

# Folklore Journal

## North Carolina

58.2 Fall-Winter 2011



# North Carolina Folklore Journal

Philip E. (Ted) Coyle, Editor

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# North Carolina Folklore Journal

## Volume 58, Number 2 (Fall-Winter 2011)

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Frame photo: The site of David Lee's Washington Sound in Shelby, North Carolina. Photo by Brendan Greaves, October 2009.

Front cover: 2001 Brown-Hudson Awardee Mary Jane Queen holding a photograph of her parents, Jim and Clearsie Prince. Photo by 2011 Brown-Hudson Award-winner Neal Hutcheson. Back cover: 2011 Brown-Hudson Awardee Lonnie Ward. Photo by Louisa N. Murrey.



## Editor's Foreword

By Philip E. "Ted" Coyle

The 98th annual meeting of the North Carolina Folklore Society was held on April 2nd, 2011 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. On a cool, early-spring morning, NCFS President Barbara Lau and UNC Folklore Program faculty-member Patricia Sawin welcomed us to Gerrard Hall, the university's antebellum "New Chapel," which was repurposed during the New Deal to become a lecture hall and cultural center for the campus. This was the first NCFS annual meeting at UNC-Chapel Hill since 1995, when Tommy Thompson, Bobby McMillon, Tom Davenport, and Beverly Bush Patterson were presented with Brown-Hudson Awards. Barbara Lau acknowledged the NCFS board-members who had been involved in organizing 2011's successful annual meeting: Lora Smith, Vice-President in charge of conference planning; Shelia Wilson, Vice-President for membership and marketing; Steve Kruger Vice-President in charge of awards; Janet Hoshour, Treasurer (currently President of the NCFS); Joy Salyers, Secretary; T.C. Owens, Student Representative; and Emily Hilliard, Program Coordinator.

The meeting focused on contemporary connections between folklore and social-justice issues, under the title "Ain't No Lie: New Stories from Southern Ground." The meeting began with a series of panel discussions involving community activists and documentarians, with incisive commentary by UNC Folklore Program faculty, who served as discussants. Lunch was provided by Vimala's Curryblossom

*Frame photo: Gerrard Hall on the campus of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, site of the 2011 annual meeting of the North Carolina Folklore Society. Photo courtesy of University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

Café, which was also the topic of a presentation that morning by Program Coordinator, Emily Hilliard. The early afternoon was dedicated to keynote presentations, one by folklorist and 2003 Brown-Hudson Award-winner Mary Anne McDonald, and one by folklorist Mary Hufford. Both addressed the need for fine-grained understandings of the experience of environmental injustice from the perspectives of those most affected, and emphasized the importance of folklore's approach for capturing those understandings. The meeting concluded with a moving series of award presentations and performances from an impressive group of tradition-bearers and scholars. The citations for these award-winners are published in this issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, and attest to the depth and richness of ongoing folklore traditions in our state.

In addition to these award citations, this issue also includes an interview by Foy Allen Edelman of beekeeper Charles Heatherly. Her *Sweet Carolina: Favorite Desserts and Candies from the Old North State* was recently published by the UNC Press. She also contributed the article "Coming Together at the North Carolina Table" to the 52.2 issue of this journal. Audio recordings from that project are available on the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* website. Her interview in this issue of the *NCFJ* points out the crucial importance of committed—some might even say obsessed—individuals for maintaining the old agricultural traditions that continue to be a basis for truly sustainable food production in our time. Her interview resonates with the citation by Tessa Thraves in this issue for 2011 Brown-Hudson Award-winner Lee Calhoun, whose work maintaining old varieties of apples depends on the energies of beekeepers like Charles Heatherly. Stephen Bishop's article about the origin of the term "tar heel," with images from UNC-Chapel Hill's library, reminded me of Timothy C. Prizer's study of contemporary turpentine folklore from Georgia in the 53.2 issue of the *NCFJ*. Robin Hitch's article about the history and politics of shape-note singing, which brings this issue to a close, traces the beginnings of some of the old hymns still sung by the Cockman Family, whose 2011 Community Traditions Award citation appears in this issue.

On behalf of the members of the North Carolina Folklore Society, I would like to thank the faculty, staff, and students of the UNC Folklore Program for hosting our 98th annual meeting in Gerrard Hall. We look forward to returning to Chapel Hill in the very near future.



2011 Brown-Hudson Folklore Award

## Creighton Lee Calhoun, Jr.: Orchardist and Apple Historian

By Tessa Thraves

Creighton Lee Calhoun Jr. is an apple historian and retired orchardist who lives in Pittsboro, N.C. At one time he had 450 kinds of heirloom apples growing at his home nursery on Blacktwig Road. There he takes cuttings of old varieties, sent to him in the mail by strangers or apple hunting friends, or gathered himself from the farmyards of North Carolina or most other Southern states you can name, and grafts them onto root stock. He's been called the Johnny Appleseed of the South. His *Old Southern Apples*, 1995, has been the definitive work on the topic and was re-released in 2011. Over 100 Southern apple tree varieties that were feared extinct survive today because of this book's original publication, which catalogs 1,600 old apples by name but more importantly tells the stories of their histories and the people who treasure them. Lee wrote this book by hand, on yellow legal paper, as he still writes today. He and his wife Edith made numerous trips to the National Agricultural Library in Maryland, where they discovered archived and forgotten resources

*Tessa Thraves works for the Center for Environmental Farming Systems. She has an M.A. in Creative Writing from Hollins University, an M.A. in Folklore from UNC-Chapel Hill, and is currently working on her Ph.D. in Communication Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill.*

*Frame photo: Lee Calhoun demonstrates grafting techniques to a young apprentice. Photo courtesy of Lee Calhoun.*

in the rare book room: the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's pomology section between 1886 and 1920. Lee combed everything available, from three-by-five note cards to thousands of boxes of old seed and nursery catalogs. This was a labor of love that he completed with his wife's help, she typing his long-hand notes into the manuscript that would become our treasured apple trove.

This love-labor originated in Saralyn, a community in Pittsboro started in 1977, when Lee and Edith began clearing land for a garden. Lee writes on his own "Calhoun's Nursery" stationary, in one of his three-ring binder scrapbooks, of Saralyn history. When Lee asked advice on planting apple trees, a Pittsboro friend said, "Why don't you plant some old-timey ones like we used to have—Blacktwig, Red June, Nickajack, Fallawater, Horse Apple." When Lee couldn't find those varieties at his local nursery, he simply taught himself to graft from a magazine article. By 1982, Lee was scavanging the countyside in search of heritage apple trees. This began the saga of Lee Calhoun and his apple hunting. He knocked on many a door in quest of the name of the apple in a farm's front yard, sometimes getting the name and sometimes getting a shake of a head and the story of the one's passed who would have known. He took cuttings from any tree identifiable by a name and grafted it, reviving the variety in his own garden, which by 1988 moved out of garden classification and into full fledged "preservation nursery." The types of apples seemed endless and so Lee kept traveling, beyond our Chatham County, beyond the piedmont, into the mountains, and even into Tennessee.

Realizing he was going to find much more than a dozen or so varieties, Lee galvanized a whole crew of apple hunters across the south, one in every southern state except Texas and Arkansas. They began hunting and collecting varieties and the stories that accompanied them, sending the twigs to Lee for grafting and sharing the stories with him as well. They wrote letters and talked on the phone. Lee sat at his desk talking to me about the bond these apple hunters formed over the years, sharing stories of old-timers mostly, some stories from younger folks about their elders. He smiles as he talks, eyes lighting up with memories, as numerous as the varieties he records, despite sharing these stories with me in a time of family sadness. The stories take him somewhere else, though, even if only for a moment. Then he mentions the not-too-long-ago distant death of one of these apple hunters and pauses, coming back to the present fully, and says, "He was a good friend for many years. I never met him, though."

Lee's book is a wealth of apple lore and Lee himself throws out treasures seemingly casually, but utterly intentionally: he is a teacher and he knows, whether by study or experience or instinct, how we carry knowledge from person to person. When talking about the history of family orchards in the South, he says, "The rule of thumb for Southern farm families was six apple trees per person." When talking about pest management and controlling bugs, he says, "an old Chinese proverb says 'the best fertilizer is the farmer's footsteps.'" He talks about vernacular ways of putting up apples and mentions grannies and midwives and dowers as if he were either a folklorist or a generation older than he is.

Most Southern trees between 1600 and 1900 were grown from seeds. Because each apple seed is genetically unique, it will always produce a fruit that is unique. Lee is known for explaining that only through cuttings can a tree distinctly true to a variety be propagated. But of all those seeds planted Lee talks of the "the geniuses of apples," the trees that produced extraordinary apples. But as passionately as he loves the apples, as profoundly important as the saving of over 100 apple varieties has been to the biodiversity of the fruit and hence our Southern ecosystem, Lee Calhoun has given us as rich a treasure by pairing human story and precious fruit. He talks about the stories told and the telling of the stories, of the folks eager to take him into their home and talk about daddy's hardships during the Civil War, and as eager to send him on down the road to talk to another neighbor or cousin or friend who they assure him will have more stories to share. After all these old-timers and all these stories, he still marvels when he reflects, awed himself to be hearing about mules and meat drippings, cider, and hog killings.

And he just as honorably and enthusiastically passes forward this knowledge as he did receive it. He teaches. He has given me trees for community gardens and my own back yard, as he has a hundred others, I'm sure. David Vernon wanted to preserve the apple trees on his great-grandfather's 200-acre Caswell County farm, and Lee passed on his knowledge so that David now runs a nursery carrying many of these varieties into the future for others to taste and grow. At Horne Creek, Lee established an heirloom orchard enabling visitors to experience the turn-of-the-century farm life of the North Carolina piedmont. He also teaches a grafting program there called "Grafting for the Future," passing forward his skills to anyone willing to learn.

