

# LISTON B. RAMSEY CENTER FOR REGIONAL STUDIES

WINTER/SPRING 2015 VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

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## NEW MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB: BELOVED REGIONAL STUDIES PROFESSORS RETIRE

*Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." This is certainly true for the Ramsey Center at Mars Hill University whose role in the region has been supported and shaped by the dedication of individuals like Dr. Carol Boggess, Professor of English, and Mr. Alan Smith, Professor of Biology. As eager as we are in winter to see the daffodils bloom and the mountain views speckled in spring green, the approach of summer is bittersweet this year, for we will be saying goodbye to these two cherished faculty members as they transition into retirement.*

*In working on our winter newsletter, we felt it was a perfect opportunity to honor the work they have done at Mars Hill University and invite them to tell about their plans for the future. We asked faculty member and Mars Hill alumnus Brandon Johnson to speak with Carol Boggess, and James H. Montgomery Regional Studies Scholar and Mars Hill University Senior Anje Kidd to speak with Alan Smith.*

Carol Boggess began working at Mars Hill College in 1987. She has witnessed countless changes during her tenure, but noted that despite the changing infrastructure, people, and courses, Bailey Mountain has always stood tall as a backdrop, and "the spirit of the place, the caring community, the traditions—all that stays the same and makes us who we are." With many highlights to speak of, to Dr. Boggess it was the friendships she shared with colleagues and students that made Mars Hill such a special and enjoyable community. She recalled other moments in her career that stood out, including her leadership role with the Appalachian Studies Association when Mars Hill cohosted the annual conference in Cherokee, N.C., and her involvement with the "New Harmonies" traveling Smithsonian Exhibition in 2010. Receiving a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to explore the question, "Rethinking Regionalism?" was another highlight. Carol Boggess played an integral role in this process that revised the Appalachian Studies program



Carol Boggess and Brandon Johnson with Bailey Mountain in the background on a cold, snowy day on the Hill.

## RAMSEY CENTER FALL HIGHLIGHTS

The Ramsey Center's fall semester was filled with a variety of programs and events that ranged from the old-time barn dance in celebration of the Bailey Mountain Cloggers' 40th anniversary to a field trip to visit artisan Alex Matisse at East Fork Pottery just a few minutes down the road from the university. We welcomed ballad singer Sara Grey all the way from Scotland in September, and Heather South of the Western Regional Archives to celebrate Archives month in October.

Our final program of the year was

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*New Mountains, continued from page 1*

and expanded it to become a Regional Studies program, which in turn contributed to the development of the Ramsey Center.

Dr. Boggess's commitment to the Ramsey Center stems from her belief that it is "the core of the institution's commitment to the region and the local community. It holds and preserves the archives and the history at the same time that it sponsors programming to reflect the trends and changes in our culture." She added that Regional Studies is special in its interdisciplinary approach to understanding place, and she quoted two of her favorite writers, Eudora Welty and Ron Rash, in saying, "One place understood helps us understand all other places." Dr. Boggess has served many years on the Ramsey Center Faculty Steering Committee, and she directed the Regional Studies Program from 2010-2014.

In looking to the future, Dr. Boggess says she has plans to finish writing her biography of James Still and to devote more time to her family's small farm in Yancey County. She says, "The good thing about farming and gardening is that healthy work is always there for the doing—every year has its seasons and tasks. That's also the bad thing about it—the work's never done!"

Professor Alan Smith has been part of the Mars Hill community for years, but when asked by Anje Kidd what year he began, he grinned and said, "Who wants to know?" So, we don't have the date, but we do know the incredible impact his time here has made on the Regional Studies Program and the Ramsey Center. Mr. Smith, originally from Alabama, was drawn to Mars Hill for its proximity to the Appalachian Mountains and their incredible biodiversity. Mentored in his early years by Dr. Don McLeod, whom he credits with encouraging his involvement with the Regional Studies Program, Alan Smith was also impressed by the strong cohorts of students and the faculty's interdisciplinary approach to the region.

