminating knowledge of old-time music, these institutions have been a welcome source of income for the musicians hired to teach at them. Jacki became a banjo player thanks to a friend who had signed up for one of these introductory banjo classes, but dropped out. Spector took over her banjo and her spot in class and learned mainly from her teacher's tablature handouts before striking out on her own.

Mason, Sluys and Spector all share similar backgrounds in the broader context of

the folk revival that began in the 1960s. All three were drawn to old-time music via revival processes and products. Many others of their generation came into old-time music at the same time and by similar paths. What led these musicians to move to Surry County? For all of them, the answer lies in the social networks that the music drew them into. In my conversations about their early years in Surry County, they all mention each other by name as part of the reason for the move. Obviously they couldn't all have been here at the same time, but there is the sense of a movement to settle in the same region.

Steve Mason originally settled in Stokes County, just to the east of Surry, at the foot of Sauratown Mountain. He had finished graduate school and was looking for both a job and a home for his young family. His fiddle teacher, Rich Hartness had moved to Winston-Salem and was playing regularly in a band with Joe Thrift.

And because I wanted to be around the music I lived with Rich for several months and looked for a job and a place to stay ... During that period, Buck Buckner, one of Joe's friends, invited me to come up to his place up on the Mitchell River, and invited this old local fiddler to come up and his name was Tommy Jarrell. And so I was at Buck's house and Tommy Jarrell came over and made me play a tune for him and let me play on his fiddle. Rich was there and so after that I was just totally--I knew I was coming to Surry County and I knew I wanted to play Round Peak tunes and that was pretty much the end of it.

Nancy Sluys and her husband Bill were living in Greenville and decided to make a move to Surry County shortly thereafter.

And we ended up back in Greenville which is where I had lived and we were there for a couple of years and that's where Bill started his sign business and that's where I started my batik business and there was a little bit of a music scene there but not that much and all summer we were going to Mt Airy and Galax and

other festivals in between and so we kind of went back and forth and then Bill saw an ad in a sign magazine for a job, help wanted at a sign company up in Mt. Airy. We went ooh, that sounds cool. And Steve Mason, he'd been married to Charlie, Steve and Charlie and um, they had moved up here the year before and [banjo player] Tom Riccio lived there, well that's where he lived and I had known him for many years from festivals. Anyway so we knew a few people, like in the Winston-Salem area. Actually Steve and Charlie lived in Pinnacle. ... Anyway, we knew those people and so we decided what the heck, this is great and we came, you know, to Surry County, lived there in Pilot Mountain for a few years, that was I guess '85. And then we moved here to Westfield in '88.

For Jacki Spector, the move was more deliberate, and a more radical change. She had been living in the Boston area, teaching preschool, but felt that she had reached a point where she needed to move for personal and financial reasons. Gentrification was changing her neighborhood, and though she was a homeowner, the taxes were becoming onerous. Further, most of her old-time music friends had moved out of the area. She had been visiting the southern fiddlers' conventions. She had been friends with Paul Brown for several years, and met many of the Surry County musicians through him and on trips to the south with him. Brown would also bring southern musicians to Spector's home on the way to Pinewoods, a country dance camp run since 1919 by the National Country Dance and Song Society.

My musical interests were moving to old-time music, and the people that I had played old-time music with had all left town. I didn't have real good solid music to play. It was just one of those times in life when it's time to do something different. And I looked at communities where I had friends and where I knew I'd have a lot of musical opportunities. And I had a couple of different choices but this one seemed like the best one. ... I'm not a city person. I'm not a farm person. I grew up in a small town, sort of in the country. I had the connections, both friends and music, just the feel of the place. Plus it was a place that I could afford. I bought this house for a third of what I sold my other house for. Not bad. So best

choice. (Interview March 29, 2007)

In addition to these perhaps prosaic considerations, Spector felt a connection she described as “eerie” on moving into her new home in White Plains, south of Mount Airy.

[I] came down here on the first of August. The house was all closed up. They didn't have central air at that time and they had taken their window air conditioners with them. So it was all hot and not cleaned all that well either. But I came in and brought things in and I sat down on the front porch. And just this sense came over me, sort of *deja vu*, that I'd lived here before. It was a very connected ... Now I have this sort of psychic piece of me anyway. It comes and goes. Sometimes it's strong; sometimes it's not. But I have this other connection to people and I felt that sort of connection to this place, this spot. It just felt like I'd been here, maybe not in this lifetime, but my spirit had passed here before. And it was eerie in a way. I sat here and went “oh, my god, I've moved to North Carolina.” On the other hand it made me know that it was going to be alright and that it was the right choice. And it's been a good choice. Better than most. (Interview March 29, 2007)

So for each of my musicians, the initial interest in Surry County was musical, but the decision to “come home to Surry County” was based partly on financial and career considerations, but even more social on social factors and the presence of friends and musical partners.

Like the older traditional fiddlers who left off fiddling while raising their families, the musical activities pursued by these three in their new home were varied, and have waxed and waned as various career and family obligations have impinged on them. Overall, though, they have used music as a primary source of entertainment and recreation. The financial inducements to playing square dances are small, as Steve Mason

often says, there are “tens of dollars to be made,” but a certain amount of cultural capital accrues to the bands that regularly play for dancers, and there is also a suspicion abroad that bands that regularly play dances tend to place higher at fiddlers' conventions. \

Steve Mason did make some money as an old-time musician. He has played regularly in three different bands over the years, the most well-known of which is the Red Hots, led by fiddler Joe Thrift and banjo player Tom Riccio. The Red Hots are a quintessentially hot old-time band, and their sound is characterized by fast tempos, tunes mostly in the key of G, Riccio's plunky, up-the-neck banjo and idiosyncratic vocals. Mason joined that group as a bass player when their original bassist moved out of state. Though he'd been playing fiddle for a number of years at that point, he had reservations about the gig:

They called me one night and said “hey, why don't you come over and play bass with us.” and I said, “well number one, I don't have a bass. And number two, if I did, I have no idea how to play a bass. I've never even touched a bass.” and Tom said, “Well I've got a bass that I bought and Riley said he can show you how to play it.” And so I said “Okay.” and so I showed up and Tom said “Here's the bass,” and Riley said, “Here's what I want you to do on this song.” And they just started playing and I just started playing with them and that was it.

It was total fun. We had a blast playing. We didn't practice a whole lot. But in the day, if we weren't doing gigs we would try to get together every couple of weeks or something. And that was fun. We all just enjoyed playing and usually Joe would bring a new tune that he had written or a new tune that he had learned and we would work on that and just play. Just like any jam, just play and talk. We got more and more gigs and better and better paying gigs and so we were actually doing a little bit better than breaking even ... For a number of years we were on the road every weekend or every other weekend from June until October all over the East coast. (Interview November 19, 2008)

The Red Hots still perform intermittently, with different members, though the core of Joe Thrift and Tom Riccio remains constant.

Nancy Sluys and Jacki Spector have ended up in the same band since the 1980s. The Pilot Mountain Bobcats was formed originally as a “pick-up band”--a group put together on the spot at a fiddlers' convention for the express purpose of playing in the band contest—but have become a regular and popular local group with three albums on cassette and CD.

Let's see, well Jackie moved to town from Boston and we just sort of fell in together. Actually the Bobcats, or the Pilot Mountain Bobcats was a pickup name for Fries or something like that one year. Anyway we kind of fell into playing, me and Jacki and Bill and a friend of ours, Scott Wise, he sort of dropped out of the scene, and he played for? about a year, or two years, a couple of years with us and then he dropped out and that's when Allen [Cottrell] and Rick [Davidson] joined the band. And then Rick dropped out, I don't know, five or six years ago. We just started as a pickup band and just kept on going with it. (Nancy Sluys Interview March 15, 2005)

Jacki Spector described the early days of the band finding its sound:

The Bobcats have a band sound and it's not Round Peak. Probably closer to Round Peak than to West Virginia, but it's just what happened when those four musicians got together.

When we were first starting to learn some waltzes. When we started playing the dances fifteen years ago, the only one who had any experience playing in that sort of situation was me. And I had played a lot of contra dances living in Boston, and I played a lot of contra dances on piano, playing backup, and I played a lot of contra dances playing guitar. And I played a lot of waltzes. And the rest of the band didn't have any idea what to do. Well we've come a long way. It was a struggle for years, and there was a period of time when a few of the waltzes we played were Alan seconded Nancy on fiddle and I played guitar. But that got cumbersome at a dance. So we stopped doing it. (Interview March 29, 2007)

Nancy describes the changes that came with time as they worked to “get the beat right”:

It took time. But it wasn't like we even tried. We just played and just had fun and just kept doing it and doing it and kept playing dances and trying to make them dancers dance and then they did and we realized we had the beat right. Those local dancers can be hard on you. (Interview March 15, 2005)

The Pilot Mountain Bobcats have become rather successful as a dance band and a contest band. They regularly place in the finals at contests, and Nancy Sluys is a regular winner and placer at both banjo and fiddle contests.

Contrary to the narrative of young people camping out at Tommy Jarrell's house, “learning at the feet of the master,” these musicians spent relatively little time in such apprenticeships. While many musicians of their era tout their time spent in such study, they all admit to being shy about initiating such visits. Steve Mason takes Tommy Jarrell as a musical hero and a model for most of the music he plays.

I was not one of those people that regularly went to his house. I was way too intimidated to do that. But people would bring him to, for instance, the Galax Fiddlers' Convention or Mount Airy, someone would drive him there and he would go and get a chair out and people would come over and people that he'd played with for years and people would just hang out and listen to music. ... I did go to his house one time and I can't remember who I was with and it might have been Riley Baugus or Kirk Sutphin or it might have been Joe or it might have been Buck. I don't remember but I wanted to go and it was not that long before he passed away.”

JR: What did you get from him/learn from him?

SM: Number one I learned that he was a great down to earth guy. He had no ego about his music. He was just himself.

He did go to visit Dix Freeman in the company of Rich Hartness. The story of that visit is

one of Mason's favorites:

Rich carried me up to Dix Freeman's house. He had been studying some of Dix's music and so forth. So he went up and introduced me to Dix and his wife Charlie and—just the greatest folks in the world. Anyway, Dix told me to pull out my fiddle and play him something. So I pulled out my fiddle and I played the song that I'd been working on most recently, which was “Rochester Schottische,” which I'd been learning from Tommy, and I was not very skilled, but anyway I got through the tune and I was just glad I got through it because I was scared to death. And immediately when I got through the tune Dix looked up at me and he said, “You been hanging out with that goddamn Tommy Jarrell, haven't you?” [laughs]

So I discovered the mythical Camelot of Round Peak music, which I had in my mind that all these guys all hung out and played together and so forth and discovered that that was not the case at all. There was a huge rivalry among musicians. And the Fiddlers' conventions, which go back forever, it was a lot of money, or early on, just a lot of value and prestige to win the fiddlers' conventions. So all the musicians were not necessarily the best of friends and a lot of them were quite frankly really big rivals. Actually Tommy was the first one to get the national recognition. And a lot of the ones that didn't that had been around the whole time playing the same music the same way didn't get it and there was a lot of resentment there because of that. (Interview November 19, 2008)

Jacki Spector likewise felt awkward about visiting the older musicians of the area, though she was happy to accompany her friend Paul Brown on his visits.

JR: Did you visit any of the local musicians when you first moved down?

JS: That's a kind of piece of having heroes, and I really don't have heroes. And it took me many many years to feel comfortable with those old people. When I came to visit Paul, Paul lived here. I visited Luther Davis, Alice Gerrard took me to visit Luther Davis when she was living in Galax too. ... When I had come down to visit Paul, I'd go with Paul to Tommy's house to play music, to take Tommy to a gig. To take Robert Sykes, to play with Robert Sykes, to go play on the radio with Robert Sykes. To go play with Benton. But I went with Paul. Paul was doing it. But I never went on a field trip. It's a very studious approach to finding your heroes, investigative, which I never had. ... I'm not that kind of a

student. I'm a hedonistic opportunist.

The summer that I was living at Paul's house, one time I did get myself over to Tommy's all by myself, and had a wonderful time. Sat in his kitchen listened to his stories all afternoon. And got what was the finest musical compliment anyone has ever given me, which was Tommy leaning across and saying, "You sure you learned to play the banjo in Boston?" And his daughter Deenie was there and she said "He means that honey! If he said it he means it!" Seriously, that to me was quite a compliment. Coming from someone who knew. That was a wonderful afternoon. (Interview March 29, 2007)

Tommy's disbelief that Jacki learned to play banjo in Boston reveals how thoroughly ingrained the Round Peak style of banjo playing was in revivalist circles in the Northeast by the 1980s. Though they were glad to have met and heard these musicians they were not acolytes or apprentices in the way that Paul Brown or Nancy Dols became. The more casual, neighborliness of their attitude towards the older musicians makes the immigrants push back against the term "revivalist."

Though I've classed these musicians as revivalists, and compared to Benton Flippin, few would dispute that label, they resist it to varying degrees. Like the Chapel Hill musicians that Carter described, they want to be a part of a community, and the "revivalist" label is an indelible sign that they are always at least a little bit on the outside. Ray Allen relates the resistance that the New Lost City Ramblers felt to the label as well. Tracy Schwarz, for one, thought that folklorists maintained the distinction between traditional and folk revival musicians and discriminated against the latter based on the circumstances of their birth (2010:243). For Nancy Sluys she flatly denies the

label.

You know, I never thought of myself as a revivalist, partly because I never studied the music, like some people. I don't know, a lot of people, I don't know, it's just that I just play it. And I haven't really studied it, so to speak, I just kind of—live it, you know. I can't really explain it. It just happens. Well, like for instance, like the old people I played with are just people I just like bumped into them somewhere at a fiddler's convention or something like that. It's not like I was—I don't know, in my younger days I was a little shy and I didn't feel like I could intrude on people's lives, so I never really did visit Tommy Jarrell even though tons of people did. It was more haphazard, I would be somewhere and get to play with; Kyle Creed I played with a bunch in the '70s, and I got to hang around and absorb stuff here and there, because somebody was at a fiddler's convention or like, I did actually visit him at his house one time after Galax in 1976 with my friend Doug Baker, who was in the Green Grass Cloggers. Doug stopped by there, we were riding back to Greenville, he was like, "Oh let's go see Kyle Creed." I was like sure. I don't know. Memory. Back in the early 70s there was definitely lots of revivalism going on and people were trying to sound old and trying to research this and study this and it's just not how I ever went about it. I was just like footloose and fancy free and having a good time and playing music. (Interview March 15, 2005)

As Carter observed, fieldwork was an important activity for the revivalist musicians around Durham and Chapel Hill, and Sluys, seems to have picked up on this rather narrow definition. A revivalist, to her, was someone who took a scholarly approach to learning old-time music, someone who carefully emulated specific older musicians, and tried to "sound old." Her definition is closer to one for a folklorist, at least as they are commonly perceived. For Sluys, her claim to non-revival authenticity stems from what she thinks is an unstudied approach to the music, more in line with the way she believes the old-timers learned and played. The wish to be not revivalist is understandable. If you

learn tunes you like from musicians you like, just like the old guys did, why can't you be a regular old-time musician like they were? When I directly asked Mason if he considered himself revivalist, he replied:

I'm of that era but I'm more of an accidental musician. I just kind of fell into everything. I think more of the revivalist as the hippies at the end of that era that were looking for the next thing. Of course it started with folk music. But once they discovered this--which is pre-folk--it was archaic compared to the folk music they were listening to. In my mind that's what the revivalists were. They were looking for something and when they discovered old-time music, said, "I found it." I wasn't looking for anything. I was just looking to hang out with these really hot girls with this dancing group. (Interview November 19, 2008)

Mason also excuses himself from the label because of his unstudied approach, but the search for roots, (this "archaic" "Pre-folk" music) and desire for community, which is what he means when he says he wanted "to hang out with these really hot girls," reflect the same revivalist interests that Cantwell and Carter identified. Though I never asked Jacki if she considers herself a revivalist or not, her discussion of her relationship to the older musicians echoes many of these same themes. The theme of "accident" recurs in our conversation. Jacki attributes many of her moves to accident and also intuition. These she sets in contrast to analysis, study and emulation. She calls me "a student" and an analytical person who studies. She also links study and emulation to the creation of heroes. I asked her if she admired or studied any banjo players in particular:

I tend not to make heroes. I was more taken with banjo music in general than with any particular player. ... But not too long after [starting banjo lessons] I did meet Paul Brown, who probably was--not necessarily that I eve tried to play like him, but I admired his playing more than anybody else's. And I heard Tommy and Fred and Kyle Creed and all these people, too. I heard them at festivals. I started

coming down. At that time Paul was living in New York State, but Paul started playing me recordings, I started coming down to festivals. And I started hearing all the music from this area. And I really don't tend to make heroes. I really don't go gaga over one particular player. And I've never, in any of the music that I play, tried to play like anybody. I don't play along with recordings. What I do is listen. Take it in. put it in my sieve. And it comes out of me, my way. That's the kind of musician I am. (Interview March 29, 2007)

The revivalist immigrants are largely of the same mind on this, though they might disagree about terms. Music for them is personal, and more than any tunes or licks, what they learned from the older generation was the importance of playing the music how you feel it, and producing a good beat for the dancers. Like Tracy Schwarz of the New Lost City Ramblers, though, they probably all wish they could “pass for traditional” sometimes.

Thomas would probably class Jacki Spector as a transplanted revivalist, as she has continued to work in education and music, the same fields she was employed in in Boston. She has not become a homesteader or farmer and lives a pretty modern life, albeit in a rural location. Nancy Sluys and her husband Bill both worked in their own small businesses, he made aluminum signs and she made and sold batik clothing. They live on a small farm in the Westfield community of Surry County, mainly raising horses which Nancy rides competitively. While they are in a rural location, horse farms are not a big part of the Surry County agricultural picture. Steve Mason and his first wife Charlie did live in an old farmhouse when they first moved to the area, and eventually built Steve's current home on a large piece of land at the foot of Pilot Mountain. Steve actually

raised much of the money to build his house by farming, and he went to the banjo player

Dix Freeman for guidance in how to do it.

I really liked the house that I was in over at Sauratown Mountain. And it had a hand dug well that only produced 28 gallons of water a day, period. Which was extremely difficult with children and so on. So I found this land that I own now at the foot of Pilot Mountain. And was able to buy the land and wanted to build a house on it. So I decided that I would start raising some crops on the land to start making some money to be able to build a house, and decided on growing bell peppers.

At that point in time I knew that Dix Freeman had grown a lot of vegetables and so I talked to Dix a lot about it and he told me what kind of tractor I needed to get: Farm-all 140, cause the plow is under the tractor where you can see it and you won't plow up all your young vegetables after you've planted them, and the fertilizer spreader and he told me the name of a wholesaler in Winston-Salem that he used to carry his vegetables to to sell and so I went and talked to them to see if they would buy them and dropped his name and they said, "Oh, yeah. We will." And they were the only people in the area that would buy local produce. The other major companies would not buy local produce, which was really odd to me. Evidently they had gotten bad stuff... But this place was called Plemmons and Ervin. Found one of those tractors and bought it and went and got a bunch of bell peppers and planted them by hand and ended up growing five acres of bell peppers the first year and asked Dix for help along the way. Ended up he suggested I grow green onions, because he said you could make a lot of money growing green onions, or spring onions, and so I planted a whole lot of those the next year. But it was me, my wife and our two daughters that did all the work.

I would work 'til five every day and come home and have to do whatever depending on the stage. Chop weeds or fertilize or pick peppers. And when they'd start coming in we would have to pick peppers until ten or eleven o'clock and have to clean them, grade them, box them and then I'd have to get up at six in the morning to carry them to the wholesaler and sell them and then get to work at eight o'clock. I did that for several years and was able to save enough money to get a down payment to get a loan to build a house. (Interview November 19, 2008)

This story is not exactly a back-to-the land parable, but it demonstrates one example of

how a person might be somewhere between a transplant and a rural revivalist. Mason was working as a geologist in Winston-Salem during the day and running a family farm in the evening, but only for long enough to raise some money. This was not the subsistence homesteading usually associated with the rural revivalist, nor was it an organic operation. Dix instructed Mason that once his plants reached a certain height he was to “put the Bulldog Sody to them,” naming a brand of powerful chemical fertilizer. Mason no longer raises cash crops, but he is a dedicated home gardener, still owns the Farm-all 140, and he hopes to return to a bit of farming once he retires.

As I stated above, I first met all of these musicians at the Bobville New Years celebrations in 2001. Bobville is the unofficial name for a series of old-time music parties that take place during the year, mostly at the homes of the Sluys and Masons. Why “Bob”? Steve Mason was present for creation.

The name has its roots in Bob and Bob came about at Galax and ... I think it was 1984. ... At that point in time, the stalls were still up at [the Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention] and that was the old-time haven and all the other parking spaces and R.V.s were the bluegrass people. And there were people from all over the country, predominantly the east coast, from Florida to all the way up to New England. Large contingents from New York and Philadelphia and other parts of PA.

Back then, there were very few nouveau old-time musicians that could play music very well. There were a lot of people that were trying and so we had these big jams where everybody would get together and play and you'd have one or two people that were pretty good at one instrument, and everybody else was just getting in these concentric circles around those people and playing music and one of the gals from Florida was named Judy McGee—we called her “Jake”—and she had dropped or lost her pick and so she said her pick was named “Bob.” And so we got the pick straightened out, and so it was “Pick Bob.” And then after that something else happened and the next person that said something was “Somebody

Bob” and then “Somebody-else Bob” everybody became a Bob that was in this giant jam.

And that just kind of continued and hung on and we decided to have a big New Years Party at our house in the spirit of the Breaking-up-Christmas tradition that we had heard about and so it got named Bobville New Years. Because our area at the back corner of the stalls became Bobville from all the Bob incidents. And so from that point in time, it was the Bobville New Years' Party. And we had the first one and the next year after that, Bill and Nancy Sluys moved up to Surry County and we started having the party at different people's houses.

We've always had the New Years at my house but we got to the point where if New Years was on Wednesday, we'd start the party Saturday at somebody's house and maybe have it there a couple of days, move it to somebody else's house, so on and so forth. So we actually got closer to the Breaking-up-Christmas tradition. And we've had a series of parties at a number of people's houses. But it's over time, it's almost always been New Years Eve at my house, and maybe another day or two, and a day or two at Bill and Nancy Sluys' house. And Jacki Spector has hosted a few things and Tom Riccio had it at his house. Joe Thrift and Tori Casey have had it at their house a number of times. And after people have that at their house one time, most of them are very reluctant to have it there again. Because it's very intense having 150, 200 people at your house and they're all old-time musicians and they're playing music all night, literally, all night long and people are dancing your floor down to the floor joists. So you've just got to be really thick-skinned and know that you're going to be trashed for a while and hopefully you can get over it before the next one rolls around. (Interview November 19, 2008)

Nancy and Bill Sluys were not present for the origin of the “Bob” story, though they arrived the next day and heard about it. Their home has become, along with the Masons, a center for the sort of all night, counterculture themed old-time music parties that are the hallmark of the Bobville New Years. Nancy's definition of Bobville:

It was at Galax, and it was in the corner of the stalls in the back corner where we always camped and that became Bobville, and it became synonymous with wild energetic music playing into the dawn hours all night long with moonshine about

and such things.... So it's just kind of interesting. It's a group of people, but it used to be a place, but it's also sort of like a spirit, you know.