"These heirloom varieties are part of our agrarian Southern heritage," Lee says. The July-August Go No Further, Dixie Red De-



Lee Calhoun works in his orchard. Photo courtesy of Lee Calhoun.

light, Sops of Wine, Royal Limbertwig, Summer Banana, Aunt Cora's Yard Apple, a Nickajack, a Ben Davis, Rattling Core, Rockingham Red, Ben Davis, the Spitzenburg, Red June, Fallwater, Horse Apple, Rockingham Red, Sweetnin', Yellow June, Mary Reid, the Cathead, the Chenango Strawberry, the Cullasaga, the Duchess of Oldenburg Blacktwig.

And every one has a story: The Baltimore Monstrous Pippin, recorded in 1817 at a foot in diameter and four inches high; the Blacktwig, over which a furious battle was fought in the magazines and newspapers of 1896 (Is it or is it not the same apple as the Paragon?); the Buff, traced in 1853 to a North Carolina seedling tree raised by the Cherokees; Hewes Crab, a cider apple that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson knew; Arkansas Black, a deep scarlet apple started in Arkansas in 1870 that stores well; Magnum Bonum, an aromatic, juicy apple that originated in 1828 in Davidson County and is considered "the king of fall apples in the South"; July-August Go No Further, from West Virginia, as in "that's the best, you might as well stop looking"; Aunt Cora's Yard Apple, grown by a midwife in Virginia; the Ben Davis, from 1870 to 1920 the most popular commercial apple in the U.S., the Red Delicious of its day; the Spitzenburg, Thomas Jefferson's personal favorite, grown at Monticello; the Rattling Core, who's seeds are loose inside and rattle. And he has

documented, shared, and passed forward for eternity many more of these treasured stories, even than varieties of apples. “The number of varieties don’t really matter,” Lee says to me. “It is the stories that matter.”



## 2011 Brown-Hudson Folklore Award

# Neal Hutcheson: Maker of Documentaries on North Carolina Folklife and Language

By Thomas McGowan and Walt Wolfram

Videographer Neal Hutcheson has produced an extensive collection of important documentaries presenting notable North Carolina folk artists, the folk speech of cultural groups in North Carolina, and the family and community contexts of regional folklife. His documentaries on North Carolina's diverse cultural populations have been featured on national public television and national satellite and cable television (including the Documentary Channel); in museum exhibits; and in educational curricula throughout the state. In the process, he has played an exemplary role in the implementation of innovative public service programs on language diversity that have become an international model for disseminating sociolinguistic information to

*Walt Wolfram, recipient of the John Tyler Caldwell Award for the Humanities, is the William C. Friday Distinguished University Professor at N.C. State University and the director of the North Carolina Language and Life Project. His extensive publications on regional dialect include Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks: The Story of Okra-coke Brogue and Fine in the World: Lumbee Language in Time and Place. Thomas McGowan taught in the English Department at Appalachian State University for thirty-nine years and is past editor of the North Carolina Folklore Journal.*

*Frame photo: Hutcheson films Henry and Mary Jane Queen. Photo by Ernestine Upchurch.*



Neal Hutcheson with Mary Jane Queen in her garden on Johns Creek, Cullowhee, North Carolina. Photo by Dorothy Queen Conner.

public audiences. His work has also provided documentation of the lively continuation of traditional music, narrative, and material folk culture in North Carolina and excellent remembrances of notable state tradition-bearers who have died in recent years.

Seven documentaries and a dramatic adaptation of a folk theme have aired on statewide UNC-TV and other regional and national venues. These include *Indian by Birth: The Lumbee Dialect*, *Mountain Talk*, *Voices of North Carolina*, *The Queen Family: Appalachian Tradition and Back Porch Music*, *The Carolina Brogue*, *The Prince of Dark Corners*, *The Outlaw Lewis Redmond*, and *The Last One*. Two more documentaries are currently in production, including one on the use of Spanish in the mid-Atlantic South and one on the dying commercial fishing industry on the Outer Banks. While these productions offer excellent insights into the forms of folk speech and dialect, they are especially notable for their presentation of the individual, social, and cultural contexts of folk narrative. Hutcheson develops close rapport with participants, lets them provide telling emic commentary on their folk arts and folk groups, and documents important traditions and performances in his



Neal Hutcheson on location in Russia. Photo by Irina Zhukova.

documentaries—and he does so with a thoughtful, critical eye and ear so that he doesn't sentimentalize or overgeneralize.

His documentary *Indian by Birth: The Lumbee Dialect*, which originally aired on public TV (UNC-TV, the local PBS affiliate) in 2001, continues to be shown annually as part of a special series of programs celebrating Native American Heritage Month. The response to this documentary from the general public and from the Lumbee community, in particular, indicated heartfelt gratitude for his sensitive portrayal of the role of language in Lumbee life. The documentary has also been featured at special programs sponsored by the Native American Student Association, and vignettes from the documentary also play a prominent role in a permanent exhibit at the Museum of the Native American Resource Center in Pembroke, North Carolina. Indeed, Neal Hutcheson's reflective depiction of Lumbee language history and development is an emblem of a deep commitment to Native American students, to say nothing of its impact on the general public.

The second documentary shown on UNC-TV was *Mountain Talk*, a 60-minute presentation on Appalachian English and culture in western North Carolina. The footage for this documentary was collected during a three-year period in which Hutcheson immersed himself in the life of remote mountain communities. At a meeting of the Appalachian Studies Conference in Cherokee, North Carolina, in spring 2004, several local participants featured in *Mountain Talk* testified to Neal's responsive, generous spirit which allowed mountain people to speak for themselves. *Mountain Talk* presents scenes featuring past Brown-Hudson Folklore Award winners Orville Hicks, Gary Carden, and Mary Jane Queen.

From the footage made for *Mountain Talk*, Hutcheson developed an especially evocative study of the music, narrative, and instrument making traditions of the Queen Family. It centers on the family matriarch, Mary Jane Queen, who received both our Society's Brown-Hudson Folklore Award and the NEA's National Heritage Fellowship. Besides offering performances of songs and stories, *The Queen Family: Appalachian Tradition and Back Porch Music* presents a thoughtful study of family folklife and the dynamics of an especially talented tradition bearer handing on family musical traditions in a rich family context in western North Carolina.

Hutcheson's portrayal of language in *Voices of North Carolina* depicts the wide range of language diversity in the Tar Heel State that extends from languages such as Cherokee and Spanish, to regional dialects such as the Outer Banks and Appalachian English, to sociocultural dialects such as Lumbee English and African American English. It is a unique linguistic profile of a state that has now been integrated into an eighth-grade Social Studies curriculum, *Voices of North Carolina: Language and Life from the Atlantic to the Appalachians*. This is complemented by his documentary on Outer Banks speech titled *The Carolina Brogue*, where he documents the endangered traditional coastal dialect.

Finally, his documentary on the production of untaxed liquor by legendary moonshiner Popcorn Sutton (*The Last One*), aired on national TV and received a much-coveted regional Emmy Award in the category of cultural documentation.

Neal Hutcheson has through his videos gathered a rich archive of local folk speech, song and music playing traditions, oral narratives and local jokes, and their contexts in North Carolina families and communities. They present state folklife in thoughtful, appreciative ways that deepen our sense of folk groups and the artfulness of performance. He nominated Gary Carden for the Brown-Hudson

Folklore Award, and his video presentation on the traditions of the Queen family has given us a particularly insightful resource to remember and review the rich treasury of regional folklife that National Heritage Award recipient and Brown-Hudson Folklore Awardee Mary Jane Queen carried and performed. Neal Hutcheson's work richly deserves the recognition of our state's folklore society through its Brown-Hudson Folklore Award.



## 2011 Brown-Hudson Folklore Award

# David Lee: Singer, Songwriter, Record-Label and Record-Shop Owner

By Brendan Greaves and Jason Perlmutter

David Lee was born on May 3rd, 1936, in Shelby, North Carolina. Raised on the Blanton and Yarborough family farms, Mr. Lee began working the land by age twelve, planting and cutting barley, wheat, corn, and cotton. His family was not especially musical, though they were “yard singers” who also sang in church. In his spare time, Mr. Lee took up guitar and piano under the tutelage of a neighbor, and at age fourteen, he began writing poetry, which soon led him to discover his affinity for songwriting. For many years, Mr. Lee’s thereby inaugurated musical practice paralleled a series of strenuous and time-consuming day jobs. From ages 18 until 26 he hauled coal and ice at the Morgan Street ice plant, and then for the next two years he worked at Burlington Mills, one of many nearby textile factories. Mr. Lee then found a long-term job at the North Lake Country Club, and he kept it for three decades through his most active period of music. From about 1967 through his retirement from the country

*Brendan Greaves and Jason Perlmutter are co-founders of Paradise of Bachelors record label ([paradiseofbachelors.com](http://paradiseofbachelors.com)), whose first release, *Said I Had a Vision: Songs and Labels of David Lee, 1960-1988*, includes extensive liner notes offering further details and many reflections from Mr. Lee drawn from over two years of conversations.*

*Frame photo: The Lee family in Washington Sound, 1971. Photo courtesy of David Lee.*



David Lee at home, October 2009. Photo by Brendan Greaves.

club in 1997, Mr. Lee spent evenings and weekends presiding over Washington Sound, his record shop and audio supply store on Buffalo Street in Shelby. The shop became Shelby's premiere source for African American popular music and also offered PA installation services, placing units in at least 50 area churches.

