

Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies

Winter/Spring 2010 Volume 2, Issue 1

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Ramsey Center Goes Back to the Beginnings with the Farmers Federation at Hickory Nut Gap Farm

On Sunday, September 27, 2009 over 100 people gathered at Hickory Nut Gap Farm, the founding place of the Farmers Federation, to honor this grassroots agricultural organization and to kick off the Ramsey Center's James G.K. McClure Farmers Federation Collection preservation and programming year. Annie Ager, who is the granddaughter of Farmers Federation founder James G.K. McClure Jr., and her husband John still operate the farm, and they graciously opened their home to Ramsey Center friends for tours, a covered dish supper, live music, and dancing.

Several people who had been involved with the Farmers Federation attended the event. These friends and family members reconnected and told stories, as guests dined on a bountiful meal and enjoyed the



Hickory Nut Gap Farm. Photo by Travis Proffitt

The Smithsonian Institution is coming to Mars Hill!

The Ramsey Center and numerous campus and community partners are gearing up to host the Museum on Main Street traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibition, **“New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music”** in the fall of 2010. See page four for details as to how you can become involved!



views from the large wraparound porch. Holding his grandson, John Ager wandered through his home sharing stories from the past with a group of visitors. After dinner, the group moved around to the back of the house to listen to stories of the Farmers Federation and to enjoy live music by the New Southern Ramblers. Annie Ager and her sister, Susie Hamilton, shared stories from the Farmers Federation Picnics, popular annual events hosted by federation chapters to inspire and entertain the organization's members. Annie Ager remembered the tug-of-war games and how children and adults chased after a pig covered in grease.

Continued on page two

Seed and Story Swap

As part of the academic year featuring the Farmers Federation collection, the Ramsey Center and Madison Family Farms partnered to hold a Seed and Story Swap in conjunction with a Local Foods night on Thursday, November 5, 2009. The organizations invited members of the community to share stories about their families' treasured plant varieties, and if possible, to share the seeds. The Ramsey Center works to preserve the history and culture of this region, and on this occasion expanded its usual focus on documents, photographs, and music recordings to include the seeds that have been passed down through generations.

Bill Best, an heirloom seed expert from Berea, Kentucky, put the event into context for those present. **"You need to know you're sitting on the Garden of Eden, as far as seeds go. I think you have a resource here that's unlike anything on earth,"** he said of Madison County. Best urged students and community members

"You need to know you're sitting on the Garden of Eden, as far as seeds go."

alike to take action in learning about and preserving local plant varieties, knowledge that was commonplace not so many years ago. Aubrey Raper, an adjunct Sociology professor and full-time farmer at his Rogue Harbor Farm, echoed Mr. Best's sentiments

and encouraged participants to become more aware of heirloom seeds and the strong agricultural economy that resides just outside of the college campus.

The idea of a community garden at Mars Hill College sprouted during the conversation. If you are interested in a community garden project at Mars Hill College, please contact Amy Carraux at acarraux@mhc.edu.



Back to the Beginnings, continued



Hazel Rhymer (left), a former Farmers Federation member, performed a ballad she remembered singing at federation picnics. Her husband was Johnny Rhymer, who had the Farmers Federation String Band, beginning in the 1940s. The evening ended with square dancing and music by the New Southern Ramblers, featuring Mars Hill College's own Gordon Hanners.

Our work to locate former Farmers Federation members continues. If you or someone you know was part of the Farmers Federation, please contact Karen Paar at (828) 689-1262 or kpaar@mhc.edu.



The Newfont family swings to music by the New Southern Ramblers. Photos by Teresa Buckner

Join Us for More Farmers Federation Programs, Spring 2010

Unveiling our Treasures: James G.K. McClure Farmers Federation Collection
February 23, 2010, 3:30 p.m., Ramsey Center, Renfro Library

Join us for this year's "Unveiling Our Treasures" event, as archivist Dr. Karen Paar and the faculty-student research team of History professor Dr. John Gripentrog and History major Amanda McMahan share their findings from work with the James G.K. McClure Farmers Federation Collection. This collection contains over 3,000 black and white photographs, as well as publications, scrapbooks, leaflets, and manuscripts that document the work of the Farmers Federation and, more broadly, western North Carolina agriculture and rural life from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Dr. Gripentrog and Ms. McMahan are the second team to work with a collection as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant. This research program is two-fold: support the college's commitment to undergraduate research and explore our rich archival treasures with the intent to create curriculum materials. Dr. Gripentrog will use these resources in his "U.S. History Since 1865" course beginning in January of 2010.