It got really so that it's wherever you are. So for instance Steve's house is Bobville, and Bobville's over here and when you get up to Mt. Airy like there's a Bobville there and where we camp is kind of Bobville too, so. I mean we just make it that. (Interview March 15, 2005)

The Bobville New Years parties are a version, as Mason says, of the old Breaking up Christmas tradition that was practiced in the southern mountains. To “break up” Christmas was to celebrate the holiday for a day or so at one home and then at another. I have heard it said that this will go on for the traditional “twelve days” between the “Old Christmas” on the Julian Calendar and the Christmas on the modern Gregorian Calendar. In practice it was more likely a week or two of visiting around the Christmas and New Years holidays. Music and dancing were the customary activities, along with the drinking and “sparking” that might have gone with them. Both Tommy Jarrell and Dix Freeman in the preceding chapter had stories about the drinking and celebrating around Christmas and New Years. The old rural tradition worked because country people in the old south had little work to do during the winter, and were able to go on extended visits. Modern life and work schedules generally do not allow for such extended recreation. The regimented modern work schedule, of course, is just one of the many aspects of modernity that the counterculture in general was reacting to. In a sense, the revival of this pre-modern way of celebrating is a critique of this modern way of life. It is part of the Bobville ethos that comes from both the counterculture and the agrarian southern

heritage. It is also a community, if a temporary one, of the kind that the Chapel Hill revivalists were looking for. Carter notes that the community around Hollow Rock “may have been partly imaginary,” that there were degrees of insiderness based on your skill as a musician (1991:84). I can attest from my early experiences at the Breaking Up Christmas parties that novice players are not as warmly greeted as more skilled players, even if they are both newly arrived, but community need not depend on absolute egalitarianism. The revivalist immigrants of Surry County have been successful in their search for roots and community, though their thoughts on labels reveal an ongoing struggle for authenticity.

A Younger Generation

Even for those with music in the family, *in the blood*, some might say, it is a conscious choice to play old-time music, and one's choice of tunes and attitude towards musical style will be a way of making a statement about what is of value. For the younger musicians of Surry County, and by younger I mean those born in the 1970s and 1980s, these choices are not haphazard. They grew up, or into, a world in which music from all over the world, or old-time fiddle tunes from all over the country, are available with increasing ease on CDs or the internet, yet they have chosen to play old-time music, and within the realm of old-time music, they have chosen which tunes and styles to practice. In most cases, they have taken a decidedly conservative approach to their music making,

taking up the Round Peak banner in ways that the older generation wouldn't have, and that the immigrant generation does not feel entitled to. As with the revivalists, I've chosen to focus on three exemplars of young musicians who've grown up in Surry County. Andy Edmonds, Kevin Fore, and Nick McMillian all hold the Surry County traditions dear, but what it means to them and what musical use they make of it varies.

One who grew up in the tradition is Andy Edmonds, born in 1986 in the Longhill community near Pilot Mountain. He had an uncle and great uncle who played fingerstyle guitar in the styles of Merle Travis and Chet Atkins and his father was a fan of bluegrass and old-time music. He started out on a guitar he got for Christmas.

Andy was influenced by friends at school and played a little bit of rock and roll and did all that mess. My dad has always listened to bluegrass and old-time music. WPAQ. I remember being a little boy and sitting on the floor of his truck and hearing WPAQ broadcasts. So I guess I've always heard old-time and bluegrass music. Traditional music. But when I was thirteen I got a Flatt and Scruggs record and set out to learn the banjo, bluegrass style. That same year, when I was thirteen, I went to the Mount Airy Fiddlers Convention and got to see and hear clawhammer banjo and old-time music up close. Particularly Benton. I saw Benton the first time that year and he became an instant hero. And I kind of put down playing bluegrass banjo to learn clawhammer. Took a little while, it was pretty hard. I learned it. (Interview with Andy Edmonds. July 31, 2007)

Edmonds would meet and become a protege of his “instant hero” pretty soon after, at the young age of 14:

I'd heard on WPAQ that Benton was playing at a square dance in Ararat, Virginia. And I had never met him before, had never had the guts to go up and speak to him even though—Now that I know he's not the type of person to have the guts to speak to nobody anyhow as quiet as he is. I went to the dance and by luck or coincidence, one, he was missing a guitar player and I had my guitar in the car for

some unknown reason, and got it out and played it with him. And after the dance he asked me to play with him full time. And that's how that all started.

One of the reasons Flippen was so taken with the young Edmonds was that Andy had been studying Flippen's recordings, in particular those featuring Benton's son Larry on guitar. Andy was able to approximate Larry's distinctive two-finger style with its steady stream of bass runs. Playing with Benton would become an education not just in guitar picking, but in fiddling as well. By watching carefully, he learned how to play fiddle, which he considers his primary instrument:

And playing with him, going to different dances and different jobs and concerts and whatever, I got to stand right next to him and watch him like a hawk on fiddle and that's how I became interested in the fiddle and took it up and basically learned from him, but he didn't teach me. Cause he's not--the old-timers aren't really teachers. You got to watch him and if you catch it, you catch it, and if you don't, you don't. And I picked up on some of his stuff and started listening to other types of old-time music, Kentucky, West Virginia, Southern Virginia, all that.

JR: You say he never did show you anything, but did you ever ask him?

AE: Yeah, yeah. One time, only one time, did I actually carry the fiddle up to his house and actually sit with him on fiddle and me on fiddle and try to learn something. I'd ask him to play a tune, but I knew better than to ask him to break it down or show me specific notes, but I just asked him to play a tune over and over. That's the only time I ever did that cause it wasn't really any different than when I stand next to him playing guitar. I can watch him just the same.

Andy played guitar in the Smokey Valley Boys until he was 18 years old, when he struck out on his own. His fiddling had become advanced enough that he felt the urge to lead his own bands at fiddlers' conventions, and he was quite successful at it. This was not a usual extracurricular activity for a teenaged boy, even in Surry County:

It was different. Nobody in high school understood at all. Nobody. Even if they had a grandpa that played a fiddle or the banjo they still didn't get it. Why, instead of listening to some huge rock band and playing that type of music. You know. Instead of jacking up cars and cruising 601 and other things, why in the world I'd want to spend my Saturday night playing for a bunch of near-dead old people about to have a heart attack on the floor. No, nobody understood it. It was different but I don't regret it at all. I think it kept me out of a lot of trouble. Maybe got me in some trouble too, but definitely different. I don't think there's many other people my age that did it. Some, a few.

He did have a musical companion in his cousin, Corey. Andy taught Corey the basics of banjo and guitar and the two spend a lot of time together, learning the regional style.

We spent many nights drinking and playing fiddle and banjo together. We carried on what I consider the Round Peak Tradition if nobody else did. Drinking and playing just fiddle and banjo. Me and him played a lot. We played a lot of all kinds of music together. We were in the same church for a long time. And we both learned a lot from the same church, same group of people. As far as starting with guitar. I remember taking him to his first fiddlers convention. And I taught him to play just D and A so he could back me in "Sally Ann" in the fiddle contest. And that first Mount Airy that I took him to, he loved it and I guess fell in love with it. We're like brothers. We've played a lot of music and we've gone a lot of places.

Andy has played in rock, country, and jazz fusion bands at various times, on fiddle, electric guitar and bass. He is a tremendously talented musician, who seems to excel at anything he turns his hand to, and he does have thoughts of making a career in music.

I'd like to play in a band, and be able to use the fiddle or any instrument to make a living at it. I like to just play in straight up traditional bands, or I like to play in different bands. I've written a few fiddle tunes. I like to write fiddle tunes if I can sit down and do it.

I'm pretty progressive with it, I'd like to think. I have pretty strong traditional ties. But I'd like to be part of the progressive movement. There's a lot of progressive bands out today that are doing pretty good.

JR: Who are some of those bands?

AE: You've got bands like the Duhks, the Mammals, Uncle Earl, those type of folks, and I like what they're doing. Not that I specifically like their music, but I like the idea behind it. And I'd like to be on that bandwagon at some point if it all works out.

Andy has very eclectic tastes in music. Though he has spent time “keeping the Round Peak tradition alive” as he says, he also cites John Hartford, Ed Haley and George Hawkins of Kentucky as influences. At any given time he may be working on French Canadian fiddle tunes, or Chet Atkins style guitar. He values the older generations, but he also hopes to expand his music. He does not think that the tradition needs any particular safeguarding, at least not by him.

I'm a pretty conservative person in personality, but I like to be creative with it. I don't think that it should just be played ninety-nine percent like the record we heard it off of. Cause those guys, like Benton—look at the way he's changed it from the way his uncle played or the way he heard Tommy Jarrell play. So change is natural and it's good and we have so many types of technology today to preserve the original sounds, we don't have to worry about the old-time music dying, or anything like that. With the invention of CDs the music's here forever now. So I tend to think: don't worry about keeping it alive. But I encourage change. And I think the progressive movement, some of those bands we were talking about earlier, are a part of that. Still has its foot in the traditional section, but it also has its foot in sounds of today, sounds of different cultures, and a lot of them do it very well, very tastefully, not just mish-mashing it all together.

Andy Edmonds is very secure in his musical abilities. He was recorded playing with Benton Flippen on Flippen's two Music Maker CDs and in 2010 he released his own CD, *Me and My Fiddle* (MMCD131). The album is a set of traditional old-time, bluegrass and southern gospel songs and tunes played by Andy and accompanied by Wes Clifton,

grandson of Verlen, and Seth Boyd a young banjo and guitar player from southern Virginia. Many of the tunes are Benton tunes, or bear his stamp of influence. There are also excursions into countrified swing music like the “House of David Blues” and Andy's original tune “Newark Swing.”

While Andy Edmonds is an explorer and a mixer of styles, there are others who hew closer to tradition. Some musicians might be on the fence about whether they are revivalists or not, but one who makes no bones about drawing such distinctions is Kevin Fore, whose example highlights a number of the differences in approach to old-time music. Probably the most conservative of the traditionalists, he is a banjo player from Low Gap, North Carolina who lives on family land once owned by Kyle Creed. Fore was born in 1974 and grew up in Beulah, North Carolina, right in the Round Peak area. His immediate family were not musicians and he did not begin playing until he was 26, when his doctor told him he had to give up auto racing, because the fumes and dust were threatening his health. Like Andy Edmonds, he saw Benton Flippen playing a square dance and became fascinated by the old-time music, and the sound of the banjo.

I just quit right then and I started going to a square dance up at Sparta with my aunt and uncle and seeing Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys and I loved the sound of the banjo, and I wanted to do it. So I went and bought a banjo and just left the racing way behind. Put it out of my mind and I got to picking up a couple of tunes. I went and took a couple of bluegrass lessons and I said, aw that's not for me. (Interview with Kevin Fore March 12, 2007)

Eventually he made the acquaintance of Kirk Sutphin and the two found out they were double cousins—related on both sides of the family. Kirk became a mentor to Fore. Like

Andy Edmonds, he also found himself in the right place at the right time to join Benton

Flippen on stage:

The first square dance I ever played was with Benton up at the Alleghany Jubilee up at Sparta. I really wasn't all that good, and I always kept my banjo in my truck behind the seat and I went up to Sparta that night and there wasn't a banjo player there. Benton's wife Lois, she said, "Why you can play the banjo, can't you?" I said, "Not really!" She said, "Let me go talk to Benton" and Benton comes up and says, "Go get your banjo." So I went and got it out of the truck and went in there. I could play a few tunes. That was really my first experience of playing out in public and it was a really good one. Got to going over to Benton Flippen's regular.

Fore picked up the technique and style of clawhammer banjo quickly, it seems, as he won fifth place at the Alleghany County Fiddlers' Convention after playing only nine months--"that just gave me a boost," he says. From the beginning he was focused on music of the Round Peak section, and Kyle Creed in particular. When his parents told him that both his great grandfather and great great grandfather—Dock and Boggie Golding—were banjo players in the Round Peak area, that gave him more incentive to specialize.

I just really wanted to play the music from here, this one part. It just really meant a lot to me when I found out that my great grandpa and great great grandpa were banjo players here. Cause I know they probably didn't venture off very far from this area. Just try to keep the tunes alive in this area.

Though the Goldings lived into the era when recording technology was available, neither of them were recorded, though they were remembered by other musicians in Donleavy's study (2005:57). For models he turned to the available commercial recordings at first.

The first tape he bought, he remembers, was Dix Freeman and the Toenail Gap String Band. One of his main sources, though, came from a revivalist field recording project:

I've worked really hard. Tom Mylet, he done a home recording of Kyle back in 1979 on his porch. And he gave me a copy of that a few years ago and I sat down and I learned every little detail. Even learned a lot of stuff from the banjo playing of Fred Cockerham. Just put it on there and rewind it. Kirk gave me some home recordings of him. And Charlie Lowe too. Come across a few recordings of him.

Kevin studied all the old recordings that he could get access to, and he tries to pattern his playing after them as closely as he can. "People ask who learned me to play the banjo. I tell 'em dead people!" In particular, Kevin has taken Kyle Creed as a hero, and he plays one of Kyle's banjos, a 1973 model built for Thomas Carter of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band.

In his study of old-time scenes, David Wood interviewed Fore extensively, and quoted him at length. Fore expressed a certain amount of antagonism towards revivalist musicians—one in particular, but many more in general, people who he resents for both musical and social slights:

Carter's [pseud. for Fore] antagonism might be focused on one musician especially, but his attitude extends to many revivalist musicians. On a non-musical level, Carter has said that he's encountered people whom he considers to be rude: "Northerners who ain't got no Southern hospitality," but he had much more to say about the music itself. When asked how non-native musicians have affected the music of Round Peak, Carter said that "they come down here and they learned the tunes and most of 'em went back to their home area and said 'I learned this tune from Tommy Jarrell.' And it don't sound nothin' like Tommy Jarrell. You say you learned a tune from somebody, you need to at least sound like 'em, you know?" (Wood 2009:101)

Fore recounts an incident at a party where several revivalists were playing in a jam and he became frustrated and angered by the increasingly obscure tune selections being made “I was just gettin' madder and madder and madder and thinkin': 'why can't they play something that everybody knows instead of playing something just trying to show the people what they can play that nobody else can play?'" (101). For Fore, choosing to play tunes that the whole group cannot play is a breach of sociability. For the revivalist, the obscure tune is a token of cultural capital. Tunes are the currency and rare or unusual tunes are often prized (Woolf 1990, Carter 1991, Titon 2001). Jacki Spector, for example, prefers to play music that she doesn't know:

To get to that level where you can learn a tune as you're playing it, to figure it out as you go along at a normal tempo. Once I hit that, that's what's fun for me. It's in the moment. And I don't play music by myself anymore. But my pleasure in playing music is in the interaction with other voices. It's fun to go to a session and play tunes you all know. It's fun; it's relaxing; and it's a nice social vibe. But it's exciting to go to a session and play tunes you don't know. [laughs] It's that keeping pace and learning it on the fly and listening and making it come out at the same time that's where the pleasure lies for me. (Interview March 29, 2007)

Surely not every revivalist prefers the obscure, and many of the old originals went out of their way to learn new material, but the “nice social vibe” is more important to Fore than the excitement of learning new tunes.

Fore—and Wood, for that matter—makes much of where a person is from, and that information determines the leeway they deserve in playing the music. From Wood:

For [Fore], what makes a musician "blend in" to the local area is not so much

where that musician is from, but how that musician plays Round Peak music. When asked to explain the differences between a traditionalist and a revivalist, Carter offered the following:

CM: Well, I guess them revivalist people...they take the tunes and butcher 'em up.

DW: But not all...?

CM: Oh no, there's a few people that I really respect - good friends with. And they took the tunes and learned 'em exactly how [older traditionalists from Round Peak] played 'em. And I respect them for that and encourage them in the music, but some of them just kinda slurred my music and the way I played.

However, according to Carter, being a native to the region gives those musicians more freedom about how they play the local music "as long as they didn't put too much crap in it." (Wood 2009:102)

Some would find this an unfair charge, and Fore, to his credit, wouldn't mind at all. He is up front about his preferences, and he has played in bands with revivalists, even revivalists from New York, provided they stay close to the source. Fore is aware of the influence of outsiders on Round Peak music. Fore is not above making use of some of the products of the revival, such as Mylet's field recording of Kyle Creed, or the banjo that Blanton Owen commissioned from Kyle Creed. Nothing in Round Peak music is free of outsider intervention. For Kevin Fore, playing in a strict old fashioned style is a conscious choice, not the only way to do it, and he uses his roots and authenticity as cultural capital to counter the obscure tunes of the revivalists.

Just a little way down the road from Fore is the homeplace of Dix Freeman, the current home of Chester McMillian, and of Chester's son Nick McMillian. Nick, Chester, and Nick's partner Kelley Breiding play in another musically conservative outfit called Back-Step. Nick, of course, learned mandolin, banjo, fiddle, guitar, and bass from

childhood. He started playing mandolin with the Shady Mountain Ramblers at age seven and took up fiddle at eleven. He played in the original Back-Step with his father and the late Greg Hooven in the early 1990s. Now he plays fiddle and leads the band in performance announcing numbers and talking to the audience. Kelley grew up in the Charlotte, North Carolina area and learned old-time music in college in the western part of the state. Nick and Kelley are also the core of a honky tonk band called Kelley and the Cowboys that is their main musical endeavor. Yes, they play country music, but it's older country music, in the style of Patsy Cline, and with much of her repertoire. Nick and Kelley share many ideas about old-time music, heritage, and their role as purveyors thereof.

Nick believes that he plays the melodies that come from Round Peak, but that he needn't be an exact copy of anyone

I could play the fiddle pretty good after the first summer of trying. The first band that I played the fiddle with was Mac and Scotty East, cause Ernest had just died and I was kind of trying to play like Ernest did. Cause I hadn't formed what style I wanted. Just like with Tommy and Fred and all the people, they didn't really try to copy anybody. It's developing your own fiddle style. And I think that's important, because a lot of people out there, say like Kirk, he tries to really play just exactly like Tommy, you know. And that's alright, but you don't develop your own fiddle style.

JR: So when you're playing now, what kind of sound are you going for?

Nick McMillian: It's my own style, but it's really rooted. Just like Tommy, say, learned from his dad and all the people around, but it formed his own style. A Tommy Jarrell style. I listened to Tommy, Fred, Kyle, Ernest. Not so much Benton. Cause Benton really wasn't considered

Kelley Breiding: Well Dobson's really another style.

N: Yeah. it's a whole 'nother style, but the Round Peak people, I listened to them. I wanted my fiddle playing to remind people of all their music, but not be just exactly like them. I don't think you should try to copy somebody. Cause it don't do them justice. The feeling of their music comes across in my music, but it's not just the same. But the whole gist of the melodies. The melodies I guess is what I'm so strict with. It's got to be that Round Peak melody. I try not to stray from it at all. So it may sound just like one of them, cause they were so strict with the melody, but I'm not trying to copy.

And the same way with [Kelley's] banjo playing, she sounds a lot like granddaddy's playing. And Fred and Tommy, but you cant' say well that's just like it. Its about the whole feeling of the Round Peak music coming across, but not being just like somebody else. So new Round Peak, but it's still rooted in the traditions of a hundred years ago. (Interview June 11, 2008)

Kelley actually learned much of her banjo technique while living with Nick and with Dix's widow Charlie Mae Freeman.

Kelley: Really I learned to play the banjo from Nick playing the fiddle, like the opposite of how he learned to play the fiddle from Dix. Which is probably how I ended up playing like Dix. I listened to those recordings. I used to play that "Step Back" tape all the time for his grandmother. I moved into the house and me and Nick were living with Charlie May, Dix's wife, and I would play that tape all the time because he talked on it and she would..she had Alzheimer's but she would remember him and it made her feel good to hear it. So I know I heard it a lot more than I realize. But I didn't actually learn to play the banjo until I came to playing with Nick playing the fiddle.

...It became something where living in Round Peak and taking on the culture and becoming part of that is part of the music. The people walk that way that the music sounds and talk and everything has that gait to it, you know? I guess I just kind of absorbed it, what was there, and started walking along with it. (Interview June 11, 2008)

In addition to playing the same repertoire and style as Freeman and his compatriots, Nick and Kelley consciously isolate their old-time music making to keep it closer to the sound and method of the old-timers. This is based on the belief that the old musicians did not “jam” with each other the way that modern musicians do.

Kelley: Dix had done this interview... and in there he's talking about how the fiddle players and the banjo players they were like, married to each other. Like, you did not jam, you did not go play with another fiddler, you did not go and fiddle with a different banjo player. Like you were partners and that's the way it was and if you were going to play you were going to play with that person and if they weren't there, you weren't playing. And once we got to thinking about that, and how that's not really happening, we kind of, don't really play with anybody for that reason of trying to make sure that the music is what it was. So we definitely consciously isolated ourselves to each other in that way.

They also limit their repertoire to a select handful of tunes. Dix Freeman is sometimes today remembered for the narrowness of his repertoire. The theory is that the few tunes that are played will be exceptionally tight.

Nick: And we don't go out hunting tunes like they do nowadays. Everybody's: “oh, listen to this tune...” We play the handful of tunes that we play and we try to play them right. And that's just like they did a hundred years ago. They didn't search out tunes as much. They had their tunes. It was hard to find tunes back then. You know if somebody come walking down the road and they had a fiddle in their hand, you might, they'd play it right then, you'd hear it for five minutes, and you might pick it up or you might pick it up and it'd have some of their fiddling and you might make up your own second part and that's how new tunes come about.

But that whole tradition is what we're trying to stay in as far as.. You know you don't see us jamming with a lot of people. We try to do it like everybody told us they did it a hundred years ago. And I think that makes the music special. And it's not that we're stuck up and don't enjoy playing with other people.

To Nick and Kelley, it is the modern approach that divides sets of old-time musicians. They find that the revivalist immigrants might not play as strong music because they don't do it in this traditional, tightly focused way.

Nick: I think the biggest difference with Steve and Nancy and them is that their music is not as solid, because they play with so many people. Like Nancy, last year, her goal was to learn as many new songs as she could. And to me, you have to master the songs that you know.

Kelley: It's the Jack of all trades master of none concept. ... you can't be as good as you can be on a thousand fiddle tunes.

