

# Liston B. Ramsey Center For Regional Studies

Fall 2009 Volume 1, Issue 2

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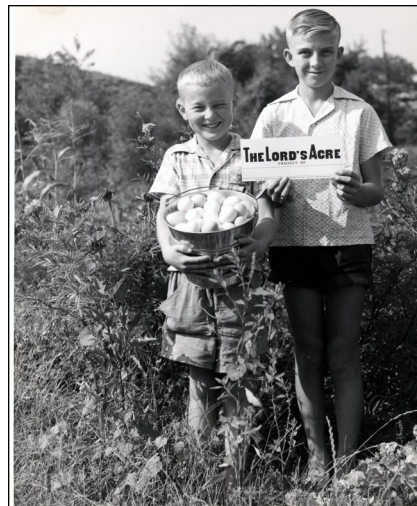
## Ramsey Center Staff

Karen Paar, *Director and Archivist*  
Amy Carraux, *Acting Program Coordinator*  
Peggy Harmon, *Special Collections Supervisor*

## From the Ramsey Center Director

Earlier this summer, a visitor came into the archives in search of inspiration. He was on his way to a community development meeting here in western North Carolina, and he knew that the Farmers Federation Collection is housed in the Ramsey Center's Southern Appalachian Archives. The visitor's own father had worked for the Federation in the 1930s and 1940s, and he thought that this organization might have valuable lessons for the group he was on his way to meet.

The visitor wound up drawing inspiration from the book I am reading now—*We Plow God's Fields: The Life of James G.K. McClure* by John Ager. In reading this biography of the man who founded the Farmers Federation in 1920, I am struck by two things—the relevance of this organization's work for today and the strong sense of stewardship that suffused the life of Jim McClure and many others who worked with him.



*James G.K. McClure Collection, Southern Appalachian Archives, Mars Hill College*

The Ramsey Center is focusing on the James G.K. McClure Farmers Federation Collection for its preservation and programming work during the 2009-2010 academic year, the second year of our National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant. The more than 3,000 black and white photographs, as well as publications, manuscripts, ephemera, and sound recordings provide a valuable window onto many aspects of life in western North Carolina from 1920 to 1960, not to mention information about this important organization's work. This collection is an excellent focal point for a grant whose purpose is to steward the archival collections entrusted to Mars Hill College.

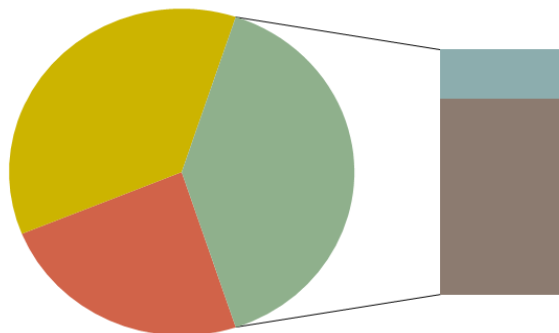
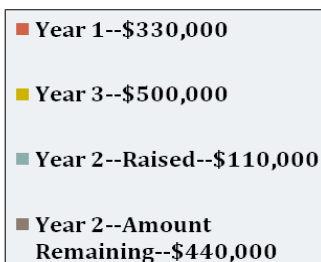
Please join the Ramsey Center this year for programs that will explore the treasures the Farmers Federation Collection contains for understanding the history and culture of the Southern Appalachian region, as well as the lessons this organization offers for those seeking to support farmers and preserve rural life today. Please join us also in the stewardship part of this Challenge Grant year, as we raise the funds that will care for and provide broad access to this wonderful collection, stewardship that will make it possible for others to study the Federation's lessons for many years to come.

## Where We Stand: The NEH Challenge Grant—First Target Met!

The Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies is currently beginning its second year of fundraising for a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant that will create a permanent endowment to support the Southern Appalachian Archives at Mars Hill College. Over the three years of this Challenge Grant, we must raise \$1.5 million in order to receive a \$500,000 match from the NEH. The target amounts vary for each year. We are very pleased to announce that we have raised the \$330,000 required to draw down the largest possible contribution from the NEH for Year 1. Please contribute to our ongoing success! (See back page for donation form.)