In the late 1950s, Mr. Lee made his first recording of his own voice, accompanied by piano and drums, and shopped it around to multiple publishers across the Southeast. This autobiographical song, "I'm Going to Keep on Trying," ambiguously addressed both romantic heartbreak and repeated rejections from the music industry. In 1961 or 1962, the tune was finally picked up by publishing company Active and received broad regional airplay courtesy of the Air record label out of Miami, Florida. Mr. Lee had only intended the bare-bones track as a demo and was disappointed with the showing. Within the next year or so, "Keep on Trying" would be re-recorded by a proper singing group and full band, the Ambassadors, of Shelby, and released on Air.

Over the next several years, up until the mid-1960s, Mr. Lee launched his own record company with three different releases by the Constellations, a local group who had positioned themselves as



The Constellations, date unknown. Photo courtesy of Don Camp.

rivals to the Ambassadors. Mr. Lee's stately and airy romantic dialogue "If Everybody" graced the A-side of their first 45 on his new Impel imprint and would become one of the most enduring numbers in his catalog. After the Constellations were split up by the Vietnam War, Mr. Lee found himself with no flagship artist, and he began offering his songwriting and production services to artists outside of Cleveland County. In 1968 or 1969, his collaboration with the Yakey Yaks of Spartanburg, South Carolina yielded "Soul Night," and this funk tune became the debut record on his new label Washington Sound, named for the shop. Local residents remember it as a theme song that accompanied radio advertisements that promoted the business.

Mr. Lee's next collaboration would net the greatest commercial success of his career. In 1971, he met Ann Sexton, a young vocalist who fronted the Masters of Soul band in Greenville, South Carolina. Sexton's recording of a new David Lee demo entitled "You're Letting Me Down" came out briefly on Impel. The mournful ballad quickly captured the attention of legendary disc jockey "John R." Richbourg of radio station WLAC in Nashville, Tennessee. Richbourg re-released the 45 on his nationally-distributed label Seventy-Seven Records and sold around 90,000 copies. Moving forward, Mr. Lee's royalties from the Sexton material allowed him to fund several

subsequent releases, including lounge material by Bill Allen, sweet soul and funk by Brown Sugar Inc., and his first gospel productions. These were performed by the Gospel I.Q.'s of Grover, North Carolina, the Relations Gospel Singers, who cut their record live at Mice Creek Baptist Church, near Gaffney, South Carolina, the Sensational Gates of Shelby, and Joe Brown and the Singing Mellerairs, with whom Mr. Lee had one of his longest working relationships. In the 1980s, Mr. Lee founded a third label, SCOP, which is an acronym for "Soul, Country, Opera, and Pop," and put out two more 45s, one by the Singing Mellerairs and one of his own.

Despite a relatively slim discography—fourteen 45s, two LPs, and a handful of cassettes and CD-Rs over a period of fifty years—Mr. Lee's career in music represents an important contribution to folklife, particularly vernacular music and occupational folklife, in North Carolina, the Southeast, and beyond. Although until recently Mr. Lee's songs and productions for other musicians (notably Ann Sexton) have enjoyed a higher profile among soul and gospel music aficionados, collectors, and DJs in Europe than among fans in the United States, his work is deserving of the North Carolina Folklore



The Singing Mellerairs (a.k.a. Melloaires), date unknown. Photo courtesy of Joe Brown.



Brendan Greaves and Jason Perlmutter with Impel artist Ann Sexton, 2010. Photo by Melvin Burton, Jr.

Society's recognition for its impressive artistry, as well as for its disregard for normative racial and genre boundaries imposed by the broader popular music industry in whose margins he operated.

As a record label and record shop owner, Mr. Lee belongs to a proud tradition of African American music entrepreneurs and businesspeople who thrived in communities across the South during the 1960s and 1970s, both during the Jim Crow era and in its equally stormy aftermath. As proprietor of Washington Sound, and in his role as record label owner, he helped not only to advance the agenda of African American businesses in the state, but likewise to disseminate both local and national soul and gospel recordings that articulated the enjoined personal and political concerns of African Americans, many of whom were his neighbors. The regional focus of his production work and independent releases—all of the artists hail from within about a seventy mile radius—underscores the significance of African American vernacular music not only to the national discourse of the Civil Rights movement, but likewise to its specific regional iterations. Impel, Washington Sound, and SCOP documented and defined the expressive sound of the North/South Carolina borderlands west of Charlotte.

Mr. Lee's collaboration with teenage interracial (or "salt and pepper") band the Constellations, his recording of white lounge singer Bill Allen with the African American group the Masters of Soul, and his own self-identification as a country music songwriter, singer, and stylist demonstrate his persistent commitment to implementing his position as an artist and community leader to nudge tense racial relations towards acceptance and the integration of working musicians and audiences. He persevered despite criticism of his countrified tastes by the African American community, much as the Constellations persevered despite criticism and hostility from some white audiences. Perhaps most importantly, Mr. Lee is a profoundly talented songwriter who is capable of transposing both deeply personal sacred and secular experience into forms of popular song. Like the greatest vernacular artists, he straddles specious genre conventions, embracing tradition and innovation in equal measure. Although shaped by more broadly Southern sounds, his music emerges from a particularly rural local musical identity and sense of place. David's body of work qualifies as both Ben-Amos's "artistic communication in small groups," the music of a community, and as popular songs with international appeal—specific to Cleveland County, but embraced by global soul and gospel listeners. His plainspoken lyrics address romantic loss and spiritual enlightenment alike, and regardless of his roots in country music, the mutable songs sit comfortably and compellingly within soul, funk, gospel, rock, and pop arrangements and performances. This easy adaptability accounts in part for the longevity of his music, especially the legendary Ann Sexton records, so beloved worldwide.



## 2011 Brown-Hudson Folklore Award

# Lonnie Ward: Traditional Musician

By Trevor McKenzie

Born in 1928, Lonnie Ward has been a part of the musical traditions of Watauga County, North Carolina, for nearly seven decades. At 83, Ward is accomplished on a variety of instruments including banjo, dulcimer, mandolin, and guitar. Recently, he took up the fiddle after being inspired by the playing of his friend, the late Ora Watson. Ward displays a wide knowledge of traditional songs, ranging from time-tested hymns to old-time breakdowns. Each tune Lonnie decides to pick is accompanied by a look of intense concentration and, more often than not, a wide grin that never fails to capture an audience. Whether onstage or in his living room, Ward is a performer more than willing to encourage others to participate in the musical heritage he has known since childhood.

Throughout the region of Western North Carolina, Ward is noted for playing his dulcimer, an instrument he first picked up around the age of 12. Ward recalls being fascinated by the wife of Ed

*Trevor McKenzie recently received a Master of Arts in Appalachian Studies from Appalachian State University. He has an interest in the history, artifacts, stories, and music stemming from the rural areas of the upland South. McKenzie regularly performs music on fiddle and other stringed instruments for concerts and square dances.*

*Frame photo: Geneva Glenn, Lonnie Ward, Rebecca Jones, Trevor McKenzie, and Matthew Weaver at Lonnie Ward's home during the filming of a documentary by Rebecca Jones for a course taught by 2005 Brown-Hudson Award-winner Cece Conway at Appalachian State University. Photo by Skye McFarland.*



Lonnie Ward. Photo by Louisa N. Murrey.

Presnell, who carried the mail and played the dulcimer. The picking style Lonnie uses in his right hand bares a high contrast to that commonly used by other dulcimer players. The thumb and index finger form a “tickle and pinch” pattern somewhat akin to the guitar “scratch” of Maybelle Carter, producing a wall of sound that provides both rhythm and melody.

The two-finger banjo technique practiced by Ward possesses its own unique sound and represents a tradition formulated by Ward himself. Inspired by the banjo playing of his mother, Kizzie Ida Ward (born 1901), Lonnie developed her two-finger picking into his own style. Among the songs Lonnie recalls being played by his mother are “House Carpenter” and “Baby Mine,” both of which he has kept within his repertoire. He also played and built instruments alongside

Beech Mountain “double-knock” banjoist Tab Ward, grandfather of Rick Ward, Lonnie’s nephew, who continues the tradition of his family’s banjo playing. Lonnie delivers powerful renditions of breakdowns, “Sourwood Mountain” and “Whoopee Liza,” as well as hymns and marches such as “Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?” He transposes this two-finger style to guitar to play tunes ranging from “John Henry” to “Boogie Woogie.”

Lonnie carries on the “Do-Re-Mi” singing tradition of his home region as an active member of the local Baptist congregations along the Watauga River. He first attended Cool Springs Baptist Church as a child where he first learned “Do-Re-Mi” singing. Upon his return from a tour in Italy near the close of World War II, Ward became the singing leader at Antioch Baptist Church, a post he held for over 20 years. An example of Ward’s gospel singing from this time period can be heard on *The Traditional Music of Beech Mountain, NC* released by Folk Legacy Records in 1964. For nearly three-fourths of his life Lonnie has contributed to the gospel music of his home region and continues to sing in church regularly. Ward has passed music on to his children and has produced recordings of his dulcimer playing and gospel singing alongside his children. Lonnie Ward is a deserving recipient of the Brown-Hudson Folklore Award due to his intense passion for the musical traditions of his home region and the enthusiasm he displays in sharing them with others.



## 2011 Community Traditions Award

### The Cockman Family

By John E. Cockman, Sr.