Though Kelley and Nick also play in other bands, the country group Kelley and the Cowboys, and the regressive old-time band the Red Hots, this ideal of focus and tightness is important in their considerations of who to play with. In the Red Hots, Nick plays fiddle and Kelley plays bass, while the revivalists Joe Thrift and Tom Riccio play fiddle and banjo. They started out as a hippy festival band, but their longevity, and the similarity of their musical practice to that of Back-step and their purported forbears has earned Joe and Tom respect:

And that's one thing about the Red Hots' music—Tom and Joe played together for the last 30 years. Tom don't get his banjo out unless Joe gets his fiddle out. It's the same thing that we're trying to do. [they've had different bass players and different guitar players over the years, but since] Joe and Tom's fiddle music and banjo music is locked in with this thing, it really matters not who plays with them, it's still gonna be the same thing because they're so locked into it. I think that's what's important, is two people getting together and playing for an extended period of time, a small number of tunes.

Nick and Kelley are at the same time some of the most eclectic and conservative

musicians in Surry County, but the same could be said of many other musicians there, including Andy Edmonds. Recognizable but different is how Nick described his fiddling, and that is a standard that all the current Surry County musicians seem to aim for.

The young musicians of Surry County make the conscious choice to play the old-time music of their home region. They also use their nativeness for cultural capital in the mixed world of the old-time music scene. Being from Surry County, living in Round Peak, shows that you are connected to what is thought to be a legitimate and authentic source of the tradition, and this connection confers legitimacy in a scene where people are looking for roots and community.

Conclusion: The Post-Revival World

The old-time string band revival was an epochal event for the community music of Surry County. Everything in the community bears its influence. Surry County in the 21st Century has a network of venues and institutions that combine to support a large number of amateur and semi-professional old-time musicians. WPAQ, the Fiddlers' Convention, and the square dances are all ways that local musicians connect with local, regional, and national audiences. The radio station broadcasts the sound of local old-time music over a large area. The Fiddlers' Convention attracts campers and contestant musicians from the larger old-time string band community. The square dances keep the

musicians playing for the locals, who keep the old, simple reels and shuffles alive. All of these institutions have roots that extend back before the era of the old-time string band revival, but all were revitalized by the efforts and attention of the revival. WPAQ resumed broadcasts of local old-time music after Ralph Epperson saw how popular Tommy Jarrell had become. The Fiddlers' Convention became a popular early summer gathering for the itinerant revivalists who had once attended Union Grove. The dances have remained below the radar of most revivalists, but the participation of people like Paul Brown, Andy Cahan, Blanton Owen, Ray Alden, and many others in the bands of the local fiddlers must have been heartening to the fiddlers who held out as old-time musicians and did not take up bluegrass or golf.

The older generation of traditional musicians participated in their own era of musical change and innovation even before the revival. Verlen Clifton, Benton Flippen and Chester McMillian all had a hand in adding the bluegrass and country elements to the older banjo and fiddle music of Round Peak and the other rural communities. They are models of behavior and musicality for the younger generations. The revivalist immigrants came in search of music and community, which they knew they would find because of their earlier visits to attend the Fiddlers' Convention or visit Tommy Jarrell. By joining and forming bands, they increased and refreshed the store of old-time musicians in the area, and gave encouragement and attention to the older traditional musicians. The younger musicians benefitted from the new attention to old-time music and from the

presence of the old musicians who kept playing because of revivalist attention. Many of them are more musically conservative, and trade on their ties to the region for the cultural capital it carries in old-time circles.

Surry County and Round Peak have been through many changes socially and musically in the past hundred years. Those who wish to play their music in the way it was played in Tommy Jarrell's youth must make some decisions that would seem strange to many of their contemporaries, such as avoiding jams, or spending Saturday night playing for eighty year old flatfooters. There are different groups of people playing old-time music—some native born and some from “off somewheres.” But they can all play “Sally Ann” and they all know the same stories about Tommy Jarrell and they all know why so and so's band always places in the contests. Nancy Sluys says she's not a revivalist—she just plays in the way that feels natural to her, just like the old-timers did. She's not entirely right, of course. There are differences in her life, education, economic situation and basic ideas about the world that come from growing up in Glastonbury, Connecticut rather than Low Gap, North Carolina. Kevin Fore believes that being from a Surry County gives someone more freedom in how they interpret the local music. He's not entirely right—just try and stop an old-time fiddler from playing a tune the way he feels it. These two musicians that I have artificially contrasted with each other exemplify different ways of being an old-time musician in Surry County in the early 21st Century. They, and probably any of the musicians I've talked to, would agree with the fact that

there was a revival and that it influenced everything in Surry County's old-time music world. Had the revival not been so intensely involved in the Surry County community, there likely would not be young people playing the music today in that community. The scene today is a *post-revival* scene. To talk of revivalists and traditionalists will be increasingly unproductive in the future. As has been observed before, even if you grow up in a community that values traditional music, the decision to play that music is a conscious choice among many competing possibilities and the decision to specialize carefully recreating the sound (like Kevin Fore) or circumstances (like Nick McMillian) of the music of your home region is also a conscious choice. Someone might come from outside and adopt the “walk” of the region and become just as conservative a steward, as Kelley Breiding has done. You might learn a great deal about your home region's music and also like French Canadian fiddling as Andy Edmonds does, making you a tradition bearer of your own music and a revivalist of someone else's music. In the post revival world, these distinctions mean less. In Surry County today, the three groups that I have abstracted from a community of hundreds of people—old-timers, revivalist immigrants and young traditionalists—are in constant interaction. They play in bands together and have done so since the 1970s, when Ray Alden observed that all the clawhammer banjo players were from out of town because the local banjoists all played bluegrass.

The post-revival scene is one that has been subject to a revival but is no longer in an active revival. The revival, though has left behind certain products and institutions

that are now available to anyone, native born or outsider. In the case of Surry County, the products are the field recordings that were commercially released on County Records and that have been continuously available on CD reissue and now mp3; the instructional materials created by Miles Krassen and Brad Leftwich; the camping and crowds at the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention; the scooped-neck banjos with twelve-inch pots built by Kevin Enoch and Mike Ramsey and Greg Galbreath; the Les Blank films of Tommy Jarrell that are shown at the Tommy Jarrell festival each year. The institutions are Bobville and the new version of the Breaking up Christmas tradition that is attached to it; the bands the Pilot Mountain Bobcats and the Red Hots and their new and unusual positions in relation to Round Peak; the Music Maker Relief Foundation and the support that it gives to the elder musicians of the community. The activities of the revival were also models for local actors. Kyle Creed was inspired to form his own record company after seeing it done by outsiders; Ralph Epperson returned to local and traditional music programming on WPAQ after seeing the enthusiasm at Tommy Jarrell's birthday party; Dix Freeman revived the practice of the home square dance on Richards Road. Someone who moves to Surry County from Long Island will never be able to become a traditional Round Peak musician, but in the post-revival world that does not matter. Someone born in Surry County and playing Round Peak music can be a revivalist, though, and in many ways already is.

CHAPTER 6

THE SOUND OF ROUND PEAK MUSIC

Introduction

The style of music that has come to be called “Round Peak” has certain easily recognizable characteristics, including an expected repertory of tunes, certain favored keys, a recognizable banjo timbre and cross-tuned fiddles. The following chapter explores these characteristics and some other aspects of Round Peak music, including guitar and mandolin styles, the role of creativity and the idea of “making” new music, the influence of bluegrass and commercial country music on old-time musicians, and the singing tradition. Finally, the history and ethnography of Surry County old-time music will be traced through various renditions of one central tune as played in the region, and the characteristics of a Round Peak tune type will be proposed.

If there is a “received wisdom” version of the history of old-time music, it probably goes something like the following, from the Introduction to Bob Carlin's book on Piedmont string bands:

The fiddle and banjo styles of the Piedmont have their roots in the melodies of Europe and the rhythms of Africa. Europeans brought the violin and their dance tunes to North Carolina's Piedmont and Africans brought the ancestors of the American banjo, along with its playing style and rhythmic patterns. In the nineteenth century, Anglo and African styles mixed with the songs of the American popular stage to form a uniquely American blend of these traditions. Called minstrelsy, it was probably the biggest and first truly American musical phenomena [sic], and it had a great effect on Southern folk music. The parlor

songs of the late nineteenth century were the next ingredient to be added, and seasoned with the banjo style known nationally as “classic” or “guitar” style. Piedmont banjoists of the new generation switched at the turn of the twentieth century from the older African-derived down-picking style to the newer up-picking of the city banjoists.

Although the guitar had been in the Piedmont since the 1850s, it didn't enter the picture as a part of the string bands until early in the twentieth century. With the guitar's addition, the archetypal old-time North Carolina Piedmont sound was completed: long bow fiddling combined with cascading banjo runs and strong guitar bass lines used in support of popular songs and dance tunes. However, as a broader national country music styles was formed, it too was emulated at the local level and combined in the Piedmont with the older instruments and repertoire. (Carlin 2004:8-9)

The combination of European fiddle and African banjo as the foundation of old-time music one of the great notions about old-time music, and one that its players invoke to explain its uniqueness and importance as quintessentially American. The sound that Carlin describes in his second paragraph as the “archetypal old-time North Carolina Piedmont sound” is best represented by Charlie Poole and his North Carolina Ramblers, a group that performed widely in the region and recorded many big selling 78 rpm records in the 1920s and 1930s. Poole's influence was certainly felt in Surry County, and it can be heard in the sound of some of his contemporaries, such as the Southern Broadcasters and the Pilot Mountaineers. The Round Peak sound that will be the focus of most of this chapter is a hold out, something that resisted that popular sound, and all the many popular music styles that followed, including bluegrass and Nashville country music.

Repertory

As with any regional old-time style, there is a central store of tunes and songs that are associated with the Round Peak tradition. This core repertory includes pieces of widespread popularity and some of more localized favor.

A tunes

John Brown's Dream
Big Eyed Rabbit
Breaking Up Christmas
Fire on the Mountain
John Henry
John Hardy
Cotton-Eyed Joe
Chilly Winds
June Apple
Lost Indian
Shortening Bread
Tater Patch

D Tunes

Sally Ann
Susanana Gals
Polly Put the Kettle On
Backstep Cindy/Step Back Cindy [alternate titles]
Cider Mill/Down to the Stillhouse
Fortune
Joke on the Puppy/Rye Straw
Ducks on the Millpond

These tune names on their own do not convey much specific information, but the list is small, and limited to tunes in two keys. Any individual fiddler plays many more than these tunes, of course, but this is the core of tunes that they might all be expected to know, and that delineate certain characteristics of the style. old-time fiddlers tend to

group tunes according to key, and there are a few keys that are common in the US. A major and D major, the two from which the entire list above come, and also G major and C major. There is also a large body of tunes called “modal” which feature one or more flattened or neutral scale degrees, usually the third and/or the seventh. These last are all rarer in the Surry County style. G and C tunes have come in to the repertory, often from outside the area, or via records and radio. These tunes--”Sunny Home in Dixie,” “Texas Gals,” “Honeysuckle”-- have the sound of newer material. Some, though are old, such as “Flatwoods” and “Sail Away Ladies,” which Tommy Jarrell learned from older fiddlers not from Round Peak.

Fiddle Tunes and Licks

In the Round Peak context, the old-time fiddler is the leader of his ensemble, and he or she is responsible for choosing the tune to play, starting it off, usually with a standard shuffle called “four potatoes,” which sets the tempo for the rest of the band, and deciding when to end a tune, usually, but not always signaling to his band-mates that he is doing so, and finishing up with a formulaic ending melody called a “tag” (“shave-and-a-haircut” is one such formula). The fiddle plays the melody of the tune, and in Round Peak usually plays on more than one string at a time, creating a harmonically thicker setting of the tune by droning on open strings or double-stopping. A fiddler may play more or less bluesy, using fewer or more slides up to and between notes. Or he may play crisply, with

one bow-stroke per note. A melody can be played in different octaves on the fiddle, and the fiddler might chose to “go low” more or less often. Some fiddlers vary their settings of tunes a little (or a lot) each time through. Some do not do this at all. All these decisions are made in the course of performance, and the results are what make a fiddler sound like himself. It is sometimes said in Surry County and the surrounding region that you can recognize the better fiddlers just by hearing their “four potatoes” introducing a tune.

An old-time fiddle tune characteristically has two strains, or *parts* in contrasting *tessiturae* (or ranges). Many tunes have more than two, some one, but most have two. Most of the time each part will be repeated, then the next part will be played. Once both (or all) parts have been played, the cycle starts again at the beginning. This is repeated for as long as the fiddler cares to play it. If playing for a square dance, the musicians will continue until the dance is complete or the caller indicates that it is time. If playing for their own enjoyment, the musicians may play for longer. The repetition may sound monotonous to a listener, but it creates a driving beat and pulse for a dance, and sometimes a trance-like state for the musicians. Regula Qureshi, writing about the repetitive, trance-inducing Qawwali music of Sufi tradition, says that “repetition serves to enrich and expand the meaning of a 'meaningful moment' by creating for it an exclusive perceptual space, an autonomous existence” (Qureshi 1994:520). This can be true for fiddle tunes. A tune can be a mental place that is created that is experienced as separate from everyday existence. A tune can sometimes take hold of the fiddler, and he may find

it difficult to end. Old-time fiddle tunes can go on for a long time. A team from the American Folklife Center's Blue Ridge Parkway Project videotaped a square dance at Dix Freeman's old homeplace in 1978. Ernest East and the Pine Ridge Boys provided the music. For one dance dance, the band played "Sally Ann" for over nine minutes (Library of Congress, AFC 1982/009: V06, V07, V08).

There are few generalizations that will hold as to the style and technique of all Surry County's old-time fiddlers, but a few to start off with could not hurt. For example, most fiddlers make use of alternate or "open" tunings. A classical violinist will tune the strings GDae (low to high). Old-time fiddlers sometimes refer to this as "standard" or "natural" tuning, and some, Emmett Lundy and Benton Flippen among them, play almost all their tunes in this tuning. The Round Peak fiddlers use AEae ("A tuning" or "Cross tuning" in their parlance) and ADae ("D tuning" or "High bass," or "Sawmill"). Most take advantage of the easy harmonic support provided by these tunings to play on more than one string at a time, creating constant drones and/or double-stops. This is often facilitated by a flatter bridge radius than a classical violinist would have. The keys of A and D are heavily favored by fiddlers over the other common fiddle keys, C and G. Most tunes are major or pentatonic in tonality, with a few using lowered seventh scale degrees and even fewer in minor keys. All fiddlers tend to slide into notes for effect. This inflection varies from one to another, but it lends the fiddling a melodic slipperiness—the beginnings and/or ends of notes can be hard to detect and the intonation of a note,

particularly a third or seventh scale degree, may fall between major and minor—that is not far from blues.

Folklorists and music scholars who considered American folk fiddle styles tended to overstate certain aspects of their posture and position, creating a picture of the country fiddler with the fiddle held down on the chest and a bow held half way up the stick, never using the little finger of their noting hand (Artley; Burman). While many fiddle players did play in exactly this manner, there was and is a wider range in practice. The creative tradition in Surry County allows room for a wide variety of approaches. The fiddlers have different terms that they might use, but there is a distinction between *tunes*, which are the pieces of music that musicians play together, and the *licks* which are unique to an individual, and which one uses to render a tune his in one's own way. As was seen previously, Joe Thrift and Richard Bowman learned tunes from Tommy Jarrell, but did not carefully assimilate his licks. Kirk Sutphin did study the licks, or *essences* as he called them. Patrick Hutchinson found a similar distinction in the way uilleann pipers thought about Irish music (1997), and it would not be surprising to find that a similar distinction is recognized in many different melodic traditions.

Tommy Jarrell held his fiddle under his chin and held his bowing hand only a short distance above the frog. He used all four left hand fingers to note with, and was especially fond of doubling an open string with the fourth finger on the string below. Benton Flippen holds his fiddle down in the crook of his arm and mostly uses the first

two fingers of his left hand to stop the strings. A major part of his sound is due to his sliding his fingers around on the strings.

Benton's use of slides is demonstrated by the following transcription of "Mississippi Sawyer," a very common fiddle tune.

Mississippi Sawyer

As played by Benton Flippen on HRC 159



Figure 8: Benton Flippen's "Mississippi Sawyer"

Oscar Jenkins, best known as a banjo player, also fiddled, and noted with two fingers. His fiddling was only recorded a few times, but his style also makes use of some striking slides. Richard Bowman is another fiddler who primarily notes with the first and second fingers, but his sound is quite different, as he is more given to quickly picking lifting his middle finger and replacing it in a different place, with an open string note in between.

Tommy Jarrell's fiddling is most distinguished by his use of the bow, which he called rocking the bow, a technique he picked up from his father. The techniques of bow rocking are difficult to describe in words, but there seem to be two varieties of it. One is a

move that can be heard in many regional styles, and is the use of the bow to rock back and forth between adjacent strings, emphasizing different melody notes on each string. involve rotating the bow to catch different strings in mid stroke. The other is a variation of the mid-bow accent. The usual mid-bow accent puts a pulse between two notes, usually the same pitch, played in one bow stroke (that is, without changing bow direction), by slowing down the bow and speeding up again. In the bow rocking situation, the pulse is accompanied by the bow being rotated around the axis of the string, so as to catch first one and then the other adjacent string to the main one being played. For example, if the main note is the A string, the first half of the bow stroke would be paired with an appropriate note played on the D string below and the second half of the stroke (during and after the pulse) would be paired with one on the the E string. The appeal of the bow rocking technique is that it creates a harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment to what is often a simple melody, but the this accompaniment is always shifting, high and then low, open strings and inflected noted strings, creating a rich full sound that is pleasing even on it's own, and that almost creates the impression that there are more than one instrument being played.

Again, dancing is the main point of old-time music, and the way you know if you're doing it right is if they're dancing. Dix Freeman talked about the way to fiddle: “Kind of play with open strings and sort of note it out and give 'em something to hit the

floor with. If you blend it in, if you chord too much, somehow or another it don't, they don't have as good a dance” (AFS 21666 and 21667. Recordings in the American Folklife Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Interview with Dix and Charlie Mae Freeman, 1978).

Round Peak Banjo

Tuning Up

In Spring of 2008 I returned to Surry County after an absence of several months. While away in New England I had opportunities to play with talented and enthusiastic old-time fiddlers and banjo players. When I did venture out to play music, it was often with folks who like to tune down for cross-key fiddle tunes and with folks who like to play in the key of G. My banjo has become accustomed to having its strings relatively slack. On my first evening of music back in North Carolina I turn the pegs of my banjo tight, cranking the strings up to play in open D without a capo. My hands and my instrument are unaccustomed to the tension, but it only takes a tune or two to acclimate to this high atmosphere and I feel like I am “back” for sure. (Field notes, May 2008)

Round Peak style banjo has become the most recognizable hallmark of Surry County Old-time music. It has today become identifiable as a melodic style, with few chords, usually but not always played on a fretless banjo, and always with a “plunky”

timbre. I will examine the characteristics that make the banjo style so different and so appealing. I will also explore the spread of this banjo style from local practice to national trend.

No one knows who brought the first banjo to Surry County, though it was more than likely a black agricultural worker, some time in the 19th Century. The banjo and fiddle were probably being played together in the Surry County area by the 1860s. Andy Cahan wrote of Gerald Manley Reese, a white banjo player from Randolph County, North Carolina, who moved to the Galax, Virginia area shortly before the Civil War, during which he lost his life in the Confederate Army (1987).

Most sources trace this the distinct Round Peak style back to Charlie Lowe, the contemporary of Ben Jarrell and friend of Tommy Jarrell. Fred Cockerham tells of changing his style from the “framming” style of his youth to the Charlie Lowe style. Kyle Creed, of all the Round Peak players the most idiosyncratic, claimed to have learned most of his banjo style and technique from an uncle who lived in Winchester, Virginia. Of the source generation banjo pickers discussed in this document, Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, Dix Freeman and Kyle Creed are considered “Round Peak” players.

Round Peak is a sub-style of what is today most often called “clawhammer” style. There is evidence that its use in America can be directly traced back to African practice. The basic clawhammer technique involves striking the long strings of the banjo with the back of the nail of a right hand finger (most often the index or middle finger), and

alternately plucking the short drone string (called the “fifth string”) with the thumb.

There are uncounted variations on this basic method, some involving “brushes” with the fingernail to play several notes in a chord, some involving occasional “up-picking” of the long strings or plucking the strings with the left hand.

The Round Peak style of banjo picking does not involve up-picking or many chords. It is characterized by mostly single note playing of a skeletal melody. There are slides, facilitated by the fretless banjos preferred by players in the area, and the fifth string may be sounded as a melody note, as well as as a drone. Most players in the area today use the term “clawhammer” to describe their technique, and disparage what they call “frailing.” In this system, frailing is more chordal and rhythmic, with fewer individual melody notes.

The extent to which any banjo player is “playing the melody” at any moment in a given performance is debatable and will vary depending on the banjo player, the tune, and the choices that the fiddle player makes when playing that tune, if he is accompanying a fiddler at the moment or the level of elaboration and ornament in the version of the tune that exists in the banjo player's mind if he is playing solo. The Round Peak style is often thought of as being based on a banjo and fiddle duet, even if the banjo is playing solo or the two instruments are playing in a larger band. Kyle Creed explained the role of the banjo in a string band to his protege Tom Mylet:

KC: The fiddle is the lead, supposed to be the lead instrument. Of course the banjo's got to go along with it, but he's not trying to do everything the fiddle is,

because he can't do it. Ain't no way you can get all them notes in there. You don't have time. You know, I can run them fingers down on the fiddle, from here plum up to there before you can bat your eye, all four of them. You can't do that on a banjo. So you're just asking for trouble when you try.

TM: So the banjo's job is to do what?

KC: More or less back-up. Well, it play the melody along, too, you know. But there's a lot of short-cuts you can take on the banjo that didn't affect the sound or nothing—it really sounded better to me. (Creed and Mylet 1979)

This exchange is representative of the general consensus of opinion on the role of the banjo in a string band, at least among the Surry County musicians. Creed seems to be aware of the interest of some banjo players in playing all the notes a fiddle does, but thinks that it is impossible. The ideas of “back-up” and “melody” are two apparently different roles, but Creed attempts with difficulty to verbally reconcile them in a way that he does effortlessly while playing the banjo. The “short-cuts” that he talks about are really the licks that make a personal or regional style what it is. Creed found that taking “short-cuts” or leaving out notes “sounded better” to him.

A number of other techniques distinguish Round Peak style. The so-called “Galax lick” was associated most with the playing of Kyle Creed, which may explain the moniker (Creed lived near Galax, Virginia). Miles Krassen explained this move and introduced this name for it in his Oak instructional book *Clawhammer Banjo* (1974). This technique is usually a three note move, ending on a down-beat. The finger of the right hand brushes across the second, then first string on the pick-up beat, then the thumb plays

the fifth string on the down beat. This subverts the usual habit of the clawhammer player, which is to play the fifth string only on the off beats. Kyle Creed was known to have made a personal rule of never playing the note of the drone string in any way other than with his thumb, no matter how awkward this may have seemed to other, more conventional, players.

