

LISTON B. RAMSEY CENTER FOR REGIONAL STUDIES

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CECIL SHARP CENTENNIAL— CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF BALLADS

2016 marks the centennial celebration of Cecil Sharp's first trip to Madison County during which he collected ballads and folk songs. To mark this occasion, the Ramsey Center is creating a multimedia exhibition that highlights the singers who sang for Sharp on his travels and the families and younger generations who continue to preserve this tradition.

The exhibition is a collaboration of artists and collectors, and it will include photographs by Rob Amberg, John Cohen, and David Holt, as well as images from the collections of Joe Penland; Elmer Hall, who runs Sunnybank Inn (Jane Gentry's historic home); and the Cecil Sharp House in London, England. It will also include video and audio content from the Alan Lomax Archives made available through the Ramsey Center's partnership with Appalshop (www.appalshop.org). The exhibition will run from September 27, 2016 through October 21, 2016 in Weizenblatt Gallery in Moore Auditorium, Mars Hill University. An opening reception will take place on September 27th in the gallery from 6-8 p.m.



Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles gather ballads from Southern Appalachia. Photograph provided by the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and English Folk Dance and Song Society.

TRANSATLANTIC BALLAD SWAP



From left to right: Donna Ray Norton, Betty Smith, Hannah Furguele, and Joe Penland. Photograph by Dianne Shaw.

On July 23, 2016, the Ramsey Center hosted a transatlantic ballad swap via Skype with the English Folkdance and Song Society during their inaugural Appalachian Conference titled, "Pastoralism and Modernity in the Southern Mountains: a Centenary Symposium on Cecil Sharp's 1916 Appalachian Journey." The event featured Betty Smith, Joe Penland, Donna Ray Norton, and Daron Douglas. Daron Douglas is the granddaughter of Jane Gentry, who is known for giving Sharp more songs than any other singer from

Madison County. The session was recorded and can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hx74aghXDeM>.

IT'S THE STORIES

In January 2016, the Ramsey Center celebrated its grand reopening after some renovations to the archives and the Center's offices. Dr. Marc Mullinax, Ramsey Center Faculty Chair and Professor of Religion, made these remarks on that occasion.

I ask my students to start off their best work with an opening, tone-setting quote, and so shall I: *The notion of a sense of place would be impossible without memory... anything that awakens such memories and keeps them alive... can be understood as an expression of our sense of place.*

~ Marlene Creates, an environmental artist and poet from Newfoundland.

It was the 1980s. High Reagan Years. Living in Washington, D.C. Talking one day with friends about the Vietnam Memorial... "Just go," my friends said. "Just go, already!" So I did, without the slightest pretext or pretense or predilection. On a late winter day, I biked down and walked towards the Memorial. It was a busy place, not a place of chaos but a place full of purpose. Folks made paper tracing impressions of loved ones' names, rubbed hands over names, laid flowers, pictures and mementos on the ground near the names. People from every state. Some carried children on their shoulders. Disabled veterans came in wheelchairs, on crutches, and leaning on canes. Some crowded around the Name Index to figure out where a name was located in this chevron-shaped tribute to those U.S. soldiers who died in Vietnam.

I felt like I was in a sacred place. It was a place of whispers, quiet conversations, tears and prayers. It was/remains a place of solace. Why? ***It's the stories.*** The stories of the dead heard and retold in that sacred space with the living is a conversation that is worth overhearing. And that is why

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Peggy and Nathan Harmon at the Lunsford Festival in 1991.

IN MEMORIAM: PEGGY DAVIS HARMON

Peggy Harmon, Special Collections Supervisor in the Southern Appalachian Archives, passed away on March 10, 2016. She had retired September 2, 2015 after serving Mars Hill University for thirty-six years.

Mrs. Harmon began her tenure at Mars Hill College in the Rural Life Museum, first preparing artifacts related to farm life for display in the museum, and later working with Director Richard Dillingham to staff the museum and give tours there. The Rural Life Museum's content was familiar to Mrs. Harmon, given the life she spent on her parents' farm in the Grapevine community of Madison County.

Later, Peggy Harmon moved to work in the Southern Appalachian Center in what was then Memorial Library and stayed with those collections when they moved to Renfro Library and came under the guidance of the Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies. Through all these years, Mrs. Harmon took diligent care of the archives and assisted countless researchers in their search for information about genealogy and the history and culture of the Southern Appalachian region. She was a wealth of knowledge about local history and Madison County families.

EXPLORING SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN FORESTS



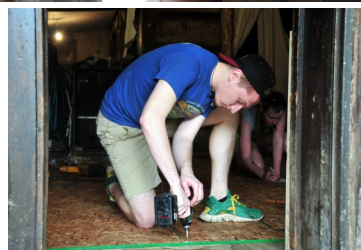
With the theme "Exploring Southern Appalachian Forests," we can't help but include a few hikes into our event and program schedule. In April we visited the Cradle of Forestry in Pisgah National Forest—the birthplace of forestry in America—followed by a hike through the early spring forests nearby. What fun!