He echoes Dr. Boggess in sharing that his relationships with colleagues have been a prized piece of his time at Mars Hill. Alan Smith has gone on to serve on the Ramsey Center Faculty Steering Committee, mentoring new faculty and students about Regional Studies. He shared many highlights of his career with Anje Kidd, but among the top were overcoming challenges in developing strategies for teaching incoming first year students, then watching those young people grow into curious and informed biologists by graduation. To many of us, Mr. Smith has been the voice of the forest—bringing it to life with his knowledge and stories on numerous hikes. He has many ideas for retirement, but none rival his plans for reconnecting with his initial passion for this region—his love of the wilderness. Alan Smith's immediate plans include spending time in the forests and visiting every mountain top of the Appalachian chain. We wish him and Carol Boggess well in their endeavors!

**Alan Smith leading hike at Craggy Gardens in 2011. Photograph by Marc Mullinax.**



## RAMSEY WELCOMES PATRICK CASH

This past fall the Ramsey Center welcomed Patrick Cash to the Southern Appalachian Archives staff. Patrick worked with the Ramsey Center while he was a student at Mars Hill, and he was particularly involved in the Center's hosting of "New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music," a traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibition. Since his graduation in 2011, Patrick has also received a Master's degree in History from East Tennessee State University and gained additional public history experience at the Carroll Reece Museum. Besides his work in the Ramsey Center, Patrick Cash coordinates and teaches in the Public History Program at Mars Hill University.



**Patrick Cash at work with the Liston B. Ramsey Collection**

*Fall Programs, continued from page 1*



**Winter's Tune Concert. From left to right: Brandon Johnson, Jerry Sutton, Cathy Arrowood, Roger Howell, and George Banks.**

"Winter's Tune: Music to Warm an Appalachian night." This winter concert sold out Broyhill Chapel and raised \$3,500 to support the Roger Howell Documentary Project. We had a wonderful response and multiple requests for this to become an annual event.

The documentary project, which kicked off during the 2014 Lunsford Festival, will depict the life, music, and stories of Mars Hill fiddler, Roger Howell, and will be used for programs that share Appalachian music traditions, such as campus activities, regional events, film festivals, and academic conferences. The film will shown for the first time at a screening during the 48th annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford "Minstrel of Appalachia" Festival on October 3, 2015. For more details, contact Hannah Furgieule. For updates on the project, please visit [www.lunsfordfestival.com](http://www.lunsfordfestival.com) and follow the link titled, "Roger Howell Documentary."



## "CREATING COMMUNITIES: VISIONARY WOMEN OF SOUTHERN APPALACHIA"

*The Mars Hill College Class of 1960 established the Hart-Melvin Archival Research Fellowship in honor of their class sponsors, Dr. Virginia Hart and Dr. Robert Melvin as their 50<sup>th</sup> reunion gift to the school. The Hart-Melvin Fellowship gives one Mars Hill University faculty member each year a course release to spend time in the Ramsey Center's Southern Appalachian Archives to work with a student partner in developing materials for use in university courses. This year's fellows are Dr. Jonna Kwiatkowski, Assistant Professor of Psychology, and Amethyst Strivelli, Art Therapy major. The comments below are from Dr. Kwiatkowski, describing the team's research in the archives and their upcoming talk on February 17<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. in Peterson Conference Center, Blackwell Hall.*

Community-based Creativity is the term Amethyst Strivelli and I are using to differentiate creative contributions that are important to a smaller community, such as a town or region, from creative contributions that are important to larger groups, such as countries or cross-national cultures. This talk will share examples and analyses of Community-based Creativity from the Mars Hill University Ramsey Center for Regional Studies. There will be a particular focus on Community-based Creativity made by women.

Most creativity research focuses on contributions from those who have had a more global impact, as evidenced by the number of creativity books that analyze the lives and times of people such as Da Vinci, Darwin, Edison, or Einstein (e.g., see Simonton, 1999; Eysenck, 1995). While these analyses are important, they have little potential for application to any real-world scenario, since researchers agree that it is almost impossible to identify or cultivate such creative geniuses *a priori*. Creative geniuses of the magnitude of Da Vinci are so rarified that it is not practical to think we can do anything but analyze their work after it is complete.