Plucking with the left hand is another method common in this style. This is typically done during passages where the melody is static, as a sort of time-filler, a way of keeping the pulse going while the fiddle dwells on one note. The most characteristic use of the left hand pluck is in a series of four eighth notes. First the right hand plays the second string open, then the left hand plucks the first string open, then the right hand picks a note, followed by the thumb pulling the fifth string.

Yet another lick associated with Round Peak, and sometimes over-used, is an accent called a “cluck” or “chuck.” The Fred Cockerham-derived “cluck” is a sound created when playing the downstroke with the middle finger and quickly stopping the plucked string with the index finger. This is an integrated right hand motion, and something that takes a bit of a knack. It is perhaps unfairly linked to the “dominance” of Round Peak style. Fred himself used this technique to great effect when playing chordal back up, as on the song “Little Satchel.” It is rarer in the melodic playing of the source generation.

Most of the techniques now associated with Round Peak banjo are detailed in

Miles Krassen's Oak instructional book *Clawhammer Banjo* (1974). At the time Krassen was writing, these techniques were associated with the playing of Kyle Creed, who lived at the time near Galax, Virginia. Given the importance of the Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention and the influence of Creed, who lived near Galax in the 1970s, it is perhaps understandable that these quirks of North Carolina banjo picking came to be known (if briefly) by the Galax, Virginia name. In fact, there were many banjo players from Galax and the surrounding counties of Carroll and Grayson, but they played in a variety of styles with little obvious resemblance to the Round Peakers.

Tom Mylet and Kyle Creed

One of the generation of revivalists who relocated to the South and apprenticed himself to a local source musician was Tom Mylet. He apprenticed himself to Kyle Creed in extra-musical ways as well. He learned banjo playing from Kyle, but also practical skills of country life. The two would eventually collaborate on a banjo instruction project.

Tom Mylet (b. 1947) was born and raised in Camden, New Jersey. His early interest in country and folk music was nurtured by visits to the Philadelphia area folk music scene. He began making annual visits to the Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention in the late 1960s, where he first encountered Kyle Creed. After Mylet graduated from college, he moved to Grayson County, Virginia in 1976. He became acquainted with

Creed through local musical events and social gatherings. One day Dale Morris, another local musician, asked Tom:

“Has Kyle called you yet?” I said “no.” He said, “Well, I saw him the other day. He said he was going to call you to see if you wanted to be in a band. He said you kept good time and seemed polite.” I was like, well, that's pretty good characteristics to be in a band. So I wound up playing with Kyle for several years. And he really sort of took me under his wing, almost as sort of a grandson or son. (Interview March 7, 2007)

Mylet played as the regular banjo player for the Camp Creek Boys for two or three years thereafter. Kyle played the fiddle in most incarnations of this band, though not, it should be noted, on the best known recordings, issued on County Records in 1968. Though Mylet also visited and enjoyed the other musicians from the area, particularly Tommy Jarrell, he found that he had a special kinship with Kyle and noticed that few other young musicians were interested in spending much time with Creed, who was not as welcoming to the revivalist crowd as Tommy was.

As a bandleader, Kyle Creed did not give Tom much instruction about his desired banjo sound. Mylet was at the time trying to sound as much like Kyle as he could, which may have been part of his value to Creed.

JR: Did he give you direction about how he wanted the banjo to sound?

TM: Not really. Interestingly enough, no. I just played. Then I ordered a banjo from him and he said “Just cause you play with me, you don't have to have one of my banjos.” Said “ah, no, I'd actually like to have one.” And wound up playing that. And then he made me a couple finger picks and I played with a finger pick for a while. I haven't lately. but I was really working at sounding like him. So that was okay.

And at some point he and I talked about writing a book together. You know, I had all that stuff pretty well figured out. In retrospect, I have no idea what I was thinking...

I got a National Endowment for the [Arts, Folk Arts Division] Grant to study with a traditional master artist. Which consisted of Kyle and I sitting around talking, mostly. And at that point I said, maybe we should do something, you know. And I think it was specific in the grant that you weren't allowed to write a book, but we decided we were going to write a book anyway. And we sat on the back porch and somewhere here's a CD.... It's tapes of Kyle and I sitting with two banjos and him kind of breaking tunes down and playing different people's variations. Stuff like that....

He'd play a tune, I'd play it back. And he'd say, this is the way Bauga Cockerham did that. Or "this is the backstep" in "Backstep Cindy." This part is the "backstep," like it was a dance with a specific pattern.

Tom and Kyle had many adventures together, which Tom relates with great relish. Many of these do not involve music at all, but concern Kyle's skill as a horseman, carpenter, and trader.

Kyle I think made a fair amount of money. He really knew the horses, he had a sawmill, he was a timber cruiser, so he could value standing timber. And he was buying land with timber on it. They used to bring wild mustangs into Galax and sell them at auction. and he was a pretty good judge of horse flesh. So he would buy these horses. Sawmill, he'd go pick Fred up, cause Fred never had a car, but was a good hand to work if you kept him sober. And so he would be breaking these horses. We were out there in the woods. We're talking about it, and he'd have a horse with a real simple harness and a real long reins. So some young mustang. Nothing takes the sap out of a young horse like dragging wood all day. They start to run, there's always a tree to wrap that reins around. Just stop them right in their tracks. So he'd break these horses, sell them to farmers, sell the timber as lumber, and sell the land as cleared. So he was making money three ways.

This mix of practical knowledge and efficiency is also evidenced in Kyle's banjo playing and building.

it's in his playing, it's in his shop, it's in his banjo making, that everything was so simple and so, it was almost like Eastern though, like he was some kind of a Buddhist or something. You know when he played the fiddle, he hardly moved. But he got a lot more music out of it than it looked like. And the same's true with his banjo playing. I think his banjo playing is summed up by him saying "why slide up to the fifth fret on the first string when you got that note on the fifth string?" Always, if you want that A note, get it off of there without fretting. It's so much easier. Well, it's so much easier once you get yourself out of the habit of doing it the logical way, is what it amounts to.

His banjo making, watching him make a banjo is amazing. One time I said to him, I said, "Kyle, how did you come up with that headstock design?" And he picked up his drill and on the drill was one of these sanding tubes and he held it at every part of the headstock. He never used a file. He roughed it out on the bandsaw, went "Dzzz" for a while, "dzzz" every one was, like, an inch round or three quarter round sanding tube. You know, so it was all done as simple as possible. Somebody asked me once, "How do you play the banjo like Kyle?" I said, "Go visit Kyle and while you're there, use the bathroom. Think about it." And there was more than one room, but the bathroom was the one you had access to. The door that closed the bathroom door also swung and closed the linen closet. One door swung two ways. Hey, you'll probably want to get in there, in that linen closet while you're in there. See it's perfect. But everything served at least two purposes.

Instructional Materials

Round Peak banjo became a brand name of sorts. The basics of the style were contained in Krassen (1974) and in a sidebar to Alden's *Sing Out!* article. The first to collect the lore of Round Peak banjo and package it all together for the novice was Brad Leftwich, in *Round Peak Style Clawhammer Banjo* (1999). This was followed by Bob Carlin's instructional DVD *Carolina Clawhammer, Lesson Two: Round Peak* (2006). Leftwich has family ties to Surry County, and spent considerable time in the area learning

from Tommy Jarrell in particular.

John Bealle discussed two influential banjo instruction manuals of the old-time revival, Art Rosenbaum's *Old-Time Mountain Banjo* (1968) and Miles Krassen's *Clawhammer Banjo* (1974). Rosenbaum's work was “a meticulous comparative study of style based on the playing of traditional performers whose playing Rosenbaum had scrutinized.” Furthermore, study of the mountain banjo “demanded as much in empathy as it did in technical rigor” (2005:28-29). This “ethno-logical” approach is contrasted with Krassen's “functionalist pedagogy,” which is focused on a narrower stylistic range, and is not just a guide to playing an instrument, but also a guide to the social context in which revivalist musicians were meeting, playing, and learning.

Where does Round Peak pedagogy fall in this schema? Leftwich does not present himself as a philosopher or a meticulous preservationist. The practice of learning traditional American music from tablature books had been questioned. Leftwich acknowledges “ambivalent feelings” about the use of tablature and a CD of Leftwich playing all the tunes in the book unaccompanied is included. The CD is the “primary tool” of the package. The book opens with a brief essay on the music of Round Peak, the banjo style, and capsule biographies of the best-known Round Peak banjoists. There is also hand-drawn map of the area, circa 1900, showing homeplaces of important players and the ghostly paths of present day highways. The importance of Round Peak is discussed, as are the fretless banjo sound and technique.

The standard tablature is expanded to include intentionally flat or sharp notes, “one of the factors that gives this music it's unusual beauty” (11). The lick that Krassen called the “Galax lick” is called “the roll” in Leftwich's discussion, but he points out that he never heard a Round Peak banjoist use the “roll” term.

The tablatures that follow are grouped, as in Krassen, according to key and tuning. The vast majority of Round Peak tunes are played in one of two tunings, but a section of tunes in other tunings follows. Tunes are mostly prefaced with a brief note on the provenance of the version or some remark about the meaning of the title or the lyrics. In presenting these bits of oral lore alongside the transcriptions, the book is at least partially successful in conveying the sort of extra-musical knowledge that is often bandied about between tunes when musicians gather. An example, from “Old Bunch of Keys”:

Tommy thought this was about the best dance tune he'd ever heard. It came from “up the mountain” in Carroll County, Va., near Fancy Gap. Tommy's father-in-law, Charlie Barnett Lowe, played it with fiddlers John Rector and Fred Hawkes. Here's how Tommy played it on banjo (the 3+ in the coarse part is a true neutral tone, halfway between 3 and 4; but on a fretted banjo, I'd play the 3) (1999:43)

The lyrics (mostly from Tommy's performances) are included on the same page as the tablature.

Round Peak Clawhammer Banjo is in some ways a product of the instructional camp culture that developed around old-time music, particularly at places like the Augusta Heritage center. A style is identified and its salient points can be abstracted and taught and practiced. Context is imparted via a few brief opening remarks. Some great

source musicians were also good teachers who taught at these camps, Melvin Wine of West Virginia, for one. But many were not, and most of the Round Peakers did not make it to these places. The instructors, younger, educated people, serve as translators, intermediaries who can explain what the source musicians knew from a lifetime of music, but never had to put into words. In the case of Round Peak music, most of the source musicians are dead and gone, old masters to be revered, but not consulted. The important text is the solo recording by the revivalist instructor who has done the hard work of driving, ingratiating, visiting, recording and learning. In a workshop, the student would typically record the instructor's playing slowly and out of context. Leftwich's book comes with the recordings already made and bound into the cover. To be sure, a discography of some of the best Round Peak recordings is included in the back, along with a list of recommendations for further reading.

Plunk: Kyle Creed's Legacy in Banjo Design

Nancy Sluys's choice of banjo makes her Surry County influence clear. She doesn't play a Creed banjo, but one built by one of the latter day followers of Creed's design, Kevin Enoch. Her fingerboard is covered with bright metal up to the seventh fret, and fretted from there on up. At the end where the neck meets the pot, the frets stop and the fingerboard wood is attenuated somewhat. This *scoop* allows room for the player

right hand to operate over the neck, rather than over the head. The pot of the banjo is twelve inches in diameter, rather on the large side for five-string banjos. Anecdotal evidence and observation have led me to believe that this configuration of elements has become one of the most popular set-ups for banjos among present day old-time musicians. Several builders besides Enoch are building instruments along these lines, including Mike Ramsey of Appamatox, Virginia, Greg Galbreath of Eggleston, Virginia, and Chuck Lee of Ovila, Texas. This arrangement--a larger pot and scooped fretless (or partially fretted) neck--is the legacy of Kyle Creed. Creed never actually built a banjo with this setup, but the sound of his banjos and his playing led later makers to create it.



Figure 9: Nancy Sluys with her Kevin Enoch banjo.

Kyle Creed told his friend and student Tom Mylet, “I’m the only man that makes an old-time banjo.” Asked what he meant by that, and Creed told him that his were the only banjos available that had the plunky sound of a fretless banjo.

... and his comment was that he deliberately made it sound very “plunky,” was the word. And how he did that was he makes it so that the bridge falls about three quarters back from center. And I said to him, “how did you come up with the scale length.” And at the time he was buying ... pre-slotted [Gibson] Mastertone fingerboards. So it’s a Mastertone scale, but... he would cut off the first fret.... And then put that shorter scale on a 12 inch pot. And puts the bridge in the middle. And why he did that was, he would, he said: all the old-time banjo players played fretless. And you didn’t have to worry about where the bridge went. Instead you put it where you thought it sounded best and they always put it toward the middle. So he designed the scale length so that it was pretty much, pretty close to the middle.

The fretless banjo is perhaps the most immediately noticeable hallmark of round peak banjo style. The African progenitors of the banjo were fretless, as were most of the homemade banjos built in the United States until the late 19th century. Photographic evidence shows that the fretless style remained popular among Surry County musicians well into the 20th century whereas the Boston and New York makers who dominated the market from the 1880s onward were turning out banjos with frets. While few musicians were building their own instruments after about the 1920s, it was common practice to remove the lowest frets of a store-bought or mail-order banjo and cover the underlying fingerboard with a piece of copper or brass sheet metal. Kyle Creed famously started using formica from old furniture for this purpose, though he did use this material for

many of his fretted banjos as well.

Scooped Necks

Kyle Creed's banjo sound and the “plunky” aesthetic in general has led to other innovations in banjo design that have been taken up by latter day builders. Creed was known to play the banjo with his right hand held over the neck of the instrument, rather than over the pot. This meant that the string was plucked closer to the midpoint, and produced a mellower timbre—more of the famous “plunk.” Among followers of the Round Peak style, this became common practice, but modern banjos, with low action, do not have much clearance between the strings and the freeboard. To facilitate plucking over the neck, modern banjo builders have taken to “scooping” out the neck near the pot. None of the Creed-built instruments that I have seen personally have the scoop. Creed's instruments had high action. High action also makes the instruments louder and gives more sustain. Since Round Peak players rarely play higher up the neck, the added difficulty of pressing the strings down does not make as much difference.

The scoop can be traced back to the early 1970s. Ray Alden remembers trying to emulate Kyle Creed's over-the-neck picking technique. He noticed that Kyle was able to get a clear note over the neck by a combination of high action and a home-made brass fingerpick.

I thought of the scoop to allow some room for the hand (and particularly the thumb) to play over that bottom portion of the neck. As my memory goes, one of

the first banjos I had built for me using my scoop idea was from Bob Flesher, who was one of the owners of Liberty Banjos in Connecticut, and supplied many parts to Kyle for his banjos. Prior to this, I had never seen anyone with a scoop in their banjo. A lot of people saw this feature at festivals like Galax, Brandywine, Mt. Airy, etc and, like the fake fingernails I started wearing to simulate Kyle's brass picks, apparently caused a buzz. (P.C. 1/16/2008)

Alden allows that other builders may have come up with the same solution at the same time independently, but the scoop did indeed cause a buzz through the small community of old-time banjoists. One veteran musician told me of her horror at seeing another revivalist player take a pocketknife to a fancy, inlaid banjo in order to improvise a crude scoop at the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention in the 1970s.

Mike Ramsey is one of the more successful of the disciples of Kyle Creed. As of early 2008, Ramsey has built over 2,000 banjos, and his standard models are ubiquitous in the revival community. In an *Old-Time Herald* article, Ramsey told Malcolm Smith that his inspiration to build came from Creed:

“I had ordered a banjo from one of my heroes, Kyle Creed, and Kyle died,” said Mike. “I just couldn't find an old-time banjo that I really liked the sound of. I bought and sold a whole bunch of them and wasn't satisfied. So finally, Whitt [Mead] said, 'Why don't you just build one yourself?' So I did.” That suggestion definitely changed Mike's life and may have changed the history of the instrument.

Mike built his first banjo in the basement of his Ohio home. He fitted a homemade neck to an old rim ... After the first one, he spent considerable time experimenting with various tone rings, rim composition and depth, and other variables in search of what he called “that magic banjo”--the banjo Kyle Creed never finished for him. He was also striving for a banjo design that uniquely accommodated the “Round Peak” style of the Blue Ridge mountain community in North Carolina that fostered such revered old-time musicians as Tommy Jarrell

and Fred Cockerham.

Mike's original goal was to build as many banjos as his hero, Kyle Creed, had. "I was thinking maybe 180 or 190, like Kyle," said Mike. Quickly, however, the demand ... grew and Mike's banjos began to travel to owners across the U. S. and to several other countries. (M. Smith 2007-2008:37-38)

Mike Ramsey is only one of the many contemporary banjo makers producing twelve-inch banjos inspired by Kyle Creed's instruments.

The extent to which this modest alteration became the new standard for old-time banjos is illustrated by Chuck Lee, a banjo maker in Voile, Texas. I posted an inquiry about the history of the scoop to the internet Listserv Banjo-L. I got few definitive answers, though a few respondents placed the first ones in the early or mid 1970s. Lee was one of the makers I cited in my initial inquiry for including scoops all the time. He replied, on January 7, 2008, that he was not thinking of any particular builder, but that when he took up the banjo, the scoop was a feature that he liked:

I started playing banjo in the mid 90s. One or three of my many open back banjos that I acquired over the next several years were scooped and I really liked that. I play over the scoop. So it's my personal preference to scoop my banjos. I build to what I like and then offer alternative options. I do build banjos without a scoop at no extra charge, but most folks so far have wanted a scoop.

This shows that in the intervening 20 years or so, the scoop went from being an experiment to a standard feature of American-made banjos intended for the old-time market. By the mid 1990s, the scoop was not associated with any specific region or style and the "plunky" sound and clawhammer (rather than whamming or up-picking styles)

had spread to become a generic old-time sound.

Plunkiness, though originally a product of technique rather than luthiery, has become a sought-after quality for old-time banjos. The way the plunky banjo sound is linked to the Round Peak community and repertory is an example of a “soundmark,” Murray Schafer's term for a “community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded” (Schafer 1977:10).

Guitar Players

The guitar is a relatively recent addition to the realm of old-time music. DaCosta Woltz and the Southern Broadcasters didn't use a guitarist, but the late 20th century opinion in Surry County seems to be that a string band isn't complete without one—or two. The Camp Creek Boys as heard on their County LP had two guitarists and a mandolin, creating a big, rolling wall of rhythm. While informal observation indicates that most modern day old-time guitar players use flat picks to strum their guitars, the Surry County and nearby area musicians often use thumb and finger picks. The sounds that they create with these picks varies greatly.

The role of the guitar in an old-time band is to be the time keeper and harmonic support. When old-time music was played mainly on banjo and/or fiddle, there was only a melody most of the time, and the harmony was implied, but not supplied. The usual practice is for the guitarist in an old-time context to play open position chords and bass

notes. The usual pattern is sometimes called a boom-chuck: *boom* is a bass note, usually the root or fifth of the chord, played on the downbeat; *chuck* is the strummed chord, played on the upbeat. The bass note will usually alternate between the fifth and root and a sensitive guitarist will emphasize the downbeat, usually. Sometimes a “bass run” will be inserted between chord changes: the chordal strums will be replaced by a brief series of notes leading up to the root of the new chord.

With the guitar, there was a fuller sound, and also choices to be made. There are many ways to harmonize a given melody, even a simple one, and the guitarist must choose. Choices in old-time music are sometimes laden with extra meaning—a certain chord may be considered more or less old-timey or be associated with a “hippy” way of playing. An example: The tune “Lost Indian” as played in Surry County has a section that can be harmonized with either the major IV (D major) or minor VI (F# minor) chord. Some revivalists express disdain for minor chords in backup guitar, finding them too modern. Chester McMillian always uses a minor when it's a possible choice, citing Tommy Jarrell as encouraging him to do just that.

Larry Flippen, son of Benton, plays with a pick on his thumb and one on his index finger, strongly favoring the thumb for most notes. Flippen rarely brushes his thumb or index across a whole chord, preferring to pick out a walking bass line that outlines the underlying chord structure of a tune.

Mac Snow also plays with a thumb and one finger pick on his index finger. His

style is much like that used by Lester Flatt, the famous bluegrass musician. Like most bluegrass and old-time guitarists, his style is based on an underlying “boom-chuck” pattern. This pattern is an alternation of a bass note (“boom”) and a strummed chord or part of a chord (“chuck”). A flat-picker would typically play both with downward strokes with his flat pick. The Lester Flatt style of two finger backup plays both the boom and chuck with downstrokes from the thumb. The index finger picks up, sometimes as an off-beat note after the strum, for a “boom chuck-a”--and sometimes alternates with the thumb for bass runs between chords.

Chester McMillian has one of the most interesting and sophisticated old-time backup styles. Chester wears picks on his thumb, index and middle fingers, with the middle-finger pick flattened and turned “backwards.” This allows him to strum down with his middle finger. Chester's basic motion is a bass note with the thumb, followed by a down stroke with the middle finger and an off-beat upstroke with the index finger. When playing at faster tempos, the index note is often left out. Chester is also adept at using the bass strings to pick out the melody of whatever fiddle tune he is accompanying. In this he shows the influence of Maybelle Carter, who created a style based around this same pattern (sometimes called the “Carter scratch”), but with only a thumb pick.

The late Paul Sutphin was another of the great Round Peak guitar players. I never got to meet Paul and I've never seen a clear video of his playing. There is some

disagreement among those I've interviewed about the mechanics of his style, which he called "clawhammer guitar." Sutphin used a thumb pick and a finger pick, and usually eschewed a capo. I asked Kirk Sutphin, a cousin of Paul, about this style and he demonstrated a pattern for me where the thumb played a bass "boom" and the index picked up first on just the highest string, then brushing across the higher strings.

Creativity and Composition in Surry County

When Cecil Sharp first ventured into the hills of western North Carolina, he was looking for those who could sing a music that had remained unchanged for centuries. Though it's often been challenged, this notion of Appalachia as a place where old-world traditions are preserved through isolation and stubbornness persists. Charles Martin, for one, argues that Appalachian artisans were often pulled in two directions by conflicting desires for individual expression and for family responsibility. Too much creativity would bring shame to the innovator's kinfolk, so innovations had to be measured and pragmatic. How does this apply to music? Martin writes:

I asked one fellow who plays and sings mountain music, and who has hosted the music segments of an annual folk festival for the last eight years, to recall those times when someone performed a piece in a particular style that may have surprised him in its originality, in its unexpected individualization. Since he tapes all performances, I thought this would be a good opportunity to

hear what he considered original, rather than what I might. "I don't recall anyone ever doing that," he replied.