Continued on page three

Spring 2010 Programs, continued

Conversations with Dr. Charles Thompson, Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University
 March 25, 2010, details to be announced



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

Join us for several events on Thursday, March 25, 2010, as Dr. Charles Thompson of Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies speaks about the Farmers Federation Collection in the broader context of efforts to document the lives and work of

farmers and farm workers.

Formerly a farmer himself, Dr. Thompson is the director of the undergraduate program of the Center for Documentary Studies, as well as a lecturer in the Department of Cultural Anthropology and adjunct professor in the Religion Department at Duke University. In addition to teaching, Dr. Thompson has written about and served as a director and producer for film projects that address agricultural issues.

Day of Service with Fields of Hope
 Saturday, April 17, 2010, details to be announced

The Lord's Acre program, an initiative of the Farmers Federation, sought to revitalize rural churches by encouraging members to donate the profits from a portion of their yield, whether crops or livestock, to support their churches. Churches were then able to provide assistance to congregation members in need. The Lord's Acre program received local and national praise, and the program quickly spread across the United States and beyond.



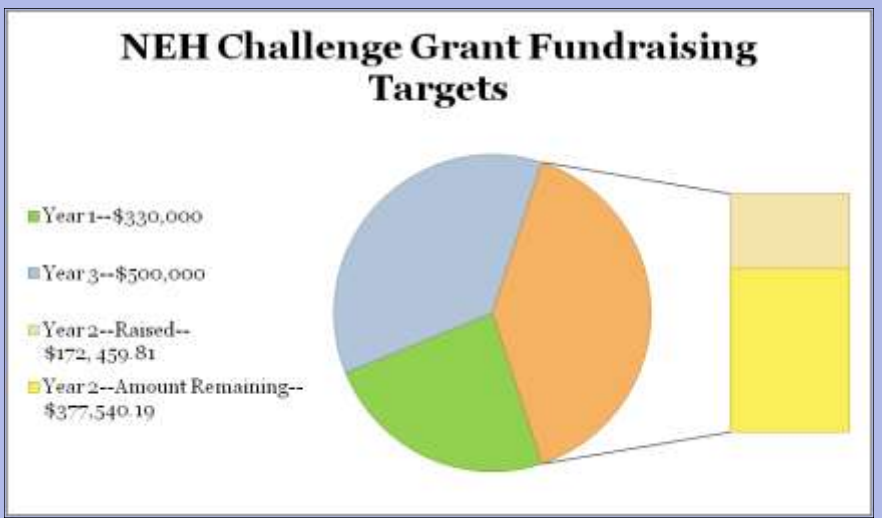
James G.K. McClure Collection, Southern Appalachian Archives, Mars Hill College

Join us in honoring the Lord's Acre program with a day of work at Fields of Hope, a farm in Mars Hill owned and operated by Susie and A.C. Honeycutt. Last year volunteers harvested more than 91,500 pounds of food that was distributed to our neighbors with food insecurity in western North Carolina. If you are interested in participating, contact Amy Carraux, (828) 689-1571 or acarraux@mhc.edu.

A Note from the NEH Challenge Grant Director, Dr. Joanna Pierce

Greetings! As this year's interim NEH Challenge Grant Project Director, I am pleased to share with you the current status of our grant fundraising. We are in the James G.K. McClure Farmers Federation focus year of the Challenge Grant, and we have had some exciting events already this year, including the wonderful gathering at the Agers' farm in September. I invite you to attend the Farmers Federation events held in the coming months.

We are in the midst of our second year of fundraising towards our ultimate goal of \$1.5 million in order to create a permanent endowment for the Southern Appalachian Archives here at Mars Hill College. Last year's goal was met, thanks to the generosity of you, the supporters of this very special collection and resource! Our goal this year is \$550,000, and we have made some good progress towards that goal. Thus far, we have raised \$172,459.81. A significant achievement indeed! However, we are still well short of our target for this year. In such an economic climate, we know it's sometimes difficult to think about spending money on things that might not seem immediate to us; however, the Ramsey Center needs you. Any amount you can give would add to our total and significantly affect our ability to steward the valuable resources of this region for you, your children, and grandchildren. Please consider filling out the form on the back of the newsletter and giving whatever you can. Thank you.





