

# Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies

Winter/Spring 2011 Volume 3, Issue 1

Photograph: Travis Proffitt

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## Harmonies on the Hill—*New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* Moments and Memories from September 25, to November 6, 2010



September 25, 2010. From left to right: Senator Joe Sam Queen, Mayor John Chandler, President Dan Lunsford, Secretary of Cultural Resources Linda Carlisle, Representative Ray Rapp, and Ms. Juliegh Sitton, Director of Governor Perdue's Western Office. Photo by Mike Thornhill, Mars Hill College.

The fall semester of 2010 brought more than 5,500 people to the Mars Hill College campus to explore the exhibition, “New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music” from the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street program in partnership with the North Carolina Humanities Council. Complementing “New Harmonies” were two locally produced exhibitions, “The Roots Music of Madison County,” developed by Leslie Burrell Smith and Dave Smith, and “SodomSong,” a collection of photographs by Rob Amberg. Visitors

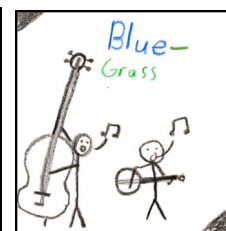
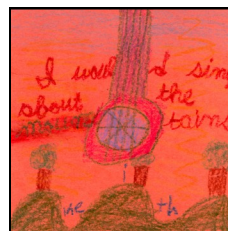


to “New Harmonies” made their own contributions to the exhibition by creating CD covers that show the types of roots music they love and the themes their music would celebrate. By the time “New Harmonies” left



Mars Hill College, these CD covers filled several walls of Weizenblatt Gallery in Moore Auditorium.

To accompany the “New Harmonies” and the Madison County music exhibitions, the Ramsey Center hosted eight programs, opening with “Our Harmonies: A Community Celebration of American Roots Music” (pictured above) and ending with the Grand Masters Fiddler Tribute. These events and others captivated and inspired the audiences, as did the performances local musicians gave for area school children. In all, nearly 1,500 public school students—including all of Madison County’s fourth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade and Early College High School classes—experienced “New Harmonies.” Students also visited from the Yancey, Buncombe, and Mitchell County and the Asheville City districts. The Ramsey Center staff is grateful for the tremendous support of the North Carolina Humanities Council, our partners, sponsors, docents, friends, and the entire Mars Hill College community.



# New Harmonies throughout the Fall



### September 13, 2010

Seventy people wrestled with the definition of “true and authentic” folk music during a North Carolina Humanities Council Road Scholar lecture by Dr. Benjamin Filene, Director of Public History at UNC-Greensboro. Dr. Filene returned to campus for the North Carolina Humanities Council’s Teachers Institute in mid-October.



### September 25, 2010

Bo Taylor from the Cherokee Nation and six other musical groups and solo performers representing the spectrum of American roots music wowed a crowd of five hundred at “Our Harmonies: A Community Celebration of American Roots Music,” the formal opening celebration of “New Harmonies.”

### October 2, 2010

People of all ages celebrated the rich mountain music and dance traditions at the 43rd Annual Bascom Lamar Lunsford “Minstrel of Appalachia” Festival. Mars Hill College alumni enjoyed the festival as part of their Homecoming. The Cole Mountain Cloggers (left) and Ralph Lewis (top



right) shared the stage with many of the region’s finest musicians.

A special thanks to Roger Howell for his ongoing support and to Joe Penland for organizing and facilitating the annual Ballad and Story Swap (bottom right). Thanks also to Eve Kindley and the 4-H of Madison County for their participation. Another big thank you to all our festival volunteers, especially the Mars Hill College History and English Honors Societies.



### October 5, 2010

Dr. Joel Reed, Professor of Music at Mars Hill College, and the Mars Hill College choir shared the tradition of Shape-Note singing at a campus Crossroads session through lecture and song.

*Photo by Mike Thornhill, Mars Hill College*



### October 10, 2010

Rob Amberg displayed several previously unpublished photographs documenting the rich ballad and music traditions of Madison County’s Laurel community in his “SodomSong” exhibition. Nearly fifty people attended Amberg’s gallery talk on “SodomSong” at Mars Hill College. Zuma Coffee in Marshall exhibited additional “SodomSong” photographs during the month of October.