How is creativity expressed, then, in "old-time" Appalachian music? It appears that rather than through instrumentation or phrasing, it lies in the voice. The singer must show "feeling" and "soul" to be considered good, and it is through feeling that personal style is achieved. But what is "feeling?" Benny Moore couldn't define it, except to recall a story about Ricky Skaggs: when Ricky heard Carter Stanley perform and saw the tears running down Carter's cheek onto his guitar, Ricky knew then what feeling was. (1990:142-143)

It can be argued that Martin's example is of dubious relevance to "old-time" Appalachian music, as his example involves two well known *bluegrass* musicians, and that bluegrass in its sixty-year history has been rather more conservative in instrumentation and phrasing than old-time music traditionally was. But that would be rather tedious genre-policing. Where is the room for innovation in this tradition? What is the wellspring of change and innovation?

The family responsibilities which Martin's eastern Kentucky artisans must contend are perhaps looser in the Piedmont-Appalachia borderland where Surry County lies. There is also the fact that many of the great Round Peak musicians flirted with social marginality, and may have been less susceptible to shaming. Whatever the case may be, musicians in Surry county have long engaged in innovation, and have taken great pride in these innovations.

The old-timers of the early 20th century were willing and able to take their music in new directions. Tommy Jarrell often referred to the verses that he made up for old

fiddle tunes, and he remembered the new ways that his father and Tony Lowe and Charlie Lowe would “jazz up” older tunes like “Sally Ann” and “Pretty Little Girl.” This is explored in more detail later in the chapter.

Tommy Jarrell was fond of making verses to tunes, and he would sometimes do so to make the song fit his experience better. In one case, he seems to me to have been engaged in subtle social commentary. The old African American spiritual “Home In A Dat Rock” was reworked by the Carter Family on a record called “God Gave Noah the Rainbow Sign.” Tommy learned this version of the song from a bluegrass recording by Joe Stuart (Gerrard 1989). The lyrics that Tommy sang follow. The third and fourth were Jarrell's creation.

Chorus:

God gave Noah the rainbow sign don't you see?
God gave Noah the rainbow sign don't you see?
God gave Noah the rainbow sign
No more water but the fire next time
Hide me, oh, rock of ages, cleft for me.

Verses:

Poor old Lazarus, poor as I, don't you see?
Poor old Lazarus, poor as I, don't you see?
Poor old Lazarus, poor as I,
When he died he had a home on high,
Hide me, oh, rock of ages, cleft for me.

From east to west the fire might roll, hide thou me.
From east to west the fire might roll, hide thou me,
From east to west the fire might roll,
Lord have mercy on my poor soul.

Hide me, oh, rock of ages, cleft for me.

Old Noah planted him a vineyard, don't you see?
Old Noah planted him a vineyard, don't you see?
Old Noah planted him a vine,
And from this he made a little wine,
Hide me, oh, rock of ages, cleft for me.

Poor old Noah drank a little wine, don't you see?
Poor old Noah drank a little wine, don't you see?
Poor old Noah drank more wine,
And he got higher than a Georgia pine,
Hide me, oh, rock of ages, cleft for me.

Oh there's honey in that rock for me.
Oh there's honey in that rock for me.
Oh there's honey in that rock,
Way up on the mountain top.
Hide me, oh, rock of ages, cleft for me.

The inserted lyrics demonstrate Tommy's skill as a folk poet, and also show him using his music to make a case against the prohibitionist tendencies of his community. Some would say that his new lyrics are borderline-sacrilegious. Tommy was not a regular church-goer, but he was a Christian, and he knew enough of the Bible to know that Noah was the first person to make wine and to become drunk, according to scripture: "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent" (Genesis 9:20-21). The repeated refrain "don't you see" becomes argumentative in the verses about Noah's drinking and consumption of wine. If Noah did it, could it be all that bad? Tommy, with his family tradition of making alcohol going back at least as far as his grandfather Rufe, and with

his well-known appreciation of a good drink, would have certainly identified with the patriarch on this score.

The old tradition of adding new verses for old tunes is carried on today, and people often remember the exact inspiration for these new lyrics. One memorable event: a Japanese-born banjo player from Wilkes County, North Carolina was commuting to work one misty morning when he ran over a pig that had escaped from a nearby farm and wandered onto the road. The following verse, to the tune of “Policeman” was created to commemorate this tragicomedy:

Japanese hit a hog in the fog this morning.
Japanese hit a hog in the fog this morning.
Japanese hit a hog in the fog,
Better watch out for your cat and your dog
this morning.

A verse like this works largely because of the ways in which the real-life event and the existing song text complement each other. The canonical naughty song “Policeman” has a repeated “this morning” at the end of the lines, which comports well with the time of day in the standard version of the story of the Japanese traveler. The song also has some verses that concern hunting (or poaching) wild hogs:

Big old nigger laying on a log this morning.
Big old nigger laying on a log this morning.
Big old nigger laying on a log,
Finger on the trigger and his eye on the hog, this morning.

Down went the trigger, bang went the gun this morning.
Down went the trigger, bang went the gun this morning.
Down went the trigger, bang went the gun,
Wish I had a wagon to haul him home, this morning.

The story of this unfortunate encounter is an updated tale of life in contemporary North Carolina, a place where the suburbs of Winston-Salem are pushing further out into the country, and where a Japanese commuter practices the fretless banjo out in the country and finds himself searching out an aggrieved hog farmer on his morning commute.

Making Music in Surry County

During a visit in the early 1970s, Tommy Jarrell told the folklorist Blanton Owen that: “Daddy and Tony Lowe and Charlie [Lowe] made that tune ‘Sally Ann’” (Unpublished field recording). Tommy’s use of this word “made” is complex. On field recordings he uses it to refer to a variety of musical innovations. In the documentary film *Sprout Wings and Fly* he says he “made” a part of the fiddle song “Drunken Hiccups,” meaning that he added a new verse to the lyrics (Blank). On the album “Sail Away Ladies” he says he “made” a part of “Soldier’s Joy” meaning that he created an alternate, lower version of one of the tune’s parts. Finally, he describes an incident in the 1940s:

Well I was a trying to learn “Paddy on the Turnpike,” Rafe Brady came down here one time and I got him to play it twice for me. Well that was back yonder in the ‘40s when I wasn’t doing no fiddling much, you know and I got to fooling with it--and about a year after that I come up with that tune that I play there and Rafe was down here again. I played it for him and he says “Tommy that ain’t “Paddy on the Turnpike,” that’s “Old Buck”.’ “Well, if there’s a tune named “Old Buck” I

don't know nothing about it but that was all that was said, that's what I called it from then on, "Old Buck"--So I made a tune I reckon. (Seeger 1999:6)

I'm also unaware of any other tune called "Old Buck." Rafe Brady had a reputation as something of a prankster, so he may have been pulling Jarrell's leg. An LP recording of Robert Sykes playing "Paddy on the Turnpike" makes a good argument that Tommy was closer to the tune as played in Surry County than Rafe was letting on.

A fourth way in which a musician could "make" a tune was by re-casting it, often in collaboration with other musicians. Tommy's fiddling father Ben Jarrell thus "made" some tunes in collaboration with the banjo players Charlie Lowe and Tony Lowe. Besides "Sally Ann," "John Brown's Dream" was made from "Pretty Little Girl" and "Backstep Cindy" was made from the tune "Holliding" (also known as "Old Time Backstep Cindy").

The Jarrells and Lowes were not the only musicians who "jazzed up" old fiddle tunes. Nor were they alone in crediting such re-invention as creativity. Benton Flippen, while not exactly prolific, is known as a creator of new fiddle tunes, "Benton's Dream" in particular, but including others like "Sally in the Turnip Patch," "Haystack Hoedown" and "Fiddler's Reel." But when I asked him how many tunes he had made up, he seemed more proud of his re-casting of an old bluegrass number:

JR: I know you've written some pieces like "Benton's Dream." Have you written many other tunes besides that?

BF: I've got three or four more that I [pause] Well, that "Polecat Blues." That's my

version of it. Cause the one I heard was bluegrass and I changed it to that.
(Flippen 2007)

I originally found it striking that when I asked him about composition, the first thing that came to Benton's mind was someone else's tune that he heard on the radio. In light of the various musical “making” activities, though, it makes more sense. Like Tommy Jarrell, Benton considers the playing of a tune and the re-shaping that individualistic players do to existing pieces to be as valid and creative an activity as composing a new tune. In this case, the change from bluegrass to old-time music is specifically noted by Benton, and “Polecat Blues” is not the only tune to get this treatment—Bill Monroe's “Gold Rush” is another bluegrass standard subjected to this kind of musical retrofit by Benton Flippen.

Benton's tune “Fiddler's Reel” was the result of his trying to play “Fiddler's Dream.” The result was not quite “fiddler's dream” but was interesting nonetheless. Benton later learned to play “Fiddler's Dream,” but kept the new tune in his repertory as well.

Composition

Though Tommy was able to compose a tune like “Old Buck” by accident, there is a modest tradition of tune-writing in Surry County. One locally popular tune is called “Tater Patch” and has always been attributed to one Ike Leonard (1884-1911). Tommy Jarrell remembers:

There was a fellow by the name of Ike Leonard—he was a working in his potato patch and this tune come in his mind. And he just throwed down whatever he was a doing and went to the house and got his banjo and played it. It must have happened about 1910, before 1920. I got it through Charlie Barnett Lowe—along in the '20s.

Charlie Barnett's brother married Ike Leonard's widow so I got the straight story to The Tater Patch Tune—the way it was told to me now. (Seeger 1999:4)

Donleavy speculates that “probably Tommy passed it to Charlie Lowe ..., although this Charlie would sometimes come up to Logan's house in tandem with Tommy Jarrell” (2004:34). Lowe played a very fast version of the tune on a home recording.

Nick McMillian has written a few tunes, and two of them are on the Back-Step CD *Rise and Bloom Again*.

N: I think my fiddle tunes are different than some people that write fiddle tunes. Some people... it's like they're playing one part from one song and one part from another song. And it's like “I wrote that song.” I can honestly say I can listen to both of these fiddle tunes and there's no parts of any other tunes that I've heard myself. And I think that's really important with writing fiddle music. It's just about writing a song that you enjoy playing, that's beautiful, that fills a need. And they come across slow. I've been playing for years and I've got three songs that I wrote. I seldom play them that much because I don't think they're as important as the other tunes. But I think that's the way that songs need to come about. You don't need to be playing tunes from another area, you need to evolve the music and make your own tunes right here where you're at. and not having to go get somebody else's fiddle tune that they wrote in another whole different place in another mindset or whatever.

J: How do you go about writing a fiddle tune?

N: What I usually do is try to come up with the A part that's different than any other tune I've ever heard. And then making a B part that's based of that A part. Most tunes, the B part of the tune is one little phrasing that was in that first part, and you take that phrasing and you make it another part of the tune. You give it

another feeling.... I always think that that's the key to writing music is just coming up with one line or something gets stuck in your head , it's like “oh, that would be a good little melody.”and then coming up with a B part from that one little line that you have in your head. And then playing it for people. If anybody \ll say, well I've heard that , then you throw the tune out

I think it's important to have a little tradition of having some new tunes come along. I think that's where the new tunes should come from, instead of other people. Come out of your head or out of the feeling that you get when you play all these other tunes that you played.

J: Do you sit down and say, let me see if I could write something?

N: Oh, no it's nothing intentional. It's more of an accidental thing than anything, like getting a melody in your head.

You can't listen to too many people's music or it'll start getting mixed in in your head and you'll come up with a song and it's something from John Hartford. You don't want other peoples' music to get mixed in with yours to taint it. Until the radio came along, that's how it was, if you heard music you heard somebody playing it and it was somebody that was really close to you, unless you wanted to walk over the mountain to Galax and then the music was different. And that over the mountain music influenced the Round Peak music. So you have to watch out what your influences are because it'll show in your music. (Interview June 11, 2007)

As discussed in the previous chapter, Nick likes to ground his musical practice in the circumstances of an earlier time, and if necessary, he will try to engineer old-fashionedness, as he does by not playing in jams with people outside his band. In this case, he's discussing limiting the music he listens to so that his own original tunes will fit a regional style—he is a geographical purist.

Joe Thrift, like the others, claims to be casual about his composition. His tunes come to him when he's bored with his usual run of tunes and starts “noodling around.”

His tune “Whiteface” is one of the more popular of his tunes, and one of the more popular of the newly composed old-time tunes. I first heard it in a jam session in New York City in 2001 and took it to be an old piece. The melody is quite unlike a typical Surry County old-time tune, but it shows some influence from Surry in its form. It is a striking melody, in the very un-Surry County key of E minor. This probably reflects Thrift's admiration for the playing of Kentucky's Luther Strong. “Whiteface” is a three-part tune, with the A part starting high, and with the B and C parts in successively lower ranges. The A part I asked Joe to speculate on the appeal of this tune, and he thought that perhaps the chord progression of the lower parts created a building tension that was released when the high part came around again. This, and the temporal extension of the lowest part (part C) are in keeping with the classic Round Peak methods of jazzing up a tune—adding more, lower parts, and playing them more times through, creating a moment of excitement when the relatively high first part comes around again.

Singing

One of the most distinctive aspects of Round Peak music is the singing. Musicians in the upland south have always sung, and the ballad tradition of the region is one of its most celebrated and studied cultural products. Though Surry County seems to have been passed over by the ballad hunters of the early 20th century, and ballads are little heard there today, there is a great store of songs that are widely known.

As the fiddlers in Surry County prefer tunes in the “higher” keys of A and D, the vocal style of most of the areas male singers is marked by a strained sound, as if the singers are often at or near the top of their range. Tommy Jarrell in particular seems to have attracted attention because of his skill at fiddling and singing simultaneously.

Tommy Jarrell's singing and fiddling incorporates some of the aspects of the “banjo-song” as defined by folklorist Robert W. Gordon. Most interesting and unusual is his practice of interrupting a sung line and completing the melody on the fiddle. (see Conway1995:241) Tommy's setting of “Rockingham Cindy” is one such performance. This tune is a version of a more widely known song called “Cindy,” with a floating set of verses about a girl named Cindy who's “so sweet the honey bees all swarm around her mouth.” The usual verse of “Cindy” is:

Get along home, Cindy, Cindy,
Get along home, Cindy, Cindy,
Get along home, Cindy, Cindy,
I'll marry you some day.

The Surry County version, it may not be surprising to learn, is more about the homemade liquor that comes from a place called Rockingham. There are two counties called Rockingham that are near Surry, and may be the source of the reference. Rockingham County, North Carolina was the home of the dipsomaniac banjo picker Charlie Poole. The town of Rockingham, North Carolina is near the South Carolina border and was home to a NASCAR race track for many years. Most likely, though, Rockingham was just a generic place name to the Surry County group, a place that sounds like it might

have some pretty good whiskey. One recording of a “Cindy”-type tune from 1927 was called “I Get My Whiskey from Rockingham,” by Georgia's Earl Johnson and his Clodhoppers. The lyrics in Surry County are:

Verse:
Where'd you get your whiskey?
Where'd you get your dram?
Where'd you get your whiskey?
Way down in Rockingham.

Chorus:
Get along home,
Get along home.
Get along home
Back to Rockingham.

“Sally Ann” as a Measure of Round Peak

The forgoing discussion of the history and style of old-time music in Surry County leads to a periodization for musical change in the community. Period 1, the earliest phase extends from the country dances of Tagliaferro's era, when a lone fiddler provided music from a store of tunes descended from the tradition of the British Isles. Period 2 begins in the late 19th Century with the introduction of the five-string banjo, and its adaptation to the fiddle tradition. With the instrument came the influence of African American music, probably from a combination of direct contact with black musicians and through their stylized representation in minstrel performances. This was the great era of innovation, when Ben and Charlie Jarrell, Charlie Lowe and Tony Lowe were getting

together and working out new parts to tunes, creating new ways to make the banjo and fiddle work together (Carter 1990). These changes may have been underway as early as the Reconstruction period, though it is difficult to say exactly. This period lasted from the late 19th Century to about the Second World War. Period 3, after the War, is characterized by the incorporation of instruments (guitar, mandolin, bass) and repertoire from the music of the mass media, specifically bluegrass and country music. Finally, in the early 1970s, the revivalists began exerting their influence on the scene, for a last era of change, Period 4. The following section attempts to track these periods of change and innovation by following the career of a single tune in performance.

In the old-time community, “Sally Ann” is often used as an example of the kind of tune everyone knows and plays. Kevin Donleavy calls it “a kind of *lingua franca*, a form of musical speech common to countless musicianers through countless decades” (2004:244). More tongue-in-cheek is the saying: “There are only really four old-time tunes, and three of them are ‘Sally Ann’” (Wooley 2003:319).

The story of “Sally Ann” is complex, though, and the various ways in which it has been played, arranged, accompanied and transmitted over the last century can tell us a lot about the evergreen issues of tradition and revival, continuity and change, insider and outsider, and music and dance. By looking at the history of this tune as it has been performed by successive generations of musicians, from a mountain singer in 1918 to a band of revivalists in the 1990s, I will attempt to hear the history of old-time music in

Round Peak.

Old time “Sally Ann”

“Sally Ann” is among the most widespread of Appalachian fiddle tunes. It has been played by fiddlers throughout the southern Appalachians but is rare outside this region and despite its general reputation as an old tune, it is not found in any source before the 20th century or outside North America. In 1918, Cecil Sharp notated a single verse and chorus sung by Mrs. Delie Hughes of Burnsville, North Carolina. The lyric that Mrs. Hughes sang was:

O where are you going, Sally Anne?
O where are you going, Sally Anne?
O where are you going, Sally Anne?
I’m going to the wedding Sally Anne.

O shake that little foot Sally Anne.
O shake that little foot Sally Anne.
O shake that little foot Sally Anne.
You’re a pretty good dancer, Sally Anne.
(Sharp 1932:351)

“Sally Ann” is a representative member of the larger family of tunes that includes “Great Big Taters in Sandy Land” as recorded by Eck Robertson of Texas and “Sail Away Ladies” as recorded by Uncle Bunt Stephens and Uncle Dave Macon of Tennessee. Henry Reed (1884-1968) of Glen Lyn, Virginia learned his version of “Sally Ann” in A from George Will White, a black fiddler who lived in Monroe County, West Virginia

(Jabbour). In Virginia, tunes of the “Sally Ann” family also go by such titles as “Beano,” “Dineo” and “Darneo.” Pug Allen’s “Beano” (see transcription 2) is a fairly simple setting in the key of A from Stuarts Draft, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley. Other examples of “Sally Ann” in they key of A were recorded by Freeny’s Barn Dance Band of Mississippi and John Johnson of West Virginia.

This family is characterized by a melody in the high strain that strongly implies a harmonic move from the tonic to the subdominant, back to the tonic, through the dominant and ending on in the tonic, as follows:

| I | IV | | I | | V | | I |

The lower strain or strains of tunes in this family are typified by minimal melodic content, often no more than an alternation between the first and third scale degrees, usually remaining firmly within compass of the tonic chord. The musical interest of this part is usually derived from the rhythmic treatment. This lower strain is often the one to which words are sung. The lower strain is also usually half as long as the higher one, requiring it to be played twice as many times if the tune is to come out “square,” though this is by no means a universal practice, as will be seen below.

One interesting exception to the general ubiquity of “Sally Ann” in the Southern Appalachians is provided by Sid Caudill, a fiddler from Alleghany County, North Carolina. Caudill learned his repertoire from older players like the legendary Green Leonard of Oldtown, Virginia, probably in the 1870s-1880s. In his study of the string

band tradition in the New River Valley, Thomas Carter interviewed and recorded several of Sid Caudill's children, including Joe, Huston and Clell. When interviewing Huston (called "Hus"), the oldest child of Sid Caudill and one who learned most directly from the father, Carter asked about "Sally Ann." Hus said his father never played that tune, and explained that it had "come in" to the area via one of Sid's brothers, banjo-playing Fate Caudill (Carter 1973:51-52). "Sally Ann" was also absent from the repertoire of Emmett Lundy of Dalhart, Virginia, another fiddler of Sid Caudill's generation who learned from Green Leonard (59-60). "Sally Ann" did make it into the repertoire of all the younger generation of Caudill musicians, most of whom learned to play in the early years of the 20th century.

Somewhere along the line, the tune was moved from the key of A or G to D. It may have been moved to this key before being brought into the area. The changes in key necessitate some changes in the melodic contour. While the "Beano" type settings of the tune begin on the octave and fall to the sixth scale degree, suggesting the subdominant chord, the New River version in D begins on the fifth scale degree--coincidentally or not, in the key of D, this is the same note, A--and usually rises to the sixth scale degree.

Frank Blevins

Frank Blevins and His Tar Heel Rattlers, a band from Ashe County in the northwest corner of North Carolina, recorded an exuberant setting of "Sally Ann" in the unusual key of C for Columbia in 1927 (transcription 3). Though his recorded output was

only four sides, Frank Blevins seems to have had a predilection for playing tunes in flatter keys than fiddlers in surrounding areas. His setting of “Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss,” for example, is in G, while most Galax and Surry County area fiddlers perform this tune in D. In “Sally Ann,” the Blevins band plays the lower strain first on this recording. The verses to this recording are as follows:

1. Shake that little foot Sally Ann
Going to the wedding Sally Ann (woo)
2. Round the corner, playing sand (?)
All night long with Sally Ann (woo)
3. Shake that little foot Sally Ann
I’m going home with Sally Ann (woo)
4. Roast xxx xxx xxx (?), put ‘em in a pan
I’ll eat some with Sally Ann (woo)

The schematic in figure 2, as in all others in this study represents the sequence of parts in a performance. Each row represents a single time-through of the tune, with double lines representing a change from one strain to the next. Longer cells represent strains of eight measures length (such as A below) and shorter cells represent strains of four measures (such as B). When letters are accompanied by numerals, it indicates that one of the verses enumerated above is sung to that strain.

B	B	B'	A		
B1	B	B'	A		
B2	B	B'	A		
B	B3	B	B'	A	
B	B4	B	B'	A	A
B3	B	B'	A		

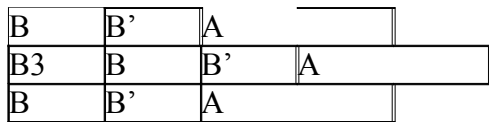


Figure 10. Structure of Frank Blevins and the Tar Heel Rattlers' "Sally Ann" 1927

Note the sequence of parts as illustrated in figure 10. The high strain, or A part, is played once each time through, with one exception. The low strain, or B part, is usually played three times, except when the singer comes in late, in which case they play it an extra time after his verse. The high A in the B' strain may be Frank Blevins' signal to the group that he is about to return to the A part. By playing this tune in C (I'm not aware of any other setting of this tune in this key), Frank Blevins is able to access an exceptionally high note in his A part without going into a higher position on the fiddle. The use of a constant drone on the open E string on the B part also lends this setting a distinctive sound. The banjo player on this recording, Fred Miller, modeled his playing on that of Charlie Poole, a popular recording artist of the time (Wyatt 1997:10-11). This style of accompaniment primarily involves picking chords with the thumb and the first two fingers and only makes occasional gestures towards playing the melody.