The Smithsonian Institution is Coming to Mars Hill College—Preparations Underway for Fall 2010

Excitement is growing as we prepare to host “New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music,” a Smithsonian Institution Museum on Main Street traveling exhibition. “New Harmonies” will be at Mars Hill College from September 25 through November 6, 2010. Mars Hill is the farthest west of

the six locations chosen by the North Carolina Humanities Council to display this exceptional exhibition that explores the musical traditions that are such an important part of the American story. Western North Carolina’s own Doc Watson sums up this music’s significance in the exhibition when he says, “American roots music expressed the joys and sorrows and all the in-

“American roots music expressed the joys and sorrows and all the in-between in our lives.”



between in our lives.” The music traditions presented in “New Harmonies” vary widely, reflecting the diversity and complexity of the American people’s heritage. The traditions highlighted range from sacred to secular, from indigenous to imported. Visitors to “New Harmonies” will hear the stories of Native American, blues, jazz, country, bluegrass, zydeco, tejano and polka music. A special exhibition developed by the Ramsey Center staff will highlight the traditional music of southern Appalachia and the lifework of traditional music collector and promoter Bascom Lamar Lunsford.

Great Blues “Harpist” James Cotton. Photo by Kenji Oda

“New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music” is the project of Museum on Main Street, a partnership between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

Special thanks to the North Carolina Humanities Council and to our valuable community partners: Madison County Arts Council, Big Ivy Community Center, Big Ivy Historical Society, Wolf Laurel Historical Society, and Dry Ridge Historical Museum.



Call for Volunteers! The Ramsey Center is looking for hard-working and committed individuals to serve on the New Harmonies Planning Committee and to work as museum docents while the exhibition is at Mars Hill College. For more information, please contact Amy Carraux at acarraux@mhc.edu or (828) 689-1571.

Appalachian Ghost Stories Beneath the Stars with Dr. Charlotte Ross

Standing with a bonfire to her back and a grey sky above, folklorist Dr. Charlotte Ross mesmerized upwards of ninety people at the “Appalachian Ghost Stories Beneath the Stars” program the night before Halloween. Audience members curled up with blankets and listened to four eerie stories that originated in Appalachia. “Our mountains have the best ghost stories,” Charlotte Ross said, because of the traditional culture of the Appalachian region. Ross warned that the tales were not like stereotypical ghost stories, but rather that they were haunting or mysterious in their own way.

The overall winner of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honors Society Scary Short Story Contest, sophomore Caitlin Teague, won the privilege of telling her story, “The True Terror,” at the event. Student Greg C. Smith’s “A Never Ending Thirst” won the prize for the

“Scariest Short Story.” Marshall Angle and Gillian Bosonetto shared the faculty honors.

This event supported fundraising efforts for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant awarded to Mars Hill College in support of the Southern Appalachian Archives. Ramsey Center staff extend special thanks to Rick Wartzok of Asheville Engineering and Controls for sponsoring the evening and providing excellent sound.



A bundled-up crowd enjoyed Dr. Charlotte Ross’ stories of Appalachian ghosts. Photo by Mike Thornhill

**“Coming Home”
to the 2009
Bascom Lamar
Lunsford
“Minstrel of
Appalachia”
Festival**

October 3, 2009, the date of the 42nd annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival, was a beautiful fall day in Mars Hill. Crowds gathered throughout the day for main stage performances and 4-H demonstrations on Mars Hill College’s Upper Quad. The Gospel Stage most strongly reflected the festival’s theme, “Coming Home,” but a strong sense of tradition pervaded the festival’s other activities as well, including the Ballad and Story Swap. That evening, many of the region’s best musicians and dancers thrilled the audience that gathered in Moore Auditorium.

Photos by Patricia R. Franklin and Teresa Buckner

More 2009 Lunsford Festival photographs can be found on Mars Hill College’s Flickr website (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/marshillcollege/sets>).



Reverend Winfred Shelton and the Harmoniers performed on the Gospel Stage. Young members of the Cole Mountain Cloggers followed Mars Hill College’s Bailey Mountain Cloggers and kept dance traditions alive during day and evening festivities.



4-H Members of Madison County shared traditions, such as making fresh apple butter. A special thanks to Eve Kindley for organizing 4-H Clubs and for her ongoing support.