### October 23, 2010

Musicians of Joyful Noise (pictured above) and the Junior Appalachian Musician Program at the Madison County Arts Council performed as part of Kids’ Day at “New Harmonies.” Over two hundred people enjoyed the day’s crafts, music, and fun. *Photo by Rebekah Crockett, Class of 2011*

### October 28, 2010

Betty Smith engaged a crowd of eighty-five at her North Carolina Humanities Council Road Scholar lecture on Jane Hicks Gentry, a Hot Springs woman celebrated for her ballads, stories, and riddles. Mrs. Gentry contributed more ballads than anyone else to English folklorist Cecil Sharp when he visited the region.



### November 5, 2010

Owen Theatre was packed for our closing event, the Grand Masters Fiddler Tribute with Paul Crouch, Arvil Freeman, Bobby Hicks, Roger Howell, Jerry Sutton, and Laura Boosinger. The Madison County Arts Council filmed the concert with funding from the North Carolina Humanities Council. For more information about this film, watch:

[www.madisoncountyparts.com](http://www.madisoncountyparts.com)

**A special thanks to everyone who made *New Harmonies* at Mars Hill a success, including...**

**Our *New Harmonies* Partners**  
 Dry Ridge Historical Museum  
 Madison County Arts Council  
 Thomas Wolfe Memorial State Historic Site  
 Wolf Laurel Historical Society  
 Zebulon B. Vance Birthplace State Historic Site

**Our *New Harmonies* Sponsors**  
 Blue Mountain Pizza in Weaverville  
 Zuma Coffee in Marshall

***New Harmonies* volunteers, docents, and the wider Mars Hill College Community.**

A special thanks to **Joshua Doby, Class of 2012**, for serving as our *New Harmonies* photographer. Unless noted, all photograph credits belong to him.



# Third Annual "Unveiling Our Treasures" Event Highlights Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection and Faculty/Student Research



Carol Boggess and Kristina Blackford at work in the archives.

On February 15, 2011, over seventy-five people gathered from the college and the wider community to hear about the research of the first named Hart-Melvin Archival Research Fellows, Dr. Carol Boggess, Professor of English, and Kristina Blackford, Mars Hill College English major. Boggess and Blackford spent the fall of 2010 exploring the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection in the college's Southern Appalachian Archives and preparing teaching resources for the English 112 "Documented Essay" course that use some of the more than 2,300 handwritten folksongs and ballads Mr. Lunsford collected. The gathering also served as a time to recognize Dr. Virginia Hart and to honor the memory of Dr. Bob Melvin, the Mars Hill College faculty members for whom the Class of 1960 named this fellowship. Dr. Melvin passed away in November 2010, and Dr. Page Lee, his longtime colleague and friend, spoke about Dr. Melvin at the "Unveiling Our Treasures" program. Mr. Ed Herron, grandson of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, delivered greetings from the Lunsford family and spoke to the importance of preserving his grandfather's legacy. Ballad singer Dr. Betty Smith brought the ballads to life through her performance and stories.

Carol Boggess and Kristina Blackford embraced the opportunity to work with the Lunsford Collection, and they passed their enthusiasm along to the English 112 classes who experimented with the teaching materials they designed. Blackford commented about her experience, "Before this, ballads were not much more than words to a tune to me, but now they are all like my children. I've particularly enjoyed researching the ballads and their history—it is so interesting to see how they've changed throughout history and through their many singers. I am excited to help other students realize this by getting them acquainted with Lunsford and his ballads in the classroom. I am proud to say that through this project, I helped create



Students from English 112 explore the ballad kits.

Ramsey Center friends and Lunsford family members examine the Lunsford Scrapbook and visit at the "Unveiling" event. Photo by Teresa Buckner, Mars Hill College



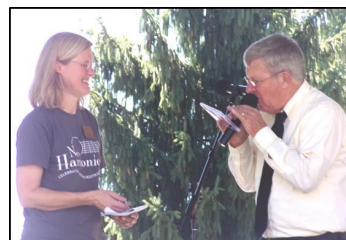
something that may enlighten or inspire other students and interest them in regional studies—or at the very least introduce them to Lunsford and everything he has done for the mountains of North Carolina." English 112 students responded well to the ballad activity that gives students experience with using primary sources, even as they explore continuity and change in this tradition. Other sections of English 112 will include this activity in the future.

