

# Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies

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Photograph by Hannah Furguele

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## Ramsey Center Runs into Spring

The fall semester of 2012 was packed full of events and programs exploring the “Where There Are Mountains” theme. Though Mars Hill had a touch of winter early, the cold held off long enough to allow for a beautiful fall day on October 6th, the day of the 45th annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford “Minstrel of Appalachia” Festival. The Ramsey Center welcomed many people to the festivities, which included the daytime stage, the ballad and story swap, crafts and demonstrations on the upper quad, as well as workshops, a silent auction, and the evening concert. It was a great day, and we plan to add more events next year.

The Ramsey Center staff is excited to announce the Fiddlin’ 5K “Run for the Music” Road Race on April 13, 2013, for those who cannot wait until October to celebrate mountain music. Inspired by a desire to raise awareness about Bascom Lamar Lunsford’s life and contributions to regional music, the race will benefit both the Lunsford Festival and the Junior Appalachian Musicians Program of the Madison County Arts Council. In the spirit of Mr. Lunsford, proceeds from the race will create a scholarship for Madison County children to participate in the program that teaches the music and dance traditions that our community proudly preserves. We

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*Course Images for Fiddlin’ 5K Road Race.*

## Regional Studies in Action

In March, a group of Mars Hill College students, faculty, and staff will travel up the road to Boone, North Carolina to participate in the Appalachian Studies Association conference at Appalachian State University. While a few of these students were among the group that traveled all the way to western Pennsylvania last March to present their photography project, some of them will be brand new to the conference. Junior Ericka Hincke reflects on her experience below:

Last March I had an amazing opportunity to attend the Appalachian Studies Association Conference in Pennsylvania. Not only did I get

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## 45th Annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival: “Looking to the Past, Looking to the Future”



**The 46th Annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford “Minstrel of Appalachia” Festival will be held on October 5, 2013. Watch [www.lunsfordfestival.com](http://www.lunsfordfestival.com) for updates.**

*Photographs by Mike Thornhill and Teresa Buckner. Clockwise from upper left: Roger Howell and Hannah Furgiuele present Lunsford Award to Boyd Black; Lunsford Festival on the Upper Quad; festival fiddlers open the evening concert with “Liberty”; children enjoy Madison County 4-H activities; Cole Mountain Cloggers dance with the audience; Sheila Kay Adams sings in Ballad Swap while Mary Eagle, Bobby McMillon, and Donna Ray Norton listen; Kathryn Parham Brickey receives Lunsford Youth Award.*

## 2012 Hart-Melvin Archival Research Fellow Report

### Dr. Joel F. Reed, Professor of Music

As the Hart-Melvin Research Grant recipient for 2012-2013, I have focused my research on a collection of shape-note hymnals donated to Mars Hill College by the family of former music faculty member/music librarian, Paul Newton. This collection contains approximately 150 books, most of which are late nineteenth and early twentieth century hymnals which obviously Mr. Newton had collected over a period of several years. My primary focus for the research has centered on the body of paperback hymnals published by the Stamps-Baxter Company in the period from the 1920s to the late 1940s. The Stamps-Baxter hymnals became the favorite hymnals of rural churches throughout the south during this period, with many churches still electing to use them in their services.

My presentation for the upcoming “Unveiling Our Treasures” event, scheduled for late February, will focus on several of these hymnals and the particular style of hymn written and arranged by

J.R. Baxter, V.O. Stamps and others for publication for shape-note singers of the rural south. Of special interest to me is a 1930s collection of African-American spirituals published in the Stamps-Baxter style. For the presentation our Mars Hill College students will perform several of the hymns which will exemplify the different compositional elements prevalent in the hymns published by this company.

As a benefit to the Ramsey Center, my final work in the research project will be to provide a summary of the collection that can be used to advertise to future researchers the exact contents of the Newton Collection.

*To hear Dr. Reed and student Hart-Melvin Fellow Andrew Hebert’s presentation on and performance of shape-note music, please join us on Wednesday, February 27, 2012 at 3 p.m. in Broyhill Chapel for the fifth annual “Unveiling Our Treasures” event.*

## Ramsey Center Welcomes Les Reker as Director of the Rural Life Museum

The Ramsey Center is very pleased to announce that, after a national search, we have hired Mr. Les Reker to serve as the next Director of Mars Hill College's Rural Life Museum. Les Reker comes to us from Odessa, Texas, where he has been serving as the Executive Director of the Ellen Noel Art Museum. He led the Museum in becoming an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, only the second art museum in Texas so honored.



*Les Reker*

Mr. Reker is an artist, educator, and museum professional. Born in Indianapolis, he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Indiana University before getting married and heading off to New York, where he earned a Master of Fine Arts Degree from Queens College of the City University of New York. A representational landscape painter, Les began showing his work in New York and elsewhere while beginning a teaching career in Pennsylvania. He taught studio art and art history for over twenty years, while directing several academic exhibition programs. He was appointed the Director of the Payne Gallery of Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where he also became a full Professor of Art.