*Mars Hill College gratefully acknowledges the support of the Edward B. Titmus Foundation for their recent gift supporting the Ramsey Center and NEH Challenge grant.*

### NEH Challenge Grant Fundraising Targets



## Ramsey Center Concludes Year of Cherokee Programming

*During the 2008-2009 academic year, the Ramsey Center focused most of its programs on Cherokee themes as part of the NEH Challenge Grant's emphasis on the Gertrude Ruskin Collection of Cherokee artifacts in the Southern Appalachian Archives. Programs during fall and spring semesters featured various aspects of Cherokee history and culture, as well as a trip to Cherokee, NC each semester. While we plan to move on to another collection for our second Challenge Grant year, we will return again and again to the Cherokee theme and build on the knowledge and relationships we developed this year.*

### "Unveiling Our Treasures"— The Cherokee Collections of the Southern Appalachian Archives



*Ramsey Center Research Fellows, Dr. Phyllis Smith and Tyler Greene.*

On February 18, 2009, some fifty Mars Hill College students, faculty, and staff, as well as members of the wider community, gathered to hear Archivist Dr. Karen Paar and the Faculty/ Student Team of Ramsey Center Research Fellows, Dr. Phyllis Smith



*Gertrude Ruskin Collection,  
Southern Appalachian  
Archives*

and Tyler Greene, introduce the Gertrude Ruskin Collection of Cherokee artifacts, books, and photographs to the community. After Karen Paar gave an overview of the research, preservation, and access efforts she had begun with the Ruskin Collection, work funded by the NEH Challenge Grant, Phyllis Smith and Tyler Greene presented more information about the different types of artifacts in the collection, as the culmination of their work exploring Cherokee materials in the Southern Appalachian Archives during the fall of 2009. Each year of the NEH Challenge Grant will support the work of a Faculty and Student Team of Research Fellows to explore key collections in the Southern Appalachian Archives and develop uses for these materials in the classroom.



## LifeWorks/ Ramsey Center Service Trip to Cherokee, North Carolina



*Mars Hill College students in the community garden at Tsalali Manor Senior Center in Cherokee, North Carolina.*

On March 7, 2009, the Ramsey Center and the Mars Hill College LifeWorks Learning Partnership joined forces to take twenty-five students and five faculty and staff members to Cherokee, North Carolina to help prepare gardens for spring planting. The group worked all morning to clear a community garden managed by the Tsalali Manor Senior Center, then enjoyed a picnic lunch and wading in the beautiful Oconaluftee River. After lunch, the group continued its gardening efforts on top of Raven Rock Ridge at the home of Cherokee elder and spiritual leader, Walker Calhoun. The workers celebrated their day of hard work with



a trip to the Dairy Queen, before they returned to Mars Hill late that afternoon.

## Cherokee Night at Mars Hill College

Moore Auditorium became a vessel for Cherokee culture on Saturday, April 18, 2009, as Mars Hill College and the Ramsey Center celebrated the song, dance, and storytelling traditions of the Cherokee people. The evening began around six o'clock as crowds gathered in the lobby for crafts demonstrations. The audience members took their seats as the lights dimmed, and an evening of sharing age-old traditions began.



*Walker Calhoun and the Raven Rock Dancers*

the Cherokee people alive. During his performance, Walker Calhoun sang traditional songs, while his family performed social dances, such as the Bear Dance and the Quail Dance.

In addition to the performance by Walker Calhoun and the Raven Rock Dancers, the audience enjoyed the music of traditional Cherokee flute player, Eddie Bushyhead. Freeman Owle captured his listeners' attention with stories, including the Cherokee creation story.

The guest of honor at Cherokee night was revered elder and spiritual leader, Walker Calhoun. Widely recognized as a keeper of ancient Cherokee traditions, Calhoun and members of his family formed the Raven Rock Dancers in the 1980s to keep the music and dance customs of

*Mars Hill College President Dan Lunsford and his grandson speak with Eddie Bushyhead before the performance.*



*Eddie Bushyhead*

Ruskin Collection in the Southern Appalachian Archives. The Ramsey Center's National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant funded this program.

"Cherokee Night at Mars Hill College" was a wonderful culmination of the Ramsey Center's year of programming, whose Cherokee theme was inspired by the Gertrude

*Freeman Owle*



## More Spring 2009 Ramsey Center Events

### "Appalachian Women as Storytellers"

Folklorist Dr. Charlotte Ross of Appalachian State University captivated an audience of more than fifty people in an event sponsored by the Mars Hill College Women's Studies Program and the Ramsey Center on March 3, 2009. Dr. Ross came to Mars Hill College through the North Carolina Humanities Council's Road Scholars Program. Ross drew on the tradition of storytelling in her own family for her program, and she inspired those in attendance to pay attention to their own families' stories. One student commented, "It was neat because stories can be handed down through everyone's family. So even I can find and tell." Another student praised Charlotte Ross's combination of storytelling and acting. No one who attended will soon forget Dr. Ross's vivid tales, and the Ramsey Center is fortunate to host her return to the Mars Hill College campus. **On October 30, 2009, Charlotte Ross will present a ghost story concert as an NEH Chal-**



*Folklorist Dr. Charlotte Ross*

**lenge Grant fundraiser**, where she will mesmerize us, while further exploring Appalachian culture.



### Visit from Jean Redpath

Scottish folk singer Jean Redpath stopped by the Ramsey Center on April 9, 2009 to see the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection in the Southern Appalachian Archives and to meet the Center's staff. (From left to right pictured with the Lunsford scrapbook: Karen Paar, Kathy Newfont, Jean Redpath, and Leslie Smith.) We hope that Jean Redpath will return to Mars Hill College during the 2010-2011 academic year, when we will explore the Lunsford Collection.