2009 Bascom Lamar Lunsford Award Winner

Leonard Hollifield (right), guitarist and vocalist, was awarded the 2009 Bascom Lamar Lunsford Award, given each year for significant contributions to the folk traditions of the southern mountains. At 83, Leonard still plays with the Stoney Creek Boys. His knowledge of and passion for traditional music runs deep with over 60 years of experience, and we are grateful to know and learn from this very deserving winner. We are also thankful to Leonard and the Stoney Creek Boys—Arvil Freeman, Boyd Black, and George Banks—for serving as the house band.



Roger Howell and Kathryn Parham (left) and the Bailey Mountain Cloggers (right) delight the crowd of 300 the evening concert.



Ballad Singer Joe Penland during the evening concert.

**43rd Annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford Festival
Saturday, October 2, 2010**
Follow our website (www.mhc.edu/regional) for more details, and be sure to tune into UNC Public Television which will air a segment on the festival on “North Carolina Weekend” in the early fall of 2010. If you are interested in volunteering with the Lunsford Festival planning process, please contact Amy Carraux at acarraux@mhc.edu or (828) 689-1571.

We were honored to have Maggie Howard, wife of the festival’s co-founder Ed Howard, and Edna Lunsford, daughter-in-law of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, in the audience. Bascom Lamar Lunsford’s grandson, Ed Herron, brought greetings from the family at the evening concert.

The Ramsey Center staff is especially grateful to Roger Howell, who volunteered countless hours to help coordinate this year’s festival. We extend another thank you to our community and campus volunteers, especially the members of Phi Alpha Theta, the History Honors Society at Mars Hill College.

<p>2009 Lunsford Festival Sponsors: Dr. Robert Adams Ms. Laura Boosinger</p>	<p>Mr. Mark A Cody Ms. Patricia R. Franklin Officer C. John Ledford Mr. Sidney Mashburn, CPA</p>	<p>Mr. Bobby Morgan Mr. & Mrs. Sam Parker Mr. Joseph Penland Ms. Debbie Ponder</p>	<p>Ms. Mary Ann Rice Mr. Billy Roberts Ms. Sandra L. Tolley Thank you so much!</p>
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Archaeologists Bring Ruskin Collection of Cherokee Artifacts to Life

This fall, the artifacts in the Ramsey Center exhibition, “Stories from These Stones: A Celebration of Cherokee History and Culture,” came to life through presentations by archaeologists Dr. Kevin Smith of Middle Tennessee State University and Dr. David Moore of Warren Wilson College. Dr. Smith’s talk, “Speaking with the Ancestors: Late Prehistoric Stone Statues from the Southeastern United States” served as the official opening for the exhibition created with funds from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. Later in the fall, Dr. Moore addressed an audience of “Civic Life” students and other members of the Mars Hill College community through a grant by the college’s Visiting Artists and Lecturers Committee.

Dr. Kevin Smith focused his September 10, 2009 presentation on the Late Prehistoric stone statues that he and his late colleague, James V. Miller, spent years locating and studying. These carved stone statues were created by Native Americans in the southeast from 1100 to 1500 AD. The purpose behind these statues is unclear, but archaeologists believe that they played a role in veneration of the ancestors. The heads of the statues are often tilted with their eyes facing the sky and carved with open mouths in the “speaking with the ancestors” form. Some of the statues are male, and others are female, and often the statues appear in male and female pairs.



Jewel of the Ruskin Collection

Dr. Smith also examined and authenticated a rare stone head carved from fluorite around the 14th century AD, which is the finest piece in the Gertrude Ruskin Collection in Mars Hill College’s Southern Appalachian Archives. Dr. Smith believes the Ruskin Collection stone head is meant to represent a male and is unaware of a potential partner. He speculates that the statue could have come from the Kincaid Mounds site in Illinois, where archaeologists have found fluorite shards but no complete statues.

On November 11, 2009, **Dr. David Moore** took students on an interactive, chronological tour of the region, using the “Stories from the Stones” exhibition text and artifacts. Starting with the Paleo-Indian period (ca. 10,000 – 8000 BC) and moving to the Mississippian period (900-1600 AD), Dr. Moore passed his own examples of these artifacts, some real and some replicas, from hand to hand, bringing the tools and treasures of the Cherokees’ ancestors to life.

Dr. Moore called the students’ attention to the *atlatl* (an Aztec word for spear thrower) counterweights, known as boatstones. “How would the Cherokee carve a perfectly symmetrical hole through the middle of a small stone?” Moore asked them. “Now remember,” he said, “this was in 2000 BC, over 4,000 years ago.”