Born and raised in Sherrill's Ford, North Carolina, the Cockman Family has preserved and presented old-time gospel hymns to audiences for nearly 25 years. Their traditional style features four-part family harmonies with the accompaniment of traditional bluegrass instrumentation. Since launching their performing career in February of 1988, the Cockman Family has developed the classic family harmonies and youthful flair that is the Cockman Family trademark. Their unique bluegrass gospel style, original songs, and original arrangements of the old gospel songs have been immensely popular with their audiences. This group's family ties are strong and the warmth of that is conveyed in their performances. The group members include John Cockman, Sr. (guitar), Carolina (Cockman) Fisher (lead vocals), Dr. John Cockman, Jr. (fiddle and vocals), Billy Cockman (banjo, guitar, and vocals), David Cockman (upright bass and vocals) and Ben Cockman (mandolin, guitar, slide guitar, and vocals).

*John Sr. is the father and the guitar player of the Cockman Family. He is married to Jane, and they reside in Sherrill's Ford. His responsibilities include radio and television promotions, as well as scheduling and advertising. He is also in charge of all the emcee work for the group. John Sr. recently retired from teaching cabinet making in public schools and is also an experienced guitar builder.*

*Frame photo: The Cockman Family in concert. Photo by Melissa Cockman, <[www.melissacockmanphotography.com](http://www.melissacockmanphotography.com)>.*



The Cockman family, taken near Boone, North Carolina.  
Photo by Melissa Cockman.

Even as young children, music was the center of their everyday entertainment. Dad and Mom played the guitar and piano and encouraged the children to participate by singing along. Harmonizing at an early age was important. It made each sibling feel an integral part of the group by producing vocal harmony. They each gained musical interest by playing the piano first, then creating those melodies on the stringed instruments. They each play multiple instruments and often switch instruments on their recordings and live performances. They feel that the instrumentation should enhance their vocal arrangements. The instrumentation and harmonies blend together, giving the songs added life to inspire audiences to remember and love the old-time hymns that so many grew up listening to.

The Cockman Family Bluegrass Gospel Group has gained many valuable experiences because of the music they play. They have performed at churches, festivals, municipal events, weddings, funerals, and private functions. They have entertained from Florida to New York and as far west as Missouri and Vancouver, Canada. They have been included in the North Carolina Arts Council's Touring and Resident Artist Directory, played three summers at Dollywood and Opryland, and have been named "The 12 Most Creative Families in America" by USA Today Weekend and American Greetings Cards. In 2006, Caroline was selected the Female Vocalist of the year by



The Cockman grandchildren. Photo by Melissa Cockman.

PowerGrass Internet Radio and in 2007 the family was selected the Bluegrass Gospel Group of the year by PowerGrass Internet Radio. The Cockman Family was featured in seven Arthur Smith “Then and Now” television specials and the Arthur Smith “Carolina Christmas” special produced by UNC-TV. They also appeared as part of the UNC-TV special “George Beverly Shea and Friends.” UNC-TV also produced a one-hour Christmas special featuring the Cockman Family in “A Cockman Family Christmas, Maker of the Stars.” Their Christmas special was also aired on American Public Television. The Cockman Family recently showcased their music in a 25-minute performance at the 2010 International Bluegrass Music Association in Nashville, Tennessee. The Cockman Family annually hosts the Ole Time Fiddler’s and Bluegrass Festival in Union Grove, North Carolina. It is the oldest, consecutive-running fiddler’s convention in America. They host and coordinate the music portion of the annual Murray’s Mill Harvest Festival in Catawba, North Carolina, and participate each year at the Smoky Mt. Folk Festival at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina.

All four brothers maintain a professional level of instrumental skill that allows them to teach others to play as well. Three of the brothers have full-time jobs and teach after work. Ben teaches guitar, mandolin, banjo, and fiddle full-time. Many of their students are

now musicians and are using their talents making music in various ways. Caroline teaches voice and writes gospel songs for the group. She was selected the 2011 Songwriter of the year by PowerGrass Internet Radio. In addition to the old-time hymns, four of the five siblings have written gospel songs that have been recorded on their albums. Billy won the 2009 North Carolina banjo championship in Wilkesboro at the Carolina in the Fall Festival. He also won the 2010 South Carolina banjo championship at the Renofest in Hartsville, South Carolina. Ben won the 2012 South Carolina Flat-pick Guitar Championship at Renofest in Hartsville, SC., as well as the 2012 Flat-pick Championship at Merlefest, N. Wilkesboro, and the 2012 West Virginia State Flat-pick Guitar Championship held at the Robin Kes-singer Festival in Gandeewille, WV. The family has won numerous festival competitions throughout the state to include three-time winners of the Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Best Performance Award in Asheville.

All the siblings are now married and have families of their own. Their performances include eight grandchildren at almost all of their concerts. Their ages range from four to ten years-old. They are being taught by their parents to play the stringed instruments and harmonize with each other as their parents did a few short years ago. The tradition lives on.



## A Honey of a Story

By Foy Allen Edelman

The following text is from an interview with Charles Heatherly. He was born in Haywood County, and attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, majoring in journalism. Charles worked for the State of North Carolina Department of Commerce in many capacities including Director of Travel and Tourism from 1981 until 1986. After he retired, he developed an interest in beekeeping and became president of the North Carolina Beekeepers Association. Today he maintains hives at the Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh and in his backyard. Charles is also an accomplished writer, published author, and photographer. He and his wife, Evelyn, live in Johnston County.

I'm a native of Haywood County, grew up in Buncombe County. I've read from the experts that about fifty million years ago, flowers, as a means of getting themselves pollinated, evolved to the point of where they developed sweet nectar and bright colors. That attracts honeybees, butterflies, and all kinds of insects. Flowers flourish because they have the pollination process to spread their genes. And, of course,

*Foy Allen Edelman is a native of Kinston and has lived in Wilmington and Charlotte. She traveled to every county in North Carolina to collect stories and recipes from local cooks. Her first book is Sweet Carolina: Favorite Desserts and Candies from the Old North State. She is working on a sequel to include main dishes and vegetables. You can hear some of the stories she collected on the North Carolina Folklore Journal website at <<http://paws.wcu.edu/ncfj/>>. Foy and her husband live in Wake County.*

*Frame photo: Charles Heatherly at work with his bees. Photo by Foy Allen Edelman.*

the nectar is a source of food for bees. We've cultivated—domesticated—bees for five thousand years. My wife and I were in Egypt in 2000, and we saw symbols of honeybees carved on the walls of the pyramids where the craftsmen wrote the history of Egypt at that time. Historians say the Egyptians actually put honeybees on boats and took them up and down the Nile following the blooms along the banks, primarily to develop honey, but in the process, the bees pollinated the crops along the way.

I've always enjoyed sourwood honey. It's produced primarily in the mountains of western North Carolina, because that's where the sourwood tree grows prolifically. The sourwood is a small tree, very wiry. If you go up the highways, you'll see it on the edge sticking out under the top growth in order to get a little sunlight. It has a bloom like a small girl's curls, and the opening to the bloom is upside down. The bee has to get down and work back up. About ten years ago, I was going for my sourwood honey to my favorite vender who's got a little roadside stand right at the foot of Grandfather Mountain. He's part Native American, one-eyed, talked very funny, very brief and said, "No honey." I said, "What do you mean, no honey?" He said, "No bees; mites got the bees." I said, "Do you mean to tell me that I'm going to have to start raising my own bees to guarantee a good source of honey?" He said, "I guess so." I asked him where he got his bees, and he told me the name of an old fellow up there; so I went and bought two hives the next spring, and I've been keeping bees every since.

I love honey, and I also got interested in the mite problem. About fifteen years ago, two mites were introduced to our bee population in North Carolina, a varroa mite, which is a large mite that gets on the abdomen of the bee. It's a parasite that sucks the energy out of the bee. You can see those; they are quite severe. The other mite is microscopic and gets in the thorax [of the bee]. Either of these mites, if produced in sufficient numbers, will wipe out the bee colony in a short period of time; so it's a challenge for beekeepers to keep a hive alive. Before the mites came [into the American bee population], there were probably six or seven million hives in the US. Many just lived in trees in the forest. After the mites came in, they wiped out the feral population completely.

Those were bees that the farmers depended on to pollinate crops. Farmers just took that for granted because it always happened. There are no more wild bees.

Many crops are self-pollinating. Corn is self-pollinating; the wind will pollinate it. There are ninety crops, about a third of all the food that you eat, that are dependent on bees for pollination, strawberries, for example. We've got big pickle factories in eastern North Carolina. Cucumbers are 90% dependent on bee pollination. One of the farmers bought two hundred hives and gave them to one of his workers and told him, "keep these bees alive; so we can grow cucumbers." Another grower spends \$5,000 a year renting bees just for the growing season. A local farmer brings them up on a truck, takes them off on a front-end loader, sits them down in the field, comes back in eight or ten weeks, picks them up, and takes them back home.

As a result of the mite problem, the bee population in this country is about half what it was ten or fifteen years ago. Keeping bees alive, and keeping other folks from stealing them, is a big challenge. The crops here that depend on pollination are blueberries, strawberries, watermelons, cantaloupe, squash, cucumbers, and blackberries. Tomatoes need pollination, but the honeybee can't do it. It takes hummingbirds and other animals. The predominant source of honey here [in Wake County] are tulip poplar trees, which have big blooms and 45% protein; they produce a very dark honey. Before it blooms, the red maple starts in February. Then blackberries bloom in March and April; that's a very good honey, light and has a nice flavor to it. When you mix all those together, you get a fairly good honey.