*Montgomery Scholars, from left to right: Aki Masunaga, Breanna Mason, Brandon Johnson, and Savannah Garrison.*

### Regional Studies Program

#### Celebrates First Montgomery Scholars

On February 26, 2009, Mars Hill College Regional Studies professors, as well as students, staff, family and friends gathered in the Ramsey Center to honor the first group of James H. Montgomery Regional Studies scholars. After the four students' faculty advisors introduced them to the group, all celebrated the wonderful opportunity the Montgomery Scholarship represents with food and music.



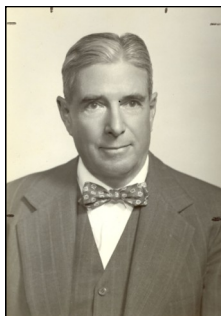
*Gary Spence and Roger Howell play music for the Montgomery Scholars celebration.*

All four scholars worked during the spring of 2009 in various organizations that contribute to the region: Brandon Johnson at the Madison County Arts Council; Aki Masunaga with the Mars Hill College Herbarium in the college's Biology Department; Savannah Garrison for the National Forest Service; and Breanna Mason in the Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies. Besides this service, Montgomery Scholars participated in Regional Studies events at the college. Garrison, Johnson, Mason, and Masunaga will all continue as Montgomery Scholars in the 2009-2010 academic year.



## Ramsey Center Launches Farmers Federation Programming Year

The second year of National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant programming in the Ramsey Center will focus on the James G.K. McClure, Farmers Federation Collection. The Farmers Federation was a cooperative organization founded in Fairview, North Carolina by James G.K. McClure, Jr. in 1920. Originally from Chicago, McClure came to live at Hickory Nut Gap Farm in 1916 in search of a healthy lifestyle and climate to battle his ill health. There he became involved with neighboring farmers who faced challenges in purchasing supplies and marketing their farm products and so provide a good living for their families. The Federation initially focused on the economic problems that farmers faced, but it soon expanded to



*James G.K. McClure, Jr.*



*James G.K. McClure Farmers Federation Collection.*

touch on many other areas of rural families' lives. At its height, the Farmers Federation was active in sixteen counties across western North Carolina. During the 2009-2010 academic year, the Ramsey Center will focus on this collection of over 3,000 black and white photographs; publications, brochures, and leaflets; manuscripts; scrapbooks of newspaper clippings; and sound recordings for preservation and programming efforts. Archivist Karen Paar will complete the processing of this collection and prepare an online finding aid for it. She will also begin digitizing some of the photographs and other items from the collection in order to provide wide access to these materials. The Faculty/ Student Team of Ramsey Center Research Fellows, Dr. John Gripenotrog and Amanda McMahan, will explore the collection during the fall of 2009 with an eye toward integrating Farmers Federation materials into the History 224 course, "U.S. Since 1865," that currently uses Farm Security Administration

*James G.K. McClure Farmers Federation Collection.*



photographs to portray American rural life. John Gripenotrog and Amanda McMahan, along with Karen Paar, will present the results of this work at an "Unveiling Our Treasures" event during the spring semester of 2010.

Preparation for the Ramsey Center's Farmers Federation Year began during the spring semester, when Dr. Kathy Newfont taught her Appalachian Oral History class around this theme. Dr. Newfont appealed to the community for people with memories of the Farmers Federation to volunteer to speak with her students, and she received an enthusiastic response. Students in the Appalachian Oral History class used the Farmers Federation archival materials to prepare for their interviews and to supplement these interviews, as they wrote their final papers. Mrs. Pauline Cheek also worked in the Ramsey Center preparing a database of references to Lord's Acre churches in Farmer's Federation publications. Mrs. Cheek has spoken with a number of people with strong memories of their parents' experiences with the Federation.