During those years Les Reker became very active in the museum profession and its organizations. He served as President of the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries, an affiliate of the American Association of Museums. In 1999 Les Reker decided to pursue museum work exclusively. He earned a certification in Museum Management from the University of Colorado in Boulder, before being appointed Chief Curator and Director of Collections at the Columbus Museum in Georgia, the largest American Art and History Museum in the Southeast. He was subsequently appointed director of the Art Museum of Greater Lafayette in Indiana and then Executive Director of the Saginaw Art Museum in Michigan before he accepted the directorship in Odessa.

***Please help us welcome Les Reker to Mars Hill College at a reception on Tuesday, February 19, 2013 at 3 p.m. in Montague Hall.***

**Congratulations to Dr. Kathy Newfont, Associate Professor of History and Ramsey Center Faculty Chair, for receiving the 2012 Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award for her book, *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina!* The award ceremony will be February 3, 2013 at 2 p.m. at the Thomas Wolfe Memorial in Asheville.**

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to attend, but I got to present a photography project, along with four other students. Our project showed what we saw as the wide reach of Appalachia, the theme for the conference. ... I also enjoyed hearing other people present on topics they thought made up Appalachia. We got to pick what sessions we wanted to go to, which was very cool. It gave each of us the opportunity to hear sessions that we were interested in, and we could share that interest with others. I will be presenting again this year. I am going to present on the Barn Project that has been going on for the past year by the Madison County Extension Office and the Appalachian Barn Alliance. I can't wait for this coming March to be back with people who have as much love for Appalachia as I do.

Other presentations will include a group panel through the Public History course with Dr. Kathy Newfont. Working in collaboration with current Vance Birthplace historians, including Director Chris Morton, public history students at Mars Hill College developed proposals for interpreting slavery at the site as well as a few individual students who are exploring the agriculture, landscapes and place names of Madison County.

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are also looking forward to partnering with the Madison County Arts Council for the second spring in a row.

Due to an early burst of winter, we were forced to cancel the much-anticipated talk by Dr. Charlotte Ross entitled, "The Role of the Chestnut in Appalachian Life." Fortunately, we were able to reschedule this talk for January 31, 2013 at 7 p.m. in Peterson Conference Center, Blackwell Hall. This program, made possible by the North Carolina Humanities Council, will kick off a busy spring semester (please see page 4 for a list of programs and events). We hope that you will be able to join us!



Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies  
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## Save the Date

*For more information about these programs, please see [www.mbc.edu/ramsey-center/upcoming-events](http://www.mbc.edu/ramsey-center/upcoming-events) or contact Hannah Furginele at (828) 689-1571 or [hjurginele@mbc.edu](mailto:hjurginele@mbc.edu).*

### **“The Role of the Chestnut in Appalachian Life” January 31, 2013, 7 p.m., Peterson Conference Center, Blackwell Hall**

Dr. Charlotte Ross will present a program on the ways the chestnut blight in the 1930s and 1940s combined with outside forces to change Appalachian society forever. A representative of the American Chestnut Foundation will be present with information about current efforts to restore the American chestnut tree. This program is made possible by a grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council, a state-wide nonprofit and affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

### **Welcome Reception for Les Reker, Director of the Rural Life Museum, Mars Hill College February 19, 2013, 3 to 5 p.m., Montague Hall**

Please join Ramsey Center staff at a reception to welcome Mr. Les Reker, the new Director of the Rural Life Museum, in the recently renovated Montague Hall, located on the Upper Quad of the Mars Hill College campus.

### **“Unveiling Our Treasures”**

**February 27, 2013, 3 p.m., Broyhill Chapel,  
Mars Hill College Campus**

Join Hart-Melvin Archival Research Fellows Dr. Joel Reed and Andrew Hebert as they share their research on the Paul G. Newton Collection of shape-note hymnals in the Southern Appalachian Archives.

### **Appalachian Studies Association Conference March 22-24, 2013, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina**

Ramsey Center staff and Regional Studies faculty members and students will give presentations and attend the 36th annual Appalachian Studies Association Conference. More information is available at [www.appalachianstudies.org](http://www.appalachianstudies.org).

### **Fiddlin' 5K “Run for the Music” Road Race April 13, 2013, Mars Hill College**

With fiddle and banjo music accompanying you through the mountainous roads surrounding Mars Hill College, this race will benefit both the Bascom Lamar Lunsford “Minstrel of Appalachia” Festival and the Junior Appalachian Musicians Program of the Madison County Arts Council. This event is open to the public, and we would love for you to join us! For more information, see [www.lunsfordfestival.com](http://www.lunsfordfestival.com).