Obviously I can't keep honeybees in my front yard. It makes for bad neighborhood relations. So the bees that I have here, I keep them on a friend's strawberry patch [in Wake County]. They pollinate his strawberries and increase his productivity about 25%, which means quite a bit to him. In exchange, he gives me a few strawberries and allows me to have my bee yard out in the country here. The thing about strawberries is that they have such a weak source of nectar that there is not a lot of honey left to store after they pollinate them. My bees here are strictly a benefit to the farmer. There's no benefit from the nectar of the strawberries, because it's



Charles Heatherly harvesting honey in Wake County.  
Photo by Foy Allen Edelman.

only 12% protein. Each bee has a mission when it goes out of the hive. The bees go to the strongest source of protein.

I've been experimenting with a type of Russian bee. They had mites in Asia a hundred years ago, and the Asian bees in eastern Russia and China developed a proboscis that they would literally pick the verroa mites off each other and pinch them. That didn't address the problem of the trachea, the one that gets inside the thorax. The U.S. Department of Agriculture started an experiment to see if they could bring over Russian queens, and introduce them into our natural bee population here, which is predominantly a yellow Italian bee, to introduce mite resistance into the genes. It's shown good results, and, of course, now that the Cold War is over, nobody minds that our bees are becoming communists.

As a beekeeper you want them to encourage the hive to produce more than it needs. That's the challenge to the beekeeper, to keep the hive alive and produce a surplus of honey. You have three kinds of bees in the hive: the worker bee, an undeveloped female; the queen bee, which is about a quarter inch longer and fully developed; and the drone, the male. The cycle begins with the mating of the queen. The average worker bee only lives forty-five days during the work cycle. She hatches out, and from the minute that she comes out of her cell, she knows what she's supposed to do. Her first job is to clean up the hive. The first bees are attendants. They literally clean up their cells and start the work of carrying the garbage and debris out of the hive. The inside of the hive is one of the cleanest and most hygienic places you will ever see. That's where the bees live, and the honey that they make is the food that they eat during the winter; so it's for their survival. All the worker bees are females, but they don't have reproduction capability. The worker bee does all the work. She guards the hive, she takes care of the queen. She graduates from the baby bee who cleans up the hive to a nurse bee to take care of the babies. Then, in her last two weeks of life in the summertime when she's fully developed, her job is to go out and gather nectar and forage and bring it back and also she's a guard bee to protect the hive.

You've heard of the queen bee? There's one queen. Her main job is to lay eggs and she's one terrific egg-laying machine at her peak productive life. On a good day she'll lay two thousand eggs a day. When she lays an egg, if she fertilizes it, it will become a female. If she does not fertilize it, it becomes a drone, a male bee. It's one of the few species where there's no father. The male bee has no father. When the queen lays the egg in an ordinary honey cell, the nurse bees come in and put a small amount of white, creamy, very nutritious substance called royal jelly, enough to feed that larva for three days, and then they fill the rest of the cell full of honey. It takes the worker bee eighteen days to hatch out, and that's the feed for the larva until it hatches out. If they are going to raise a drone, the queen does not fertilize it, and the drone comes out about a quarter of an inch longer than the ordinary female worker bee. It gets the same food as the worker, royal jelly for three days, and then honey. In each

hive you have about two hundred drones. Bees can grow their own queen. Beekeepers prefer to introduce a queen that we have bought for a specific reason to change the nature of the hive. That's part of the excitement of dealing with bees; you can change the hive in thirty or forty days by introducing a new queen. If the bees themselves decide they need a new queen, if the old queen is tired or injured and can't lay eggs, they can create a queen cell which is about three times as big as the ordinary honey cell that the other bees are incubated in. The queen will lay an egg and fertilize it, and then the workers completely fill that cell up with royal jelly. And that's what determines a queen bee or a worker bee. The queen bee gets royal jelly for her entire incubation cycle. It takes her twenty-one days to hatch out.

The social aspect of honeybees is extremely fascinating. The queen is the source of order in the hive. She's a fully developed female, larger than the other worker bees. In the spring one of the challenges the beekeepers have is bees have a tendency to swarm, which means about a day before the new queen is born, the old queen will leave and about half of the hive will leave to go find a new home and you don't want that to happen. If you've left this for the hive to manage, there are probably six or seven queens about ready to hatch out, the strongest queen supposedly emerges first, and the first thing she does is go and kill all the other queens, so that there is only one queen. A hive will not tolerate more than one queen. The queen needs to stay at a constant 93° temperature. Bees rotate in order to keep the queen cool. In the summertime, the bees air condition the place. Some bees actually go out and bring back droplets of water and take them up to the top of the hive. Other bees are there fanning their wings and evaporating the water to lower the temperature in the hive. In the wintertime, when it's 30° outside, they eat honey and generate heat, the inside will get very hot, and they'll gradually rotate out to keep the temperature constant.

In the springtime the hive contains about twenty thousand bees that have survived the winter. The bees are out everyday when the weather's fine, and all of a sudden, when the first flowers bloom, the worker bees, forager bees,

come back to the hive. The bee communicates to the hive with certain pheromones [odors] that “we just found honey out there” to the queen, the queen immediately starts laying eggs. Within a month, the hive grows to sixty thousand bees, the summer strength; so there are plenty of bees to go out and gather the food and bring it back and store it. Once they bring the nectar in and make the honey, it can't have more than 18% water content or it will ferment or sour. They know exactly when they've reached that level of humidity, and they seal that cell and that's it. When the tombs of Egypt were explored, honey was found that was put in them five thousand years ago, and it was still good.

Bees move around in the hive. About 200 years ago, a Presbyterian minister, Langstrom, discovered what's now called “bee space.” He discovered that if you build a hive and leave a space between  $1/4$  and  $3/8$  of an inch between frames, the bees will use that space to traverse. If you leave less than  $1/4$  inch or over  $3/8$ , the bees will glue it up with a substance they make called propolis, a resin they harvest from the trees. It's a very strong glue that makes the hive airtight and completely dark. As a result of the Langstrom invention of bee space, there are two boxes for each hive, the big deep box hive, where the queen lays eggs and the hive manages itself. The top has shallow boxes with wax in them. The bees fill the cells there with honey, close them up, and cap them. At the end of the season, the beekeeper takes out the shallow boxes filled with honey, cuts the caps off the cells, puts them in a centrifuge called an extractor that slings the honey out. As soon as the honey flow is over, the queen stops laying eggs. The bees start dying off, because they've literally worked themselves to death. They wear their wings out. They'll go out on a mission and not come back. You have to harvest the honey then, or the bees will eat it back. When the tulip poplar bloom is the big source of honey here at the first of June, you want to get your honey then. When the supply of honey goes down, the queen stops laying eggs, and the bee population goes down, and the drone's only job is to eat honey and mate a new queen. When there's no more honey flow, the female bees throw the drones out [of the hive] where they die from exposure or are eaten by birds.



Stella Daniel in front of one of her award-winning cakes at the 2010 NC State Fair. Photo by Foy Allen Edelman.

Beekeepers leave the fall honey for the bees to eat during the winter. In the fall, the queen will lay another set of eggs; those bees will take the hive through the winter.

It's really fascinating to understand how the bee survives and how it thrives and the challenges that face it. If there's a drought, a lot of bees will die and the queen can die from exposure. If you don't have enough honey left [for the winter], you have to feed the bees sugar water. Royal jelly is another substance [bees produce] that is now harvested as a cosmetic. Everything the bees produce has an antibiotic agent. Since the bees live in the woods, they have to cure themselves, so they produce a very active antibiotic agent. Doctors have used honey as a treatment for burns, because it seals the wound from air and contains an antibiotic. There's a good deal of evidence to support the use of bee stings as a treatment for arthritis. Beekeepers as a rule have a low incidence of arthritis. If you get stung by a bee, she, worker bee, emits a pheromone, a special kind of odor, and it's a cry of alarm. It's a way the bee says "I'm in danger. Come help me." If you get stung here you'd better move over yonder, because they'll be lots of bees looking for you. The main reason a bee stings is to protect the hive. They communicate by smell and pheromones.

The smoker is the way to control the bees. The reason is that over millions of years of living out in the wild, fire is the great enemy of anything that lives in the woods. As soon as a bee smells smoke, she gorges herself with honey. They don't pay attention to you, because they think the woods are on fire. A worker bee with a full stomach of honey can fly two hundred miles and survive for two weeks. As soon as the smoke goes away, they put the honey back into the hive.

You have to treat bees with respect or they will attack you. I've found that the more I work with them, the less aggressive they are when I'm around them. These yellow bees are very gentle; I'm convinced that they are accustomed to me.

### **Stella Daniel's Orange Carrot Cake**

Stella Daniel won blue ribbons in the "foods cooked with honey" category at the NC State Fair in 2003 and 2009. She grew up in Northampton County and now resides in a cabin located just off the Blue Ridge Parkway in Ashe County. "Use small and organic carrots for this recipe if they're available," Stella told me in 2009 at the NC State Fair in Raleigh where we met. "And I use imitation vanilla extract for the glaze, because it's clear."