Al Hopkins and the Hill Billies recorded a fairly straightforward version of "Sally Ann" in D for Vocalion in 1926 (transcription 4) and again in 1927. Though the band was based in Galax, Virginia, the lead fiddler of the Hill Billies was Charlie Bowman of Tennessee. The Hill Billies, then, were something of a summit-meeting of talented musicians representing a fairly wide area of the Appalachians. Both of their recordings of

“Sally Ann” feature some very stilted vocals by Mr. Hopkins. The 1926 record also has a banjo break by John Rector. It is hard to be certain, but the break sounds almost like Rector is playing the banjo with a flat-pick. On most times-through, the banjo plays a chordal accompaniment.

Again, I would like to point out the arrangement and repetition of the strains and the way these elements relate to the vocal part. The tune is performed seven times through completely, with the high strain played twice before the ending tag.

Each verse of the lyric takes the length of a single playing of the B part to perform. There are three discrete verses:

1. Going to the wedding Sally Ann
Going to the wedding Sally Ann
2. Shake that little foot, Sally Ann
Shake that little foot, Sally Ann.
3. Sift your meal and save the bran.
Going to the wedding Sally Ann.

The relationship of the vocals to the tune structure is represented in the following table.

The numerals next to the letter indicate which of the above verses is sung to that part.

A	A	B1	B2	B
A	A'	B	B	
A	A	B3	B1	B
A	A	B	B	
A	A	B2	B1	B
A	A'	B	B	

A	A	B	B	B
A	A	TAG		

Figure 11: Structure of Al Hopkins and the Hill Billies “Sally Anne” (1926).

As this table shows, the high strain (“A”) is always played twice on each time-through, while the low strain (“B”) is usually played twice if there is no singing. If there is singing, the low strain is played an extra time before cycling back to the A part. On the seventh time-through, the low strain is played an extra time, even though there is no singing.

Tommy Jarrell’s “Old Time Sally Ann”

Outside of the recording studio, “Sally Ann” was ubiquitous in New River Valley region. Mark Sanderford a photographer who lived in Galax for many years, tells the following story:

Back when I first got to Galax it seemed like everybody in the country could play an instrument. I remember going to one auction sale and this fellow was standing there--he had just walked over from across the street and was watching the sale going on, and Wade Ward handed him his fiddle and said, 'Here, play us a tune.' And the guy said, 'I don't know how to play.' Uncle Wade told him, 'Well, play Sally Ann--there's not a man alive that can't play Sally Ann.' So the fellow played 'Sally Ann', and it wasn't bad! To this day I don't know who the fellow was. (Gerrard and Sanderford 1991/1992:30).

The unknown fiddler that Sanderford remembers most likely played something like the Hill Billies version. This version was the setting that Tommy Jarrell remembered as the “old timey” way of playing “Sally Ann.” Followers of Jarrell now retronymically refer to this version as “Old Time Sally Ann.” Jarrell’s “Old Time Sally Ann” (transcription 5)

follows the model of the Hill Billies record, starting out with a phrase that emphasizes the high A and indicating the subdominant by moving up to the B. The verses to the “Old Time Sally Ann” are:

1. Did you ever see a muskrat, Sally Ann?
Draggin’ his slick tail through the sand.
2. I’m a ridin’ in the buggy, yes I am,
I’m ridin’ in the buggy Sally Ann.
3. I’m a goin’ to the weddin’, yes I am,
I’m a goin’ to the weddin’ Sally Ann.
4. Sally’s in the garden, playing in the sand,
Susan’s in bed with the hog-eyed man.
5. I’m goin’ home with old Sally Ann,
I’m a goin’ home with old Sally Ann.

Figure 12 shows the part order and verse placement as heard on County CD 2725. The notation “(low)” after a letter indicates that Jarrell plays the strain in the lower octave.

A	A	B	B		
A	A	B	B1	B	B
A	A (low)	B (low)	B (low)		
A	A	B2	B	B3	B
A	A	B	B	B	
A (low)	A (low)	B (low)	B (low)		
A	A	B4	B	B5	
A	A	B	B		

Figure 12: Structure of Tommy Jarrell’s “Old Time Sally Ann” on County CD-2725.

On no recordings of the newer “Sally Ann” does Tommy sing the first verse (“Did you

ever see a muskrat...”), but on both recordings I have heard of Tommy playing “Old Time Sally Ann” he sang this verse first, suggesting that he strongly associated it with this tune. Note also the frequent use of “I’m a...” at the beginnings of lines. This prelude parallels the rhythm of the fiddle part nicely and, as will be seen below, is absent from the newer version of “Sally Ann.” The modifier “old” in verse 5 may be Tommy’s way of referring to the old-time pedigree of this version, as he does not use “old” in the later version. Verses 3 and 5 are familiar from the other recordings of “Sally Ann” that have been discussed, and seem to be widely associated with this tune. Verse 1 is also sung to old versions of “Sally Ann” from other parts of the country, and some even call the tune “Muskrat Sally Ann.” Verses 2 and 4, however, are rarer, and may have been created, or at least set to this tune, in the Round Peak area.

The “Round Peak” Sally Ann

Two other Round Peak musicians figure into the story at hand. Charlie Lowe (1878-1964) was a friend and musical companion of Ben Jarrell and the man who taught Tommy to play banjo. He was widely regarded as the best banjoist in the area, and won a blue ribbon at the 1949 Galax Old Fiddlers’ Convention (Donleavy 2004:30-31). Only a few home recordings exist of Charlie Lowe playing banjo with Tommy on fiddle and Earnest East on guitar. Lowe’s playing is fast, precise and driving, almost entirely played

on a single string at a time. Tona Hawks (1883-1914) was raised by his grandfather, Kenny Lowe and was thus known as Tony Lowe by almost everyone. Tony Lowe (as he'll be referred to below) lived "the next holler over" from the Jarrells and was a close friend and music partner of Ben Jarrell (Neithammer 26). Tommy said,

There's a lotta folks say he could outfiddle my daddy...Both he and daddy would play with Charlie Lowe or Joe Lowe or Clingman Lowe, all them Lowes' kinfolk, they were all old timey. They'd play old timey 'Sally Ann.' My daddy and Tony jazzed it up a little and made the 'Sally Ann' that I play. (Donleavy 2004:89)

During a visit in the early 1970s, Tommy Jarrell told the folklorist Blanton Owen that: "Daddy and Tony Lowe and Charlie [Lowe] made that tune 'Sally Ann'" (Unpublished field recording). Tommy's use of this word "made" is complex. On field recordings he uses it to refer to a variety of musical innovations. In the documentary film *Sprout Wings and Fly* he says he "made" a part of the fiddle song "Drunken Hiccups," meaning that he added a new verse to the lyrics (Blank). On the album "Sail Away Ladies" he says he "made" a part of "Soldier's Joy" meaning that he created an alternate, lower version of one of the tune's parts. Finally, he describes an incident in the 1940s:

Well I was a trying to learn "Paddy on the Turnpike," Rafe Brady came down here one time and I got him to play it twice for me. Well that was back yonder in the '40s when I wasn't doing no fiddling much, you know and I got to fooling with it--and about a year after that I come up with that tune that I play there and Rafe was down here again. I played it for him and he says "Tommy that ain't "Paddy on the Turnpike," that's "Old Buck".' "Well, if there's a tune named "Old Buck" I don't know nothing about it but that was all that was said, that's what I called it from then on, "Old Buck"--So I made a tune I reckon. (Seeger)

If there's a tune called "Old Buck," besides the one Tommy played I don't know nothing about it either. Rafe Brady had a reputation as something of a prankster, so he may have been pulling Jarrell's leg.

A fourth way in which a musician could "make" a tune was by reimagining it, often in collaboration with other musicians. Tommy's fiddling father Ben Jarrell thus "made" some tunes in collaboration with the banjo players Charlie Lowe and Tony Lowe. Besides "Sally Ann," "John Brown's Dream" was made from "Pretty Little Girl" and "Backstep Cindy" was made from the tune "Holliding" (also known as "Old Time Backstep Cindy"). Since these tunes were made by fiddlers working with banjo players, it seems reasonable to state that part of this reimagining was based on a higher degree of interplay between banjo and fiddle parts. This will be explored more below.

Black Influence

The range of activities that fall under the rubric of "making" gives us some idea of the artistic ferment in the Round Peak area of North Carolina, a ferment that there is reason to believe was fueled in part by a degree of black-white interchange in the area. This interchange is well documented by Cecilia Conway's *African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia*. Corrina McKinney Bowden remembers a black band made up of fiddle, banjo, drum and piano regularly playing for white dances in Mount Airy during the 1920s. A black guitar player, Jim Rawley remembers several black banjo-picking friends. Tommy Jarrell remembers a black banjo player who would play for the family on visits to

purchase whiskey from Ben Jarrell. Later in life, Tommy learned the song “Bo Weaval” from a “yellar gal” (light skinned black woman) at a tent show. Tommy also learned the song “Rylan Spencer” (sometimes called “Riley and Spencer”) from the playing and singing of Jim Rawley (Conway 1995:150-151). But how is the black influence made manifest in sound? And how is it a part of the making of the Round Peak “Sally Ann”?

Black Non-blues Secular Music

Americans of African descent have been playing the dance music of the American south since colonial times. Eileen Southern reports that blacks were fiddling “Negro jigs” as music for the entertainment of white dancers as early as the 1760s (1997:64-68). At about this same time an English traveler in Maryland wrote the earliest surviving description of a banjo on what would become United States soil: “the instrument (if it may be so called) is made of a Gourd, something in imitation of a Guitar” (Cresswell 66). Unfortunately, the black contribution to the string-band tradition has not been well documented on commercial or archival recordings (Otto and Burns 1972; Carlin 1995:31-32). Despite the shortage of commercial recordings, we have ample evidence of the influence of black musicians on their white contemporaries. Prominent white musicians including Maybelle Carter, Bill Monroe, Dock Boggs and Dock Roberts have credited blacks as either major influences or direct mentors and models.

To answer the questions of the previous section--how is black influence made

manifest in sound and how is this influence evident in the making of the Round Peak “Sally Ann”--we need to ask: what does black string-band music sound like outside the context of the blues? It may be supposed from listening to Joe Thompson, Frank Patterson and John Lusk that black fiddlers were “rougher and more rhythmic” than their white counterparts who played the same repertoire. The banjoist and folklorist Bob Carlin almost makes this claim, but cautions that “all African American, like all Anglo-American, musicians do not sound the same” (2004:32). The black fiddlers of south central Kentucky seem to be an important exception to the general trend of more rhythmic fiddling among African Americans. In fact a side-by-side comparison of the fiddling of the black Kentucky fiddler Cuje Bertram with that of his white fellow Kentuckians Leonard Rutherford and John Salyer shows Bertram to be the most intricate and notey (Titon 2001:40-41). Dock Roberts, an influential Kentucky fiddler who recorded in the 1920s, learned his elegant and sophisticated long-bow style from Owen Walker, a black neighbor (Wolfe 1998:69). All this is to emphasize ahead of time the fact that traditions are created and sustained by individuals and that they will vary widely and confound most attempts to generalize about them. I hope, therefore, that all that follows will be understood to be offered in a spirit of relativism and moderation admitting that there are exceptions to all statements about old-time fiddling.

Titon's Melody Types

Ethnomusicologist Jeff Titon identifies a type of melody common in south-central Kentucky--a region with a high concentration of black residents--that is the result of “the ongoing black-white musical interchange that characterized vernacular music throughout the colonies and the Republic.” This melody type (Type Three in Titon's scheme) is characterized by: 1) relatively short phrases; 2) major or pentatonic tonality; 3) offbeat accents and syncopation; and 4) limited melodic range in individual strains. Such tunes are particularly suited to being played as banjo-fiddle duets (Titon 2001:20-21). Another type of melody (Type One) “descends from a class of British and Irish tunes.” The characteristics of these tunes are: 1) major or minor tonality; 2) melodic movement that tends to be stepwise along the scale or outlines a major chord; 3) relatively long phrases are comprised of a succession of eighth notes; 4) wide range; and 5) syncopation is rare and when present it tends to be across bar lines. The characteristic accompaniment to the fiddle for these melodies is chordal (19-20).

Titon's lists of characteristics are intended to distinguish types of melody--in this case the African American derived melodies from those that originated in New England or among the Scots-Irish who settled eastern Kentucky. For my purposes, I propose that these traits may be useful in comparing different performances of the same melody. Rather than thinking of any of the Type Three elements as exclusively black, I tentatively

call them *interracial tendencies*. These phenomena may be found more often and to a higher degree in the fiddling of black musicians and white players who lived in areas of higher interracial musical exchange. Performances of the same tune by fiddlers from areas with less black-white interchange will tend to render their tunes in a manner closer to that described by the Type One melody.

Compare, for example, the version of “Eighth of January” by the white musicians Charlie Higgins (fiddle), Wade Ward (banjo), and Dale Poe (guitar) (transcription 6), with that recorded by the black duo of Nathan Frazier (banjo and vocal) and Frank Patterson (fiddle) (transcription 7). Charlie Higgins (1878-1967) came from the older Galax tradition that included Emmett Lundy and Green Leonard. Remember that the areas “below the mountain” (like Round Peak) were the site of greater black-white interchange than those “up the mountain” (like Galax). Transcription six is based on a recording made by Peter Hoover in 1959. Not much is known about Frank Patterson, but he was born in Walter Hill Tennessee (30 miles east of Nashville) about 1880, making him a contemporary of Higgins. He learned most of his repertory from an older black fiddler sometime around 1900 (Wolfe n.p.). This recording is from a 1942 session organized by the folklorist John Work of Fisk University in Nashville. Patterson subtly varies the rhythm each time through.

Titon lists short phrases as the first quality of the black influenced melody type. If we compare the way these two fiddlers render the high strain, Higgins’ melody is best

heard as being constructed of two two-bar phrases, while Patterson plays four two-bar phrases. Patterson's version is based on a repeated two-bar motive, while Higgins' has a flowing, notey quality in which the second phrase flows almost seamlessly out of the first. While there is much melodic repetition in Patterson's rendition, Higgins' high part has no repeated melodic material.

The second quality Titon associates with black fiddling is major or pentatonic tonality. Both performances are in D major, but while Higgins plays G and C-sharp (the fourth and seventh scale degrees), Patterson's version is completely pentatonic. Notice also that Higgins' version implies the subdominant chord in the second measure of the high strain, while Patterson's high strain does not. The B parts are strikingly similar, but Patterson and Frazier add a second low part, C, that features a double stop of F-sharp and B, implying the relative minor chord, B minor. The last half of measure four of the Patterson's B part features an elision, whereby the last note of one phrase serves as the first note of the next (in this case D). By not lingering on the tonic note but launching into the next strain, this elision gives the transition from the B to C part an exciting melodic push.

The third quality Titon lists is the use of offbeat accents and syncopation. Higgins' version is fairly straight-forward in its rhythm, consisting of quarter and eighth notes with a regular pulse. Patterson varies the rhythm considerably on successive time-throughs, mainly by shifting the accents and deploying different syncopations. In the time-through

transcribed here, note the use of an anticipation between measures 2 and 3 and 4 and 5 of the A part. The long note held over the bar between measures 5 and 6 results in the accent being shifted from the first to the second beat of measure 6 (note the same technique in measures 7-8).

The limited melodic range that Titon associates with black and black-influenced fiddling is problematic for the use to which I am putting these categories. It also seems to be the quality to which there are the most available exceptions. It does, however, suit the present situation. While the A part of both settings encompasses an octave plus a perfect fifth, Higgins' B part encompasses an octave plus a half step, while Patterson's B and C parts are constrained to a major sixth.

The banjo accompaniment to these two settings further highlights their differences. Higgins' banjoist, Wade Ward, was an accomplished and prize winning clawhammer banjo player, but he chose to accompany Higgins using a three-finger (thumb plus index and middle fingers) up-picking style that produces arpeggiated chords rather than a melodic line. By playing a solely pentatonic setting, Patterson creates a version that is more suited to the limitations of the five-string banjo. Nathan Frazier's clawhammer part closely follows the fiddle line, creating a performance that is more a duet than a melody with accompaniment.

All the foregoing points to the possibility of describing the Patterson and Frazier version as a Type Three black-influenced performance and the Higgins, Ward and Poe

recording as a Type One British-derived performance.

Comparison of Round Peak and Old-time versions of “Sally Ann”

If we look at the new “Sally Ann” created by the Jarrells and Lowes (the “Round Peak ‘Sally Ann’”), we will find that most of the tendencies Titon associated with black and black influenced fiddling show up to a degree not found in the Old-Time “Sally Ann,” suggesting that it is in part the result of interracial interchange in the Round Peak area (transcription 8).

To begin with, the phrases are indeed shorter in the newer version. The A part is based on a repeated motif only a single measure in duration. The B and C parts are half the length of the high part. Both of these lower strains are constructed out of relatively short repeated melodic motifs as well. The older version does not rely on such repetitive motifs and the high part features no repeated melodic material at all.

Titon’s second quality is major or pentatonic tonality. All versions of Sally Ann that I am aware of are in major keys. The Round Peak “Sally Ann,” despite the use of the fourth and seventh scale degrees as passing tones, has a strongly pentatonic sound, though it is not as pentatonic as his “Old Time” version, or the earlier recordings by Blevins and the Hill Billies (if things can be said to be “relatively” pentatonic). Finally, just as Patterson’s “Eighth of January” lacked the implication of a subdominant found in Higgins’ version, the high part of the Round Peak “Sally Ann” stays within the area of

the tonic chord until the cadential move in the second to last measure, while the “Old Time Sally Ann” features the typical “Sally Ann” chord progression with a subdominant harmony for measures 2-3.

The offbeat accents and syncopation, Titon’s third quality, are characteristic of most of Jarrell’s fiddling, and are provided by his vigorous “bow-rocking” style. This style is difficult to describe in words, but it involves accenting notes by both “bearing down”--or applying a little more pressure with the bow and simultaneously rotating the bow so as to catch and sound an adjacent string. Typical syncopation patterns are: 1) the dotted-quarter, followed by an eighth note or pair of sixteenths, followed by another quarter note pattern at the ends of strains and phrases; and 2) across-the-bar anticipations.

Titon’s fourth quality is limited melodic range. If we count every note in the A part, the range is an octave plus one step from A5 to B6. The B section has a range of a major sixth from A5 to F#5. However, the bulk of the melodic content of these two strains falls within a significantly smaller range. Looking at the tune as a whole, we note that the eighth note figure BABC# is common to the second half of the penultimate measure of each strain. In the A and B parts, this figure and this range of notes is only heard in this location (penultimate measure of the strain). If we discount this cadential flourish, the A part has a range of a major sixth from D5 to B6, and the B part has a range of a fifth between D5 and A5. If we discount the high A in the B part as not an essential part of the melody (some other local players omit it) the B part spans only a major third,

D5 to F#5.

The most noticeable change from the Old Time version is the de-emphasizing of the high B note in the A part. The actual range of the melody in this strain is the same, but the range of the “important” notes, those that fall on the beat and define the melodic contour, is compressed by a whole step in the Round Peak version.

Comparing the lower strain in the Old Time and Round Peak tunes, note that D, the tonic note, is not arrived at until the third measure of the Round Peak version, thus creating a part that mostly alternates between only two notes, E and F sharp. Both of these melodic changes have implications for the banjo part.

The banjo part on the Blevins recording is mainly rhythmic and chordal, with only a few gestures at the melody of the tune. John Rector, the banjoist on the Hill Billies recording, plays mostly chords, but takes one melodic chorus, the sound of which leads me to suspect that he may have been playing a tenor banjo or a five-string with a flat pick. Fred Cockerham, accompanying Tommy Jarrell, plays a lot more of the melody, rarely striking more than one string at a time. As shown, this is characteristic of the Round Peak style of clawhammer banjo and also describes Nathan Frazier’s playing on “Eighth of January,” discussed above. There are some important distinctions between Frazier’s style and Cockerham’s, though.

If the instrument is tuned aDADE, the customary tuning for playing in D major in this area, most of the key notes are available as open strings. Also, Because the high B is

not played on the beat in the Round Peak “Sally Ann,” but only as a decoration, it can be omitted entirely by the banjo, and often is. When playing Sally Ann on banjo, Jarrell and Cockerham usually rendered the high part with a brush across the long strings followed by the striking of the short drone string on the beat (a move sometimes called the “Galax lick,” see transcription 9). Most of the lower strain can be played simply by hammering on and pulling off from the E string.

As has been seen, the syncopation, phrase structure, accompaniment, harmony, and range of the Round Peak “Sally Ann” make it in many ways a more “interracial” version than the “Old Time Sally Ann.”

Varying Repetition

Another trait that I believe comes from the African-American string-band tradition is the extension of tunes by means of extra reiterations of the lower strains. The recordings of Nathan Frazier and Frank Patterson and the Gribble, Lusk and York band reveal a few things relevant to what I have been discussing so far. These two black string bands played in central Tennessee and were recorded in the 1940s by researchers from the Library of Congress and Fisk University. The characteristics enumerated by Jeff Titon are all present (as illustrated by the discussion of Frazier and Patterson’s “Eighth of January,” above). So is a seemingly casual approach to the “arrangement” of the tune. Often, the higher strain of a two-part piece will be played twice, followed by a higher number of repetitions of the lower strain. The part order of Frazier and Patterson’s

“Eighth of January” is illustrated in Figure 5.

A	A	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	B	
A	A	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
A	A	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C

Figure 13: Structure of “Eighth of January” as played by Frazier and Patterson.

In contrast, the Charlie Higgins version is AABB throughout. This structural freedom can also be heard in performances by Joe Thompson of Mebane, North Carolina, perhaps the last living traditional black fiddler. Joe calls the low strain of a tune “‘the resting part’ and [says] that, during long dances, it was customary to ‘hang out down there’ and ‘coast’” (Wooley 2003:111). Thompson lived and played in the Piedmont, hundreds of miles from the Frazier/Patterson and Gribble/Lusk/York bands in central Tennessee, yet he shared this “hanging out” approach. This suggests that this was a widespread African American practice in the Upper South. Round Peak lies in between these two areas, so any white musicians in that locale might have been within earshot of this practice.

We have seen that the Blevins band would vary their performance, but never to the degree to which the black string bands did. The extravagantly flexible way in which the Round Peak players felt at liberty to vary the structure at will is I believe a key innovation of the Round Peak style and a product of black influence.

The Round Peak “Sally Ann” is a three part tune, and as played by Tommy Jarrell on four separate recordings, highly variable in the way these parts are repeated each time through the tune, as illustrated in Figure 5, which is based on the rendition on *Tommy &*

Fred (County CD-2702).