Photograph by Marc Mullinax

RAMSEY CENTER ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK TRIP

In March of 2016, Ramsey Center Program Coordinator, Hannah Furguele and Ramsey Center Faculty Chair, Dr. Marc Mullinax teamed up with Regional Studies Faculty, Dr. Kim Reigle and Dr. Ethan Mannon to lead five Mars Hill students on an alternative spring break trip that focused on Southern Appalachia. The group spent time helping restore an old cabin in McDowell County, West Virginia where they also had the opportunity to explore the impact and challenges communities face due to mountain top removal and coal mining. Following this time with Big Creek People in Action (bigcreekpeopleinaction.com), the group continued up to northern West Virginia where students and faculty attended the annual Appalachian Studies Association Conference at Shepherd University. Below are a few thoughts by student Justin Schronce as he reflected on the trip:

"The spring break trip to West Virginia for me was an amazing trip. I had always heard about mountain top removal and seen it on tv, but when I heard about this trip I knew I had to go. Seeing what that process had done to these people who were living there and what it had done to the environment around them was astonishing. When we helped a family work on the house they wanted to move into was so rewarding. While we got most of what is now the new floor done and did a little insulation, compared to the project as a whole [this contribution] was relatively small. But these people were so thankful for the work we did. It is an experience I will never forget, and I hope I can go again."



Top photo: Justin Schronce puts drywall in while Hunter Weatherford, Andrea Garber, and Kehlyn Jarvis hold it up with help from son of cabin owner. Bottom left: Kehlyn cuts out plywood for flooring. Bottom right: Thomas Propest screws down the flooring.

It's the Stories, continued from page 2

the Vietnam Memorial is such a powerful place. It's the stories. They bring people together. From far and near, alive or dead, the distance between people is shortened by memories and stories.



Dr. Marc Mullinax at Ramsey Center reopening. Photograph by Teresa Buckner.

The region of the Southern Highlands, to which this Liston B. Ramsey Center is dedicated and in which it is situated, is – in John Well's words last August – "not just the jewel but one of the bearers of the identity of this place. This is an identity-bearing Center." Without analyzing why too much, I have just one word: *It's the stories*. Amble through our rooms, inspect the giant scrapbook of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, go down and check out the artifacts, the ones on paper and the ones not on paper. We stand on giants, I tell you, and we should get down and listen. Overhear. Do our equivalent of pencil rubbings, laying of flowers. In the same kind of way that makes the Vietnam Memorial so sacred and powerful, so too do the stories contained herein make this Ramsey Center ... well, the jewel that it is. These stories and narratives await our hearing, enchantment, and await us to come within their whispering distance.

Too often the places we create are placeless, Because they don't include our stories. (Michael Jones)

But not here! These stories, artifacts, ballads, and records are like the Wi-Fi in this room, hiding but tap-able. Available. When we connect to them, they help us reconnect to our own place in the world. PLACE-ment. They are stories not just of longing, but of belonging, stories clue us in to what it means to be human and connected with each other in a place-based world. It is the stories of each region that make that place ... the region it is. Stories shorten the distance between now and our collective future – that storied place in which we shall grow and thrive.

I urge you to linger. And return. Often. Consider becoming a "regular" here. Each moment you may spend in these precincts is further preparation to hear the past and tell the stories for a future in need of bending low and listening to whispers of from the past. These whispers are like Mary Oliver's *Wild Geese*:

*harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

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UPCOMING RAMSEY CENTER EVENTS

Cecil Sharp Centennial Celebration: Opening Reception. September 27, 2016, 6-8 p.m., Weizenblatt Gallery, First Floor Moore Auditorium, Mars Hill University. Featuring photographs by Rob Amberg, John Cohen, David Holt and others to celebrate 100 years since Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles traveled to Madison County to collect ballads. The exhibition will run until October 21, 2016.



49th Annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford "Minstrel of Appalachia" Festival. October 1, 2016, All Day, Upper Quad of Mars Hill campus and Moore Auditorium. Details at www.lunsfordfestival.com.

"A Walk In Big Ivy" with Steven McBride. October 6, 2016, 7 p.m., Ramsey Center, First Floor, Renfro Library. Photographer Steven McBride will share his conservation project for Friends of Big Ivy, a group that is working to preserve the biodiversity and beauty of the forest.

Big Ivy Hike. October 15, 2016, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Depart from Broyhill Chapel, Mars Hill University. All levels accommodated, reservations required. Space on the trip is limited. Please contact Hannah Furguele to sign up.

"Valuing Forests: Woodlands in the Western North Carolina Economy." November 3, 2016, 7 p.m., Ramsey Center for Regional Studies, First Floor, Renfro Library. Panel discussion on the changing ways of valuing forests in the western North Carolina economy. Mars Hill University Regional Studies Coordinator Dr. Ethan Mannon will moderate.

"Celebrating Music Mentors" Reception with David Holt. November 9, 2016, 4 p.m., Ramsey Center for Regional Studies, First Floor, Renfro Library. This reception will be for David Holt's photography exhibit, "Mentors and Heroes," on display in the Ramsey Center from September 1–November 15, 2016.

"Winter's Tune: Music To Warm an Appalachian Night." December 2, 2016, 7 p.m., Broyhill Chapel, Mars Hill University. Doors open at 6:30. Tickets at www.lunsfordfestival.com. Join us for the third annual winter concert featuring a showcase of our region's finest musicians. Performers to be announced.

For more information about the events listed above, please contact Hannah Furguele at hurguele@mhu.edu or call her at (828) 689-1571. This is the last printed Ramsey Center newsletter. In October 2016, we will begin to send out quarterly e-newsletters. To sign up for the e-newsletter, please write to Karen Paar at kpaar@mhu.edu.