1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour  
1 cup whole wheat pastry flour  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice  
½ teaspoon salt  
4 large eggs, beaten  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
¾ cup vegetable oil  
½ cup honey  
2/3 cup packed golden brown sugar, Stella prefers Dominos brand  
½ cup orange marmalade  
½ cup orange juice  
3 cups carrots, peeled and grated, lightly packed  
½ cup coconut, grated

½ cup golden raisins  
½ cup dark raisins  
¾ cup pecans

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease and flour 2 tube pans. Measure and sift the all-purpose and wheat flours, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, pumpkin pie spice, and salt in a bowl and set aside. In a separate mixing bowl, beat together the eggs, vanilla extract, oil, honey, brown sugar, marmalade, and orange juice. Stir in the dry flour mixture until just blended. Fold in carrots, coconut, raisins, and pecans. Bake until tester inserted into center of cakes comes out clean, about 40-45 minutes. Transfer cakes to rack for cooling, about 15-20 minutes. Turn out cakes onto rack; cool completely. Frost with orange glaze, if desired.

### **Orange glaze, optional**

2 cups + 1 tablespoon confectionary sugar  
1 tablespoon butter or margarine, softened  
¼ cup orange juice, freshly squeezed  
½ teaspoon vanilla extract  
1½ - 2 teaspoons grated orange zest  
Mix all ingredients together thoroughly and spoon onto cooled cakes.



## Tracing Back a Tar Heel

By Stephen Bishop

Have you ever pondered our state's nickname, the Tar Heel State? No one, including historians, is quite sure when or how the heel got tarred, although legends abound. The most probable explanation for this mysterious, tar-shrouded term is that it originally belonged in close association with barefooted laborers—and, well, snide remarks. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the production of tar and turpentine flourished in North Carolina, as the coastal plain abounded in the highly resinous species *Pinus palustris*, or longleaf pine—a pine capable of growing in areas of dry, sandy soils where agricultural crops withered, areas labeled “piney woods” or “pine barrens.”

“North Carolina just had this tragic situation,” says Robert Outland, author of *Tapping the Pines: The Naval Stores Industry of the American South*. “There was nothing else for North Carolinians to produce and market except naval stores. It was profitable, but other colonies in the eighteenth century seemed to have found something that would generate even more revenue.” So stuck with pines, North Carolinians embraced naval stores while South Carolinians planted rice and indigo. Naval stores (think “stored goods” not “store front”) represented products made from pine sap and were used especially for shipbuilding. Tar, pitch, rosin, and turpentine were industry

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*Frame photo: Workers prepare barrels of naval stores for transport, Sampson County, NC, circa 1923-1939 (detail). Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*

mainstays, and in the 1800s, a network of roads and rivers—and later railroads—funneled barrel after barrel of crude and distilled naval stores to New Bern and Wilmington. “In Wilmington,” Outland says, “barrels of spirits of turpentine were stacked as far as the eye can see—everywhere, two and three high.” Amid the smell of brine and pine sap, sailors and dock hands filled sailing vessels and steamers with oaken barrels capable of conveying North Carolina’s liquid cargo along the seaboard and across oceans.

By 1845, the *Cincinnati Miscellany* cataloged North Carolina’s nickname as “Tar-Boilers”—which is perhaps a notch above the South Carolina “Weasels” and the Mississippi “Tadpoles” (Gist 239-40).

### The Heel

Tar boiling was a backwoods operation reserved, in the words of Outland, for “the poorest and most powerless people.” In the piney



A turpentine hand “hacks” new notches in a longleaf pine in Sampson County, NC, circa 1923-1939. Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

woods, slaves and poor whites camped for days to weeks around a newly built tar kiln, only to move a few weeks later and repeat the operation. To build a kiln, workers dug a basin and coated it with clay. They gathered dead pine wood, all hand-hewn into firewood-sized pieces, and arranged the wood atop the newly dug basin. To limit a fire's oxygen intake, workers shoveled a layer of dirt over the mass of wood before igniting it. The wood cooked instead of combusting and, as a result, sweated out tar. Molten tar collected in the basin where a trench channeled it to an uncovered trough. Here, workers dipped tar into buckets and barrels. A kiln twenty-feet in diameter and twelve-feet high could produce roughly 100 barrels of tar in a week ("Distilling Turpentine").

"It was hard work," says Outland, "It was dirty work; you worked all day long, and the pay was ridiculously low, and a lot of people didn't have any choice." It was also dangerous work. Workers had to watch and regulate the fire's intensity. Some had to climb the smoldering kilns to remove or add dirt, not knowing if the mound underneath would collapse. Sap and tar would have permeated a worker's clothes. (If you have parked a car under a pine tree, you know washing wouldn't have helped much either.) And since many workers were too poor to own shoes, it's not difficult to imagine all those bare feet, and heels, collecting a glaze of sand-encrusted tar.

### The War

The first recorded use of "tar heel" is tied to the Civil War. Although various stories after the war claim soldiers from North Carolina stuck relentlessly to the battlefield—as if they had tarred their heels—the term seems to have had a less flattering origin, as regiments from across the states saw first-hand the people of the piney woods and their tar and turpentine forests. Like that of tar, turpentine production was an arduous, messy affair. Laborers cut, with a tool called a "hack," a washboard series of notches into one side of a living pine. Slightly v-shaped, the notches funneled sap into an axe-cut cavity, called a "box," in the tree's base. In the summer months, turpentine workers walked from tree to tree, in a forest full of thousands of trees, scraping clogged up notches and collecting sap.

Soldiers, too, traveled these forests of scarred, bleeding pines—known as turpentine orchards—day-in and day-out. "We crossed the river and marched sixteen miles through an uninhabited pine region," wrote a Union chaplain. "A vast turpentine orchard extended



A turpentine hand scrapes a longleaf pine to promote more resin flow, Sampson County, NC, circa 1923-1939. Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

on each side of the road, and stretched away to the right and left indefinitely” (Gage 280). At times, it must have been eerie, too, or so thought a *New York Times* newspaperman: “The stripped trees become white with resinous sap and on a dark night one would take a turpentine farm for a huge cemetery” (“Distilling Turpentine”). The people living in these “uninhabited pine regions” and working the turpentine orchards must have been an equally eerie sight.

In a hard-to-decipher journal entry dated 1862, the first recorded use of the term “tar heel” suggests an association with poverty. “This is a low sandy country,” scribbled Confederate lieutenant, William Lowrance. “The land is poor and the inhabitants—generally the same. The country is widespread with cypress swamps and duck ponds. I know now what is meant by the piney woods region of N.C. and the idea occurs to me that it is no wonder we are called ‘tar heels.’ Very little wheat [is] raised about here. The inhabitants live on corn meal, sweet potatoes, [and] cabbage.”

### The Heels of Defeat

For inhabitants and workers of the piney woods, the Civil War produced much of the same. Many freed slaves labored under a new form of slavery—peonage. Laborers who had been collecting tar and turpentine their whole lives had few opportunities for higher paying, less grueling jobs. Landowners provided these laborers with a debt of room and board (often their old slave cabins) to be paid back by laboring, once again, in turpentine orchards. Moreover, by



A worker pours resin into a barrel with a turpentine tree in the background, Sampson County, NC, circa 1923-1939. Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

the late 1800s North Carolina's naval-stores laborers were moving south to other longleaf forests in South Carolina and Georgia. The longleaf forests in North Carolina were not only dying—they were failing to reproduce. Decades of tapping the pines had taken its toll, leaving trees weakened and unprofitable. Turpentine hands had been safeguarding turpentine trees by preventing forest fires. Little did they know, longleaf was fire adapted and quite capable of withstanding low-burning fires (at least, in its normal state and not dripping with flammable sap). Without these fires, longleaf lost its competitive edge, and other species flourished.

But what turpentine workers left behind, it seems, was the term “tar heel.” For years after the war, people used the term derisively to indicate low status and poverty, if not rude manners. In an entry on Americanisms, the 1883 edition of the *Encyclopedia Americana* says, “In pineries, on the other hand, valuable timber is obtained, and the population is far superior to the tar heel, the nickname of the dweller in barrens” (“Americanisms” 199).

Still, it is a sign of good nature when a person turns an intended insult into a compliment. And many North Carolinians began self-applying the term with pride, as an indicator of themselves as honest, hardworking folk. “That makes perfect sense,” says Outland. “That just seems to be how most nicknames work. They start out with negative connotations, then people to whom the negative nicknames are attached end up owning them and deciding that’s how they’re going to be identified.”

In his short poem “A Tar Heel,” John Charles McNeil, who was born and raised in the sandhills of North Carolina in the late 1800s, displays the rival connotations associated with the term at that time. Although Loftin, the narrator of the poem, is a proud turpentine hand, McNeil is obviously poking fun. In language that seems utterly offensive today, but was commonplace in his day and time (in fact, McNeil was one of North Carolina’s most popular and acclaimed poets), McNeil writes,

“Oh, I gits my stren ’th fum white-side meat,  
I sops all de sorghum a nigger kin eat,  
I chaws wheat bread on Saddy Night,  
En Sunday’s when my jug gits light.

I kin cut mo’ boxes ’n a shorter while,  
Den any ’er coon fer forty mile’;



Workers prepare barrels of naval stores for transport, Sampson County, NC, circa 1923-1939 (detail). Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

I kin dip mo' tar en scrape mo' scrape  
 En leave my crap in better shape,

En chip en pull en corner finer,  
 Den any 'er coon fer forty mile';  
 When it comes to bein' a turk'ntime han'.  
 Count Loftin fer a full-size' man. (41)

Eventually, positive connotations won out. Tar heels came to be seen—and saw themselves—as tough, hard-working people. No doubt, these positive connotations were helped along by popular stories of our soldiers sticking like tar to the battlefield. In 1893, the positive connotations were cemented, as students at the University of

North Carolina debuted a sports paper called *The Tar Heel* (Powell). The rest, so to speak, is history. But the next time you hear someone say “tar heel” originated from Dean Smith’s “four corner offense,” make like our legendary soldiers and stand up for the people of the piney woods, the true tar heels. Theirs were hard, hard lives.