Figure 5. Structure of Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham's "Sally Ann" from "Tommy and Fred," County CD 2702.

A	A	B	B	B	C	C	C			
A	A	B	B	B	C	C				
A	A	B	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	
A	A	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	C	C
A (low)	A (low)	B	B	B	B					
A	A	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
A	A	B	B	B						

The A part is always played twice, but the B part is played at least three times and as many as *eight* times on one time-through. Tommy played the C part from two to six times and sometimes omitted it completely.

To put this performance in the context of the rest of Tommy Jarrell's repertoire I would like to compare it to the other tracks on the *Tommy & Fred* album, taking this as a reasonably representative selection of his repertoire. Of the album's twenty-one tracks, seven are primarily what would be called "songs"--tunes with a single strain repeated over and over. The remaining fourteen tracks are fiddle tunes with two or more strains, most with some singing. Only two of these tunes, the instrumental "Soldier's Joy" and the two-strain song "The Yellow Rose of Texas," are played in the supposedly standard AABB format throughout. In all cases the highest strain is played exactly twice, no matter its length (4, 8 or 10 measures), and lower strains are played between two and eight times. The number of repetitions of lower strains is almost always within the range

of two or three repetitions. For example, on “Old Bunch of Keys” the low part is played between four and six times on each time-through, on “June Apple” it is between two and four and on “Cluck Old Hen,” it is between three and five. The widest variance is on “Cumberland Gap,” on which the low strain is played three times the first time through and eight times on the fourth.

Blanton Owen asked Jarrell about this practice during one visit:

Blanton Owen: Sometimes...when you’re playing the low part it just doesn’t feel right to change there. Most everybody plays it two times through and then two times the other part through.

Tommy Jarrell: Yeah, I know they do, well I, we used to play for two or three minutes on the low part then go on to the high part. We played more on the low than we did the high.

BO: Things like that “Step Back.”

TJ: Yeah.

BO: ...and all those things like that, they just sound good sometimes with all those basses going on and on and on.... Bottom part of “Sally Ann.”

TJ: [fiddling a bit] Let’s get a drink then we’ll play some more.
(Unpublished field recording, 1/2/1974)

Though Jarrell doesn’t have much to say on the topic, he clearly knew what he was doing and was aware that it was not the typical way of playing a tune. Ray Alden, who recorded Tommy Jarrell on many occasions and produced *Tommy and Fred: Best Fiddle-Banjo Duets*, says that this practice may have grown out of Jarrell’s work as a square dance fiddler:

The low part, obviously, is easier to play, it's easier on your hands and everything than the high part. The high part's got bigger finger stretches and maybe it's a little bit hard to get really good intonation. So if you had to play a long square dance, it made a lot of sense to play the low part [longer] and it would just be easier on your hands. Because these dances, I think Tommy said they lasted sometimes 40 minutes.

So then the problem became, if you're playing with a banjo player, how do you know when to change. The fiddler is determining everything, he's playing, he says: okay, I'm rested, I'll go up to the high part. What they would do often, they would sit, Tommy told me, they would sit, sometimes in a door between two rooms and they would interlock their knees, so all Tommy had to do was just nudge Fred or Charlie Lowe's knee and that was immediately a sign I'm going up to the high part now. And the other thing Tommy would do was he'd raise his fiddle a little bit. When we played with him he would almost always raise his fiddle to let us know, even if he was doing AABB, cause it was so ingrained in him to give that communication. (Alden)

Before World War II, most dances in the Piedmont, as elsewhere in rural America, were held in private homes with small rooms, so musicians would sit in doorways and play so that people could dance in two rooms on either side (Carlin 2004:76). Forty minutes seems like a very long time for a single dance, but not outside the realm of possibility. Carlin notes that a single dance usually lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes, requiring great stamina indeed.

The Third Part

The appending of a low third part to a tune is another Round Peak hallmark. Ray Alden speculated that the appeal of the low part also comes from playing for long square dances. The B and C parts of the Round Peak "Sally Ann" are technically easier to fiddle

than the A part so playing these parts long gave the musicians a chance to rest a bit and simultaneously keep the music interesting. The return to the high part after the long coast in the C part would create a little musical lift--a feeling of ebb and flow, perhaps.

This third part is sometimes thought of as an alternate version of the second part, and its melody is quite similar. Fiddling a normally high strain in a lower octave is a practice characteristic of (though not unique to) the Surry County area. Clell Caudill, a musician from Ennice, North Carolina, up in the Blue Ridge, spent some time playing with Charlie Jarrell (Tommy's uncle), when Charlie lived "up the mountain." Clell learned some tunes from Charlie Jarrell and came to think of tunes in which parts could be played in different octaves as "below the mountain tunes" (Carter and Owen 1978a). Older "up the mountain" fiddlers like Emmett Lundy and Charlie Higgins, on the other hand, did not recast strains in the lower octave.

Although I noted above that the addition of extra parts was characteristic of the Round Peak way of "making" a tune, the third part of the Round Peak "Sally Ann" may be an exception. Tommy tells the following story about the low strain:

I learned that from Hiram Moody in Lambsburg, and I brought it down to North Carolina and showed everybody else how to play that part on the basses. I don't know where Hiram learned it, unless he just made it up. (Donleavy 2004:32)

Unfortunately, Hiram Moody was never recorded. John Rector (not the John Rector who played banjo on the Hill Billies recording), a fine fiddler in his own right, was interviewed at the age of 90 by Kevin Donleavy, to whom he described a meeting with

Moody:

There was a fellah named Hiram Moody lived in Lambsburg. He got hold of my fiddle one time, and I thought he was going to TEAR IT UP! Playing for a dance at the top of the mountain. He was a GOOD FIDDLER!" Then John plays a wild "Sally Ann," saying afterwards that's how Moody played it. (Donleavy 2004:293)

As played on Donleavy's unpublished field recordings, Rector's rendition of Moody's version does not have the low third part that Tommy attributed to him, but is strikingly similar to Tommy's "Old Time Sally Ann," particularly in the high part.

Donleavy's book offers another anecdote to further complicate tracing the third part. Aldon Harris (b. 1918), the son of Hiram Moody, said:

Here's the way Tony Lowe used to play 'Sally Ann' and they used to tune their violins with that high bass. Tony Lowe was the man to play it that way. He's the one who changed it like that. They used to play it the old way. Aldon mentions that dad Hiram learned to play it Tony's way. (Donleavy 2004:244)

After this, again based on Donleavy's unpublished field recordings, Harris plays a "Sally Ann" in three parts, strikingly similar to Tommy Jarrell's Round Peak version. Harris also said that Hiram Moody often played music with Ben Jarrell.

So who taught whom? The chronology is impossible to discern based on these interviews. The age of the fiddlers is also a factor. Harris was 70 when Donleavy interviewed him. Rector was 90. It is possible to speculate that Tony Lowe taught Hiram, who taught Tommy. The fact that Aldon Harris specifically mentions the "high bass" tuning (meaning the fiddle is tuned ADAE from low to high) as a feature of Tony Lowe's version strongly suggests that this may be the case as the third part would be difficult to

play in standard tuning, while the other two parts do not utilize the lowest string at all. Further evidence for this theory is the fact that Tony Lowe died in 1914 and Tommy's escape to Lambsburg did not occur until 1921. On the other hand, Aldon was not born until 1918, and thus would never have known Tony Lowe personally, though clearly his father held Lowe in high regard. As we have seen in Tommy's attribution of the low part to Moody, it is not uncommon for fiddlers to show their respect to those they learn from by announcing the provenance of particular tunes, parts, or variations. Moody very likely would have told his son about the man who taught him the low part.

Singing

Another aspect of black music-making that influenced whites was singing. Old-time musicians and bands often divide their repertoires into two broad categories: the "songs" and the "tunes." In the old-time community a "tune" is a piece of music that is instrumental or primarily instrumental, though one may sing when performing it. A "song" is a piece of music that is primarily vocal and cannot be performed without singing the lyrics, though some songs have been transformed into fiddle tunes. The songs may be derived from old British ballads or folk tales and myths. "Sally Ann" is associated with lyrics almost everywhere it is played. We can therefore classify it in a third category, the "instrumental song." As described by Alan Jabbour, this is a "class of lyric folksongs that are sprightly, playful, allusive and occasionally obscene," and often associated with fiddling in the South (Jabbour 1996:254). As has been shown, the Round

Peak area of North Carolina was a place of especially high black-white musical exchange, and consequently, a higher incidence of singing to fiddle music. Comparison with musicians from the Galax area across the state line in Virginia (and “up the mountain”) is instructive. Roscoe Parrish and Luther Davis, fiddlers from this area, did not sing along to their fiddling, and report that such singing was uncommon in their area, though they knew that this was the practice in North Carolina (Conway 1995:151).

Thomas Talley’s 1922 collection *Negro Folk Rhymes* includes many rhymes similar in character to the verses that make up “Sally Ann.” Many of them also resembled “Sally Ann” in that they were made up of disconnected “floating” stanzas that could appear in flexible combination with any other stanzas (Wolfe 1991:xxvi). The rhymes collected by Talley were “used as banjo and fiddle (violin) songs. It ought to be borne in mind, however, that even these were quite often repeated without singing or playing” (Talley 1991:236). The words and the music, then, have independent lives and can be put together in a modular fashion by the performer. The performance is described thus:

The compositions were comparatively long. From one to four lines of a Negro Folk Rhyme were sung to the opening measures of the instrumental composition; then followed the larger and remaining part of the composition, instruments alone. In the rhyme “Devilish Pigs” four lines were used at a time. (237)

Talley compares the evolving structure of the music as various verses are sung to a theme-and-variations movement in a Western classical piece. On the effect of the words on the musical performance, Talley writes:

The Negro Folk Rhyme, then, furnished the ideas about which the “old time” Negro banjo picker and fiddler clustered his best instrumental music thoughts...Perhaps a new school of orchestral music might be built on the Negro idea that some of the performers sing a sentence or so here and there, both to assist the hearers to a clearer musical understanding and to heighten the general artistic finish. (238)

There are several clear parallels to the banjo-and-fiddle based old-time music being studied here. Most scholars now think that the music played by Southern blacks and whites in the 19th and early 20th centuries was much closer to each other than commercial recordings would lead us to believe (Wolfe 1991:xxv-xxvi). The long compositions and occasional singing that Talley describes also describe Tommy Jarrell’s performances of “Sally Ann.” I cannot speculate here on whether Tommy’s singing helps his audience understand the music better, as Talley suggests, but it certainly does “heighten the general artistic finish” of the performance, if only by introducing variety into the repeated strains which would be played many more than five or six times in the context of a dance.

Jarrell commercially recorded “Sally Ann” at least three times. Singing is only done to accompany the second and third parts, which are shorter, less melodically active and in a lower part of the fiddle’s range. As has been shown, Tommy Jarrell’s “Sally Ann” has a loose structure, with the high strain (or “A part”) played twice each time through, and the following strains (the “B part” and “C part”) played variable numbers of times, with the C part sometimes omitted altogether. Verses sung to the B part are never

sung to the C part, nor are C part verses sung to the sung to the B part.

The B part verses are:

B1. Ride the buggy, yes I am
Ride the buggy Sally Ann
Sally Ann
Sally Ann

B2. Sift your meal and save the bran.
The old cow needs it, Sally Ann.
Sally Ann.
Sally Ann.

B3. Sally in the garden sifting sand
Susan in the bed with the hogeyed man
I'm going home with Sally Ann,
I'm going home with Sally Ann.

B4. Greenback dollar!
Greenback dollar, good as gold.

With the exception of B4, the B part verses are sung over the duration of two iterations of the B part.

The C part verses are also usually sung over the duration of two iterations of the part. The C part verses are:

C1. Who in the world in the doggone nation's
Throwing them rocks at me?
All them rocks, all them rocks
All them rocks at me?

C2. How in the world can I swing Sue?
Susan's gone away.
She's gone away
Susan's done and gone.

The following tables illustrate the structure of the tune as it is realized on three recordings. Each table row represents a complete time-through of the tune. A letter alone indicates an instrumental performance of the relevant strain. A letter with an apostrophe (A') represents the strain played in a lower octave on the fiddle. A letter with a number indicates that the verse from the above list is sung. As most of the verses take two iterations of a part to sing, the letter and number will appear twice. The first is a performance of Tommy fiddling and singing, accompanied by Fred Cockerham on fretless banjo.

A	A	B	B	B	C	C	C		
A	A	B	B	B	C	C			
A	A	B1	B1	B	B	C	C1	C1	C
A	A	B	B	B	C	C	C	C2	C2
A'	A'	B'	B'	B'	B'				
A	A	B2	B2	B	B	B	B3	B3	B
A	A	B	B	B					

Figure 14: Structure and verses of “Sally Ann” from County CD 2702.

The next table represents Tommy singing and playing in a band context, with banjo, guitar and string bass accompaniment on Heritage 038.

A	A	B	B	C	C				
A	A	B	B4	B	B1	B1	B		
A	A	B	B	C	C2	C2	C	C	
A'	A'	B'	B'	B'	B'				
A	A	B	B3	B3	B	B	C	C1	C1
							C	C	C

Figure 15: Structure and verses of “Sally Ann” from Heritage 038.

This last table represents a performance of Tommy playing solo banjo and singing on County CD 2726.

A	A	B	B1	B1	B				
A	A	B	B4	B	B	C	C2	C2	C
A	A	B	B3	B3	B	C	C1	C1	C
A	A	B							

Figure 16: Structure and verses of “Sally Ann” from County CD 2726.

Although this is a limited sample of the sum total of times Tommy Jarrell performed “Sally Ann” we might speculate on what this can tell us about his approach to singing verses in the context of a loosely structured tune. The verses may be sung in any order, and Tommy varies this freely, although he seems to prefer to sing “Ride the buggy...” early in a performance rather than later. From this limited sample we can see that he begins singing B verses on either the first or second iteration, and that in a given performance he will either always start singing on the first B or always on the second B. Furthermore, he will always play a strain through at least once more after finishing a verse before moving on to the next strain. Finally, if a verse is sung, the strain is always repeated more times than if it is played without singing. Strains are always played at least twice through (the solitary B at the end of the solo banjo performance is basically a tag), but when a verse is sung during a strain, it is played at least four times through. The structure of the music expands to accommodate the singing.

Tommy attributed the C part verses, like the melody, to Hiram Moody (Donleavy

2004: 32). Though he says that both verses were ones Moody would sing, C1 (“Who in the world, in the doggone nation’s throwin’ them rocks at me?”) seems unlikely to have been composed by Moody. The verse is a reference to one of the great legends of the Round Peak area, the “rocking.”

A man could have rocks thrown at him by gangs of young men waiting for him as he passed by. They might have been waiting for him because he was courting a woman from their community, since anyone from even a few miles away was considered an outsider. (Ray Alden, Interview February 27, 2005)

Tommy elaborates a bit:

They used to rock you when you went to Lambsburg, and you had to run, by God, if you didn’t have a pistol to shoot back at ‘em! When my granddaddy moved up there, it was called Rockburg--wasn’t any post office then. Those old flat river rocks, you know. Godamighty, they were lying everywhere. (Donleavy 2004: 32)

John Rector also remembers Lambsburg as a rough community, and says it was nicknamed “Guzzleburg,” presumably for the amount of drinking that took place there (293). Given this information it seems unlikely that the “rocking” verse was made by a Lambsburg musician. Ray Alden says “It would really be a Round Peak guy who would be singing about getting rocked, not a Lambsburg person. So it doesn’t make complete sense. ‘Swinging Susan’ I could see having learned from someone in Lambsburg.” My personal theory, for which I have no supporting evidence, is as follows: “How in the world can I swing Sue?...” was a Lambsburg verse, and a clever Round Peak musician (possibly Fred Cockerham, who was often a target of rockings) created the “rocking” verse. The grammatical parallel of “Who in the world...” with “How in the world...”

suggests to me that this is a reference to and parody of the “swing Sue” verse.

“John Brown’s Dream”: The Round Peak Aesthetic

Just as the Round Peak “Sally Ann” was created from an older tune, Tommy Jarrell claimed that “John Brown’s Dream” was a tune his father and the Lowes made from “Pretty Little Girl.” By examining the common strategies in these two remakings we can get some idea of the aesthetic values of the Jarrell-Lowe circle of musicians.

“Pretty Little Girl,” as played by Tommy on an unpublished field recording made by Blanton Owen in 1974, is a fairly simple two part tune (transcription 10). Like “Sally Ann,” the Round Peak players updated it by adding parts. The two lower parts in “John Brown’s Dream” might be thought of as the same part played in different octaves. My reason for calling them two different parts is that they are both played in each time-through, while a low A part is played on its own *as* the A part. The lowest strains of the new tunes have a similar construction, starting with two quarter-notes worth of the tonic note followed by what Amy Wooley calls a “circular motif” which “wind[s] around in a feeling of pent-up dormancy, building up energy for the euphoric return to the A” (2003:318-321). The new strains would have a similar effect on the performance of “John Brown’s Dream” to that noted for the Round Peak “Sally Ann.” These parts are comparatively easier to play than the high part, easier on the hands and not demanding such careful intonation. “John Brown’s Dream” would be well suited for playing a long

dance of the sort described by Ray Alden above.

As with “Sally Ann,” the newer tune here has a wider range, encompassing the entire cross-tuned fiddle from a low A to a high B, but the range in individual strains, particularly the added strains, is relatively small. Both these “new” tunes take a cascading trip down from the top of the fiddler’s range to the bottom. The return to the high part after a long “coast” in the low range of the fiddle creates an exciting effect like being awakened from a dream. This effect is heightened by the way in which the beginnings of these tunes are reshaped. Looking at the first measures of each of these four tunes, notice that the older versions proceed up to the high A note gradually, arriving at this climax on the third beat. The newer tunes shift this high note forward to the first beat, often anticipated over the bar in performance. This gives the newer tunes more of a forward push. The second strains of the newer tunes show a melodic simplification and a rhythmic complexity in comparison to their predecessors. As the central range of the B part of “Sally Ann” was reduced from a major third (between D and F-sharp) to a major second (between E and F-sharp), the central range of the B part of “John Brown’s Dream” is a whole step smaller than that of “Pretty Little Girl.” The main activity of the B part of “John Brown’s Dream” is sliding into a unison E.

The foregoing suggests certain things about the values of the Round Peak aesthetic. To put it in the terms of Titon’s melody types, Round Peak melodies have: 1) short phrases, constructed out of repeated motifs; 2) major or pentatonic tonality, with a

preference for melodies that do not imply subdominant harmony; 3) strong accents on downbeats, frequent across-the-bar anticipations and off-beat accents; 4) a wide melodic range over all, but relatively small ranges in individual parts; and 5) are suited to single-note clawhammer banjo accompaniment. To this I would add the structural flexibility in relation to part-order as discussed above.

Revival “Sally Ann”

The Fuzzy Mountain String Band

“Sally Ann” has been subjected to certain subtle yet telling changes in the hands of various revival musicians. As discussed above, the Fuzzy Mountain String Band, were a group of young revivalists who came together in the area around Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina around 1970. They placed a premium on learning their repertoire correctly, and from authentic sources:

From the beginning, members of the FMSB ventured forth to visit and record old-time fiddlers and banjoists throughout the upland South. And learning their tunes “right” was important. We took great pride in the fact that virtually all of our repertoire was learned first-hand, most from traditional musicians we visited, recorded, and got to know. Bobbie was especially critical: she was the one willing to tell any of us that we didn’t have a phrase quite right. (Hicks 1995)

Bill Hicks, one of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band’s fiddler’s expanded on this method, and specifically cites Alan Jabbour’s work as a model:

We were very influenced by Alan Jabbour’s views about what collecting was about. Which were, if I understand them, that you find a particular fiddler who plays a source, who *is* a source, for a tune. In fact the tunes were sort of like these

titles that go back to individuals and most of the individual players play the tune a little differently. But you pick one or, if you're going to play two versions of a tune you say this one is from so-and-so in what county, Virginia and this one's from down in Georgia. And then you learn those tunes as carefully as you can and I think we followed that sort of system or rule. (Hicks, Interview, March 24, 2005)

The source given for the Fuzzy Mountain String Band's version of "Sally Ann" on Rounder 11571 is Tommy Jarrell. They sing the verses Tommy sang (with the exception of "Sift your meal...") and they sing them to the same parts he sang them. Interestingly, though, they do not vary the structure as Tommy did. The Fuzzy Mountain String Band establishes a pattern, and maintains it for a full six times through (see figure 9). In this they are like most current revival string bands.

A	A	B	B	C	C	C	C
A	A	B	B	C	C	C	C
A	A	B	B	C	C	C	C
A	A	B	B	C	C	C	C
A	A	B	B	C	C	C	C
A	A	B	B	C	C	C	C

Figure 17: Structure of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band's "Sally Ann," recorded in 1971, Rounder 11571.

The question may be asked: why, if the Fuzzy Mountain String Band was assiduous enough to painstakingly learn the tunes "correctly" and to sing the very same verses as Tommy Jarrell, did they eschew the structural looseness of the original musician? Bill Hicks, one of the two fiddlers on this recording, told me that the decision

to regularize the structure of “Sally Ann” was probably based on the size of the ensemble. The FMSB had two fiddles, two banjos, a guitar and a dulcimer. Coordinating a freer structure between so many instruments would be tricky, to say the least. In recent years, Hicks has been performing as a duo with his wife, Libby, on guitar, and he tells me that he now plays the tune with a freer structure, more like Tommy Jarrell.

In the years since the Fuzzy Mountain String Band recorded, the structure they used has become a generally accepted standard for playing the Round Peak “Sally Ann” and other three-part versions. The Pilot Mountain Bobcats are a group of accomplished old-time revivalists all of whom moved to the Surry County area from other parts of the country. Like many who moved to the upland South to be closer to the source of old-time music, they attempt to strike a balance between counterculture and rural aesthetics. The Pilot Mountain Bobcats opt for a hippie aesthetic when it comes to album packaging and personal appearance. The members have a fondness for tie-died and batiked clothing. The cover of their album, *Dance by the Light of the Moon*, is a brightly colored painting by Tori Casey depicting the band as anthropomorphic felines playing next to a campfire, with woodland creatures dancing around. Musically, however, they remain close to the rural ideal. Like the Fuzzies, they give the provenance of the tunes they play in the liner notes.

Their performance of “Sally Ann” (the “Surry County national anthem” say the notes) renders it as a song, with banjoist Jacki Spector singing on almost every time-

through (transcription 12). Spector's lyrics are somewhat different from Tommy's and transcribed below..

A	A	B1	B1	C	C	C	C
A'	A'	B'2	B'2	C	C	C	C
A	A	B3	B3	C	C	C	C
A	A	B	B	C1	C1	C	C
A'	A'	B'4	B'4	C	C	C	C
A	A	B1	B1	C	C	C	C

Figure 18: Structure of the Pilot Mountain Bobcats' "Sally Ann."