*Amanda McMahan and classmates conduct Farmers Federation research in Appalachian Oral History class.*

**Programming for the Farmers Federation Year will begin with a trip back to the Federation's beginnings at Hickory Nut Gap Farm in Fairview,** where Jim and Elizabeth McClure built their home and worked with their neighbors to found the Federation. The McClures' descendants still own the farm, and **on September 27, 2009,** family members including John and Annie Ager, will offer tours of the farm and stories about Jim McClure and his work with the Federation. **After the tours that begin at 4 p.m., we will gather for stories and a covered dish supper at 5 p.m., followed by music and a square dance.** Please join us as we kick off this year of focus on the Farmers Federation! To RSVP, and for more information, please contact Amy Carraux at (828) 689-1571 or [acarraux@mhc.edu](mailto:acarraux@mhc.edu).



## More Fall 2009 Ramsey Center Programs

### September 10, 2009—Gallery Talk and Exhibition Opening:

#### "Speaking with the Ancestors: Late Prehistoric Stone Statues from the Southeastern United States"

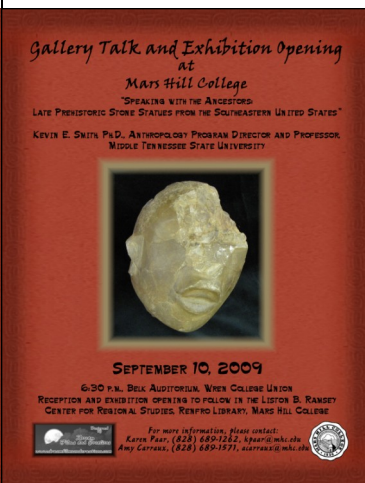
On September 10, 2009 at 6:30 p.m., archaeologist Dr. Kevin E. Smith will speak to the Mars Hill College campus and wider community on the topic, "Speaking with the Ancestors: Late Prehistoric Stone Statues

from the Southeastern United States" in Belk Auditorium, Wren College Union. Dr. Smith's talk is part of the opening event for "Stories from these Stones: A Celebration of Cherokee History and Culture," an exhibition created by Ramsey Center staff with funding from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. A reception and

opportunity to view the exhibition will follow in the Ramsey Center, which is located in Renfro Library on the college's campus.

Dr. Smith's talk describes his work to locate and study carved stone statues created by Native Americans in the southeast from 1100 to 1500 AD. A stone statue head like those Dr. Smith will discuss is the finest piece in the "Stories from these Stones" exhibition. This piece is part of the Gertrude Ruskin Collection in Mars Hill College's Southern Appalachian Archives. The exhibition features more than 80 other artifacts from the Ruskin Collection, dating from ca. 10,000 BC to the 1940s.

"Stories from these Stones" is on display in the Ramsey Center in Renfro Library on the Mars Hill College campus from Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and by appointment while school is in session. Please contact Karen Paar at (828) 689-1262, [kpaar@mhc.edu](mailto:kpaar@mhc.edu) for more information or to schedule an appointment.



*Phil Potter of the Colburn Earth Science Museum identifying the statue as fluorite.*

Coming to Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, NC  
The 42nd Annual Lunsford Festival

Saturday  
October 3, 2009

Featuring:  
Sons of Ralph, Buncombe Turnpike,  
Phil & Gaye Johnson, The Cockman Family,  
Whitewater Bluegrass Company,  
Laura Boosinger, Bobby Hicks  
and many more...

Daytime Festival: 11 AM - 4 PM. Free Admission  
Evening Concert: 7 PM in Moore Auditorium.  
Admission: \$12 Adults, & \$6 Children. Free MHC Students

For more information contact:  
Leslie Smith, Program Coordinator, Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies,  
(828) 689-1571. Email: [lsmith@mhc.edu](mailto:lsmith@mhc.edu)

WNCW88.7  
Spindale, NC [wncw.org](http://wncw.org)

October 3, 2009:

### 42nd Annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford "Minstrel of Appalachia" Festival

Please join the Ramsey Center, the Madison County Arts Council, WNCW, and other friends on Upper Quad of the Mars Hill College campus on Saturday, October 3, 2009 for the 42nd annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford "Minstrel of Appalachia" Festival. From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., musicians and cloggers will perform on the main stage on the Upper Quad. Daytime performances will also include a Ballad and Story Swap, jam circles (bring your instruments!), and—new this year to the Lunsford Festival—a Gospel Stage from 12 to 4 p.m. in the college's amphitheater.

The Lunsford Festival evening concert will take place in Moore Auditorium from 7 to 10 p.m. Besides many festival favorites, performers for this year's evening concert will include the Cockman Family, the Principles Gospel Quartet, Buncombe Turnpike, and Sam Adams and Family. Tickets for the evening concert are \$12 for adults, \$6 for children (12 and under). They are available in advance at the Mars Hill College Bookstore. For more information, contact Amy Carraux at (828) 689-1571 or [acarraux@mhc.edu](mailto:acarraux@mhc.edu).





