

THE LISTON B. RAMSEY CENTER FOR REGIONAL STUDIES AT MARS HILL UNIVERSITY

Established in 2002, the Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies at Mars Hill University **connects** the campus with the wider community to **explore** the history, culture, and environment of the Southern Appalachian region. The Ramsey Center **preserves** and provides access to resources for this study through its Southern Appalachian Archives. The Center shares Mars Hill University's commitment to local and global engagement, to service, and to experiential learning.

The Ramsey Center is located in Renfro Library. To schedule a visit, please go to <http://www.mhu.edu/ramsey-center/contactarrange-a-visit> or call (828) 689-1262.



Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies
Mars Hill University, Box 6706
Mars Hill, NC 28754

THE BASCOM LAMAR
LUNSFORD COLLECTION

SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN
ARCHIVES

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Bascom Lamar Lunsford, circa 1920s.

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WHO WAS BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD?



On March 21, 1882, Bascom Lamar Lunsford was born on the campus of Mars Hill College on the spot where Cornwell Hall now stands. From his earliest recollections he was involved with the making of music, and he was well acquainted with education. Lunsford's father taught at Mars Hill College, and his mother oversaw

one of the residence halls.

Lunsford became known as the "Minstrel of the Appalachians," working long and hard to preserve the cultural heritage of Southern Appalachia at a time when many were running from the region and others were seeking to change it. He practiced law and other professions as a young man before returning to his first love, mountain music and dancing. Highlights of his career included a White House command performance for Franklin D. Roosevelt, a performance before King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England, and recording his "memory collection" of some 320 songs, tunes, and stories for Columbia University in 1935 and the Library of Congress in 1949.

Lunsford maintained close contact with Mars Hill College and donated many of his manuscripts, recordings, and instruments to the school. He said he first learned banjo picking and ballad singing on the mountain campus, and allowed his name to be given to Mars Hill College's annual mountain music festival, *The Bascom Lamar Lunsford Minstrel of Appalachia Festival*.



Bryson City High School Students, 1928, Lunsford Scrapbook

RESOURCES WITHIN THE COLLECTION:

- Some 2,300 handwritten ballad and folk song texts
- The Bascom Lamar Lunsford Scrapbook
- Letters, memorabilia, and publications by Lunsford
- Pamphlets and memorabilia from the early Mountain Dance and Folk Festivals
- The Columbia University Memory Collection on aluminum discs
- Lunsford's personal instrument collection: his banjo, guitar, fiddle, and mandolin-banjo
- Illustrated, unpublished book on folk dancing by Bascom Lamar Lunsford



DIGITIZATION OF THE COLLECTION:

The Lunsford handwritten ballad and folk song collection has begun to be digitized for easier accessibility and preservation. Some of these ballads are available

through the Digital Library of Appalachia: <http://dla.acaweb.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/Mars>.

Bascom Lamar Lunsford's musical instruments are on display in the Ramsey Center, along with his oversized scrapbook. This scrapbook has been scanned and is available through DigitalNC: <http://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/ncmemory/id/135431>.

"Conversation with Death," collected in *Scottsboro, Alabama* in 1937.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Because of Lunsford's role in starting the first consecutive national folk festival in 1928, Asheville's legendary *Mountain Dance and Folk Festival*, he is known internationally for his preservation and promotion of mountain cultural traditions.

In 1916-1918, musicologist Cecil Sharp collected more old British ballads in the western North Carolina mountains than anywhere else in the Appalachians. Many musicians of western North Carolina gained national attention in the early radio days with legendary bands like Wade Mainer and his Mountaineers and the Callahan Brothers. The Lunsford Collection is arguably the most representative for western North Carolina folk songs and ballads in the 1920s and 1930s. With a mix between ballads dating back to the 1500s and pop songs from early country music, the collection shows the relationship between radio and local repertoires.