B1. Sift your meal and save the bran
I'm going home with Sally Ann
Sally Ann
All night long with Sally Ann

B2. You go home with who you can.
I'm going home with Sally Ann
Sally Ann
All night long with Sally Ann

B3. Sal's in the garden sifting sand
Susan's in the bed with the hogeyed man
I'm going home with Sally Ann
I'm going home with Sally Ann

B4. Going to the wedding with Sal, Sal
Going to the wedding with Sally Ann.
All night long with Sal, Sal
All night long with Sally Ann.

C1. Who in the world, in the doggone nation's
throwing them rocks at me?
All them rocks
All them rocks at me?

Nancy Sluys, the Bobcats' fiddler, cannot cite any single source for her version of "Sally

Ann”:

I can’t really say I learned it from any one person. It sort of melded into that “Sally Ann.” It’s pretty heavy on the Galax, with a little bit of Mount Airy thrown in. It’s just, I don’t know, it’s about the power of its own. It’s a very common tune around here. The “Surry County National Anthem” they call it. But there are several different versions. Some people play it without the low part, a few play it just doing it one time through. I don’t know, mine is probably more from Galax area fiddlers. It’s a fiddlers’ convention version. (Sluys Interview March 11, 2005)

By this Sluys seems to mean that her setting of “Sally Ann,” rather than being learned from a single “source” in the manner of the Fuzzy Mountain String Band, evolved over years spent playing the tune with other local musicians. Sluys’ “fiddler’s convention version” uses A and B parts reminiscent of various old-time versions of “Sally Ann,” with a low third part very similar to the Round Peak third part, creating a hybrid version, a not uncommon practice in the Blue Ridge. Leftwich notes of “Old Time Sally Ann” that “many musicians retrofitted it with a low third part in deference to the popularity of the Jarrell-Lowe version at area fiddlers conventions” (1999:84).

The lyrics are hybrid as well. Jacki Spector’s story of how she came to sing these verses is similar to Sluys’ explanation of her fiddle setting:

My lyrics are a composite of varying versions of the song heard over the years. The "all night long with Sally Ann" came from Doris Kimble. I met him around 1990 when Ray Alden came down and recorded some Kimble Family tunes with him and Ivery (and Dave Spilkia). They put out 2 cassettes at that time; a reissue of the Kimbles and the one they did as the "Pine Knot Rowdies." I assisted with the recording. Anyway, Doris was a quiet little man who played the autoharp and sang. I'm pretty sure that I heard him sing that refrain and added it to verses I picked up here and there. He also sang the "ever see a muskrat Sally Ann?

dragging his long tail through the sand" verse. I think he called it "Muskrat Sally Ann." (Spector. Personal communication, April 1, 2005)

The composite approach that Sluys used for her fiddling and Spector for her lyrics is not unlike that described by Tommy Jarrell as "making." Jarrell learned some verses from his family and some from people in another community. Add another part that you learned from someone in Lambsburg, and you've got yourself a new tune.

In this respect the Bobcats represent a return to the older way of learning and making tunes, a post-revival band, if you will. While many members of the Hollow Rock and Fuzzy Mountain bands left North Carolina in the mid-1970s to pursue professional careers, the Pilot Mountain Bobcats have been living and playing music in Surry County for 20 years.

A lot of the old-timers are gone now. But we have been here for so long that there's not really anybody that doesn't consider us just as a local band. We're not like the hippies or the newcomers or anything like that. [JR: Took a while, but...] It did. But it wasn't like we even tried. We just played and just had fun and just kept doing it and doing it and kept playing dances and trying to make them dancers dance and then they did and we realized we had the beat right. Those local dancers can be hard on you. (Sluys, Interview)

Dancing

Like the Fuzzy Mountain String Band, the Bobcats play the same structure throughout their version of "Sally Ann." By way of explanation, Nancy Sluys told me "We kind of end up doing more structure, because we play a lot for dances. And I think for contra dances and dances that require particular numbers of beats." Contra dances were unknown in Round Peak before the 1980s, and the primary dances in Surry County

today remain square dance and flat-foot. So what happened?

As noted above, contra dances are mostly unknown in Round Peak. Round Peak is square dance country. Ray Alden says “I never heard of contra dances nor heard any musician mention that term.” The difference between the traditions as it concerns musicians is summed up by dance-caller Phil Jamison:

When I call squares, I usually call to the beat, rather than the phrase of the music, which enables me to call to tunes with extra beats or extra parts. Calling dances to these “crooked” tunes lets the band cut loose on some of their favorites, and mine too. But bands, beware that most callers will not want to call to crooked tunes...Most callers will want a “square, or thirty two bar AABB” tune, i.e. one with two sixteen beat parts, each repeated. When playing for a contra dance a square AABB tune is absolutely necessary. (1991:10-11)

In other words, a contra dance requires a “square” tune, while a square dance does not.

The terms used to describe various kinds of non-contra country dances done in Appalachia vary widely, even in a small region (Spalding), as do the specific details of form and structure (Dalsemer), but the inherent tolerance for crookedness is held in common among all styles of southern country dance, as well as the various forms of solo dance variously called flatfooting, clogging or buckdancing.

Conscious attempts to revitalize contra dancing began around the turn of the last century, when May Gadd formed the still-active Country Dance and Song Society (CDSS) in 1900. Another wave of revival started in New England in the 1960s, presumably as part of the widespread interest in folk music and dance in America. Two callers, Dudley Laufman and Bob McQuillen, began traveling around New England in a

bread van, teaching contra dance in college towns. From this base, the form spread down the east coast (R. Carlin 222-224).

Back-to-the-landers, Northerners and academics in the Research Triangle area of the North Carolina Piedmont would have been among those taking up the trend originally propagated by Laufman and McQuillen. Many of these people had experience with contra dancing in other areas of the country and started contra dances in North Carolina. As southern style old-time musicians were hired to play these dances, they had to adjust their playing to fit the demands of the contra dance form. Although squares--usually "big-circle" squares--are still the rule at small dances in North Carolina's rural communities, contras are held all across the state. The CDSS web site lists thirteen regular dances, not only in the cities and research centers of the Piedmont, but in the Appalachian towns of Asheville and Boone as well. The bands listed for these events are not Northern-style ensembles. They include The Pilot Mountain Bobcats and the Slate Mountain Ramblers, two solid and respected traditional groups that have each placed high in the rankings at the conservative local fiddlers' conventions. Some more conservative groups have found it not worth their while to adjust to the demands of the contra form.

While Jamison's quote above acknowledges that it is possible to do a square dance to a crooked tune, the knowledge that many callers who are used to calling contras will expect, and possibly demand, square tunes seems to have led many to draw a bright

line through their repertoire between danceable square tunes and undanceable crooked tunes.

When the modes of dance change the fundamental laws of music change with them. Ray Alden attributed the long low parts to the demands of the square dance, and it seems that the increasing popularity of the contra dance is partially responsible for the decline of that practice.

Conclusion

Alan Jabbour sometimes says that in studying fiddle tunes, as he's done for nearly forty years, he oscillates "between the triumphal sense of having identified a feature of great cultural importance, and the anxious sense of being the only one in the world who thinks that such features are of any consequence" (2002). I will confess to sometimes sharing this anxiety. I believe, though, that these details do matter and that they have shown us some important things about creativity in a traditional context.

"Sally's in the garden sifting sand" goes one of Tommy's verses, a reference to a bawdy dance of long ago. I have attempted to sift some of the migrations, collaborations and influences that have come to bear on one very old fiddle tune. I believe that these social factors can be heard in the music and that comparative study of old-time music *as music* has much to tell us about who the players were and are, who they knew, where they went and what they valued.

Transcriptions and Examples

Transcription 1.

"Sally Ann"

as sung by Delie Hughes of Burnsville, NC in 1918. From Sharp 1932.

A

5

B

9

13

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for the first transcription, 'Sally Ann'. It consists of three staves of music in 2/2 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The first staff begins with a boxed 'A' and contains measures 1 through 4. The second staff begins with a measure rest '5' and contains measures 5 through 8. The third staff begins with a boxed 'B' and a measure rest '9', and contains measures 9 through 13, ending with a double bar line. The melody is simple, using quarter and eighth notes.

Transcription 2.

Beano

as played by Pug Allen on MTCD 321-2.

A

5

B

9

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for the second transcription, 'Beano'. It consists of two staves of music in 2/2 time, with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first staff begins with a boxed 'A' and contains measures 1 through 4. The second staff begins with a measure rest '5' and contains measures 5 through 8, ending with a double bar line. The melody is more complex, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes. A first ending bracket labeled '1.' spans measures 7 and 8. The third staff begins with a measure rest '9' and a boxed 'B', and contains measures 9 through 12, ending with a double bar line. A second ending bracket labeled '2.' spans measures 9 and 10.

Transcription 3.

"Sally Ann"

As played by Frank Blevins and his Tar Heel Rattlers (1927)

B

5 **B'**

9 **A**

13

Transcription 4.

"Sally Anne"

as played by Al Hopkins and the Hill Billies (1926)

A

5

10 **B**

Transcription 5.

Old Time Sally Ann

as played by Tommy Jarrell on CO-CD-2725

A

5

B

9

Transcription 6.

Eighth of January

as played by Charlie Higgins on FRC-501

A

B

5

1.

9

2.

Transcription 7.

Eighth of January

as played by Frazier and Patterson on Rounder 0238

A

6

B

10

C

14

Detailed description: This block contains the first three systems of musical notation for 'Eighth of January'. The first system, labeled 'A', starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 5. The second system, labeled 'B', starts at measure 6 and ends at measure 9, featuring a first ending bracket over measures 7-8 and a second ending bracket over measure 9. The third system, labeled 'C', starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 14. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/2.

Transcription 8.

Sally Ann

Fiddle tuned ADAE

as played by Tommy Jarrell (CO-CD-2702)

A

5

B

10

C

14

Detailed description: This block contains the first three systems of musical notation for 'Sally Ann'. The first system, labeled 'A', starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 4. The second system, labeled 'B', starts at measure 5 and ends at measure 9, featuring a first ending bracket over measures 7-8 and a second ending bracket over measure 9. The third system, labeled 'C', starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 14. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/2.

Transcription 9.

The "Galax lick"

Banjo tuned aDADE

as played in the high strain of "Sally Ann"

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for 'The Galax lick'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/2, showing a single note on the first line. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/2, showing a sequence of notes with fingerings 0, 2, 0, 0, 0. The lick is a short, rhythmic phrase.

Transcription 10.

Fiddle tuned AEAE

Pretty Little Girl

Tommy Jarrell (1974)

A

B

Transcription 11.

Fiddle tuned AEAE

John Brown's Dream

Tommy Jarrell (CO-CD-2702)

A

B

C

D

Transcription 12.

CONCLUSIONS

In November 2010, as I was finishing a first draft of this dissertation, I spent a day working at a friend's Christmas tree farm up the mountain in Carroll County, Virginia. On my way home I somehow missed a turn that would take me to the highway home and I found myself going down the mountain in the dark on small country roads with unfamiliar names. Eventually I crossed the state line back into North Carolina and found myself in the Round Peak section, but still largely clueless as to which direction I was going in, and which direction would take me home. After years of working on a project documenting something called Round Peak music, I was literally hurtling around in the darkness, lost in Round Peak. Eventually I found Sparger Road, familiar to me from another story that would sound made up if I related it, and from there, I made my way back to Highway 89, the Galax-Mount Airy route, and found my way home.

In this dissertation I have tried to tell the story of how the community music tradition in Surry County was revitalized. To get to that point, I showed how the music functioned in the life of the agrarian society of the antebellum period, and how it was changed with the society after the Civil War. Old-time music was shown to be one of several forms of music available in the town of Mount Airy by the early 20th Century, and old-time music was considered a nostalgic pursuit that harkened back to

times before the war. It was shown that the community enjoyed the music and dancing because it brought them together. I have shown that the community kept these old fashioned activities alive long enough to be a model for the folk revival (it survived long enough to be revived, like the log houses of the area). The music was changing the whole time, though. I have argued that the music went through periods of renewal. The first phase was characterized by solo fiddling of tunes from a tradition rooted in the British Isles. The second phase began some time after the Civil War, when the banjo was added to the British-derived fiddle tradition, and the style of playing was adapted to accommodate this new ensemble sound. The third stage of innovation was after World War II, when mass-media reached the area and new instruments and repertoire from bluegrass and country music were incorporated into the old-time style. The resulting sound and scene were well positioned to appeal to the members of the old-time string band revival in the 1960s and 1970s. That revival was a continuation of the earlier folk revival. These movements shared a desire to escape the regimentation of postwar suburban life, and find community and authenticity, which they thought were located in an imagined past populated by romanticized rural people. Though the revivalists did not find the wished-for utopia in Surry County, they did find an exciting ensemble style of music, and several charismatic old masters to provide models for their lives. The revivalists gave the old musicians attention and new status in their community. Some key forceful individuals

helped the Surry County scene to prominence. They brought the musicians on tour to festival stages around the country, distributed their music on LP records, and explained Southern music and culture to an eager audience. As consequence, the Round Peak style was given a convenient handle, and the sound that it describes became a “default mode” for urban old-time musicians, some of whom would never set foot in Surry County.

In this dissertation I have tried to convey what it is that makes Surry County's old-time music special, and what it is about the community that has enabled the music to hold on as a vital local activity in the face of globalization and mass culture. I believe that the roots of these answers can be found in the long history of the music in this area. The music was a key source of entertainment and vehicle for sociability, essential for the dancing that held the community together and was an outlet for feelings and urges that would disrupt sociability. In turn the community quietly supported the music during the decades while it was in the shadows of bluegrass, rock and commercial country. They supported it long enough for it to be championed by a new generation that came from unexpected places and took the music to even more unexpected places. There were forceful personalities, both local and from away, who wanted to share the music, and the generosity of Round Peak with the world, and who did just that. There were locals, musicians and not, who recognized the importance of this heritage. This history, or some of it, is well known to the musicians who live here

today, and they invoke it in the service of their music and their ideas about how to live. When they tell stories about tunes, or giving up farming, or visiting older musicians, they are creating a “temporal synecdoche” as Michael Jackson calls it, which makes the “present ... continuous with the ancestral past” and “brings the wider world within a person’s grasp *in the here and now*” (1989:155, emphasis in original). When they play a Round Peak tune at a house party or a square dance in Surry County and the dancers “hit the floor,” they know they've “got the beat right.” And if they're not playing it just like Tommy or Kyle or Fred, they're getting the same feeling, the same experience of playing for a dance and making the people happy that those old guys had. Maybe they get the same feeling of doing something beautiful and this makes the abstract concept of *tradition* a palpable experience *in the here and now*.

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- Mountain 302 (LP). *June Apple*. Tommy Jarrell, Kyle Creed, Bobby Patterson, Audine Lineberry. Galax, VA: Mountain, [1972 {Heritage reissue date}]
- Mountain 303 (LP). *Mountain Ballads*. Various artists including Bobby Patterson, Tom Norman, Katie Golding, James Lindsey, Pete Lissman, Bob Flesher. Notes by Kyle Creed. Galax, VA: Mountain, 1974.
- Mountain 304 (LP). *Liberty*. Kyle Creed with Emily Spencer, Brian Yerman. Notes by

- Kyle Creed. Galax, VA: Mountain,
- Mountain 308 (LP). *New River Jam: One*. Various Artists including Kyle Creed. Galax, VA: Mountain, 1975.
- Mountain 310 (LP). *Joke on the Puppy*. Tommy Jarrell (with Chester McMillian-guitar and Steve Roberts-banjo). Galax, VA: Mountain Records, 1976.
- Mountain 312 (LP). *The Original Camp Creek Boys: Through the Years*. The Camp Creek Boys. Mountain, 1973.
- MMCD79 (CD). *Fiddler's Dream*. Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys. Notes by Timothy Duffy. Music Maker Relief Foundation, 2003.
- MMCD 131 (CD). *Me and My Fiddle*. Andy Edmonds and the Buckstankle Boys. Music Maker Relief Foundation, [2010].
- MMCD (CD). *270 Haystack Road*. Benton Flippen and the Smokey Valley Boys. Benton Flippen, Kevin Fore, Wes Clifton, Frank Bode, Andy Edmonds. Notes by Andy Edmonds. Music Maker Relief Foundation, [2010].
- MTCD 321-324 (CD). *Far in the Mountains, vol 1-4*. Various Artists, including three tracks by Tommy Jarrell, two tracks by Robert Sykes and four tracks by Benton Flippen. Notes by Mike Yates. Recorded 1979-1983. Stroud, Glos., UK : Musical Traditions Records, 2002.
- OB-CD-502 (CD). *Banjo Lessons on Kyle's Back Porch*. Kyle Creed with Tom Mylet. Old Blue Records, 2009.
- OB-CD-705 (CD). *Long Time Piedmont Pals*. Kirk Sutphin and Riley Baugus. Old Blue Records, 2010.
- Old 97 #002 (CD). *Grandpa's Favorites*. Kirk Sutphin & Friends (Eddie Bond, Lisa Sutphin, Jim Lloyd, Pat Conte, Bill Dillof, Tom Mylet, Verlen Clifton, Paul Sutphin, Riley Baugus, Kinney Rorer, Doug Rorer, Richard Bowman, Barbara Bowman, Keith Hiatt. Notes by Kirk Sutphin and David Holt. Old 97 Wrecords.
- Round Peak Banjos 0901 (CD). *Frolic in Round Peak*. Kevin Fore and Friends. Low Gap, NC: Round Peak Banjos, 2009.
- Rounder 001 (LP). *George Pegram*. George Pegram, with Fred Cockerham-fiddle. Notes by Anne Gilbert. Cambridge, MA: Rounder Records, 1970.
- Rounder 0028 (LP). *High Atmosphere*. Various Artists including Fred Cockerham-banjo. Notes by John Cohen and Mark Wilson. Cambridge, MA: Rounder Records,

1974.

Rounder 0029 (LP). *The Smokey Valley Boys*. The Smokey Valley Boys. Cambridge, MA: Rounder, 1974.

Rounder 0228 (LP). *The Green Grass Cloggers: Through the Ears*. Benton Flippin and the Smokey Valley Boys. Cambridge, MA: Rounder, 1986.

Rounder 0313. *Third Annual Farewell Reunion*. Various Artists including Paul Brown and Tommy Jarrell performing "Old Time Sally Ann." Cambridge, MA: Rounder, 1994.

Rounder 0319 (CD). *Young Fogies*. Various Artists. Tommy Jarrell and others perform "Visits." Cambridge, MA: Rounder, 1994.

Rounder 0326 (CD). *Old Time, New Times*. Benton Flippin. Notes by Paul Brown. Cambridge, MA: Rounder, 1994.

Rounder 0383 (CD). *Down in North Carolina*. Mike Seeger and Paul Brown. Cambridge, MA: Rounder,

Rounder 0404 (CD). *WPAQ: The Voice of the Blue Ridge Mountains*. Various artists. Notes by Paul Brown. Cambridge, MA: Rounder Select, 1999.

Rounder 0439 (CD). *The North Carolina Banjo Collection*. Various Artists including Tommy Jarrell, Charlie Lowe, Kyle Creed. Produced by Bob Carlin. Cambridge, MA: Rounder, 1998.

Self-produced, no number (CD). *Live At WPAQ*. Andy Edmonds, Adam Hurt, Beth Hartness and Buck Buckner. 2004.

Self-produced, no number (cassette). *Wanted*. The Toast String Stretchers. Ginger Bode, Frank Bode, Paul Brown, Verlen Clifton, Terri McMurray, Will McIntyre. Toast, NC. 1989.

Self-produced, no number (CD). *The Round Peak Ramblers*. Mack Snow, Erika Godfrey, Steve Snow. 2007.

Spudchucker Productions [nn] (Cassette). *Step-Back: Fretless Banjo and Dance Tunes from Round Peak*. Dix Freeman and the Toe-Nail Gap String Band (Kirk Sutphin -fiddle, Chester McMillian – guitar, Dix Freeman – fretless banjo and fiddle, Rich Hartness – fiddle).

SUG-CD-4019 (CD). *Long Steel Rail*. Riley Baugus (With Dirk Powell, Joe Thrift, Tim O'Brien). Notes by Dirk Powell. Durham, NC: Sugar Hill Records, 2006.

Union Grove SS-9. *The 50th Annual Old Time Fiddlers' Convention at Union Grove*. Various Artists, includes Tommy Jarrell performing “Jack of Diamonds.” 1974.

Yodel-ay-Hee CD-026 (CD). *Dance By the Light of the Moon*. The Pilot Mountain Bobcats (Nancy Sluys, Bill Sluys, Jacki Spector, Allin Cottrell. Notes by Allin Cottrell. Yodel-Ay-Hee Records, 1999.

Yodel-ay-Hee CD-037 (CD). *Down the Road: Appalachian American String Band Music*. The New Pilot Mountaineers (Steve Mason-fiddle, Nick McMillian-banjo, Beth Hartness-guitar and vocals, Rick Davidson-guitar, banjo, Sandy Grover-bass. Chester McMillian-guitar). Notes by Riley Baugus. Yodel-Ay-Hee Records, 2001.

Yodel-ay-Hee CD-038 (CD). *Life of Riley*. Riley Baugus. Yodel-ay-Hee Records, 2001.

Yodel-ay-Hee CD-055 (CD). *Ever What You Want*. Man Alive (Joe Thrift-fiddle; Nancy Sluys-banjo; David Long-guitar; Bill Sluys-bass). Yodel-Ay-Hee Records, 2001.

Yodel-Ay-Hee 056 (CD). *Best of Friends, volume one*. Nancy Sluys-banjo (with Richard Bowman-fiddle, Chester McMillian-guitar, Michelle Belanger-feet, Joe Thrift-fiddle, Charlie Pickford-guitar, Bill Sluys-bass). Asheville, NC: Yodel-Ay-Hee Records, 2005.

Yodel-Ay-Hee 062 (CD). *Lady of the Lake*. The Pilot Mountain Bobcats. Notes by Dale Morris. Asheville, NC: Yodel-Ay-Hee Records, 2006.

[No Number] (CD). *Two Traditions: Contemporary Fiddle Music with Percussion Accompaniment*. Various Artists. Nancy Sluys performs “Sugar Babe.” Self-produced, 1999.

[No Number] (CD). *A Pile of Fiddle Tunes*. The Slate Mountain Ramblers (Richard Bowman-fiddle, Barbara Bowman-bass, Marsha Todd-banjo, Clyde Johnson-guitar. Ararat, VA: self-produced, 2006.

<http://www.wolfgangsvault.com/jenkins-jarrell-and-cockerham-string-band/concerts/newport-folk-festival-july-16-1969.html>. Live recording of Fred Cockerham, Tommy Jarrell and Oscar Jenkins, recorded at the Newport Folk Festival, Newport, RI, July 16, 1969. Available streaming at this url. Accessed February 22, 2010.