From the Mars Hill University archives, we have culled: 1) reflections about women who organized creative communities, and 2) reflections about how creative contributions from individuals changed communities. With this information, we will compare and contrast Community-based Creativity with large-scale creativity. Our main goal will be to identify similarities and differences between these types of creativity. A secondary goal will be to offer insights about how Community-based Creativity supports a community and how it can be cultivated within a community.



Amethyst Strivelli with Jonna Kwiatkowski in the Ramsey Center.

## WEST BUNCOMBE ELEMENTARY VISITS RAMSEY CENTER

For the second year in a row, the Ramsey Center welcomed the third grade class from West Buncombe elementary school in Asheville to spend the day exploring Mars Hill University and learning about the region. Their day was filled with fiddle tunes by local favorite, Rhiannon Ramsey, the beautiful fiber arts and animals of



Angel Ridge Farm with Lorri Helms, a fun craft project that explored agriculture in the Ramsey Center, and a tour of Mars Hill's campus. To complete the day, students and teachers got a special "behind the scenes" performance by the Bailey Mountain Cloggers in their studio. When asked what their favorite part of the day was the response from students varied from meeting Freddie, the famous albino angora bunny of Angel Ridge Farms; getting to see all the trophies that the Bailey Mountain Cloggers have won; dancing with the cloggers; and of course eating in a big university cafeteria with all the Mars Hill students. The Ramsey Center is happy to organize tours for groups, so if you are interested, contact Hannah Furguele for details. (Photo left: Rhiannon Ramsey performs fiddle tunes in the Heritage Cabin. Top right: Bailey Mountain Cloggers dance with visiting students in their studio. Bottom right: Clarissa Roberts assists students with craft project in the Ramsey Center)



APRIL 11, 2015



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## UPCOMING RAMSEY CENTER EVENTS

For more information about these programs, see [www.mhu.edu/ramsey-center/upcoming-events](http://www.mhu.edu/ramsey-center/upcoming-events) or contact Ramsey Center Program Coordinator and Lunsford Festival Director Hannah Furguele at (828) 689-1571 or [hfgurguele@mhu.edu](mailto:hfgurguele@mhu.edu).

**Unveiling Our Treasures: "Creating Communities: Visionary Women of Southern Appalachia" with Jonna Kwiatkowski and Amethyst Strivelli. February 17, 2015, 3:30 p.m. Peterson Conference Center, Blackwell Hall, Mars Hill University**  
Presentation by the 2014-2015 Hart Melvin Archival Research Fellows (see story on page 3).

**"River Cane: Cultural Workhorse and Ecological Powerhouse" presented by Dr. David Cozzo. March 3, 2015, 12 p.m. Ramsey Center, Renfro Library, Mars Hill University**

Dr. Cozzo will discuss the cultural applications of river cane in Cherokee material culture, both as an artist's resource and as a food source. The second half of the talk will give an ecological perspective on river cane: its role with wildlife and domesticated animals, its ecological function in riparian habitats, and factors leading to its demise. Bring your lunch! Drinks and dessert provided.

**"Giving Voice to Our Stories: An Oral History Journey" with Kelly Navies. March 10, 2015, 7 p.m. Ramsey Center, Renfro Library, Mars Hill University**

Using oral history and other primary source materials, Kelly Navies explores the history of African-American communities in Madison County and other parts of western North Carolina.

**Fiddlin' 5K "Run for the Music" Road Race. April 11, 2015, 9 a.m. Upper Quad, Mars Hill University Campus**

Save the date for the third annual race that lets you enjoy traditional mountain music while you run! The race will benefit both the Bascom Lamar Lunsford "Minstrel of Appalachia" Festival and the Junior Appalachian Musicians Program of the Madison County Arts Council. See [lunsfordfestival.com](http://lunsfordfestival.com) for registration and other information.

**Interested in volunteering? Please contact Hannah Furguele to learn more about getting involved with the Fiddlin' 5K, the Barn Quilt Program, and other Ramsey Center events. Contact Ryan Bell at [rbell@mhu.edu](mailto:rbell@mhu.edu) to find out about the Bailey Mountain Foundation Trail Days every Tuesday at 2 p.m.**

**TO RECEIVE OUR NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL, PLEASE CONTACT KAREN PAAR AT [KPAAR@MHU.EDU](mailto:kpaar@mhu.edu).**