Students puzzled through ideas, and finally, after drawing together everyone’s contributions, the group reached the answer—a piece of hollow river cane was twisted back and forth over a layer of sand to create the hole. The sand of the region consists predominantly of quartz, the second hardest rock, and using the hollow river cane only carved the perimeter of the hole, lessening the time and pressure needed to cut the stone. Following David Moore’s presentation, audience members looked at the objects in the exhibition with a new appreciation.



Atlatl Counterweights, ca. 2000 BC



“Stories from These Stones: A Celebration of Cherokee History and Culture”

The “Stories from these Stones” exhibition, developed by Ramsey Center staff, features more than 80 artifacts from the Gertrude Ruskin Collection, dating from ca. 10,000 BC to the 1940s.



“Stories from These Stones” Exhibition. Photos by Aki Masunaga & Dave Smith

Visit Our Exhibition:
Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies,
First Floor of Renfro Library
Hours: Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Wednesday, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., and by appointment, while school is in session.

Meet our Montgomery Scholars

This scholarship encourages the best of the Regional Studies students to further enrich and strengthen their learning experiences by directly engaging in the region through required service. Our scholars are a true credit to Mars Hill College, the Regional Studies program, and Mr. James H. Montgomery, who endowed this scholarship. The scholars' interests are varied, and their passions are deep, but their love for this region is the same.

Being a Regional Studies minor comes naturally for Savannah Garrison, a native of Madison County and a junior at



Mars Hill College. "I am from this region and I am very passionate about that, so I love learning about my heritage," she says. She is a Biology major and performs her service work with the National Forest Service of North Carolina in Asheville and Brevard.

Senior Brandon Johnson will graduate in May of 2010 with a double major in English and Political Science and a minor in Regional Studies.



Brandon, who grew up in Lenoir, North Carolina, says, "I have always enjoyed

living in Appalachia and learning about the areas around me." He's also quick to share that his favorite lesson learned is how to play the fiddle.

Brandon continues to develop his passion for music by giving mandolin lessons to children in the Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program at the Madison County Arts Council, where he completes his service.

Breanna Mason, a junior Zoology major and Regional Studies minor, says she did not fully comprehend the beauty and uniqueness of the region until she enrolled in the "Introduction to Regional Studies" course. She eagerly admits, "I gained a whole new perspective and appreciation of the region that I've been a part of for so long." Breanna is from Brevard and works closely with the Ramsey Center staff to help plan and coordinate events to complete her service.



Junior Aki Masunaga calls Mars Hill her second home, but she is from Osaka, Japan. Aki says, "For the first time I looked at Japan with an outsider's view. This experience helped me to see my own country as a very unique place in the world." She also observes that being a



Montgomery Scholar has helped her grasp the importance of understanding the places we come from. Aki is a Biology major, concentrating in Ecology, and a Regional Studies minor. She performs her service with the Mars Hill College Herbarium.

Ramsey Center Staff Updates

Amy Carraux, introduced in the fall 2009 Ramsey Center newsletter as the Acting Program Coordinator during Leslie Smith's maternity leave, has moved into this role permanently, after a very busy and successful fall season of programming. We thank Amy for all of her hard work last semester and look forward to more great contributions from her in the future!



Leslie Smith and her husband, Dave, welcomed a beautiful baby girl, Lucy Carolina, on September 2, 2009. While Leslie misses her work with the Ramsey Center, she has decided to stay home with baby Lucy. The Ramsey Center will have the opportunity to draw on Leslie's knowledge of Southern Appalachian music, when she returns as a consultant to help with the "New Harmonies" exhibition and the Ramsey Center's 2010-2011 Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection preservation and programming year.



Connect with Ramsey Center fans, learn more about upcoming programs and events, and see photographs from previous events by joining the "Ramsey Center for Regional Studies at Mars Hill College" Fan Page.

Ramsey Center Hours Extended!

Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies, First Floor of Renfro Library
Hours: Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and by appointment, while school is in session.
NEW: Wednesday, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., while school is in session.

Southern Appalachian Archives, Ground Floor of Renfro Library
Hours: Monday – Friday, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and by appointment, while school is in session.

Contact Karen Paar (kpaar@mhc.edu or (828) 689-1262) or Amy Carraux (acarraux@mhc.edu or (828) 689-1571) to schedule an appointment.

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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.*