The Ramsey Center would like to thank the Class of 1960 for this important gift that goes toward the National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant and benefits Mars Hill College students and faculty. We are grateful to Dr. Virginia Hart and Dr. Bob Melvin for allowing the Archival Research Fellowship to bear their names. Finally, we would like to thank Dr. Melvin's family for designating the Hart-Melvin Fellowship for the gifts that many friends and family members have made in his honor.

## National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant Nears \$1 Million Mark

Thanks to generous contributions, including the largest personal donation to date given recently by an anonymous donor, Mars Hill College has raised nearly \$1 million of the \$1.5 million required match for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant. It's not too late to contribute! Please send your donation to the Mars Hill College Office of Advancement, P.O. Box 370, Mars Hill, NC 28754 or contact Tim McClain, Director of Major and Planned Gifts, at (828) 689-1435 or [tmclain@mhc.edu](mailto:tmclain@mhc.edu). Checks should be made payable to Mars Hill College, with "Ramsey Center NEH Challenge Grant" in the memo line. Thank you for your support!

## Award-Winning Musicians from the Mountains of Western North Carolina DVD Available!



Buddy Davis presents the tribute DVD to Karen Paar.

Musician Buddy Davis, Ellen and Sidney Braverman, and Eddie Swann of the Regal Media Group, LLC produced and generously donated the *Award-Winning Musicians from the Mountains of Western North Carolina* DVD to the Ramsey Center in support of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant.

The DVD features favorite regional musicians from years past. Copies of the DVD are \$20.00, and all proceeds go to the NEH Challenge Grant. For more information or to order a DVD, please contact Karen Paar, [kpaar@mhc.edu](mailto:kpaar@mhc.edu) or (828) 689-1262.

## Public History Students Get Behind-the-Scenes Tours

The Ramsey Center for Regional Studies collaborated with the Mars Hill College History Department to offer a special course on Public History in association with “New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music.” After learning about different fields of Public History, as well as serving as docents and assistants for “New Harmonies” school visits and programs, eleven students traveled with History Professor Dr. Kathy Newfont and Ramsey Center staff members to Raleigh.



*Mars Hill College History students who took the Public History course touch the frame of the Bill of Rights at the North Carolina State Archives.*

While in Raleigh, students visited the North Carolina State University Public History program, and they received behind-the-scenes tours at both the North Carolina State Archives and the North Carolina Museum of History. The highlight of the trip for many was learning about the recovery, preservation, and presentation of North Carolina’s copy of the Bill of Rights.

Jonee Taylor, Class of 2012, shared, “To have been given the opportunity to tour through the

actual archives storage spaces and to have been allowed to have an intimate introduction to the Bill of Rights made me feel like this was not just a break from school or that we were just a little college on a field trip. I realized when we were all standing there looking at the Bill of Rights that we were respected and privileged students with a unique opportunity.” In describing his experience viewing the Bill of Rights, Patrick Cash, Class of 2011, exclaimed, “This was the highlight of my undergraduate experience!”

### STAY CONNECTED!

[www.mhc.edu/ramsey-center](http://www.mhc.edu/ramsey-center)

Connect with us on Facebook!  
Follow the “**Ramsey Center for Regional Studies at Mars Hill College**” Fan Page.

### UPDATED HOURS:

**Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies**

First Floor of Renfro Library  
Open by appointment, 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](mailto:kpaar@mhc.edu)  
or (828) 689-1262  
to schedule an appointment.

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



*Bascom Lamar Lunsford's “dehorned fiddle”*

*Bascom Lamar Lunsford Collection, Southern Appalachian Archives, Mars Hill College.*

## THERE'S STILL TIME TO FILL THE FIDDLE

**We are nearing the \$1 million mark for the NEH Challenge Grant to endow the Southern Appalachian Archives. Thank you for your ongoing support!**