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## Long Ago and “Fasola” Away

By Robin Hitch

Would it surprise you to discover that a popular and yet persecuted cult had once been widespread across the Southern Highlands, even well into the 20th century? It was a cult—or perhaps we should call it a “folkway”—that was centered on music, entwined with religion, elemental to rural education, and was a social institution in its own right. It was a cultural practice that became so widespread that in our grandparent’s time almost all rural folk of the uplands of Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky—no matter their religious leanings—belonged to it. It was, as a tradition, handed down from their parents and grandparents, the sturdy stock of German and Scotch-Irish pioneers who first settled the coves and valleys of the Southern Appalachians. It was born in Europe and popular before the American Revolution in Puritan New England, but was eventually despised by the church as a “cult” and driven to extinction in those parts, even before the United States was born. It was brought to the South by the settlers who came down the Great Wagon Road in the mid-1700s, to be preserved for more than a century in the isolated hills of the Southland. As progress made its way up the

*Robin Hitch grew up in South Florida where she attended Palm Beach Community College. Robin has worked full time in WCU’s Hunter Library in the Systems Department since 1998. She wrote this article after becoming involved to help save the Shook House from demolition (it has since been restored and is included in the National Register of Historic Places), where she and her now deceased husband Bob, who is a Shook descendant, learned of Reuben Philips and his singing school there.*

*Frame photo: Pine Log Singing School Circa 1912. Photographer unknown, from a suitcase of old photos that belonged to author’s husband’s late uncle Buck Reece.*

coves and hollows it was finally “found out,” and was systematically eliminated to become only a forgotten memory to the vast majority, even to those who think they know about music in the region. Yet at one time it was central to the forces that made this region what it is (or was).

This was the folkway of Fasola, a widely popular movement in this region, and eventually several others, such as the hills of Arkansas and the mountains of southern Missouri. Fasola flourished from about 1800 until the 1930s. The forces of organized religion and the institutions and promoters of “proper” music education nearly brought Fasola to an end, although it is regaining some of its former popularity today. This has always been the struggle of the Fasola, better known in the south as Sacred Harp Singing, or “Singing the Shaped Notes,” since its first inception over 300 years ago.

The beginnings of Fasola, the “fa-sol-la” of the musical scale, are murky at best, but the roots accepted by most historians place the beginnings in Elizabethan times. In the England of Shakespeare, notes were sung in the Fasola fashion of “fa sol la fa sol la mi fa” (Jackson, *White Spirituals* 4). This practice slowly faded until a renewal in Europe in the late 1600s, toward the middle of the Baroque musical period. The issues surrounding its rebirth lie in the changes going on in the Protestant Church in those years. The traditions and austerities of the democratic early church had given way to a rise in the more autocratic power of the churches over the years, and the attraction and excitement of the churches had become less intense (Kamien 100). The once-vibrant religions had become boring. The songs sung by congregations, before sung by rote based on the musical knowledge of the deacon in the old “common way,” had dwindled in number and in variety as the years passed, and by that period there were just a few rather worn-out sacred songs to be sung (Jackson, *White Spirituals* 6).

Some of the early founders of the “new” churches cast about to find a liturgy that would invigorate their denominations. Soon leaders such as Isaac Watts of the Church of Christ and the Wesley brothers, founders of Methodism in England, settled on the publishing of hymnals, intended to introduce new songs to the congregations, as the route to creating such excitement. The problem arose, however, that these common Christians were mostly illiterate, and certainly not familiar with the nuance and complications of traditional musical notation. Enter Fasola, coming to the rescue! By 1698 hymnals began appearing with musical notation and the letters F, S and, L

Four-Shape Notation, Sequence used by Little and Smith:

FA SOL LA FA SOL LA MI

Four-Shape Notation, Sequence used by Andrew Law:

FA SOL LA FA SOL LA MI

Four Shape Notation. Drawn from an image in *Two Notable Shape-Note Leaders*.

printed below the staff (“Mi” was added later). Now it was found that with very little instruction the congregations could sing a song to a tune, even if never before heard. In Thomas Walters’ 1721 manual, *Grounds and Rules of Music Explained*, which was considered the premier authority on singing for a quarter century, it noted that with his new book “even children or people of the meanest capacities can come to sing” (Bealle 9).

While the rise and fall of Fasola in Europe is a tale in itself, Fasola also made its way across the Atlantic and was incorporated into the Congregationalist Churches of New England by the early 1700s. The same forces that had brought Fasola to popularity in England saw it rise in New England as the “Regular Singing” movement (as opposed to the traditional “Common Way”) by 1721, with the introduction of Walters’ book (Jackson, *White Spirituals* 6).

At first the traditional churches embraced the new idea, but soon it became obvious to the leadership that their congregants’ enthusiasm for singing was too much of a good thing. The singing seemed to take on a life of its own as people became excited about their new-found abilities. Singing schools not sponsored by the church grew up across the countryside, and social gatherings outside the direct control of the Puritan leaders began to become commonplace. Soon stories of a friendly “mixing of the sexes” came to the ears of elders,

and an aura of some never-quite-explained moral “risk” fell upon the singings and their promoters. A backlash had also developed among the educated purveyors of music, who believed this primitive form was a threat to the “real” reading of music, and these forces combined to ban hymnals using the Fasola from the churches by the 1760s. A pamphlet was circulated as early as 1722 that outlined the objections:

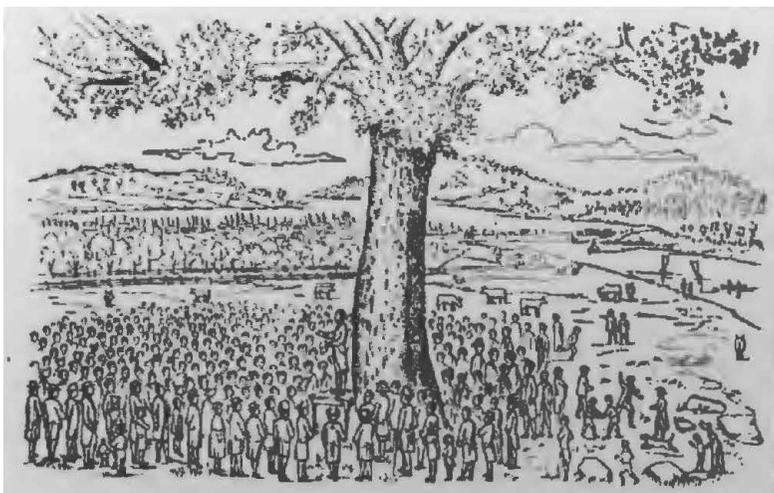
1. It is a new way, an unknown tongue.
2. It is not so melodious as the usual way.
3. There are so many tunes we shall never have done learning them.
4. The practice creates disturbances and causes people to behave indecently and disorderly.
5. It is Quakerish and Popish and introductive on instrumental music.
6. The names given to the notes are bawdy, yea blasphemous (i.e., fa-sol-la-mi, etc.)
7. It is a needless way, since our fathers got to heaven without it.
8. It is a contrivance to get money.
9. People spend too much time learning it, they tarry out nights disorderly.
10. They are a company of young upstarts that fall in with this way, and some of them are lewd and loose persons. (Ellenwood 20)

The next phase in the history of Fasola was written in the hills of northeastern Pennsylvania. In those same years, when popularity declined in New England because of antagonism from church leaders, the areas around Philadelphia were filling up with new immigrants. Scotch-Irish and German settlers, mostly poor and Protestant were coming in torrents to the new world, invited by the Quaker William Penn, to the new lands of religious freedom he had established there. Singing teachers from New England, in some disrepute there and out of work, discovered they were welcome among these new inhabitants, and the growth of the singing schools began anew in those regions. For a generation or two the Fasola prospered, but then, as in England and New England before, the same forces led to its demise.

It was the children raised with Fasola, the children of the original immigrants, who carried Fasola outward. Pennsylvania had become overcrowded and land expensive by the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, and now the children of the original settlers were lured away to the south and west by promises of cheap land on the frontier. They departed on foot or with crude wagons and ox carts, taking their families across the Susquehanna and on across the Potomac Rivers into the Valley of Virginia. Here Fasola found its most permanent haven. Onward they came down the Shenandoah Valley and into the Carolinas, following the crude trail known to history as the Great Wagon Road. Everywhere they went the old, worn Fasola hymnals traveled secured as treasure next to the ever-present family Bible in the settler's meager collection of possessions (Rouse 199).

The American Revolution brought a certain democratization of the churches, especially on the frontier. As the settlers moved further west into the former lands of the Cherokee and Shawnee—Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky, and the uplands of the Carolinas—they took the popularity of the Singing School to new heights. By 1798 this surge of popularity brought about a new innovation in the hymnals: the printing of the score in patent or “shaped” notes. Shaped notes were a simple extension of the Fasola, changing the round heads of the standard notes on the staff to a series of geometric shapes corresponding to the Fa (right triangle), Sol (circle), La (square) and Mi (diamond) (Jackson, *White Spirituals* 12).