**October 30, 2009**

## Appalachian Ghost Stories Beneath the Stars with Charlotte Ross

Get ready for chills down your spine as folklorist Charlotte Ross returns to the Mars Hill College campus on October 30, 2009 at 7 p.m. for an outdoor Appalachian ghost story concert. The concert will be a fundraiser in support of the Ramsey Center's NEH Challenge Grant. Dr. Ross captivated a Mars Hill audience back in March with her stories. Watch the Ramsey Center web site ([www.mhc.edu/regional/](http://www.mhc.edu/regional/)) or contact Amy Carraux at (828) 689-1571, [acarraux@mhc.edu](mailto:acarraux@mhc.edu) for more details.

**November 5, 2009**

## Seed and Story Swap

This event, one of the Farmers Federation year programs, will be held in Pittman Dining Hall on the Mars Hill College campus in conjunction with a Local Foods Night. Details will be announced soon, but we are currently gathering the names of people who would like to share their story of a fruit, flower, or vegetable variety handed down in their family, as well as share some seeds, if possible. Please contact Amy Carraux at (828) 689-1571, [acarraux@mhc.edu](mailto:acarraux@mhc.edu) or Karen Paar at (828) 689-1262, [kpaar@mhc.edu](mailto:kpaar@mhc.edu) if you would like to be part of this program.

## Ramsey Center Fall Events— Save the Date!

**September 10, 2009, 6:30 p.m., Belk Auditorium, Wren College Union**—Gallery Talk and Exhibition Opening, “Speaking with the Ancestors: Late Prehistoric Stone Statues from the Southeastern United States” by Dr. Kevin E. Smith, followed by a reception and opening of the exhibition, “Stories from these Stones: A Celebration of Cherokee History and Culture” in the Ramsey Center, Renfro Library.

**September 27, 2009, 4 p.m. (tours) and 5 p.m. (stories, covered dish supper, music and dancing), Hickory Nut Gap Farm, Fairview, NC**—“Back to the Beginnings: A Farmers Federation Gathering at Hickory Nut Gap Farm.”

**October 3, 2009, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Upper Quad), 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Moore Auditorium), Mars Hill College**—42nd Annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford “Minstrel of Appalachia” Festival.

**October 30, 2009, 7 p.m., Mars Hill College campus**—“Appalachian Ghost Stories Beneath the Stars with Charlotte Ross,” NEH Challenge Grant Fundraiser.

**November 5, 2009, 6 p.m., Pittman Dining Hall, Mars Hill College**—“Seed and Story Swap” with Local Food Night dinner.

## Ramsey Center Staff Update

**Please join us in welcoming...**



**Dr. Joanna Pierce** as Acting Ramsey Center Faculty Chair and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Grant Project Director for the 2009-2010 academic year. Dr. Pierce

is stepping into these roles for Dr. Kathy Newfont, while she is away from the college on a one-year NEH Fellowship. Joanna Pierce is an Associate Professor of English at Mars Hill College and the Chair of the college's Regional Studies Program. She earned her doctorate in English from the University of South Carolina, with a dissertation focusing on the relationship between women and place in literature.

**Amy Carraux** as Acting Ramsey Center Program Coordinator for fall 2009, while Leslie Smith is away on maternity leave. Amy Carraux comes to us from Mars Hill College's Life-Works Learning Partnership, where she worked in the Campus Compact AmeriCorps\*VISTA position during the 2009-2010 school year. Prior to coming to Mars Hill College, Carraux spent a year with the Massachusetts Campus Compact, where she served at Tufts University. Both positions called on her to support students as they serve with and learn from local communities. Amy Carraux graduated from Elon University.



We will miss Kathy and Leslie, but we feel very fortunate to have Joanna and Amy on our team. We look forward to announcing the birth of Leslie Smith's baby and the publication of Kathy Newfont's book in future Ramsey Center newsletters!

## A COMMITMENT ...

***How can you help Mars Hill College meet the National Endowment for the Humanities challenge  
for stewardship of the Southern Appalachian Archives?***

- ☐ Tell your friends!
- ☐ Send a check to the address below, payable to Mars Hill College, with "Ramsey Center NEH Challenge Grant" in the memo line.
- ☐ Participate in Ramsey Center programs and events. Send in the form below to receive our newsletter and invitations to events.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_State\_\_\_\_\_Zip Code\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

*Please send to: Mars Hill College Office of Advancement, P.O. Box 370, Mars Hill, NC 28754,  
(828) 689-1102.*

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