The first of this genre may have been printed about 1798 by an obscure singing teacher named John Connelley in Philadelphia. Another 1798 publication by Andrew Law adopted a similar method, but was soon followed by a much more popular book, *The Easy Instructor* (Jackson, *The Story* 33). These books and their descendants were unique in the period in that they begin with a very basic instructional section intended to teach the use of the notes to those with no musical background. “The clear advantages of the shape note system are almost immediately apparent. Providing an individual shape for each syllable enables anyone, after a modicum of attention to the matter, to name the proper syllables of any piece of music instantaneously. One of the genuine difficulties in ordinary solmization is that the student must make continual mental computations. With Shape notes, this is completely avoided” (Lowens and Britton 31-32). Such instruction drove the development of singing schools. Now any person educated enough to read who might come into possession of one of these treasured books could become a singing school instruc-



The “singing” of 1818, sketched in 1905 for W.L. Grissom’s *The History of Methodism in North Carolina*.

tor. In the isolated coves and valleys of the frontier, education was a scarce commodity, so often the public services of remote communities depended on itinerant teachers and preachers. In fact, it was often true that such people were both teacher and preacher, serving up the three R’s during the week and the “hellstorm and brimstone” of the Great Awakening on the Sabbath as they moved from community to community. The addition of “Singing Teacher” to this resume was a natural one, for in a world where musical instruments were extremely rare, due to poverty, isolation, and bad roads, any musical entertainment was a blessing. “Singing” combined the church with the three R’s in such a way that it was often impossible to separate the two. In addition, the schools offered adults the ability to interact with members of the community who did not share their particular Protestant denomination, making such schools and singings an invaluable “glue” to bind together the many diverse members of a settlement, as well as to provide common ground for chaperoned exposure of young folks to members of the opposite sex.

By 1810, the Great Awakening had come to the mountains of the South, and a sense of community was growing in the isolated hills. With the threat of Indian attack finally quelled by years of war, and the valleys and coves filling up, the settlers sought new ways to connect with each other. The “Singin’ Schools” were a wonderful opportunity, a chance to become proficient with the “new fangled” notes and show off your talents on Sunday at church, but the set-



The Shook-Smathers House after renovation, 2005. Photo by Robin Hitch

tlers wanted more. “Singings” became an institution that filled these needs. For generations “Singings” were held across the area, ranging from small groups of ten or twelve, to extravaganzas with hundreds of singers.

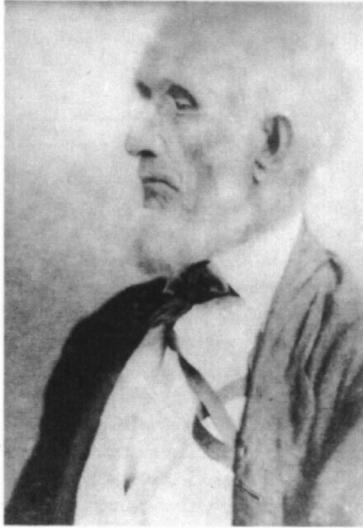
Deep in the Southern Appalachians in the earliest years of the 1800’s, a man lived who was the epitome of the “Teacher, Preacher and Singing School Teacher” that became such an institution in the area. His name was Reuben Philips. Born in 1795 near Charlotte, North Carolina he moved as a child to the mountains and grew up near Asheville. He would grow to be an old man of 90, and he ended his years in Alabama at the extreme far southern end of the hill country, a preacher and singing teacher to his last breath. In 1884 he wrote his memoirs for his daughter, which included a section that illustrates the early days of the “singings.” In it he described events leading to a summer school at the “Shook House” in Locust Old Fields, now known as Clyde, North Carolina in 1818:

In the fall of [1815] I commenced a school on Sandy-mush Creek in the west part of Buncombe County near Colonel James Lowrey. The neighborhood was composed of about forty families and no church but the Methodist and an excellent community. I enjoyed myself very well and being anxious to learn music, I applied to the same Mr. White

to come over and teach for us. He accordingly sent articles and the school was made up. He employed me to make the manuscript books. The school commenced. He attended and taught two days and at the close of the second day he informed us that he could not teach any more so the school was done. The young people had a meeting and resolved that I should take his place and that they would sustain me. I concluded to try, so I commenced in good earnest, only knowing four or five tunes in the parts [Fa So La]. [I] appointed the next Saturday for the first day. I soon memorized the rules [Shaped Notes] and practiced some more tunes on Saturday. The first Saturday in October 1816 I commenced my first music school. I taught on Saturdays only and sang on Sabbath gratuitous.

My good success was published all over the county and a petition was sent from Locust Old Fields where I had before taught school for me to teach a reading school and a singing school for them. I opened a school at Locust Old Fields [Canton, NC] on the first Monday of January 1818 and a music school also for Saturdays and Sundays gratuitously. Old Father Shook came to hear us sing and was so delighted that he proposed his house [five miles west in Clyde, NC] for me to sing in. Old Father Shook had a fine house and in the third story he had a room 40 feet square well finished for preaching for the Methodists. I made a large school at that place, some fifty scholars, and had the assistance of my old friend Humphrey Posey who was an experienced music teacher. This school drew together a vast concourse of young people from both schools. Towards the end of the summer my friend Rev. Posey and Parson Byers requested that we should call all the Sandymush and Newfound music scholars for a three day singing—two at Father Shooks and on Sunday at Waynesville five miles further west. We had over 120 singers, the greatest singing ever witnessed in that county. On Sunday we went in procession to the muster field where a stand was erected for preaching. The hymn was sung that affects my heart. I was so overcome as to be scarcely able to stand on my feet. The hymn was commenced “Oh tell me no more of this worlds vain store etc.” (Philips 5 – 10)

It seemed that “singing” had caught fire. Several new hymnals were published in the Valley of Virginia, the most well known of the early ones was the *Harmonia Sacra* by Joseph Funk, published in ten editions from 1832 to 1860 in Singers Glen, Virginia (Wayland 9). “Singing” Billy Walker of Spartanburg, South Carolina introduced his book, *Southern Harmony*, in 1835, and soon it had sold 600,000 copies, an incredible number in those days (Jackson, *White Spirituals* 63). Not to be outdone, Walker’s partner, stung by “Singing Billy’s” fame, left that association and went west before the Civil War to the



Reuben Philips circa 1886. Courtesy of [www.shookhistory.org](http://www.shookhistory.org)

hills of Alabama, where he published what was to become the most popular of all the Shaped Note books, the *Sacred Harp*, which had sales in the millions.

Time rolled along, and the forces of proper music and morality that had previously squashed Fasola in other areas began to erode the tradition again. Music aficionados, always critical of the limitations of the old four-note system, stretched the tradition to include seven notes, and by the 1870’s seven-note song books had become the norm for Fasola. More than anything else though, it was the urbanization of the South and the centralization of the Protestant denominations that decreased the mass popularity to Fasola. Organized religion, its headquarters always located in some distant area where Fasola had long been forgotten, chose the hymnals, and the

well-trained choirs determined the music to be sung on Sunday. Fasola began to be seen as “primitive” and “white spiritual” singing. It was only in the most rural of settings that the singings still flourished, and then only until new forms of entertainment like radio and instrumental concerts and dances found their way there. By the late 1930’s, Fasola and shaped-note singing had almost disappeared. But the assault continued; it can be seen in the struggle of the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Pelham, South Carolina, which was refused entry into the Southern Baptist Association up until 1964, because it refused to ban the shaped-note hymnals (Sightler 1).

But Fasola is not quite extinct. In the rural coves in and around the Southern mountains Primitive Baptists and Free Will Baptists still hold on to the old ways, and another group, the rural Black Gospel Churches, have adopted the simple notations and have even written their own new words to the old tunes they sang from the hymnals. Famous and popular Fasola favorites like “Amazing Grace,” “Keep on the Sunny Side,” and “This Little Light of Mine” continue to be popular to this day in other genres. Adding instruments to the singing led to the birth of another mountain folk tradition: the family gospel singers of the South. Many of the hymnals became songbooks for the new instrumentalists of the region, finding their way into the traditional bluegrass music of today, a tradition that extends back only about as far as the demise of Shaped Note Singing. In fact, the notation used by traditional banjo players in bluegrass is called “tabular notation,” but is in fact recognizable as the old shaped notes (Stevenson 1).

The growing interest in the folk art and folkways of the Appalachian region led to a renewed interest in Shaped Notes in the 1980’s and this has also led to something of a revival in recent years. Today “Old-Time-Singings” are held around the region and all have the same old traditional structure of “Singing with Supper on the Grounds.” From the web page that announces the annual “Shape-Note Singing at the Cullowhee Presbyterian Church” held the “Saturday before third Sunday in April” each year comes this description of the affair: “Unaccompanied by instrumentation, the music is created entirely by the human voice - the ‘sacred harp.’ The hosts of the singing have extra hymnals to share, and offering to share a hymnal with others is a prevailing and friendly gesture on the part of the singers. Visitors are genuinely welcome to attend as listeners, but ideally they should not join in the singing unless they are practiced

singers themselves. Participants typically prepare and share a pot-luck dinner, and visitors who want to eat should always bring along a food item to contribute to the general meal. Any dish that's typically served at a covered-dish supper would be a suitable offering from a visitor."

Now, in the second decade of the 21st century, we find ourselves witness to the rise once again of this strange "cult" of singers. Today's converts, immersed in the complications of a dehumanizing electronic age, find satisfaction in the simplicity of Fasola. It is a simplicity born of fellowship over shared meals, of faith in the power of family and history, and of the inherent democracy entailed in learning simple notes and then singing them together as the unaided human voices are joined in unison. The attraction may also be, as it has always been with Fasola, that recognition of joy that can be found in quiet revolt, in keeping alive something that the "powers that be" want eliminated. Help keep Fasola from extinction by attending a "singing" and listening to the democratic union of vocal cords as they strum their "Sacred Harp."

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